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**Negotiating territory: Economic development and cultural
assertion in the commune of Bagnes in Switzerland**

Raynauld, Françoise, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1987

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**NEGOTIATING TERRITORY:
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL ASSERTION
IN THE COMMUNE OF BAGNES IN SWITZERLAND**

by
François Raynauld

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University
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1987

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT
NEGOTIATING TERRITORY :
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL ASSERTION
IN THE COMMUNE OF BAGNES IN SWITZERLAND

Advisor: Professor Sydel Silverman

The concept of cultural assertion was formulated in this study to trace the historical process through which culture can become an instrument of power in a community's efforts to mitigate outside pressures for change and achieve a larger degree of local control over economic development. In Bagnes (Valais), an Alpine community of 5,000 located in southwestern Switzerland, the economy was based on subsistence agriculture and cattle raising until World War I, but economic development has taken place through hydroelectricity production and tourism. The study describes how these sources of social change came together during the 1970s in a process of competition over who uses the land and for what purposes. The study attempts to define the circumstances under which cultural assertion can be used to "negotiate territory." In the case of Bagnes, the cultural heritage of the population enters into processes of economic development, permitting a form of coexistence among the three sectors of the local economy -- agriculture, hydropower and tourism.

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The final acknowledgements in thesis is usually reserved for the spouse of the author. In this instance, it is especially apt, for not only did Diane Morissette provided intellectual companionship in working out ideas, but having been trained in anthropology, she participated actively to fieldwork in Valais. I will be forever indebted to her generosity on that occasion and to her patience while I was writing.

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INTRODUCTION

Dans [les] conquêtes, il ne suffit pas de laisser à la nation vaincue ses lois; il est peut-être plus nécessaire de lui laisser ses moeurs, parce qu'un peuple connaît, aime et défend toujours plus ses moeurs que ses lois.

Montesquieu, De l'Esprit des lois, Livre X, Chapitre XI, 1748 (Classiques Garnier Tome I, 1961: 153).

The purpose of this study is to try to explain the emergence of a popular reaction to economic development in a rural community of the Swiss Alps called Bagnes. This reaction will be described as one of "cultural assertion". It followed significant changes in local patterns of land use after the Second World War, when tourism and hydroelectricity production became more important than agriculture in generating income for the population of this locality.

The loss of agricultural land to tourist accommodations and energy production was gradual. In the beginning of this process, the financial means of tourist promoters and political influence of energy companies had permitted land acquisitions or expropriations at low cost from peasants. The ensuing growth of the tourist industry created new employment opportunities and peasant families were no longer inclined to sell land. Meanwhile, the number of potential buyers increased. Since

the early 1970s, the community's territory, both public and private, has been contested square meter by square meter.

Tourism and hydropower industries compete with agriculture to obtain or maintain a share of control over land use to their benefit. The interaction between them has become a matter of negotiation, that is, a power relationship which arises on occasion when a specific issue becomes a ground for conflict. Sometimes the negotiation turns into an outright confrontation, especially when the clash is between tourism and agriculture. While the production of hydroelectricity no longer requires much physical expansion in the commune now that construction work is over, the growth of the tourist industry is still dependent on the acquisition of more property.

Consequently, this study will document the actions, motivations and sources of power of the local men and women involved in this competitive process. Whether they are associated with one or another sector of the local economy, their sources of power can be outlined in the following fashion:

- agriculture: collectively owned pasture land and water, private property and empirical knowledge acquired by peasants and their spouses;
- hydroelectricity : capital and international marketing networks;
- tourism : employment creation, capital, innovation in services offered to visitors, promotion of facilities.

In this case study of development of hydropower production and tourism in a rural community, it will be shown how, and under what influences, the territory of the community came to be used for new economic purposes. In this "territory", arable and pasture land are critical components; there are also roads, canals, forests, agricultural and commercial buildings, as well as a very large dam, a sizeable artificial lake behind it, electricity producing stations, ski lift networks and of course, residential areas; these components exist altogether in distinctive spatial arrangements. "Land use" will refer to the ways in which these components of the territory acquire more or less importance, relative to each other, in a given part of Bagnes at a given point in time. The study of land use thus requires a historical approach to identify the changes in location of the areas used by each sector of the local economy, as well as to analyze the competition in which the land using groups were involved when these changes occurred, especially their ability to mobilize support.

The negotiation of territory involves what can be called "cultural assertion" on the part of the local population. Cultural assertion is a process whereby a group of people select a series of practices and use knowledge from their cultural heritage, identifying publicly with them in order to show their own distinctiveness from others in the face of assimilative influences. Cultural assertion occurs when internal conflicts among social classes in a locality or region are diffused at particular times when external pressures for change threatens the interests of all classes.

The expansion of tourism and the production of hydroelectricity in the community of Bagnes have confronted its inhabitants with changes so extensive that the results, in terms of potential advantages that might ensue, are as uncertain for one social class as for another. Ideology, in this instance a symbolic relationship with the land, unifies socio-economic interests that, in other circumstances or in other places, would be opposed. Obviously, individual perceptions are influenced by what each person can gain or lose in the evolving local power structure. As a consequence, ideological homogeneity of this sort can only be ephemeral. As soon as external pressures favoring a "foreign" appropriation of the land disappear, the homogeneity of native perception also disappears. Ethnographic work in Bagnes revealed that such ideological homogeneity exists at present. It merits study because it sheds light on what a local population expects from economic development, namely that the actual occupants of the territory must be involved in the decision-making process regarding any further expansion of tourist activities.

The reaction of the local population to their land becoming a battlefield for different interest groups is designated as cultural assertion because it is inspired by elements of the collective identity, the culture, of the people of Bagnes. The following components of Bagnard identity are the major themes referred to in the process of cultural assertion:

- The centuries-old importance of private property in land as the principal criterion of differentiation among families in the social hierarchy, rather than differences in wealth or lifestyle;

- The defense of communal autonomy, insofar as possible, in the face of attempts by external powers to impose decisions in the commune;
- Cattle raising as the preferred activity of the local inhabitants.

This study will show that these particular aspects of the Bagnard collective identity are the most sensitive to the specific problems raised by the expansion of tourism. Cultural assertion consists first in defending private property as the preferred marker of social stratification among men and women born in the community; second, in supporting the local bureaucracy and elected officials in their efforts to control the territorial greed of promoters of tourism; third, in spending large amounts of money and mobilizing family labor in raising cattle -- indeed, significant social prestige is associated with this activity, now that it is obsolete in strict economic terms.

This study fits into the tradition of Swiss Alpine community studies focussing on land use and the effects of economic development, but with special attention being paid to the notion that cultural assertion on the part of the local population has accompanied economic development and mediated the relationships between "natives" and "foreigners".

Cultural assertion, as defined above, can be seen as a form of "resistance" which occurs in a population, or a segment of a population, when confronted with extensive pressures for change in certain historical circumstances. In anthropology, resistance behavior has been discussed in

some studies of acculturation :

"Resistance, if discussed at all, is usually treated as a phase of acculturation, and in a theoretical framework that may explain the acculturation, but not the resistance to it. Resistance movements are analyzed either as tension-relieving mechanisms whose prime function is to ease the strain of the acculturative process, or as simple unwillingness by a particular group of people to abandon the security of previously enculturated behavior patterns" (Clemmer 1972: 214, original underlining).

