

Fraternity among the French Peasantry

Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography

Fraternity among the French Peasantry

Sociability and Voluntary Associations
in the Loire Valley, 1815-1914

Alan R.H. Baker



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The individualism of the French peasantry during the nineteenth century has frequently been asserted as one of its most striking characteristics. In this 1999 book, Alan Baker challenges this orthodox view and demonstrates the extent to which peasants continued with traditional, and developed new, forms of collective action. He examines representations of the peasantry and discusses the discourse of fraternity in nineteenth-century France in general before considering specifically the historical development, geographical diffusion and changing functions of fraternal voluntary associations in Loir-et-Cher between 1815 and 1914. Alan Baker focuses principally upon associations aimed at reducing risk and uncertainty and upon associations intended to provide agricultural protection. A wide range of new voluntary associations were established in Loir-et-Cher - and indeed throughout rural France - during the nineteenth century. Their historical geography throws new light upon the sociability, upon the changing mentalites, of French peasants, and upon the role of fraternal associations in their struggle for survival.

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