



Leslie Page Moch

PATHS TO THE CITY

Regional Migration in
Nineteenth-Century France

PATHS TO THE CITY

NEW APPROACHES TO SOCIAL SCIENCE HISTORY

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**PATHS
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**Regional Migration in
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PREFACE

Paths to the City: Regional Migration in Nineteenth-Century France is the second volume in a new series sponsored by the Social Science History Association with the goal of promoting a wider scholarly interchange between historians and social scientists. The series will include both single-authored works and edited collections of original essays devoted to applying social scientific methods to the study of historical issues, as well as to using the insights of historical research to broaden the perspectives of social scientific research.

In this volume, Leslie Page Moch provides an excellent example of the usefulness of social scientific approaches and methods in the study of a major historical problem — the role of migration in the process of urbanization. By utilizing a wide variety of sources, she has made a major contribution to understanding the social, economic, and demographic aspects of internal migration in southern France in the second half of the nineteenth century. Further, she has used this detailed case study to raise important questions for the study of the process of migration and its impact on individuals and families elsewhere.

— Stanley L. Engerman
Series Editor

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I am delighted to acknowledge the many debts incurred in the creation of this book. Charles Tilly's insight and intellectual vitality fired this study from the beginning. His genuine concern with historical questions and actors was inspiring to a beginning graduate student and remains so today. Louise Tilly graced this study with her interest, her broad knowledge of the nineteenth century, and her acute eye for the flawed argument. She offered aid and encouragement the likes of which few students experience. My most demanding mentor was Elizabeth Pleck, who, throughout my scholarly career, has been willing to train and to counsel. Time and time again she persuaded me to rethink and rewrite. By their character, intellectual sophistication, spirit, and their indefatigable research and writing, these teachers have become cherished friends and models. They enriched the scholarly experience which had its home in Ann Arbor in 1974, then migrated to France, to Champaign, Illinois, and then to Texas.

Scholars at the University of Michigan kindly read and commented on the manuscript in its initial phases. Fellow graduate students Donna Gabaccia and Bob Rudney saved my worst errors and most awkward prose from exposure. Professors Raymond Grew and John Knodel each improved the dissertation with advice and admonitions special to their respective expertise.

The Rackham School of Graduate Studies supported exploratory research for this project. Subsequently, a generous fellowship from the Social Science Research Council made it possible for me to devote 1976-1977 to research in France and to write the dissertation on which this book is based. The Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois gave me moral and material assistance at a crucial juncture. The Department of History at the University of Texas at Arlington provided excellent circumstances in which to create the manuscript.

In France, scholars Maurice Agulhon, Raymond Huard, Michelle Perrot, and the late René Lamorisse encouraged my research efforts. The directors of the Departmental Archives of the Gard in Nîmes, Monsieur Jean Sablou and Monsieur R. Debant and their staff, especially Monsieur J. Baccou, were unstinting in their cooperation and patience with endless requests for documents. Likewise, municipal librarians and the employees of the Protestant Consistory Archives tirelessly furnished materials. The hospitality and intellectual curiosity of the Nimois, Dr. and Madame Jean Paradis, Monsieur and Madame Pierre Martin, and many others, humanized both my research experience and the resultant study. Monsieur Pierre Gorlier and Mademoiselle O. Cavalier of Le Vigan, and Mademoiselle H. La Tour and Monsieur Benjamin Bardy of the Departmental Archives of the Lozère in Mende contributed hospitality, kindness, and their own insights into the evolution of Languedoc and its people. Pierre and Dora Atger, above all, offered friendship and community.

Eleanor Forfang provided expert and spirited mapmaking, and Michelle Bock typed the manuscript.

I owe a great deal to Sarah Page Moch, born two days after my Ph.D. dissertation was drafted, for infusing life with joy and fulfillment.

For his love and unstinting support, this book is dedicated to Michael Moch.

— Leslie Page Moch

Grapevine, Texas

INTRODUCTION

"I was born on May 13, 18____, in a city of Languedoc, where there were, as in all southern French cities, much sunlight, a good deal of dust, a Carmelite monastery, and two or three Roman monuments."¹ Thus began a semi-autobiographical novel by Alphonse Daudet. Daudet, *homme du Midi* and nineteenth-century realist, spent much of his career interpreting southern French culture to his curious compatriots of the North.

Daudet was born in Nîmes. His family had originated in the Lozère, one of the hilly departments in the Massif Central, north of the Mediterranean coastal plain on which the old Roman city stands. The Daudets' home town was Concoules, a few kilometers from Villefort, one of the towns on which Leslie Page Moch's graceful study concentrates. Peasant Jacques Daudet, the family patriarch, left Concoules for Nîmes during the French Revolution. His brother went with him. They joined a long-established migration from the rough mountains of the Cévennes to the plain. Jacques became a silk weaver in Nîmes and eventually built his own business. His son Vincent, Alphonse's father, contracted an advantageous marriage with the daughter of another silk manufacturer. The business failed at midcentury, when Alphonse was a boy. The family then moved to Lyon. There Alphonse received his education. His first job as a teacher's assistant was so miserable that he left the south to seek his fortune in Paris, where a brother had preceded him.²

Many more mountain people followed the Daudets' path to the city on the plain. Their migration, like that of the Daudets, was prompted by the search for better economic circumstances and was mediated by family connections. Like Alphonse Daudet, many migrants passed through Nîmes for a period of their lives. Some made it their permanent home. In Leslie Moch's warm, original, and sophisticated *Paths to the City*, we learn a great deal about this migration

from hinterland to city, as well as about the regional economic change that promoted it. And we learn it while making close contact with the individuals and families who struggled to cope with migration and economic change.

Everyone who studies nineteenth-century industrialization and urbanization knows some of the lore of rural-urban migration: that most cities drew the great bulk of their migrants from their immediate surroundings, that average distance migrated tended to rise with skill, that cityward migrants from agriculture moved disproportionately into services and general labor, and so on. With a few historians of industrialization, such as Yves Lequin, we begin to get a sense of the connections between migration patterns within a region and alterations in the economy of that region. Occasionally — but no more than that — we find life histories of individual migrants, but it is very rare for anyone to look directly at the social structures of sending and receiving areas at the same time. The technical problems of doing so are formidable: City censuses may well identify birthplaces or previous residence, but they do not describe those sending areas or place the migrants within their structures. Migrants come from many places, many of which send only a handful of people; former migrants in the city at any particular point in time represent a residue of many arrivals and departures over a substantial previous period; identifying the “same” person in two different places using different records is no picnic. These and other technical problems explain why serious studies of whole migration streams are so few.

Yet if we are to understand the interaction among sending communities, receiving communities, and migrants, we need reliable observations on all three. The interaction matters because it bears on such questions as how much previous exposure to industrial production and/or capitalist property relations migrants to industrial cities had, to what extent migrants moved into ready-made networks of people from common origins, what sorts of information about urban opportunities and dangers migrants brought with them, and to what extent migration to a city was a last resort for impoverished villagers.

Leslie Moch helps us answer all these questions, and more. Her study of migration to Nîmes is the only European study we know that maps separate streams of migration to a city, describes the migrants within those streams, develops direct evidence concerning the sending communities as well as the destination city, analyzes the social processes bringing different types of migrants to the city, and provides