Clemmer credited Dozier (1951) with having had the first insight about resistance being an active cultural process as opposed to its description as a largely negative attitude vis-à-vis social change. Resistance behavior also has a creative aspect within religiously oriented "revitalization movements", which Wallace defined in 1956 as a "deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture" (1956: 65 [quoted in Clemmer 1972: 219]). Similarly, Bastide alluded to messianism as having first been considered by missionaries and colonial administrators as a pathological phenomenon, until research on this topic shifted to the examination of the point of view of the colonized population itself. It is only then that "messianism clearly appears as something essentially rational [...], reflects a reasoned judgment and interpretation [...] clearly understood by everyone, and in terms of which certain rules of action and behavior are formulated" (Bastide 1966: 469). Cultural assertion, as understood in the present study, allows adaptation to the changing environment brought in by economic development more than it stands for the preservation of the status quo. Thus, cultural assertion is an "active", "creative" and "essentially rational" process.

Whereas Wallace, Clemmer and Bastide discussed resistance behavior as it is expressed during some episode of prolonged contact between two different cultures, one being in the process of assimilating the other, Berthoud and Sabelli (1979) have proposed an extension of the concept to all social practices which do not conform to the utilitarian logic of capitalism: "various forms of mutual aid" for instance, should be studied as expressions of resistance to "the wage relationship typical of the industrialized world" (1979: 751-752). However, the argument presented in that paper suffers from the absence of historical perspective in dealing with resistance behavior, an approach that might document, for example, the persistence of mutual aid in one region as opposed to another where it disappeared. The present study owes more to Clemmer insofar as he provides a framework within which to analyze resistance in reference to specific ethnographic cases. Although this approach might not be as general as a theory might require, leading such authors as Berthoud and Sabelli to claim that "no theory of resistance exists" (1979: 751), the concept of cultural assertion can be a contribution to the development of such a theory. The concept is useful for interpreting a form of resistance to social change different from violence, escape or resignation.

Clemmer's framework consists of three separate components: fundamental beliefs, which he defines as "those convictions of what constitutes reality that are most important for self-identification of the particular group", ideology, and behavior, with a strong emphasis on ideology which "transforms fundamental beliefs from the passive, cognitive level to the active, behavioral level in particular situations" (1972: 222).

In contrast to Clemmer's perspective, the concept of cultural assertion includes an explicit recognition that "fundamental beliefs" change over time, precisely according to the nature of those "particular situations" where ideology transforms beliefs into behavior. Indeed, Clemmer's framework does not permit the identification of those fundamental beliefs that are more relevant than others in certain situations, and ultimately, it inhibits the comparison of resistance efforts on a cross-regional basis or over time. The definition proposed above for cultural assertion as a process of selection of practices and knowledge from the cultural heritage, is thus an attempt to introduce a historical perspective on resistance behavior by accounting for the changing content, over time, of "what constitutes reality" (in Clemmer's terms). This process of selection, as Behar wrote recently, is set in motion by "contemporaries [...] fully conscious of themselves as the makers of their own history" (1986 : 6,7).

Components of cultural identity that are part of the cultural assertion process in Bagnes valley have been documented in one way or another in the anthropological literature on the Alpine region as well as by earlier local authors (Courthion 1972 [1903]; Gabbud 1909 ; Suter 1944). As a matter of fact, the "data of record" for anthropology on the Alps have been overwhelmingly collected in the canton of Valais, even though pioneers in the field had worked in the French and Italian Alps (Burns 1961; Wolf 1962). The Valaisan material was helpful to the present study as a background against which local outcomes in Bagnes could be set in perspective, especially with regard to the effects of economic development elsewhere in Valais. Books published by Swiss and North-

American anthropologists include Berthoud (1967), Friedl (1974), Windish (1976), Wiegandt 1977, Muehlbauer (1979), Crettaz (1979), Netting (1981), Crettaz (1982) and Preiswerk (1983). Moreover, two books (Weinberg 1975; Sauvain 1980) and one dissertation (Minge-Kalman 1977a) are directly concerned with the valley of Bagnes.

The major exception to the geographic preference given to Valais by anthropologists studying the Alps is the monograph by Cole and Wolf on two communities of South Tyrol located next to each other (1974). This book was instrumental in the development of the concept of cultural assertion as a means of interpreting the reaction of the Bagnards to external pressures for change, insofar as Cole and Wolf spoke of "cultural elaboration" and "cultural defense" to describe the divergent ways the people of Tret and St. Felix have constructed their ethnic identity over time (1974 : 284). "Assertion" regroups "elaboration" and "defense" into a single process.

Whatever unanimity exists in the anthropological literature on the Alpine region centers on the description of the economic circumstances faced by the peasantry in the mountain environment. Before wage employment became dominant in communities like Bagnes, household prosperity depended on access to a multitude of meagre resources, which provided good living conditions for peasants when a successful combination of these resources could be managed within single households. The peasant economy was not fully based either on cultivation or on raising animals, but rather combined them, hence the terms "agro-pastoral"

(Friedl 1972: 145) and "mixed mountain subsistence agriculture" (Cole 1969: 189). The principal characteristic of the exploitation of mountain resources was that it was based upon an extreme fragmentation of land holdings within each household. In the Valaisan community of Kippel for instance, Friedl mentions that in 1939, the average holding was about nine acres (3.6 hectares) and it was divided into 50 parcels or more (1972: 148). (See also Berthoud 1967: 119-123; Netting 1981: 15-16; Sauvain 1980: 124). Such fragmentation provided a reduction of risk:

"For dependable subsistence, each household required land and buildings to serve each of the major agricultural purposes plus a share in the community forest and alp. It was also desirable that there be separate plots at varying altitudes. [...]. Such dispersion both limited the risk of bad years by utilizing different micro-climates and served to effectively schedule labor, especially the mowing of hay, which could begin at lower elevations and follow the ripening grass higher in successive stages. [...]. No one had all his land near the village or at the opposite extreme" (Netting 1972: 134-135).

The variety of resources available to a household is further documented by lexical categories in existence in Bagnes to describe different types of fields or meadows. Even orchards have different names, whether the area around the trees is used for pasture or cultivation. Each parcel of land thus has a name according to "fertility of soil, moisture retention, elevation, accessibility, gradient of slope, and orientation to sunlight" (Burns 1963: 137). Eleven different types of buildings also have distinctive names in Bagnes, whether they are located close or far from the family's house, or if they are designed to conserve dry goods or perishables, or when they are reserved for this or that animal. Social prestige was obtained in proportion to the ownership of some or all of those

properties making up a viable holding.

The notions that risks of poverty can be reduced or that prosperity can result from proper management and acquisition of property, are central to the current reaction of the Bagnards to the effect that more control should be exercised by the local population over the expansion of tourism. The loss of land to tourist infrastructure prevents a "return to the land" should the industry collapse. More to the point, since tourism is showing no signs of abating, the industry's craving for land is a threat to the local system of stratification insofar as "ownership of property [... as ...] the principal peasant status marker" (Netting 1981 : 172) is losing significance as wage employment and consumerism spread in the community.

