

1974-02-06a: [BOURGEOISIE] Differentiating "Noble" Classes

Roupenel, 132-3, following up his "Taisand" characterization, points out the number of absurd offices that existed, especially kinds of domestic titles of princely families (imitating the king's household, probably) which entitled the holder to tax exemption, quartering of troops, and the like. It would seem obligatory for me to make very clear distinctions between offices which had both privilege and honorable service (Parlementaires), offices which had privilege & profitable service (trésoriers), and offices which gave privilege but no service (secrétaires du roi), offices which gave exemptions without nobility and so were simply privilege without any honor. In the minds of -modern historians these tend often to get fused, and all of them are disparaged as giving privilege, which is per se loathful to the modern mind. But to understand the actuality of the 17th-18th centuries, the public/private distinction in terms of service or no service must have been recognized--if, indeed, it wasn't manifest in some definition of the law of the times which is not clearly seen by modern scholars.

It would seem that in the provinces, where the local magistracy decided the matter of who was taxable, that individuals could get exemptions on a personal basis. For everyone that did, his erstwhile share of the taxes would be transferred to the general fund which the remaining taxables would have to bear. So, the number of taxables would shrink by bits, due to exemptions, although probably overall it would increase due to rise in population. The issue of a steady flow of people from the productive class to the purely leisured class is frequently found in modern scholars, but this can never be shown to be a massive shift at any one time, and the answer to it is that it allowed for social mobility by opening places in bourgeois level to those just below it. (Quite another question is the fiscal effect of capital going into non-merchant class, when bourgeois to noble shift made; here, the problem is to determine whether or not the capital still found its way somehow back into commerce. The big issue always is rentes; they could have operated as a kind of stock holding even though they took the form of personal loans under the guise of giving lessee a tenancy of some kind.)

At end of his section on *privilégés*, Roupenel says that the only life-giving part of the Dijonnais was the vivacious class of the *gens de métier*. (p. 135ff on them, not read.) This must tie in with what he says later about the stultifying life of the upper classes wiping out the old folk ways in the 18th century.

[Additional handwritten note]: Roupenel does not keep his social categories clear. Sometimes it is *parlementaires* who constitute the new oligarchy, and they are sharply distinguished from bourgeoisie; other times (as Ch. II title) it is *Bourgeoisie Parlementaire*.

But on pp. 194-5 he explains this: "Bourgeois" he is using just to mean city-dwellers, which can mean office holders as well as wealthy merchants, but most of wealthy got an office, though they might not get precise nobility. The important thing is that this city-dwelling group was powerful because it owned the countryside.