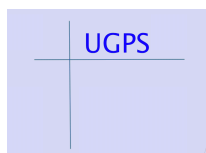


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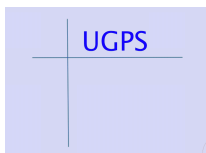
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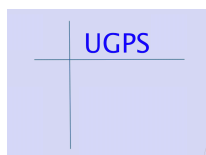
Emotions of Indebted Peasants in Early Modern France, 1680-1785

Elise M. Dermineur



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UGPS Working Paper Series

Emotions of Indebted Peasants in Early Modern France, 1680-1785

ELISE M. DERMINEUR

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Dr Elise M. Dermineur

Historian Barbara H. Rosenwein has argued that people in the Middle Ages lived in “emotional communities”, each community having its own very particular norms of emotional valuation, expression, and gestures.¹ In this paper, I examine rural communities and their emotions, with particular reference to the relation of debt/credit to the local economy, from 1680 to 1789. As a case study, I have selected a rural area located in the south of Alsace, on the border with the Swiss cantons, and only a few miles away from Basel.² There, peasants traded, exchanged and lived together in an “emotional community” as described by Rosenwein.

Growing indebtedness on the part of peasants is one of the features of the rural economy in the eighteenth century. The goal of this paper is to put side by side both the economic changes and the social changes that occurred in the eighteenth century, with particular reference to emotions. How did the growing indebtedness of peasants modify their individual and community behaviour and especially their emotions? I argue that there was a correlation between the increasing weight of debt on rural households and changes in behaviours in eighteenth-century rural France.

Various cross-referenced sources from two rural seigneuries (sources such as loan contracts and judicial litigations) inform us on peasant behaviour and emotions regarding credit and debt. The loan contracts run from the 1730s to 1785. These were recorded by a notary and stipulate the amount of money lent, the interest rate, the

¹Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2006). 24

² During the eighteenth century the seigneurie of Delle, which belonged to the Mazarin family, was composed of about thirteen villages, and the seigneurie of Florimont of about a dozen. The court met frequently in the main towns of Delle and Florimont. Peasants could seek justice very easily as all the villages were located near the town. As both seigneuries were part of Alsace, there was no royal justice in this particular region (one specificity of this area). Instead, seigneurial courts of justice offered their service to the peasants, who found themselves satisfied with both its quality and service. See also Elise Dermineur "Justices Seigneuriales et Communautés Rurales aux XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles" in *Belfort 2007, Actes du colloque du 19, 20, et 21 octobre 2006*, Belfort, June 2007: 31-45

duration and the mortgage guarantee. They rarely reveal the purpose of the loan. I have consulted approximately 2,000 loan contracts.³ Social changes occurring at the same time, and the emotions of the peasants involved, can also be tracked, thanks to an analysis of local judicial records. I have consulted roughly 2,600 judicial cases for the seigneurie of Delle in Haute-Alsace, from 1680 to 1785, and roughly 1,000 cases for the seigneurie of Florimont, at the Archives Départementales du Territoire de Belfort.⁴ The local justice records I have examined, called the “*registres d’audiences*”, are one of the best sources for the study of rural communities.⁵ The seigneurial court was the first level of justice and peasants used this tool heavily. Historians, however, have not paid close attention to these registers. Despite a recent and growing interest in seigneurial justice – shown by, among others, Anthony Crubaugh, Antoine Follain, Julie Hardwick, Jeremy Hayhoe, Hervé Piant and Fabrice Mauclair – the examination of economic patterns, and also sociability, through these judicial records, has been neglected thus far.⁶ I emphasize the fact that these kinds of

³ ADTB 8B 8 19, 20, 21, 31, 32, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 156, 157, 158, and 160. And ADTB 12B 14, 15, 16, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 78, 79, 80, 81, and 82.

⁵ I have made a sample of a five year period in every forty years, except for the first sample (1680-1685). Therefore, I have studied judicial records for the seigneurie of Delle as follows: 1680-1685, 1700-1705 (some registers missing), 1740-1745, 1780-1785.

⁶ Anthony Crubaugh, *Balancing the scales of justice : local courts and rural society in Southwest France, 1750-1800* (University Park, 2001), Anthony Crubaugh, "Local Justice and Rural Society in the French Revolution," *Journal of social history* 34 (2000), Antoine Follain, *Les Justices Locales dans les Villes et Villages du XVe au XIXe Siècle* (Rennes, 2006), Julie Hardwick, *Family Business : Litigation and the Political Economies of Daily Life in Early Modern France* (Oxford 2009), Julie Hardwick, "Seeking Reparations: Gender, Marriages, and Household Economies in Eeventeenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 21 (1998), Julie Hardwick, *The Practice of Patriarchy: Gender and the Politics of Household Authority in Early Modern France* (University Park, Pa., 1998), Jeremy Hayhoe, *Enlightened Feudalism: Seigneurial Justice and Village Society in 18th-Century Northern Burgundy* (Rochester, 2008), Fabrice Mauclair, *La Justice au Village: Justice Seigneuriale et Société Rurale dans le Duché-Pairie de La Vallière (1667-1790)* (Rennes, 2008), Herve Piant, *Une Justice Ordinaire: Justice Civile et Criminelle dans la Prevôté de Vaucouleurs sous l'Ancien Régime* (Rennes, 2006), Zoe Schneider, "Women Before the Bench: Female Litigants in Early Modern Normandy," *French*