Other consequences of tourism, and more generally of economic development, have been proposed in the anthropological literature on Valais. The availability of wage employment outside the commune of Vernamiège in Central Valais has meant that its population decreased steadily during the 20th century, with only older people maintaining a family farm (Berthoud 1967). Friedl mentioned that jobs in the manufacturing sector near Kippel resulted instead in the intensification of agricultural practices, with the emergence of the peasant-worker phenomenon characterized by an abandonment of subsistence or commercial agriculture in favor of farming aimed at procuring farm products for the household (Friedl 1974). In the commune of Vollèges, at the entrance of Bagnes valley, most male inhabitants of the village of Le Levron commute

daily to the Rhone plain to work; the family farm is maintained at the cost of increased labor by women (Minge-Kalman 1978b). For the Bagnard village of Bruson, Weinberg discussed the availability of wage employment in the tourist sector of the local economy as well as in the Rhone plain in terms of an "agricultural exodus", meaning a complete or partial abandonment of farming coupled with continued residence in the community (Weinberg 1975).

Therefore, the anthropological literature on Valais has paid attention to economic development only insofar as it transforms pre-existing practices in the communities. This approach was criticized by Berthoud (1982) for its neglect of the ability of people to react to, and shape these changes creatively. In offering a synthesis of his students' ethnographic observations in Bagnes, he thus interpreted the emergence of part-time agriculture as "a cultural resistance" to the State, to market integration, and to the process of urbanization which mass tourism has set in motion in Bagnes valley (1982: 231, 253). Berthoud is correct in pointing to the importance of studying people's reactions to economic development on their own terms, but the present study will show that what he calls "cultural resistance" misses all three targets he has identified. Peasants have a vested interest in State policies that favor agriculture; the family farm in Bagnes is obviously part of the market economy; and, the physical aspect of urbanization (more concrete) is perceived as less harmful to the community, than its concomitants, i.e., consumerism or new criteria for social stratification among the Bagnards. The concept of cultural assertion proposed in this study has a larger

implication: it expresses resistance by all Bagnards, peasants and non-peasants, to being deprived of the power to make decisions in their land of birth.

Berthoud's comments about the community studies done in Valais may not be warranted today, for tracing the books published about the canton in their chronological order indicates that the community study method -- which seeks to describe a place and its inhabitants (Cole 1977: 357-358) -- has been replaced by problem-oriented ethnographies addressing issues of general interest to anthropology and using comparative and historical methods. For instance, Preiswerk (1983) compared mourning rituals, especially the community meals served after a burial in Anniviers valley and in a similar setting in the canton of Vaud, before and after these rituals were abolished by law in both cantons during the first half of the 19th century (see also Berthoud 1977).

Netting's publications about Valais are the most illustrative of the trend toward problem-oriented approaches in Alpine research. Netting first carried out a community study which examined the relationships between the constraints of the mountain ecology and the adjustments made by a population so as to shape a relatively stable system of resources' exploitation (1972). In a later work, Netting moved to "the dynamics of demography" in that community, looking at household composition over time, inheritance practices and age at marriage, and showing how changing economic conditions are factors that influence the size and membership of households (1981). He linked his case with issues

being debated among historical demographers and social historians, and criticized those anthropologists he called "biological ecologists" who lose sight of the principal aim of anthropology -- to look at human behavior and culture. Crettaz (1982) makes an even more forceful statement in favor of looking at behavior and culture through history by publishing a detailed account of an informant's point of view of daily life in yet another village of Valais; his book can be seen as a contribution to the current revival of anthropology's attention to the study of oral tradition (Brown and Roberts, eds. 1980) and the use of narratives in writing history (Strathern 1979; Rosaldo 1980: 90). In a similar vein, Behar defined a new genre of enquiry, "historical anthropology" (1986: 6), which involves discussing with informants the contents of old family papers and village records with a view towards eliciting what characterizes both the present and the past of a community. These new concerns, historical demography and the "native" conception of history, illustrate the extent to which anthropologists now incorporate a historical approach into the analysis of processes of social change at the community level where "human beings [respond] to these processes through culturally informed action and action-involved cultural forms" (Wolf 1986: 328).

The present study is an attempt to make cultural connections more explicit in the historical process. It makes use of the view of culture proposed by Wolf:

"In the rough-and-tumble of social interaction, groups are known to exploit the ambiguities of inherited forms, to impart new evaluations or valences to them, to borrow forms more expressive of their interests, or to create wholly new forms to answer to changed circumstances. [...] 'A culture' is thus better seen as a series of proces-

ses that construct, reconstruct, and dismantle cultural materials, in response to identifiable determinants" (1982: 387).

It will first be shown that components of cultural identity can be defined through an analysis of significant facts of local history. Then, the social and economic changes brought in by tourism and the production of hydroelectricity in the community will be described; it will be seen that the circumstances in Bagnes have led to the toning down of internal conflicts in favor of a consensus shared by the local population on the need to have more control over economic development (Chapter I). The emergence of such a consensus is consistent with the distinctive features and functioning of the federal system in Switzerland. Chapter II will show to what extent the commune, as a political entity, and the people of Bagnes, as occupants of a territory, can exercise autonomy within this system to address issues posed by economic development. The ethnographic material on Bagnes throws light first on the constant relocation of farming operations caused by new economic activities; and second, on the fact that increased income associated with them, is perceived to have been obtained at the expense of a loss of control over land use in the community. This perception of the resident population, in turn, has led to resistance, involvement and cultural assertion.

Chapter III will set these issues in a historical perspective showing that the origins of tourism and the early development of the hydropower resources of Valais and Bagnes can be traced to outside influences and that little room has been left for local participation in decision making concerning these industries. Similarly, long-term State policies toward

agriculture since the middle of the 19th century have emphasized cantonal leadership at the expense of peasant initiatives.

A historical approach also provides evidence for the fact that tourism and agriculture could coexist in relative harmony in Bagnes, which was the case before the First World War (Chapter IV). This background is useful in showing the basis for the contemporary views of the local population on the expansion of tourism in the community, namely that the Bagnards have exercised control over tourism before and might do so today. This historical perspective suggests a deficiency in recent literature on tourism that studies relationships between "hosts and guests" (Smith ed. 1977) or adopts a "transactional view" in which the "leisure-service distinction" becomes a "universal in relations between tourists and hosts" (Nash 1981: 465, 467). Such approaches do not consider whether or not tourism is a new phenomenon in an area. For instance, relationships between tourists and residents can greatly deteriorate when four generations of "hosts" are gradually replaced on the "service" side of the equation by a free-floating labor force from Mediterranean countries, as is the case in most of Switzerland's resorts. Moreover, the transactional approach evades the important issue of sources of power and the origins of power differences in the relationship. In Bagnes, the history of tourism suggests that such power remained in the hands of the "hosts" in the 19th century, while tourism after the Second World War opened the possibility for the power of the "guests" to increase. Cultural assertion must be understood as part of the power of the "hosts" to influence outcomes.

