The Pride of Place Local Memories & Political Culture in 19th Century France

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Chapter 6

While the government encouraged a revitalization of historical science in the 1840s in the service of defining and consolidating a cohesive national identity, such intentions were not uniformly welcomed and accepted. Some lamented the loss of local particularity and criticized the "rewriting" of local histories as national histories. They expressed dissatisfaction with the political centralization of the Old Regime and French Revolution that reduced both politics, and its historical narrative, "to a single center, a single authority." p. 206 check original source

However, such charges oversimplified a complex process that at once sought out local memories while at the same time wary of their political import and unity challenge lying within sacrificing local histories/memories for legitimacy and national greatness

Part of the impetus for collection was competition with England and German who outpaced France in their collection of "patriotic" materials

Reaffirm national and monarchical grandeur

"cult of the past" term used in 1867

"...the ministry and CTH sought to anchor local memories within a united, national framework; they rejected local initiatives that they deemed overly memorial; and they entered into isolated buy public and revealing conflicts with provincial elites." 207-208

French national unity seen as a recent accomplishment in 1830s likely as a result of the previous political machinations the overthrowing of the elite in favor of liberalism, democratization, and the bourgeois suggested an idea that France could finally be representative of all its people, be one people's voice, and thus be one people

Definite encouragements of looking at local history as but a part of the whole, incomplete without the national identity and encouragement to go beyond the local investigation to embrace the concept of FRANCE as the goal of study

Some of the products of this were sources that were used national topographic dictionaries

Examine to what extent BSHAP participated in this agenda

"According to Nisard, the "human spirit" underlay both patois and French literature, but "it is less complete, it appears in more or less defective forms" in the former. François Génin, the CTH member and soon-to-be BTH official, articulated this unitary design with yet greater clarity. Without rejecting local idioms, he emphasized their subordinate position. "Even before modern centralization," he explained, a tendency towards unity prevailed in France. There had been a geographical center, "a French people and a French language, to which the trouvère from Picardy or Burgundy ... conformed himself." This still held true. "before investigation dialects," he concluded, "let us pay attention to French....The res is secondary." 213-214 check original source

Idea of this objects as mere remains of the past; while they were in fact historical objects, their role was as a fossil of France's past, not necessarily a part of modern France important tension here that may still be present in the current understanding of these objects

"The committee," it told a supplicant from Carpentras in 1839, "must deal above all with the language of the North, which has contributed most to the formation of French." 215 such attitudes toward rural areas may account for the lack of importance placed on medieval objects in the area at the same time since much of the medieval history of this area also tied to England, this may also have something to do with the forgetting or ignorance of this period's medieval since it was not always French?

"We thus uncover an intellectual state that, under the July Monarchy, both cultivated and skirted local memories." 217

Thierry, a devotee, albeit in word only, to the idea of internal diversity applauded the Middle Ages spirit of urban liberty and local patriotism High Middle Ages espoused and lauded as a period of growth and the flourishing of the "individual" and a break from early medieval stagnation and oppressive lack of definition/character

Particularity nothing without the broader entity, no self-value; relegated to the past and divorced from the present

Second Empire saw a key transformation in the acceptance of local history

Appeal to wide political range of constituents
call for social harmony after 1848

growing preoccupation with endangered localities

France was sufficiently strong to recognize internal differences

apprehension did not disappear, but shifted to peripheral regions and sentiments

“They also turned to university professors to impart "the direction most in keeping with the true interest of science" to other provincial elites. All of this reflected building disappointment with these amateurs. "It is certain that a great many [provincial] societés do not amount to much," and official wrote Duruy in 1866.” 227 localism=mediocrity

“In 1860, archivist Louis De Mas Latrie urged provincial correspondents to restrict themselves to “pure and simple description” in their archaeological inventories and eschew “descriptions of local customs and narrative on local legends.” 228

“Affection for the pays and its memories could, if properly channeled, supply unmistakable social and political benefits.” 228 Rousseau and the idea of petite patrie the very hierarchical organization of France gives its inhabitants a pyramid of identities to transition them from the local to the state

Chapter 7

"Under the July Monarchy, CTH members also urged prefects to help "cover France with archaeological commissions. This encouragement was limited, however, and such invitation haphazard. Ministerial officials neither established such agencies nor provided them with significant resources. They congratulated prefects intermittently for their zeal and left it at that." 238

"Reluctant to increase administrative visibility, abandon the center, and yield a parcel of its authority, the ministry remained loyal to its Sorbonne congresses.“ 243

in addition to conflict over whether state should intervene, also disagreement as to how to do so and how much