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**Alessandro Stanziani**, *Histoire de la qualité alimentaire, XIXe-XXe siècle*. Paris: Seuil, 2005. 440 pp. Notes, index of concepts, and index of names. €26 (pb). ISBN: 2-02-078841-1.

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The year 2005 was widely publicized in France as the centennial anniversary of the law separating church and state. Less noted, however, was the centennial of France's law against fraud and adulteration or doctoring [*falsification*] in food products, a law that remained on the books until superseded by European Union legislation in 1993. In *Histoire de la qualité alimentaire*, Alessandro Stanziani addresses the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century factors that led to the 1905 law. As he points out, the French legislation was passed at a time of increasing state involvement in the marketplace of foods around the industrial world. The United States passed its Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906. Why, for example, he asks, would the state intervene to prohibit the watering down of wine, which does not impact public health, while at the same time allowing for the sale of alcohol, which clearly does? (p. 7). The answers to this question lie in the construction of the marketplace, a composite of phenomena that are cultural as much as economic and very much tied to place and time.

Stanziani is an economic historian at the CNRS [Chargé de Recherches au CNRS en Histoire Economique] and the author or editor of works on economic history that include *L'économie en révolution. Le cas russe, 1870-1930* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998) and *La qualité des produits en France, XVIIIe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Belin, 2003). His *Histoire de la qualité alimentaire*, under review here, is less a gastronomic treatise on the quality of food in France than an economic and legal history that highlights the complex network of political pressures, cultural expectations, and information networks whose interaction gave rise to twentieth century concepts of pure or natural foods and the ways in which they should be protected in the marketplace.

Stanziani's work lies at the intersection of a growing literature devoted to the social and cultural construction of the marketplace in France and an increasing number of publications on the history of consumers and consumerism there. His approach parallels that of Jean-Pierre Hirsch, for example, whose study of the Lille business community highlights the continuities between state intervention before and after 1789. [1] Informed also by the literature on the history of consumption, Stanziani notes to the importance of *Consumption and the World of Goods*, edited by John Brewer and Roy Porter, but he writes that consumer products are less homogenous than they suggest and that a more nuanced analysis is needed (p. 25) [2]. He also focuses more on the products available to consumers than the consumer agency itself, in contrast to Ellen Furlough's *Consumer Cooperation in France*, which covers much the same time period. [3] Stanziani himself contributed to a collection of essays published in 2005 on the history of consumers and consumerism, and described on H-France as expressing "la vitalité d'un nouveau champ d'étude." [4]

Emphasizing a synchronic as well as diachronic approach, Stanziani shows that concepts of food quality differ over time and space. What was deemed good quality wine, for example, was watered down in Antiquity, sweetened in the eighteenth century, and made more "pure" and red at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In southern Europe, the high quality beverage was wine; in northern Europe it was beer (p. 11). The marketplace, in other words, is synchronically dynamic and culturally determined: "Nothing is more constructed than a natural food" (back cover). [Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.]

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Stanziani makes extensive use of chamber of commerce and syndical association archives, together with substantial F12 (Commerce and Industry) and BB18 (Justice Ministry) sources from the Archives nationales to address the perspectives of the different actors in the debates over food quality. Substantial supporting secondary literature, much of it theoretical, such as the reference to Brewer and Porter, also appears in the footnotes. Attributing his analyses in large part to Max Weber's sociology of law, Stanziani argues that the legal nexus is neither a set of prohibitions nor constraints but, instead, "a field of action in the interior of which actors form their perceptions. The rules and their procedures distribute the possibilities of success of the various participants" (p. 18).

Four specific products are studied: wine, meat, milk, and butter. Each has a different discursive context in the development of the 1905 legislation. For wine, the focus was adulteration and misleading labeling. The main issue for butter was the differentiation between it and margarine, in other words, the setting of defined norms for products and their substitutes. Meat products were addressed in terms of disease and the security of the food supply, and milk gave rise to issues of health and diet regarding the acceptability of skimmed milk and the dangers of milk infected with tuberculosis. All four foods were the subjects of extensive debate regarding freedom of the marketplace as opposed to state intervention. What adds to the complexity of the discussion is the historical dimension upon which Stanziani insists, the frequently changing notions of "quality" in food products. The shifts in what was considered good quality wine are examples of the synchronic in his analysis. Law, he adds, is also a matter of history and cultural convention (p. 35).

In his book, Stanziani surveys France's history of food quality legislation, much of it related to bread, grain, and wine. An ordinance of 1350 prohibited the mixing of Burgundies with other wines. Fraudulent use of place names emerged as an issue, however, only with the emergence of the great wines of Bordeaux toward the end of the eighteenth century (p. 42). Increased urbanization and trade during the first half of the nineteenth century led to an enhanced concern with food and drug quality and produced the anti-fraud law of 1851, which relied on the ability of informed buyers to discern adulterated products, thereby preventing fraud in the marketplace (p. 56).