The second major force for economic development in Bagnes was hydroelectricity production in the valley. Large-scale projects such as dams have not been studied by anthropologists in Valais, despite their importance there. However, there are descriptions of confrontations between developers and local populations, in other areas, as well as analyses of the benefits of these projects (Ackerman *et al.*, eds. 1973; Deudney 1981). These discussions have informed the view of the present study that the impact of hydroelectricity production depends upon the size and diversity of benefits that it brings to the community immediately concerned with these projects. It will be shown here that electricity production interacts very closely with the expansion of tourism (Chapter V) but curiously that the former is not perceived as being as damaging to the community as the latter. However, both contributed to the emergence of cultural assertion because they raise the same issue of Bagnard control over economic development. To address that issue, the present study will examine the following question: what are the political and economic bases of power acquired by the local population to maintain control over land use in their community? This approach will permit to focus on new land use patterns emerging with economic development in the Alpine region as well as to incorporate a historical view in looking at tourism and resistance behavior.

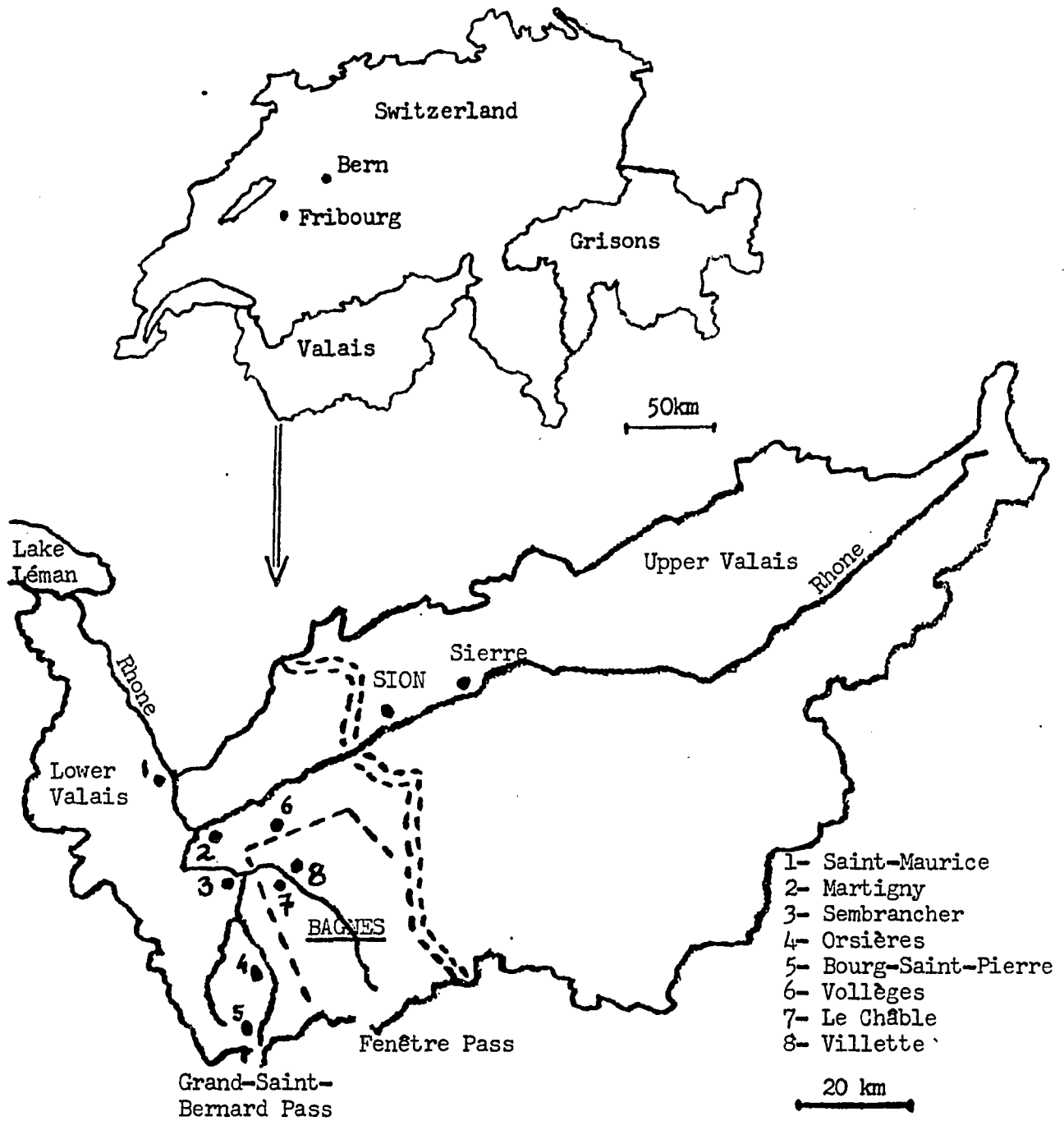
It will be shown in Chapter VI that the answer to the above question lies essentially in the extent to which all parties involved locally in the negotiation of territory have been able to mobilize support in their favor. In the process of appealing for support, the most successful

parties will be those who have been able to reinterpret the Bagnard cultural heritage in contemporary terms.

CHAPTER I

Introducing Bagnes

MAP 1
SWITZERLAND, VALAIS AND BAGNES VALLEY



1.1 Collective identity

The inhabitants of the Bagnes commune are known as Bagnards. Communes are the principal administrative bodies of the country. Citizens must be registered in one of these communes in order to exercise their political rights. The following chapter will explain this system. The largest direct tax payment a Swiss citizen makes is to the commune of residence. These taxes are used to defray the costs of public education which include the salaries of the teaching staff as well as the construction and maintenance of school buildings. The commune is also responsible for social assistance, churches, police services, public works and various farming subsidies. In other words, the commune is responsible for a wide range of expenditures which today, in other countries, are assumed by a higher level of government.

Switzerland is divided into more than 3,000 communes. While some of these are simply remote settlements of perhaps 30 people clustered on a bend in a mountain road, others comprise densely populated sections of cities where exact communal boundaries are not easily discernible. There are approximately fifteen villages and hamlets in Bagnes commune, the largest of which has a population of 400. Of all the communes in Switzerland, Bagnes has the distinction of covering the largest area. Extending over 282 km², it is a "small republic" boasted Courthion (1916: 142), drawing attention to the fact that through the years, Bagnes had managed to maintain its size despite inter-village rivalry. By contrast, the commune of Martigny was broken up into five autonomous parts in

the mid-19th century. Bagnes' villages and hamlets are scattered at altitudes ranging from 800 to 1,400 meters overlooking a 10 kilometer stretch of the Dranse River. The Dranse joins the Rhone above Lake Léman before the Rhone resumes its course to the Mediterranean.

The commune of Bagnes belongs to the canton of Valais, one of the 23 cantons making up Switzerland. (The characteristics of a canton are briefly described in the next section of this chapter). Valais, which is in the southwestern corner of Switzerland, is bordered by France to the west and Italy to the south; the Rhone River flows through the middle of the canton. The Bagnes valley runs on a southeast, northwest axis and at its southernmost point borders Italy. A second commune, Vollèges, is also located in the valley which, like Bagnes, consists of some ten settlements. (The village where Wanda Minge-Kalman worked at the end of the 1970s [1977b, 1978a, 1978b] is located in the commune of Vollèges.) Together these two communes have a population of about 6,000 permanent residents. Before tourism developed into the extremely prosperous industry it is today, the Bagnards' and the Vollégeards' principal occupations were agriculture and cattle raising.