sources are not usually used to examine emotions at all. Historians generally favour autobiographical/self narratives, which are almost non-existent for peasants, and/or criminal records.⁷

Peasants' emotions in the Old Regime constituted a set of complex and interrelated feelings and sentiments that shaped societal relations and regulated everyday life. Emotions *did* things as Sara Ahmed put it recently, and should be analyzed as an historical object in their own right.⁸ Emotions had multiple meanings and effects, and were also manipulated in turn. They expressed the way people lived and interacted. It is my contention that emotions in rural communities in the Old Regime had social and economic functions and followed rules and norms invented and moulded by the peasants themselves and consequently not imposed from above.

For many years, historians have studied peasants as a single unit and have paid no attention to individuals and even less to their emotions.⁹ Peasants have been represented in historiography as violent, backward and incapable of feelings such as compassion, love and other sentiments. Recently, however, some historians have begun to revisit peasant history and study individuals, contributing to the formation of emerging patterns about mentalities and about relationships between individuals.¹⁰ Social relations were far more complex than has been theorized so far and a gap in historiography does exist. Moreover, despite a growing interest in the history of emotions over recent years, historians such as Reddy, Rosenwein or Smail, to name

Historical Studies 23 (2000), Zoë A. Schneider, *The King's Bench: Bailiwick Magistrates and Local Governance in Normandy, 1670-1740* (Rochester, NY, 2008).

⁷ Among important work on emotions see especially Piroska Nagy and Damien Boquet, *Le Sujet des Emotions au Moyen Age* (Editions Beauchesne, 2009), Piroska Zombory-Nagy et al., « Pour une Histoire de la Souffrance : Expressions, Représentations, Usages », *Médiévales* 13, n° 27 (1994): 5-14, Barbara H. Rosenwein, « Worrying about Emotions in History », *The American Historical Review* 107, n° 3 (2002): 821-845.

⁸ Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 22 (2004).

⁹ I am particularly referring to the scholars of the Annales school. See among others Pierre Goubert, *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730*, Démographie et sociétés (Paris, 1960), Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The peasants of Languedoc* (Urbana, 1974), Abel Poitrineau, *La Vie rurale en Basse-Auvergne au XVIIIe siècle, 1726-1789* (Paris, 1965), Pierre de Saint Jacob, *Les paysans de la Bourgogne du nord au dernier siècle de l'Ancien Régime*, Publications de l'Université de Dijon (Paris, 1960).

¹⁰ See for instance Mary S. Hartman, *The Household and the Making of History : a Subversive View of the Western Past* (Cambridge, UK ; New York, 2004).

but a few, have not yet directed attention towards the peasants, nor to emotions relating to economic change and violence.¹¹ This project is therefore not only a contribution to our understanding of rural communities but also, and more importantly, an ethnographic sketch, with a historical perspective, of a traditional society and it contributes towards filling a gap in the historiography of emotions.

In order to examine the link between economic change and social and emotional interactions, I first highlight the mechanisms of emotions and social networks in the credit/debt exchange. Then, I present a typology of the judicial cases and their chronological evolution, concentrating on those dealing with debt, in order to show the chronological evolution of feelings and sentiments. Finally, I focus on the link between debt and gender.

I. The Rural Credit Network and Emotions

Credit is the lifeblood of economies, and the pre-capitalist economy of eighteenth-century rural France was no exception. Credit was fundamental for peasants in conducting their daily transactions. But before the advent of capitalism and the establishment of a proper banking system, peasants relied mostly on their neighbours, friends and family members to locate available funds and capital for their needs. Individuals or households in need of cash – in order to pay their taxes, to make new investments, or just to make ends meet – could count on their network of sociability and on the norms of cooperation within the community.¹² Historians of rural France have shown the importance of such networks but have not gone beyond the simple relation of *clientèle*. Lending money to someone was an act that allowed the creditor at least three things: to strengthen ties with the borrower and therefore create a

¹¹ William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling : a Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York, 2001), Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), Daniel Lord Smail, *The Consumption of Justice : Emotions, Publicity, and Legal Culture in Marseille, 1264-1423*, *Conjunctions of religion & power in the medieval past* (Ithaca, 2003).

