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Nicolas Marty and Antonio Escudero, eds., *Consommateurs & consommation XVIIème-XXIème siècle. Regards franco-espagnols*. Perpignan and Alicante: Presses Universitaires de Perpignan-Publicacions Universitat d'Alacant, 2016. € 22.00 (p.b.). ISBN 978-84-9717-411-4.

Review by Pierre Blavier, Paris School of Economics, EHESS.

This book deals with the history of consumption in France and Spain since the seventeenth century. It originates in a conference held in Perpignan (9-10 April 2014) supported by various Spanish (University of Alicante) and French academic institutions (IDHES, Perpignan University, Casa Velazquez). The book has twelve chapters that are equally distributed between Spanish and French historians, and it therefore has a certain diversity that is sometimes difficult to synthesize.

However, as is clearly set out in the introduction, the underlying idea is to propose a wider perspective on the history of consumption that is traditionally focused on prices and incomes. Works like that of Jan de Vries have drawn more attention to the demand side, now considered as a key factor in economic growth.^[1] De Vries coined the concept of an “industrious revolution” to suggest that the attraction of new products may be an important factor in understanding economic development since the seventeenth century. The book deals with this evolution in France and Spain, but through original research areas like credit, product differentiation, and the cultural and symbolic aspects associated with them. Only one chapter proposes a direct comparative analysis, while the others concern either Spain or France.

The first three chapters deal with the “pre-industrious” period before the nineteenth century. Belen Moreno presents an innovative argument, which insists on the importance of post-mortem inventories as a source for investigating the history of consumption. The main limit of these inventories is that poor households are underrepresented, although he explains that this bias changes a lot between one Spanish region and another. This literature shows that urbanization, income, profession and gender are all key factors for understanding changes in consumption habits and their repercussions. But it also shows that new modes of sociability and commercialization play a role as well. The next two chapters by Ramos and Raveux tackle similar issues, but through very particular products: on one hand clothing colours in the province of Palencia (Spain) between 1750 and 1850, on the other chintz and banyans in Marseille during the last third of the seventeenth century. Both are thus very narrowly focused, but they exploit rich sources in the archives of post-mortem inventories.

Two chapters, by Gillet and Albert, deal with advertising strategies. They show that these latter changed a great deal in the nineteenth century leading to a wider range of marketing possibilities. They refer to social class differences in terms of either traditional (i.e. working-class) identity or modernity. In her thorough study of the retailers of Besançon, Marie Gillet illustrates the various strategies and considerations of consumers in the town: small shops continued to subsist by relying on “special links” with suppliers and customers, and on credit sales.

Two chapters focus more closely on the history of food. Fabrice Poncet analyses Ancien Régime food consumption by looking at imports of Gournay butter to Paris. This original source allows him to

reconstruct networks of dealers and consumers. However, some inconsistencies led him to wonder to what extent his sources—consignment notes—might be biased. Josep Bernabeu Mestre et al. examine the impact of changes in food consumption on health in twentieth century Spain. They establish that malnutrition existed until the 1970s, which confirms how detrimental the Franco dictatorship was for socio-economic welfare in Spain. Since the 1980s, however, a decrease in physical activity has led to other health problems linked with obesity (such as cancer, diabetes, etc.).

Finally, two chapters study consumption in a more classical way, by using longer time frames. Escudero et al. analyze worker consumption for two areas from 1875 to 1930: Biscay (the Basque country) and Alcoy (Valencia). The representativeness of these regions is taken for granted by the authors, but they do not indicate the criteria they are following or provide any argument for it. Both areas seem to be very industrial, thus with a large population of blue-collar workers. The nominal wage increase occurring over the First World War is very impressive, although it partly reflects growing inflation. If price evolution is taken into account, the upsurge appears much more moderate. The main budget item was food and not housing, as is nowadays the case. This income evolution led to health improvements. The main result of the chapter is that preliminary industrialization was a source of impoverishment and deterioration of living conditions, whereas the reverse trend prevailed after 1900. The chapter by Jordi Maluquer is the only one to compare France and Spain directly, and to use a very long time frame (1850-2013). Thus this approach is original in comparison with the other contributions, and it is fruitful. Indeed, the author undermines the idea that a convergence has occurred between Spain and France in recent decades. Surprisingly, this convergence occurred more in the 1960s than since the 1980s. Such a result contradicts the common understanding of the 2000s as a great decade for Spain, all the more as one considers the Great Recession of 2008, which hit Spain harder than it did France. As the author concludes, it would also be interesting to pursue a similar comparison with other countries. The main weakness of this approach is that it does not address inequality: income distribution is hidden behind the overall mean at a national level.

In a nutshell, this book includes empirically well-documented and thorough contributions on original subjects, in particular those of PhD students working in original primary sources. Nevertheless, the collection remains quite heterogeneous, and this lack of a strong guiding line makes it difficult to follow. The comparative perspective is also, unfortunately, neglected.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Belén Moreno: L'inégalité comme norme : modèles de consommation dans l'Espagne pré-industrielle

Fernando Ramos: Révolution industrielle, identité et effet trickle-down dans une économie sous-développée : le « monde des couleurs » dans une petite province castillane (Palencia), 1750-1850

Olivier Raveux: À la mode orientale ? La consommation des couvertures de lit et des robes de chambre en indiennes à Marseille dans le dernier tiers du XVIII^e siècle

Philippe Meyzie: Consommateurs et marchés alimentaires en France (XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles)

Fabrice Poncet : Une source pour l'étude des consommations alimentaires de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime : les lettres de voiture

Antonio Escudero, José Joaquín García Gómez, Pedro Pérez Castroviejo: La consommation de la classe ouvrière espagnole durant l'industrialisation

Marie Gillet: Pratiques et relations commerciales entre boutiquiers et consommateurs bisontins au XIX^e siècle

Anaïs Albert: Devenir bourgeois ou rester prolétaire. Une comparaison des stratégies publicitaires de deux grands magasins de vente à crédit parisiens : les grands magasins Dufayel et Aux Enfants de la Chapelle

Jean-Claude Dauma: La consommation dans les campagnes françaises dans les années 1880-1914 : un régime de transition

Roser Nicolau, Josep Pujol: Prix et consommation des aliments durant les premières phases de la transition démographique. Espagne, 1910-1912

Jordi Maluquer : L'évolution de la consommation privée sur le long terme : Espagne et France, 1950-2013

Josep Bernabeu Mestre, María Eugenia Galiana-Sánchez, Eva María Tescastro-López: De la faim et la dénutrition à l'obésité et la malnutrition : la transition épidémiologique et nutritionnelle de la population espagnole au XX^e siècle

NOTES

[1] Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer behavior and the household economy, 1650 to the present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

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