This chapter will examine some of the elements in the history of the Bagnard people that contribute to an understanding of the attitudes they adopt today regarding economic development. These elements will constitute a useful background when the institutional structures of decision making in Switzerland are reviewed in chapter II, especially the commune-based institutions, and also in chapters V and VI when the

focus will be on what is called throughout this study, "the negotiation of territory". It is more appropriate to emphasize historical data rather than contemporary material in presenting the community because the specific components of Bagnard collective identity, which underlie their current reaction to economic development, are indeed rooted in history. In other words, the focus of this chapter is to document the particular ways in which the Bagnard people interpret their local history within the context of the process which is defined here as cultural assertion.

The history of the area will be first placed within the broader context of the formation of the Helvetic state. It will be shown briefly that the circumstances in which a nation was established in the heart of the Alps can explain the substantial local power wielded by the communes up to the present time in relation to that of the higher levels of government. This section will also summarize the major stages of Valais' political union with the Swiss Confederation. This will be followed by a section showing that protection of the commune's independence in decision making is long-established. It will not be surprising therefore, to find in subsequent chapters that this major component of collective identity determines to a large extent the nature of the popular reaction to economic development. In outlining the historical roots of this attitude, I will first show how the community achieved political autonomy with respect to the seigniorial powers from the 16th century on, then how economic independence was obtained from those who held the rights to the peasant families' agricultural production in the 17th and 18th centuries. Overall the reader will see that as the community gained more

self-reliance, isolation or retrenchment in economic matters and regional politics did not result. Rather, every peasant family, by various means, acquired the minimum amount of cash necessary to maintain its property and livestock. Describing these means, I will also document the importance of private property as the main differentiating factor in the social hierarchy of village families, this too being a major component of Bagnard collective identity.

A family's wealth, a key factor governing its social position in the community, was gauged until recently by the number of pieces of land it owned at various altitudes. Thus with more property, a family minimized the risks associated with a variable climate, allowing it to diversify its production and reducing its reliance on the market or on more affluent neighbors. Cultivating a vineyard, planting hemp or peas or having stands of trees are examples of crop diversification. This list could be lengthened according to the family's means and ingenuity.

Historically, the final step in consolidating property was by intensifying involvement in cattle raising, thus reducing the need to migrate to find money. Marketing animal products, meat or cheese, brought in the much needed money for commercial transactions. For this reason, cattle raising was seen through history as the way for a family to achieve economic independence from pressures that would threaten the integrity of its property. However, this does not explain the large investments made in cattle raising in the commune today since the profitability of such investments no longer convinces anyone -- not even the farmers

themselves who acknowledge the superior financial opportunities to be found in the local tourist industry. In some cases, investments in owning cattle may even threaten to break up a family's property. Chapter V will show to what extent cattle raising has changed from an occupation providing "economic independence" to one seen as a "preferred activity" -- the third main component of collective identity.

This chapter will conclude by considering briefly the impact of increased tourism and local production of hydroelectricity on the commune. This will show in which context the growth of wage employment and increased inequality in property keep the Bagnards together instead of fragmenting the community.

1.2 Switzerland and Valais

The power held by the communes today has its origins in the formation of the Helvetic nation. Switzerland emerged as a combination of territories progressively acquired from European monarchical or imperial powers through conquest, or when inhabitants succeeded in freeing themselves from the protection of a lord or bishop. David Lasserre, in writing about Switzerland, said that "the unique characteristic of its history is that of being the history of an oath" (1941: 9, my translation). This was not so much because the initial sworn alliance of three small republics in 1291 had been the origin of Switzerland but rather because each increase in territory had been debated around a new contract and had resulted in further oaths being sworn. Lasserre stated that as a result of the alliances concluded in the 15th century, one "canton" was obliged to rally the majority in times of civil war, another had to remain neutral and the other was left free to make its own decisions:

"Qu'on explique la chose par les fluctuations de l'opinion publique ou par les circonstances particulières où se trouvait chacun de ces alliés, cette diversité des obligations et des droits a été voulue par les Confédérés en même temps que leur unité" (Lasserre 1941: 15).

A canton may therefore be defined as a territorial entity represented by a group of public authorities, who at a certain time, succeeded in linking the political and military fortunes of its constituents with those of other members of the Confederation.

During such negotiations, the communes were party to these alliances as they were responsible for the first move towards achieving independence from the feudal lords. Present day communal land very often corresponds to the property held by those early lords and since the lands were not all freed simultaneously, the "Leagues" formed by the communes varied in size and population to those found in the "Countries" and "Towns" already consolidated within the Confederation¹. Hence the reason why some communes are larger than some cantons. That of Schaffhausen for instance is only slightly larger than the commune of Bagnes, while Geneva and Zug, along with three of the six half cantons of the country, are indeed smaller than Bagnes.

Not all the territories enjoyed equal status in the Confederation as there existed certain situations of overlapping agreements. For example, the military protection offered by France to some regions in exchange for the exclusive services of their mercenaries, could invalidate agreements already signed between other members of the Confederation. The old Switzerland was thus made up not only of cantons which were separate and autonomous but also of various territories which had allied status; still others were protectorates or even held subject status and within this latter category could be the subjects of one of several cantons. Steinberg reflects on the modern day outcome of such a legacy of history:

"The complex overlapping of political authority, the jagged nonsense of frontiers and boundaries, the bits and pieces

¹ During the first centuries of its existence, the Confederation was known in Europe as the "League of Upper Germany" similar to the Hanseatic League and the league formed by the group of Lombardy towns (Lasserre 1941: 43, 9).

of territory lying about the map, resemble a jigsaw puzzle constructed by a whimsical providence"(Steinberg 1976: 6).

The commune of Bagnes belonged to the canton of Valais, a territory having allied status with all Confederate members until 1815, at which time it formally became a full member of the Confederation. The first alliance between Valais and the Swiss dates back to 1403. For three centuries preceding this date, the peasants of Upper-Valais, the inhabitants of the area at the source of the Rhone, had progressively gained their freedom from the sovereign rule of the bishop of Sion and had regrouped themselves into seven "dizains". A dizain was an association of communes headed by a military leader who was periodically appointed at a general meeting attended by representatives from each commune. The inhabitants of the seven Valaisan dizains shared a common language, German and a common occupation, farming.

The dizains were bordering upon the three founding cantons of Switzerland accessible by the Furka pass route. The fact they all spoke the same language strengthened their ties. In 1403, the two groups signed an "entente de combourgeoisie", guaranteeing freedom of movement between their respective territories, specifically to procure salt, an essential staple in cattle raising countries. (The document is reproduced in Lasserre 1941: 54-55.) This agreement was renewed in 1416 and 1417 at a time when the dizains were engaged in fierce struggles with both the family of the new bishop of Sion and with Savoy. The new bishop was reluctant to honor his predecessor's commitment to the Confederates while Savoy had succeeded in forming alliances with the towns of Bern

and Fribourg. The count of Savoy controlled the Grand-Saint-Bernard route, located in the valley immediately adjacent to Bagnes and wished to extend his jurisdiction to cover Upper-Valais and the Simplon route. The alliance that existed between the dizains and the founding cantons allowed the dizains to make it known indirectly, through the latter, that they were opposed to Bern and Fribourg. In times of peace, the alliance also guaranteed peasant control of the Furka route and was instrumental in maintaining the balance of power between the "countries" and the "towns" in the Confederation.