¹² Jon Elster, « Social Norms and Economic Theory », *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 3, n^o. 4 (1989): 99-117. 100

relation of dependency in which the borrower was indebted materially and morally to his or her creditor (1); to enhance the existing network of sociability between the creditor and the debtor and on some occasions help two sub networks to become a single unit, i.e. one network¹³ (2); and finally, to advertise publicly to the village/community that the creditor helped out the borrower in a difficult moment or/and at a key moment in his or her life (3). Emotionality was therefore an inherent component of the action of lending money, especially in a close community in which everyone was likely to know each other, which reinforces in turn the ties – and emotional ties – between people. In the two seigneuries I have observed, all the loans were made in the limit of these two small areas with no external interaction. Moreover, almost 30% of the loans in the seigneurie of Delle, and almost 40% in the seigneurie of Florimont, were made between people living in the same village.

Therefore, it is very likely that creditors and debtors knew each other. Trust, honour and friendship were essential notions to sign the deal and convey good feelings between neighbours and friends. On 7 May 1743 Margueritte Dermineur married her neighbour Jean Pierre Monnier, thus strengthening the ties between two important peasant families in the area. Margueritte was the daughter of Pierre Dermineur, mayor of the village of Puis, while her groom was the son of Jean Pierre Monnier, mayor of Suarce. Together, Margueritte and Jean Pierre would have five children, three daughters and two sons, before Jean Pierre died during the summer of 1754 at the age of forty-four.¹⁴ Margueritte's father died three years before her husband, leaving her part of his patrimony. Her father-in-law also died in the same year as her husband. She alone was in charge of her household and her five children, and it is possible that she possessed sufficient resources to make another marriage unnecessary. We do not know when she died, but she appears to have been very active until at least 1783. Margueritte Dermineur was one of the most active female

¹³ Here the theory of emotional community developed by Barbara Rosenwein could apply. See Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, 1st ed. (Cornell University Press, 2007).

¹³ ADTB Registre paroissial de Suarce, E-dépôt GG 1-3.

¹⁴ ADTB 2 E 4/444. Margueritte Dermineur's father, Pierre Dermineur married Madelaine Frery on 11 November 1706. Therefore, Jean Pierre Frery was a relative on her mother's side.

creditors in the seigneurie of Florimont. She lent money to her friends, neighbours, and relatives to a total of 3,152 livres, a very significant amount. On 7 April 1755, she lent 144 livres to her neighbour Henry Moittrissier, a young man who wanted to buy two new steers. He agreed to pay back Margueritte in two years and mortgaged some of his land to secure the transaction. On 12 February 1763, Margueritte agreed to lend 370 livres to another of her neighbours, Henry Werther. He would pay her back in four years with interest. Ten years later, she lent 468 livres to a married couple from her village, Nicolas Frelin and Marie Voelin, stipulating that the money had to be repaid within two years. Her father, Pierre Dermineur, had lent money to the couple twenty years earlier. She trusted them and continued to maintain the link between their two families. On 10 September 1780, she lent 500 livres to one of her neighbours, a single woman named Catherine Grimont. On 2 April 1781, she lent 400 livres to a relative living in her village named Jean Pierre Frery.¹⁵ Finally, on 15 January 1783, she lent 770 livres to one of her husband's relatives, Jean Jacques Monnier, which he would repay within three years with interest. Margueritte's network of clients shows that she was involved in her community. She belonged to a network of sociability in which family relations (even in-laws), the neighbourhood, and friendship mattered. She lent significant amounts of money to people whom she knew; people from the village and family members. She was not ignorant of economic strategies as she negotiated all the deeds she signed (interest, mortgage guarantee, repayment schedule, etc). This example demonstrates that friendship certainly played an important part in the success of the transactions because it was related to trust. The relation of credit and debt helped to reinforce village solidarity, bind together the village community, and certainly contributed to the formation of a community identity, an emotional community as Barbara Rosenwein would say.

But friendship could turn into hatred when the norms of cooperation were infringed. In December 1741, a widowed female baker, Margueritte Durand, came before the judge of Florimont to ask for the payment of nine *livres* for some bread she had sold on credit to Henry Monnier, the mayor of Florimont.¹⁶ Trust was such that it was usual to keep a tab at the local store for this kind of transaction. The amount of