Scientific advances during the later nineteenth century heightened legal concerns about public hygiene. Debates about protecting wine quality oscillated between concerns for the protection of marketplace competition, on one hand, and public health, on the other. Wine consumption increased with the growth of cities, not only among the bourgeois classes but also among factory workers who were often paid in wine (p. 77). The late nineteenth century, however, saw a widespread plastering [*plâtrage*], the use of potassium sulfate to preserve wine, and the adding of sugar [*sucrage*] to increase the alcohol content during fermentation.

Stanziani shows how the attempts to insure wine quality in the market were the results of *conjunctures* of political, bureaucratic, and budgetary pressures, rather than a monolithic state intervening in a static marketplace. Private commercial associations, or syndicates, were often divided on quality standards, such as *plâtrage*, which the southern vintners supported, and on which the Bordelais were divided (pp. 125-126). With new techniques and new cuttings, the latter introduced following the phylloxera plague of the late 1870s, the different wine market participants, armed with what Stanziani calls incomplete and imperfect knowledge, accused one another of fraud and falsification (p. 151). Protection of butter proved less complex. Developed in the late nineteenth century, margarine had the potential to be considered as butter by consumers, but it was effectively excluded from the market. Public health was not an issue and marketplace demands took precedence in a political context favoring agricultural over newly-emerging industrial food processing interests (p. 189).

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The consumption of meat, especially pork and beef in contrast to mutton, increased as did wine and butter in the nineteenth century, but unlike the last two, meat was of major concern with respect to public health. [5] The meat trade had been regulated under the ancien regime, Stanziani notes, with the butchers of Toulouse who were granted a trading monopoly in exchange for selling at fixed prices and only in a specified geographic area (p. 202). Increases in the international meat trade in the late nineteenth century complicated matters as French protectionists and hygienists argued against the import of American pork on the grounds of trichinosis infection. American counter-threats against the French wine trade, together with local commercial interests in France's major port cities, led others in France to lobby for a more *laissez-faire* meat trade (p. 232).

In addition to the political alliance of protectionists and hygienists, the changing patterns of production and an enhanced role of scientific expertise in the marketplace, together with cultural factors, such as the expansion of the press and its tendency to create panics, all influenced the meat trade in late nineteenth century France (p. 244). Stanziani views the trichinosis fears of 1880s France as similar to the mad cow panic of the early 2000s in that both saw price fluctuations, for pork and beef respectively, shifting with the uncertain state of the relevant scientific expertise during the two eras (p. 253).

By the start of the twentieth century, meat quality standards in France depended in large part on the discourse about epidemics. Only the norms for luxury meat cuts used in grilling, which was then gaining popularity among the more affluent social strata, were exempt from the discussion of disease. Adulteration and doctoring did not enter the debates about meat standards as they did that of wine and butter, for which sanitary conditions seemed less at issue (pp. 254-255).

Milk lay somewhere between wine and butter on one hand, and meat, on the other, in the discourse that informed the market. As with meat, sanitation conditions were important for milk and the fear of contamination with tuberculosis was prevalent. The progressive industrialization of milk production and distribution, however, gave rise to questions about what constituted "real" milk; whether skimmed milk was a fraudulent product or another form of milk, issues that paralleled the debate about the status of margarine versus butter, or sweetened wines *vis-à-vis* the "pure" product (p. 259). Not only was there an increase in the numbers of milk-producing cows, but also their yield went from nine hectoliters of milk per cow in 1852 to fifteen in 1882 (p. 260). The establishment of milk standards covered not only the quality of the milk but also what went into its production, specifically, what the cows were fed (p. 276).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, a cacophony of competing and changing criteria for quality food standards in France led hygienists, government officials, professional associations, and many consumers to demand a new general law on fraud and falsification that would respond to technological advances and provide general quality guidelines for the marketplace, while at the same time being specific to each product (pp. 286 and 426). A Republican-Radical bloc, in power since 1902, enacted the 1905 law as the standard for food. The new law was designed to control the marketplace, with public health of secondary importance. In a liberal marketplace model, consumers were to be informed about food products then left free to buy whatever they wished (p. 293). The law focused on the setting of standards for products in the marketplace and shifted the interpretation and enforcement for "pure" foods from the Parliament to the governmental administration. This trend toward controlling the marketplace by administrative means influenced the "economic-institutional" life of France into the late twentieth century and, through the European Union, to the present (p. 303).

Following the 1905 emphasis on food labeling, rather than state intervention, to protect the health of the population, the government turned to the development of product standards. Stanziani writes that the same sort of technical shifts seen as innovations in manufactured goods were viewed as falsifications

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or adulterations in agricultural products (pp. 322 and 424). Government experts scrutinized food products to determine their "purity," although the officials did not always agree on their findings. Restricted by government budgets to small teams, the inspectors were limited in the numbers of visits they could make to shops. Seizures of suspected foods for closer scrutiny were uncommon (pp. 336-337). Because it was difficult to tell man-made from natural changes in butter, there were few condemnations for adulteration of this product. A difficult product to standardize, butter lent itself to adulteration in many forms, including the addition of margarine and artificial coloring (p. 374). Determining when wine fermentation was complete was another problem for government specialists until the Appeals Court ruled in 1913 that soured wine was to be considered as "corrupt," falling under the purview of the 1905 law (pp. 380-381). With regard to meat, the 1905 law added to "corruption," a term used during the ancien regime, the term "toxic" (p. 381).