Another pact was signed in 1529, this time with all the Catholic cantons. It was aimed at checking the spread of Protestantism in the Alps. In the meantime, a separate alliance made with Bern in 1475 had enabled the Valaisans to subjugate the entire Savoyard population living on the Rhone plain and in the lateral valleys, including the Grand-Saint-Bernard route. The language of this region was French. Bagnes was among the territories conquered. Their status was that of subject regions under the authority of the seven dizains of Upper-Valais and the bishop of Sion. They maintained this status until 1798 when the whole canton was annexed to France. Valais had been denied full status as a Confederate member until then because of the alliance of the dizains with Bern, already showing itself to be a very powerful canton within the Confederation. Upper and Lower-Valais remained Catholic and while the difference of status between the two parts of the canton completely disappeared in 1815 when Valais joined the Confederation, their linguistic differences remained; two thirds of Valais' population is French speaking and one third is German speaking, or to use a Swiss term, alemanic.

1.3 The community of Bagnes

One of the major components of local collective identity, the defense of the community's autonomy against its neighbors' claims or the demands of other powers, may be traced back to the 14th century, the period when the communities of Lower-Valais began to obtain certain advantages from their lords. Bagnes was then ruled by the Count of Savoy through the intermediary of the Abbey of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune. In fact, all of Bagnes valley (see map no. 1) had belonged to the latter since 1150 as settlement for a loan the former had incurred. Before this date, the count had exercised his power through a representative, known as a vidomne, who lived in Le Châble, a village in the central part of the valley. Today, Le Châble is the administrative center of Bagnes commune.

Material written about a vidomne who worked in the neighboring commune of Orsières (Dubuis 1980: 394) indicates that a vidomne's duties were essentially economic. The count's income depended on the peasants' volume of work. They sold firewood and received a salary for operating the mills and ovens from which the count could charge user fees. The vidomne collected payment in kind for these dues. It is very likely that he was also responsible for marketing agricultural production. His salary was claimed in the form of taxes and fines collected in the months of May and October when he assumed the role of lord². The commoner who

² There were further taxes and fines paid by peasants during the other ten months as well, such as a tax on transfers of property (see p. 32) or fines for harvesting a crop on Sunday. However, for the period before 1500, more information on these topics cannot be provided here because no complete survey of the characteristics of the feudal regime in Valais could be located.

acted as vidomne was entitled to have the title of noble conferred on him at the end of his administrative career in return for services rendered to the lord (Gay 1903: 44). Ennoblement carried with it rights to land which explains why there were noble families living in Bagnes alongside the Saint-Maurice priests, for example, the de Monthéolo family in the village of Villette and the de la Tour family in Montagnier (Bérard 1963: 37; Courthion 1906: 88.) This type of administration seems also to have been favored by the abbots of Saint-Maurice since several families which were originally from Martigny, Sierre and Saint-Maurice were still collecting feudal rents in Bagnes in 1799, the year when the community made its final repurchase of these rights (Communal archives of Bagnes: P. 622 -- hereafter abbreviated as C.A.B.).

The deed transferring Bagnes valley to the Abbey in 1150 (reproduced in Courthion 1906: 74-75) stipulated that the abbots could only draw profit from their property two months each year, one in the spring and one in the fall, as was the case for a vidomne. The deed also stated that the Count retained the right to mobilize troops at any time³. Neither the count or the Abbey had the right to demand special payments from the population without mutual agreement and such funds were to be shared equally. This last item suggests that both parties feared that the Bagnards might rise in revolt if forced to pay unwarranted amounts of money.

³ This seems to be the only labor service required from the peasants. Very likely the vidomne or any vassal of the count were not able to order peasants to perform labor services on the count's property or in maintaining major roads without payments in kind or in cash being made to the workers involved.

It was also the Count of Savoy who granted the first "franchise" to the peasants in this region. Thus in exchange for swearing allegiance periodically to the count, the peasants obtained the right to the communal use of such land that had not been granted in fief to the count's vassals. It was in this way that one of the oldest franchises recorded in Valais was granted to Sembrancher, a community located at the entrance of the Bagnes valley. Not only was common use authorized (in all probability only confirming an established fact⁴), but this commune was given the additional rights to hold fairs and markets at its convenience, to open a roadside inn and to hold the monopoly on the transportation of goods across its territory (Pellouchoud 1968: 32, 35). The first franchise dates back to 1239; supplementary franchises were granted in 1322, 1380 and 1466 (Blondel 1961: 269).

At least in the case of Sembrancher, those franchises clearly demonstrate that the Savoy counts favored an alliance with the peasants rather than with their vassals like the vidomnes and their successors. Among their duties, vassals owed military service to the counts. However, during the 12th and 13th centuries, the allegiance of the peasant collectivities, which provided the ultimate sources of revenue, was seen as

⁴ Marc Bloch notes that it is difficult to prove this, as documents prior to the 13th century make no mention of the term "community": "most communities had not been recognized officially even though they had been in existence for a long time: they were actual associations well before they acquired legal status" (1952: 172). The closest reference to communities found in the earliest documents is to "the neighbors". It must be stressed, as does Bloch, that the most useful and recent documents come from seigniorial days. The fact that they make no mention as to what preceded the seignior is perhaps due less to genuine lack of information than to the personal interests of those concerned.

far more important, since the feudal ties over the years had weakened and consequently the services of the vassals could not be guaranteed in the event of any widespread military venture. Marc Bloch, in his studies on feudalism, noted that at the end of the 13th century, the vassals' practice of swearing multiple allegiances led one German baron to boast that he served 20 different lords (Bloch 1961: 212). These pledges had thus become meaningless; swearing allegiance no longer signified specific rights nor specific duties; the fiefs granted by the lords ended up being sold and the oath of homage attached to them became, to use Bloch's expression, an object of trade. Bloch added:

"To put it more precisely, the lord first of all had the fief restored to him; then, if he so desired, he reinvested the new tenant with it, after having received his homage. In almost every case, it goes without saying, a preliminary agreement allowed the seller or donor to defer the surrender of the property until he had obtained the lord's approval of his successor. [...] he crucial change occurred when the lord lost, first in the eyes of feudal society, then in those of the law, the right to refuse the new investiture" (Bloch 1961: 209).

According to Bloch (1961: 208-212), the relationship between lord and vassal was deteriorating in the same way all across western Europe during the 12th and 13th centuries.

This situation has relevance to this study for two reasons. First, as we have seen, the communities obtained franchises from lords more powerful than the local vassals who held the immediate rights to the peasants' agricultural production. To a lord, such as the Count of Savoy, granting franchises to the communes was a more durable arrangement, given that collectivities and not individuals were involved. Collective

interests replaced individual interests even to the point where the vassals were left on their own to deal with the peasants. Secondly, the commercialization of the fiefs meant that the wealthiest of the communities were able to buy them progressively, thus expanding their collective domain at the expense of the feudal domain. This is exactly what took place in Bagnes until the last of the feudal rents were repurchased in 1799.