¹⁵ ADTB 12B45

money was not great and the fact that the baker had to request payment before the local judge indicates that she had not been successful earlier in getting it by direct means and that she was now in an open conflict with Monnier. The story is a little bit complicated as the bread ordered by the mayor was consumed by a carpenter working for the community of Florimont and therefore commissioned by the mayor. The judge requested to hear all the parties involved and, in the end, the mayor claimed that he had paid for the bread, which the baker continued to deny, as her books made no mention of it. The parties appeared in the courtroom on two further occasions and witnesses were even summoned to testify as to whether or not the bread had been paid for. In March 1742, three months after the initial complaint of the widow, whose case was still open and under investigation, she came to ask the judge for 100 *livres* of “*dommages et intérêts*” (compensation) as the wife of the mayor, Marie Bettevy, had physically attacked her. She claimed that the mayor’s wife “beat her up, knocked her down to the ground several times and punched and kicked her, and that she lost so much blood that she had to stay in bed at home for several days.” Marie Bettevy, the mayor’s wife, simply declared that the baker insulted her saying she was a “silly woman and a thief” (“*une sottie et une voleuse*”). Several court hearings took place afterwards to hear the two cases. On 11 October 1742, the mayor’s wife was charged to pay 10 *livres* of *dommages et intérêts* to the baker, to pay for the medicines and expenses, and finally she was fined 4 *livres* and 16 *sols*. The very next day, her husband, the mayor, was charged to pay the baker 19 *livres* for the bread and late interest fees, and also had to pay the legal expenses of about 30 *livres*.

This short example highlights several important features about the local courts, money and sentiments:

1. Financial issues could trigger strong sentiments such as enmity, revenge, hatred, humiliation and others. For the payment of 9 *livres* and in defence of their honour, the mayor’s wife severely injured the baker, which tends to prove that the matter was extremely important to her and her husband.
2. It also reveals the flip side of trust as a complaint was lodged against the mayor. As Daniel Smail explains, this aspect implies sanction, both legal

and moral.¹⁷ When the norms of cooperation were infringed, in this case the default of payment for the bread, material reparations and also moral reparations were looked for in the courts. Legal sanctions therefore implied moral sanctions, as the trust that bound the parties had been broken. Emotions could arise as a consequence of legal sanctions (shame/pride, anger, hatred/joy, feeling of justice/injustice, indignation, desire for vengeance, etc).

3. Enmity was exposed to the public eye and news was spread and conveyed within a close community. In this community, emotions could be manipulated in order, for instance, to emphasize a prejudice and seek compassion, understanding and sympathy from others, to diminish an opponent through giving him or her a bad reputation, to seek pity or admiration from others.
4. The public nature of this small case was quite important as witnesses had to give information on the payment or otherwise for the bread and, consequently, had to take sides.
5. Emotions such as those in this example have meaning and send information to the participants. Marie Bettevy's attack on the baker refers to her husband's conflict with Margueritte Durand and describes the network of emotionality in the community. It is also interesting to underline that the mayor's wife was the one attacking the baker and not the mayor himself.

II. The Weight of Debt in the Eighteenth Century: Evolution, Change and Pressure on the Peasants

If debt involved the sentiment of friendship (and even in some cases compassion or charity), and could trigger hatred as well, it is necessary to place these emotions in their historical context and to analyse the pattern of change and evolution. Change

¹⁷ Daniel Smail, 158

over time appears essential in the formation of emotional communities as described by Barbara Rosenwein.

First, the analysis of the evolution of the credit market is fundamental to understanding the pressure of debt in the eighteenth century. The volume of exchange in the credit market increased dramatically in the second half of the eighteenth century, as the graphs below illustrate. Peasants mortgaged their land and, as I have argued elsewhere, almost all their land was mortgaged after a while.¹⁸ Creditors requested greater guarantees and men had to bring their wives to the notary to sign the deeds, as a wife's lineage property and dowry could be used in case of default, and as women (wives) represented an additional guarantee in case of their husband's death. This created definitively a breach in traditional patriarchy, as men were no longer in sole charge of their household management. I return to this aspect later.

