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978-0-521-55031-4 - Labour, Science and Technology in France, 1500–1620

Henry Heller

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For a generation, the history of the *ancien régime* has been written from the perspective of the *Annales* school, with its emphasis on long-term economic and cultural factors in shaping the development of early modern France. In this detailed study, Henry Heller challenges such a paradigm and assembles a huge range of information about technical innovation and ideas of improvement in sixteenth-century France. Emphasizing the role of state intervention in the economy, the development of science and technology, and recent research into early modern proto-industrialization, Heller counters notions of a France mired in an archaic, determinist *mentalité*. Despite the tides of religious fanaticism and seigneurial reaction, the period of the religious wars saw a surprising degree of economic, technological and scientific innovation, making possible the consolidation of capitalism in French society during the reign of Henri IV.

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# Labour, science and technology in France, 1500–1620

HENRY HELLER

*University of Manitoba*



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**To my beloved parents  
Dora and Irving**

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## Preface

For many years the history of France in the *ancien régime* has been written from the perspective of the *Annales*. Particularly important to the conceptualization of this epoch have been the writings of Fernand Braudel and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, who have emphasized the importance of the notion of *la longue durée* or of long-term economic and cultural factors in shaping the history of early modern France. The following work represents a critique of this perspective based on a renewed appreciation of the role of the state, on Marx's concept of primitive accumulation, and recent research on early modern proto-industrialization.

I am especially indebted to my colleague Mark Gabbert, who has helped me to think through some of the theoretical problems raised in the course of this investigation. I am grateful to James McConica and Gillian Lewis for permitting me to present some of the ideas in this book in their research seminar on early modern Europe at All Souls College, Oxford University, in 1992. I recall with pleasure the hospitality of Bob Scribner at Clare College, Cambridge, who allowed me to try out my ideas on his graduate students as well. I would also like to thank the librarians of the Bibliothèque Nationale and Bodleian and University of Manitoba libraries, without whose assistance this work would have been impossible. The editorial skill of Margaret Deith of the Cambridge University Press must be acknowledged. My scholarly efforts over the years have been generously supported by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council. The following manuscript has been written with the help of a research and study leave grant from that body.

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## Abbreviations

AN	Archives Nationales
<i>BHR</i>	<i>Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance</i>
BHVP	Bibliothèque de l'histoire de la ville de Paris
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale
<i>BSHPF</i>	<i>Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français</i>
<i>Bull. soc. hist. Paris</i>	<i>Bulletin de la société de l'histoire de Paris</i>
Coll. Lamoignon	Collection Lamoignon
<i>DBF</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de biographie française</i>
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>DSB</i>	<i>Dictionary of Scientific Biography</i>
Haag	Eugène and Emile Haag, <i>La France protestante</i>
Herminjard	A.L. Herminjard, <i>Correspondence des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française</i>
Isambert, <i>Recueil général</i>	François André Isambert, <i>Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises</i>
Min. Cent.	Minutier Centrale
<i>MSHP</i>	<i>Mémoires de la société de l'histoire de Paris</i>
<i>Nouv. biog. univ.</i> ed. Michaud	<i>Nouvelle biographie universelle</i> , ed. L.-G. Michaud
<i>Recueil des poésies</i> , ed. Montaignon	<i>Recueil des poésies françaises des XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles</i> , ed. Anatole de Courde de Montaignon
<i>Reg. BVP</i>	<i>Registres des délibérations du Bureau de la ville de Paris</i> , ed. François Bonnardot <i>et al.</i>