Let us briefly review the stages involved in these two processes of collective liberation from feudal rule. The Count of Savoy granted the first franchise to Bagnes in 1328. It contained conditions regarding the transportation of goods to Aosta, then a large town in Savoy (now Italian), via the Fenêtre pass in Bagnes territory. Before that, if they hoped to sell outside their territory, Bagnard peasants had to carry their goods to Sembrancher, a village on the Grand-Saint-Bernard road to Aosta, (*Société savoisienne d'histoire et d'archéologie* 1860: 225-228). This franchise guaranteed Savoy that certain strategic routes over the Alps would be maintained. The Count now had an alternative, the route through Bagnes, in the event the Saint-Bernard route was closed by an avalanche or occupied by enemy forces. While there is no specific reference to any sort of association maintaining this route or defending the Bagnards' right of access to external markets, documents found in the commune's archives indicate that, at least in January 1475, just before the region fell under the rule of the seven dizains from Valais, the community did have its own appointed representatives. The document in question is the oath of allegiance the "syndics of the community of Bagnes" swore to the abbot of Saint-Maurice (*C.A.B.*: Pg. 62).

The reference to these syndics proves that between 1328 and 1475 a group of inhabitants did join together to form an assembly, which would later be known as the "bourgeoisie", a subject covered in the following chapter. At this point, the focus will be on identifying the delegates and describing their duties. The communal archives posterior to 1475 indicate there were four syndics and that they were elected for a one-year term by members of the community. Their job was to administer the collective property, the exploitation of the forests being the first resource to produce any revenue. The main expenditures were the syndics' travelling expenses which were most often incurred when new franchises were obtained or when old ones were defended ⁵. During the regime of the seven dizains, Bagnards took advantage of the animosity that existed between the abbot of Saint-Maurice and the bishop of Sion to accumulate more franchises and to reduce the powers of the abbot, as will be seen shortly.

Together with the syndics, the following officials helped with administration: the châtelain, his lieutenant, the capitaine of the militia, the curial and the sauthier. The châtelain, a man from Upper-Valais, represented the seven dizains. His appointment had to be formally approved by the abbot of Saint-Maurice. His judicial duties were similar to those of the Savoyard vidomne. The châtelain's lieutenant was a local

⁵ There were risks attached to being a member of the syndicature since profits belonged to the community while the deficits were the responsibility of the four syndics. The first financial records are dated 1633; the number of items in this document lead one to believe that the earlier accounts must have been lost. The 1633 accounts are filed under number P. 253 in the communal archives of Bagnes.

man chosen by the abbot of Saint-Maurice from a list of three names suggested by the Bagnards. His principal duty was to assist the châtelain by having the sauthier impose fines in connection with seigniorial rights or the syndics' decrees. The curial, a notary by profession, was responsible for conveying the official orders of the authorities to the people. He also acted as the clerk of the court in internal disputes argued before the châtelain's lieutenant or the bishop. The capitaine of the militia was chosen by the seven dizains from a list of names provided by the communities within the district of Entremont, that is, the Savoyard region made up of Bagnes and the communes located along the Grand-Saint-Bernard road between Sembrancher and Bourg-Saint-Pierre. The militia's responsibility was to guard the region's mountain passes. Lastly, the sauthier served as assistant to the lieutenant, the curial and the capitaine. His job was similar to that of a bailiff today: in addition, however, he had to render certain services to the parish priest.

Each role was thus clearly defined, and strictly speaking, there was no hierarchy among these positions, except in the case of the sauthier. While it is certain these five people were first and foremost representatives of seigniorial powers and higher authorities, according to the communal archives, all of them except the châtelain, were natives of Bagnes. Moreover, holding these positions was not incompatible with serving as a syndic. Since it was not uncommon for these positions to overlap in those days, a situation that existed until the end of the 18th century, performing the dual functions of community representative and seigniorial officer did not appear unusual to either the authorities or the

peasants. The essential prerequisite for being a seigniorial officer was the ability to read and write; specialized service not political allegiance was expected by each "client"⁶. These officials had only the right to question rulings before they were handed down to the people; in other words, they had the right to establish, by means of an existing document, that a certain order contradicted the spirit or the letter of the franchise agreements in effect at that time. The task of procuring the first franchises thus remained in the hands of the syndics, while the responsibility of the officials was to have them ratified when disagreements arose.

Material found in the archives suggests that under the rule of the seven dizains, Savoyard policy was maintained in seeking the allegiance and support of peasant collectivities, even in the subject region of Lower-Valais. This policy was to prevent peasants from fleeing their villages, thus freeing themselves of their obligations to pay tithes and taxes. The transportation of goods and the maintenance of trans-alpine routes were also too important to sacrifice a whole population to the interests of vassals like the abbot of Saint-Maurice, who were not inclined to support the new leaders of the country. As we have seen, the dizains had already negotiated with the emancipated peasants of the Confederation and did not hesitate to give some powers to their own peasants, especially when alliances with the Confederates had to be

⁶ This is why most lieutenants, curials and capitaines were notaries by profession. It has been shown elsewhere that the professional uniformity among the representatives acting in the peasants' interests, had long term consequences on the social stratification in the commune (Raynauld 1977).

respected by providing the manpower to clear the roads of snow and dig ditches, two jobs clearly associated with the inclement nature of a mountain climate.

It was above all during the 16th century that Bagnes benefited most from this policy. The archival records shown that starting in 1481, a notary was paid by "the councillors and officers of Bagnes" to keep a copy of "the legal document setting forth the franchises and liberties of the men of Bagnes valley" which had been granted by the abbot of Saint-Maurice. It was his responsibility to have this document ratified by the chapter of the abbey, that is the assembly of all the priests of the monastery (C.A.B.: P. 15). Other franchises were granted in 1497 by the bishop and by the Diet, the assembly of the representatives of the seven eastern dizains (C.A.B.: P. 18). In 1523, the Saint-Maurice franchises were ratified and in 1529 the franchises given by the Valaisans received confirmation (C.A.B.: P. 49 and P. 87). 1529 was also the year the syndics obtained from the Diet the abolition of the rights of échutes and lods which belonged to the Saint-Maurice abbey (C.A.B.: Pg. 102); both were a sort of sales tax levied by the lords on each property transaction in lands or buildings⁷. Then in 1535, the syndics procured the annulment of the right of mainmorte which Saint-Maurice enjoyed (C.A.B.: Pg. 106); a person subject to mainmorte could only marry a spouse with the same status and upon their death, their complete estate was turned over to the

⁷ As noted above (p. 29), it was also in 1529 that the dizains negotiated a new pact with the Confederates. Although no firm proof exists, it is possible that all the inhabitants of Lower-Valais simultaneously benefited from that time on from the loosening of these particular constraints of feudalism on the transmission of their property.

lord. Two documents attest moreover that a serious disagreement arose between the abbot and the Bagnes prosecutors in 1542 over "the written and the unwritten uses enjoyed by the community at the time Mathieu Schiner was bishop" which was the beginning of the century. The matter was heard before the bishop in power at that time and the Diet. It seems to have been resolved by yet another ratification of the Bagnes franchises (C.A.B.: Pg. 110 and P. 89).

Handing over judicial powers to the local officials, besides having the franchises sanctioned, also affirmed Bagnes' political autonomy. This was another consequence of the conflicts that existed between the priests of Saint-Maurice and the authorities in Sion.