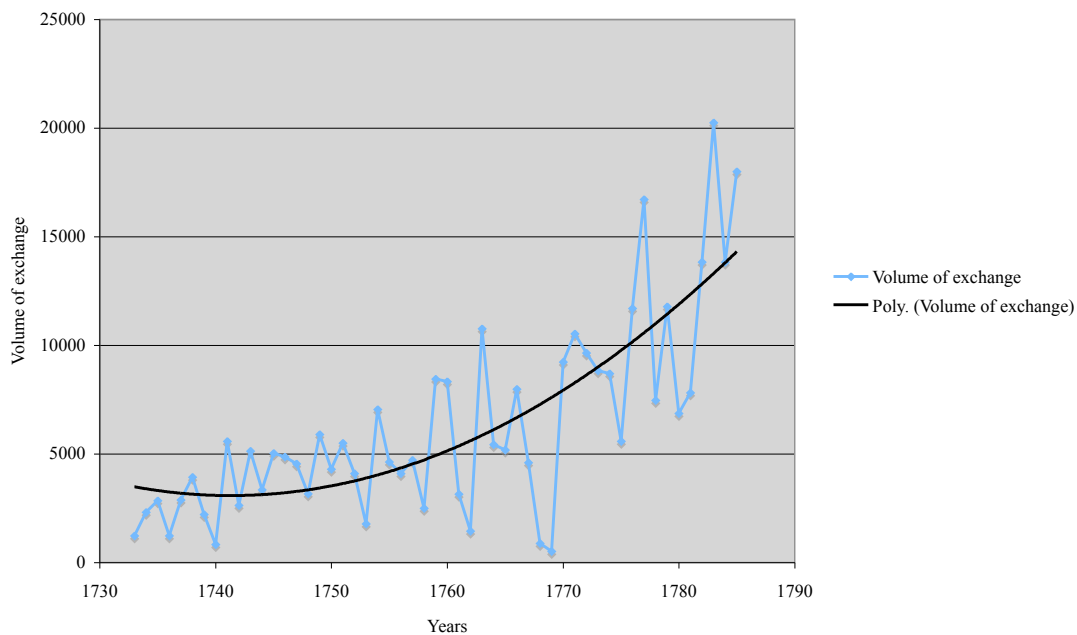


Figure 1 Volume of Exchange in the Credit Market in the Seigneurie of Delle Represented by Year, 1733-1785

¹⁸ Dermineur, "Female Peasants, Patriarchy, and the Credit Market in Eighteenth-Century France." 65-66

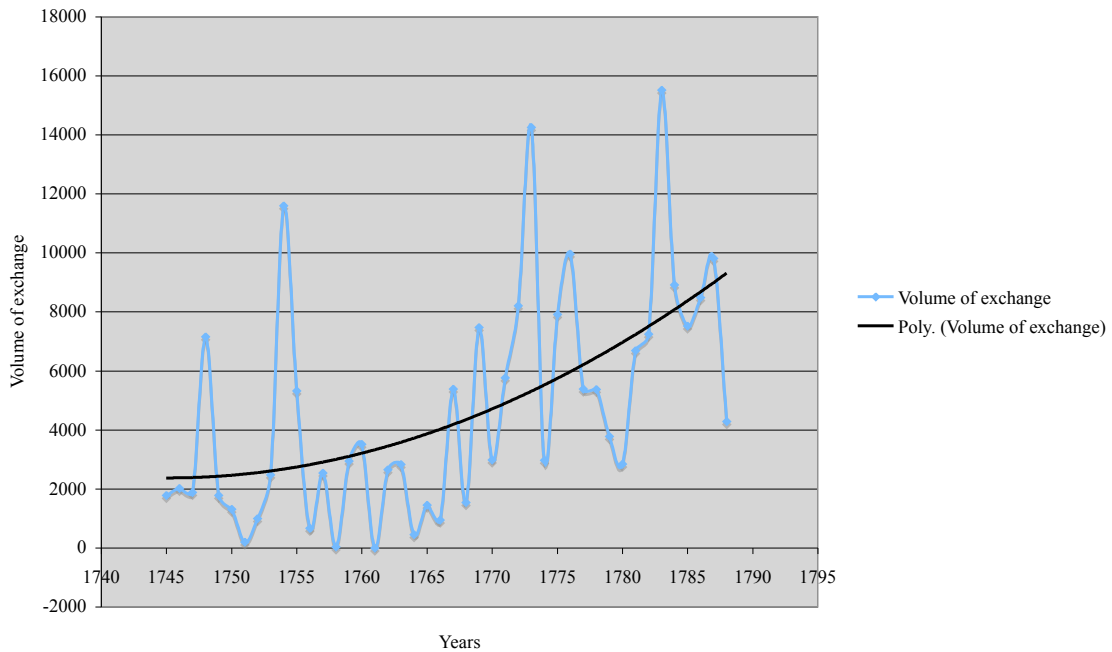


Figure 2 Volume of Exchange in the Credit Market in the Seigneurie of Florimont Represented by year, 1745-1788

As I have indicated, local justice records offer insights into social conditions at this time of economic transition. As the pressure of debt increases, we observe a development in the number of judicial cases concerning debts and recognition of debt. Gradually over the period, the proportion of this type of case grew, denoting the increasing monetization of rural areas and the pressure of debt on the peasants. In the late seventeenth century, in the seigneurie of Delle for instance, 19% of the cases concerned repayment of debt, while a century later this proportion reached 61%. The proportion of cases concerning debt corresponds to what other historians have observed elsewhere. Hervé Piant found that in the late seventeenth century 39% of the *causes d'audience* concerned the repayment of loans and debt, while this reached 76% in the eighteenth century.¹⁹ Cornelia Hughes Dayton calls this process “the

¹⁹ Piant, *Une Justice Ordinaire: Justice Civile et Criminelle dans la Prevôté de Vaucouleurs sous l'Ancien Régime*. 143 Piant mentions that J.-A. Dickinson found between 30% and 40% of debt litigations in the bailiwick of Falaise and that D. Martin found over 50% of these cases in Basse in Auvergne.

litigated economy” while Zorina Khan talks about “justice of the marketplace”.²⁰ In the seigneurie of Delle, this type of case grew by 312% during the period, while in the seigneurie of Florimont it grew by 139%.