In summary, Stanziani writes that increased internationalization of trade in the late nineteenth century, together with technological shifts in food production, led to a rethinking and reconstruction of the marketplace, carried on through legislation, administrative reconfiguration, and court action (p. 415). Basic to these changes were the shifts in the kinds of information related to foods in the market and the networks through which information passed in a world dominated by the subjective perceptions of fallible individuals (p. 417). Subjective perceptions, however, produced substantial economic effects. The 1905 act and subsequent clarifications, which allowed for *plâtage*, the addition of potassium sulfate, of up to two grams per liter (p. 306) and also emphasized the integrity of place names on foods, preserved a wine industry in the south that focused on traditional wine-making techniques, with little investment in cellars, whereas, together with the 1855 wine classification law, they promoted the high-end Bordeaux vintners. Bordelais and Champagne vintners were allowed to use salicylic acid as a preservative but not artificial coloring as they pushed for new urban markets (p. 421). Place names of origin had a legal value only for wines, in contrast to milk and butter, in the marketplace. The meat market was to be regulated to prevent the transmission of disease but also to recognize the different cuts of meat. Luxury meats, such as those for grilling, were exempted from tuberculosis inspection, thereby promoting the development of specialized cuts and, in general, favoring the raising of livestock for meat consumption (p. 423).

Stanziani draws several conclusions from his research. The common view of a French move toward free trade only after the 1860 Cobden-Chevalier pact must be revised in view of the fall of tariffs on foodstuffs from the beginning of the Second Empire onward. By the same token, the 1880s-90s period usually seen as protectionist, witnessed the relatively free importation of wines (p. 428). Early twentieth century consumer cooperatives sought to balance economic forces in the marketplace rather than protect the legal rights of the consumer, in contrast to the post World War II consumer organizations (p. 432). Finally, as Stanziani correctly notes, despite the importance of the 1905 statute, "in the agro-alimentary domain, the attempt to incorporate innovation in an appropriate body of law and [the] political-economic negotiated [arena] represents a constant for at least two centuries" (p. 435).

An unusual feature that adds to the usefulness of *Histoire de la qualité alimentaire* is an index of concepts [*index des notions*], enabling the reader to locate key terms in the text, such as *asymétrie d'information* [unequal information available to marketplace participants], *contrefaçon* [counterfeit], *naturel* [natural, as in the products discussed], and *mouillage* [watering down of butter, milk, and wine]. Oddly, *plâtage*, frequently addressed in the text, is not included in the list.

Although *Histoire de la qualité alimentaire* touches on the development of taste, as in the mention of a gastronomic shift from the older *bouilli* [boiled and stew meat dishes] to the grilled cuts preferred later in the nineteenth century (p. 282), this book is not a history of gastronomy. Nor is it an economic history of the food trade in France. One might also look for more about the ways in which the Great

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Depression of the last quarter of the nineteenth century interacted with the evolving standards of the era (p. 420). The development of a professional administrative corps to monitor the food marketplace bears interesting parallels to the professionalization of the *métier* of chef during the later nineteenth century and one wonders how this may have impacted the food trade. [6] These points aside, Stanziani has written an important analysis of France's economic, political, and legal handling of four key constituents in the food marketplace at a time of significant technological, social, and cultural change.

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#### NOTES

[1] Jean-Pierre Hirsch, *Les Deux Rêves du Commerce: Entreprise et Institution dans la Région Lilloise (1780-1860)* (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1991).

[2] John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993). For an interesting comparison with German regional food consumption patterns of roughly the same period covered by Stanziani, see Uwe Spiekermann, "Regionale Verzehrungsunterschiede als Problem der Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte Räume und Strukturen im Deutschen Reich 1900-1940," in Hans-Jürgen Teuteberg, Gerhard Neumann, and Alois Wierlacher, eds., *Essen und kulturelle Identität, Europäische Perspektiven* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), pp. 247-282.

[3] Ellen Furlough, *Consumer Cooperation in France: The Politics of Consumption, 1834-1930* (Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[4] Alain Chatriot, Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, and Matthew Hilton, eds., *Au nom du consommateur, Consommation et politique en Europe et aux États-Unis au XXe siècle* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005). The quote is from a publication announcement on H-France, 21 January 2005.

[5] French meat consumption increased more rapidly than did most other European countries in the nineteenth century. See Hans-Jürgen Teuteberg and Jean-Louis Flandrin, "Transformations de la consommation alimentaire," in Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, eds., *Histoire de l'Alimentation* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), p. 735.

[6] See the discussion of the professionalization of chefs in Amy B. Trubek, *Haute Cuisine, How the French Invented the Culinary Profession* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 90-91.

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