	1680-1685		1700-1705		1740-1745		1780-1785	
	F	D	F	D	F	D	F	D
Debt	n/a	19.09	40.82	36.96	57.32	50.58	56.96	61.35
Inheritance	n/a	7.42	7.69	6.16	2.58	7.07	6.84	5.29
Property	n/a	19.62	11.83	18	17.67	12.31	15.40	9.75
Insult/battery	n/a	15.91	8.28	11.37	2.15	2.75	5.62	3.65
Social behaviour	n/a	5.83	0	0	0.86	0.65	0.73	0.38
Separation of property	n/a	0	0.59	0	0.86	0.39	1.95	2.36
Community	n/a	10.87	10.65	7.58	7.32	10.09	2.93	3.12
Cost of justice	n/a	2.12	3.55	0.47	3.44	2.09	1.22	2.43
Wages/Pensions	n/a	2.38	4.73	3.31	3.87	3.27	2.44	2.13
Conflict with the seigneur	n/a	12.46	8.87	9	3.01	7.60	2.44	6.85
Guardianship	n/a	1.06	0.59	1.42	0.43	1.04	0.48	0.99
Other	n/a	2.9	0	1.89	0.43	1.17	0.97	0.38
Unknown	n/a	0.26%	2.36	3.79	0.86	0.91	1.95	1.29

²⁰ Dayton, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789*, B. Zorina Khan, "'Justice of the Marketplace": Legal Disputes and Economic Activity on America's Northeastern Frontier, 1700-1860," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 39 (2008)

Table 1: Proportion in Percentage of Cases According to their Typology in the Seigneurie of Delle (D) and in the Seigneurie of Florimont (F)

I will not explain in detail here why there were gradually more conflicts over the repayment of debt brought before the court throughout the eighteenth century. Put simply, it seems that at least three main reasons can be underlined. First, the economic context was responsible for this increase in the number of cases as more and more peasants had recourse to loans in order to face events or to make a new investment. (It is important to highlight that debt did not necessarily imply a poor economic situation.²¹) Second, it seems that the peasants relied more and more on the judge to solve their internal community conflicts as the number of cases in general brought before the court increased dramatically (from 377 cases in 1680-1685 to 1,312 in 1780-1785 in Delle). Finally, the link between debt and the growing “conflictualization” between creditor and debtor needs further detailed exploration. I would argue that creditor and debtor did not all necessarily experience conflict per se, as many cases concern recognition of debt, i.e. that a certain amount is due, probably to avoid prescription of the debt. But, both creditor and debtor probably used the judge as a mediator and as a means to regulate and make official their transactions and conflicts. The peasants saw the courtroom as a vacuum in which they could release their tensions and therefore their emotions. They also saw it as a means to socially and materially punish and exclude someone who did not respect the cooperative norms of the credit mechanism. Conflict in court inevitably implied emotions as the justice process involved the defence of one’s honour, reputation, creditworthiness and so on. The appearance before the judge was a key moment in one’s expression of emotions as it presented the opportunity to express emotions (anger, shame, hatred, etc), and to manipulate them in turn.

The local economy was changing and this mutation expressed itself in the judicial records, notably in the increasing proportion of debt repayment cases. The economic context had a huge impact on sociability and gender and this can be analyzed through cases of ordinary violence.

²¹ Thomas Brennan, « Peasants and Debt in Eighteenth-Century Champagne », *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 37, n^o. 2 (2011): 175-200.

III. Social Consequences of Indebtedness: Ordinary Violence and Gender Issues

Economic changes, positive or negative, necessarily imply social changes in every society in any historical period. Some historians have emphasized that the economic context, particularly a difficult one, prepared the ground for tensions, conflicts and even violence.²² Daniel Vickers agrees and defines debt as “an instrument of social power and, as such, often became the focus of deep social tensions”.²³ Recently, discordant voices have challenged this argument. Zorina Khan, for instance, rejects “the hypothesis that markets eroded the social norms of cooperation that supposedly were a feature of small communities”.²⁴ She contends that legal disputes over debt did not lead to genuine conflicts within the community. This argument is tenable because Khan analyzes debt litigations focusing only on the group, the community, and not the individual as a subject of analysis, and therefore she does not pay attention to gender. I argue that growing indebtedness did not lead to more ordinary violence within the community – rather the contrary – but I contend that it led to more violence toward and on the part of women.

I argue that economic tensions such as inflation, fragmentation of land and the pressure of debt in eighteenth-century rural areas played a role in social tensions, especially in the way men acted towards women, perhaps due to the loss of authority and control men exercised in marital relations (see my argument above about the position of women in the credit market). Most of the insults and physical attacks took place between people who knew each other.²⁵ Economic tension certainly contributed

²² See for instance Cynthia A. Bouton, *The Flour War: Gender, Class, and Community in Late Ancien Régime French Society* (University Park, 1993), Gutton, *La Sociabilité Villageoise dans l'Ancienne France: Solidarités et Voisinages du XVIe au XVIIIe Siècle*, Robert Muchembled, *Une Histoire de la Violence : de la Fin du Moyen Âge à nos Jours* (Paris, 2008).

²³ Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in America," *William and Mary Quarterly* XLVII (1990). 3-29.

²⁴ Khan, "'Justice of the Marketplace': Legal Disputes and Economic Activity on America's Northeastern Frontier, 1700-1860." 27.

²⁵ On insult see Elise Dermineur, "Insult Trials and the Challenge of Patriarchy in the Early Modern French Countryside," unpublished paper presented at the *Western*

to social tension and most likely to gender tension. Perhaps other studies in the future will inform us whether the challenge to patriarchy in the eighteenth century led to something of a rise in ordinary violence against women as I suggest.²⁶ Through three short examples, I would like to emphasize the link between economic changes and gender tensions. Jeanne Porchy, before the judge, asked for a separation of property from her husband Jacques Chaboudé, which was granted in August 1780. In April 1781, her sister-in-law, Marie Bouat, physically attacked her.²⁷ Margueritte Surgaud also asked for a separation of property from her husband, and we can find her again and again before the judge. In April and September 1780, Surgaud was in open conflict with her brother Georges Surgaud because of their parents' inheritance. In April 1781, she summoned Dominique Théfine before the judge for the payment of a piece of land that she had sold to him. In August 1784, she summoned François Blanchard for the payment of another piece of land. In January 1783, she summoned Jean Macker before the judge for insult.²⁸ Marie Eve Chavanne was a rural domestic working in Jean-Baptiste Galliat's farm. In July 1781, she came before the judge to claim the payment of her salary. A month later, Melchior Galliat, accused her of being a "slut and a slob".²⁹ Other cases, such as those described here, can be found in the civil justice records. Of course, it would be difficult to firmly state whether there was a link between the growing economic activity of women and ordinary violence toward them, but evidence seems to suggest so.

Insults and physical attacks have always been a common feature of rural sociability. But perhaps, as peasants entered in the civilizing process described by Norbert Elias, the proportion of litigations concerning insult and battery dropped.³⁰ It is also a characteristic that Robert Shoemaker has observed in eighteenth-century

Association for French History Annual Meeting (University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 2007).

²⁶ Elise Dermineur, « Female Peasants, Patriarchy, and the Credit Market in Eighteenth Century France » in *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History 2009*, volume 37, September 2010: 61-84

²⁷ ADTB 8B 156.

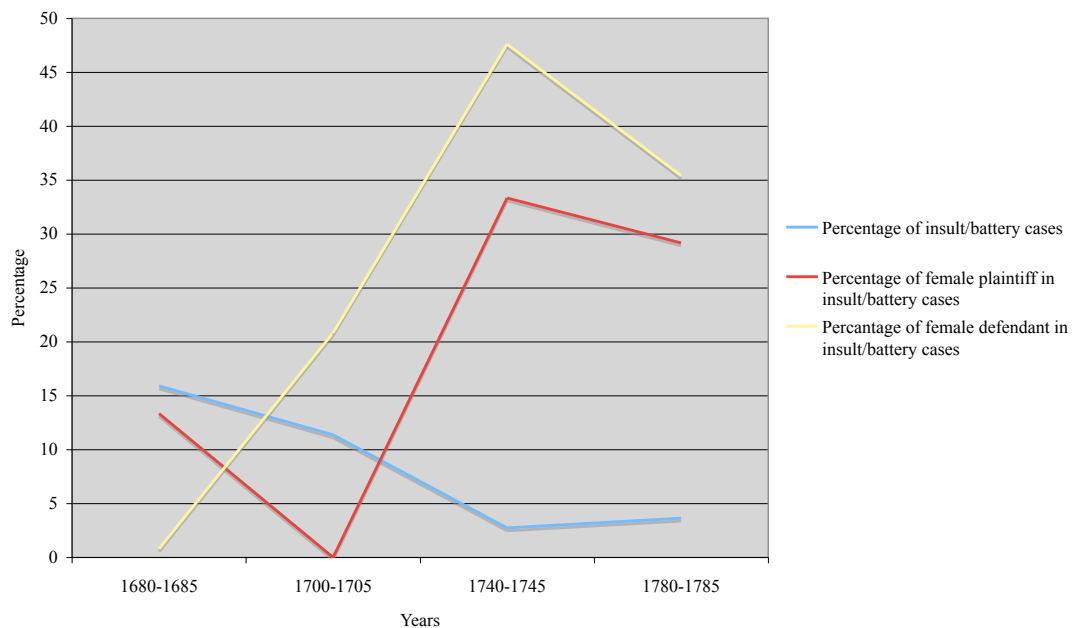
²⁸ ADTB 8B 156, 157, and 159.

²⁹ ADTB 8B 156.

³⁰ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Oxford, 1978).

London upper-class society, and that Thomas Gallant has observed in nineteenth-century rural Greece.³¹ Everywhere, the rate of violence decreased. The proportion of women involved as plaintiff and defendant in this particular type of case in our region, however, rose dramatically after 1740-1745, and remained at a steady high level in 1780-1785. I argue that the growing economic participation of women created social, and more importantly, gender tensions within the community.³²

Resentment at both the increased pressure of debt, and above all the greater participation of women in the economic sphere (here I would like to recall their growing new positions as economic partners in their households described above), developed within the community as a shared emotion – especially among men.



Graph1: Ordinary Violence and Gender in the Seigneurie of Delle, 1680-1785

Male peasants, as a community, reacted to the new role of women within the community through violence and defiance against them, perhaps out of fear as their

³¹ Thomas W. Gallant, "Honor, Masculinity, and Ritual Knife Fighting in Nineteenth-Century Greece," *The American Historical Review* 105 (2000), Robert B. Shoemaker, "The Taming of the Duel: Masculinity, Honour and Ritual Violence in London, 1660-1800," *The Historical Journal* 45 (2002).

³² A complete analysis of the phenomena from 1750 to 1789 through different judicial records would highlight this pattern much more clearly.

traditional patriarchal role was challenged. Female peasants were also quicker to use violence in turn to defend their interests. Here, the theory of emotional communities implies constructionism and social norms – i.e. patriarchy in this case, or rather the challenge to it. Resentment toward the new economic position of women described a change in the traditional social system in which patriarchy used to be the main social model of gender interactions. Its infringement by new economic patterns generated sanctions against women.

Conclusion

Premodern rural credit markets expanded gradually and dynamically in the eighteenth century in amounts never seen before. Credit, and consequently debt, turned out to be key in social relations within the community. Seeking a loan from a friend or a neighbour implied feelings and sentiments such as friendship, trust, or even compassion. Creditor and debtor participated in the formation of a norm of cooperation in which each party established a relationship of confidence and trust, based on a mutual agreement and shared values. In case of default, the tie between the creditor and the debtor was broken if peaceful means could not be found to settle the issue. The recourse to an external party to resolve the matter became frequent and the courtroom became the place to release hatred and other feelings against the debtor (and also against the creditor). The courtroom was also a place to officially state that the bond between two parties had been broken.

Litigations for debt repayment occurred more and more often in the eighteenth century, as the credit market was growing. As a consequence, it seems that peasants spent more time, energy and money regulating their default of payment in court than in taverns or in the street attacking each other. They transferred their anger, hatred, bitterness, and resentment in this matter of debt payment to the judge, who decided on sanctions that did not imply violence. As a result, cases of ordinary violence decreased significantly in the eighteenth century, confirming Norbert Elias' theory of the civilizing process, i.e. Western society learned to refrain from violence – at least in public – and became more peaceful. According to Elias, the nobility began to follow new social standards of politeness and etiquette, which involved a decrease in

blood feuds. As a result the lower classes of society imitated the upper class and everybody became civilized. Unconscious imitation, therefore, caused a change in mentalities in Elias' theory.

From my point of view, however, economic changes provoked a change in social behaviours and human interactions. It seems that a decrease in violence could be generally accepted as a social phenomena, as individuals gained a certain control over their emotions and reached a state of self-discipline. Anger, for instance, came to be expressed through other means than physical violence. But if cases of ordinary violence decreased in the eighteenth century, violence on the part of, and against, women rose significantly. Women's new economic role within society did not correspond to the traditional system of patriarchy in which their economic and social role was significantly reduced.³³

This paper has shown that we need to be attentive to emotions in economic mechanisms and changes as these reveal information about human interaction and also shed light on social change.

³³ This aspect can be applied to other societies in other times. In an article published on 13 May 2011 in the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, Laure Marchand describes the current changing social climate in Turkey, a country with a growing and dynamic economy. The journalist observes that women who are seeking and getting more independence and economic power become the target of violence on the part of men. "Laure Marchand, Turquie: la violence contre les femmes croît avec leur émancipation", *Le Figaro*, no. 20770, Friday 13 May 2011, 8.