Immediately after power was transferred from Savoy to the dizains between the years 1477 and 1480, the Pope had to threaten the bishop of Sion with excommunication if he did not respect the abbot's acquired rights to his seigniorial lands of Lower-Valais (Courthion 1906: 76). In 1501, a treaty was drawn up between the Diet and the abbey defining each one's jurisdiction; in particular, it provided that the bishop would hear without appeal all disputes between the abbot and the representatives of his seignories, while local problems would come under the law of the abbot in Saint-Maurice itself (*Ibid.*: 77).

In 1566, Bagnards were granted the right to have non-monetary cases (those involving less than 10 florins, a very small amount) heard in Bagnes regardless of the parties involved (C.A.B.: P. 144). In 1609 the

abbot lost more of his jurisdiction over Bagnes when the bishop decreed that no resident of the valley could be summoned before the lower courts except before the châtelain's lieutenant (C.A.B.: P. 230). It can be seen therefore, that in the space of one century, the community greatly benefited from the decentralization of the judicial system. The gain of small concessions here and there also benefited the community. In 1571, for example, the Bagnes syndics obtained permission to hold in Sembrancher their annual swearing ceremony of allegiance to the abbot; the representatives of Bagnes had impressed upon the Diet the high cost of having the abbot stay in Bagnes on these occasions (C.A.B.: Pg. 135). Even now, 400 years later, the reader can imagine how irritated the Saint-Maurice abbot must have been when he heard for the first time of this decision made in Sion.

The purchase of the fiefs from the lords was the second stage in Bagnes' development as a relatively autonomous community. Except for some incidental financial considerations, the franchises granted Bagnes in the 16th century were essentially political in nature, as they changed the power relationships with Saint-Maurice in favor of the community. By contrast, the purchase of the fiefs during the 17th and 18th centuries was in the nature of commercial transactions since the process implied that the fiefs were for sale and that buyers existed.

It was typical of those purchases that the syndics were among the buyers and a good number of local notaries or their descendants among the vendors. It was not so much the lands that were sought by the

community but rather the right to collect the feudal rents on these lands. The community would thus become the tax collector. The most important feudal rent at that time was the tithe; it is described in a 1657 document as "the eleventh sheaf, without fraud or deception" (C.A.B.: P. 274). Yearly accounts produced by the syndics indicate that crops obtained from the Bagnards in this manner were sold, either when the tithe was payable (with the owner of the field immediately paying in cash the equivalent of the eleventh sheaf), or after "the recovery of the community's grains" (C.A.B.: P. 1064/2, 1709: 17, my translation), when a few local retail merchants then sold these crops (C.A.B.: P. 1064/3, 1710). The accounts also show that it was common practice to sell grain on credit at a rate of 5, occasionally 6 per cent. This system of accumulating cash from each purchase explains why these transactions continued in succession for about 150 years, each one adding to the "purchasing power" of the community. 53 transactions were recorded between 1659 and 1793.

The fact that local notaries were among the sellers suggests that the lords and vassals, who previously held the rights to collect the tithe, had encountered problems collecting it. As a result the fiefs had not been first put up for sale in the 17th century. This is not the place to launch into a complicated discussion seeking to determine the precise date on which the fiefs became objects of trade as Bloch described them (see p. 27), or to specify the time when the final crisis of feudalism occurred in this region. However it is fair to assume that the lords did not find Valais a lucrative area. Therefore they put their rights as tithe collec-

tors, perhaps as well as their land, up for sale quite early.

The main problem faced by the lords was the actual collection of the money and produce owed by the rent-paying peasants. A lord incurred considerable expense accomplishing this task. Not only did he have to pay an exacteur or collateur of tithes to go into the fields and pick up the eleventh sheaf of rye, barley, peas, beans and hemp, as it is described in almost all the deeds, but he also had to prepare the documents establishing that a certain family cultivating a certain plot of land owed a certain amount of rye as opposed to, for instance, barley. The very size and complexity of these record books (a dozen of them have been preserved) indicate that compiling them was a costly proposition for the lords. In 1510, one notary was able to get 400 florins from the châtelain of Bagnes and Vollèges for one of those books (C.A.B.: Pg. 90). This is a large sum of money considering that in 1494, the cost of constructing the bell tower and the main body of Bagnes' church was 1,000 florins for three years of work (Gard 1982: 23). It is unquestionably when lords could not pay such fees that local notaries were paid in kind and acquired their first tithes' collection rights.

The territory subject to the tithe included all the community's arable land. However, for reasons which are not explained in the document reproduced in the following table, the size of each dixmerie (literally "the place where the tithe is collected") was not uniform. This size was measured at the time by a unit called a quinte, which corresponded to the number of collection districts within a given territory.

The second column of Table 1 shows the average total production available to the tithe collector after the harvest; here, the unit of measure is a quartanne, a unit equal to the average yield of a 380m² field. The third column was not included in the original source but it indicates which lands were more productive since it is a calculation of the average yield of a quinte in each dixmerie. The last column gives the number of quintes on which the syndics held rights of tithe collection as representatives of the community in 1799, which is the date of the final purchase by the syndics of Bagnes of all remaining titles of collection.

TABLE I
THE "DIXMERIES" IN BAGNES IN 1799

Name	Size (in quintes)	Production (in quartannes)	Average yield of a quinte (in quartannes)	Number of quintes held by the community
Adroit	36	569,4	15,8	28,75
Allions (de Montagnier)	7	105	15	4,16
Jonchivres	4	60	15	0,33
Sarreyer	6	156	26	0,5
Lourtier (or tithe of Villeneuve)	8,66	156	18	1,33
Champsec	4	80	20	-
Revers ("fief de Lostan")	24	266,6	11,1	19,55
Versegères	1	11	11	1
TOTAL	90,66	1404	n.a.	55,62

Source: Communal archives of Bagnes, P. 622, 1799.

This table shows in two different ways how the syndics managed to buy the tithes at the least possible cost to the community. First, by looking at the fourth column and the two largest districts of collection, Adroit and Revers, it can be seen that by 1799, the communal representatives had acquired more than three quarters of the collection rights. The

syndics, capitalizing on the fact that in both districts the collection rights had been divided up among several owners, were able to purchase these rights at a better price. Adroit is a good example of how this happened: between the years 1660 and 1780, according to the dates of the deeds of sale for the rights in this territory, the syndics signed 30 agreements with as many owners for only 23 of the 29 quintes existing in the "dixmerie" in 1799; there are no records for the remaining six. In some cases, owners only had a sixth or possibly a third of a quinte for sale ("two thirds of one half a quinte"⁸) and so on. The largest transaction involved two quintes which had not been split up.

It was costly to exercise one's rights to these fragmented titles especially if the owner did not reside in the commune and if no one had supervised the spring planting of crops. Among the vendors were noble families from Monthey, Saint-Maurice, Sion, Sierre and Leuk. In 1799, the commune of Savièse near Sion, was still exercising its rights to the tithe in Bagnes by sending its unpopular officials to the commune to carry out collection. However, several descendants of Bagnes' notaries living in Sembrancher and Martigny relinquished on their own, their claims to the tithe.

The second point illustrated by this table is that the rights that came up for sale were the least profitable. Looking at column three, one can see that the syndics bought the entire quinte of Versegères, while

⁸ This expression is taken verbatim from the deeds. This fragmentation of the rights is due to the inheritance system, something which will be examined later on.

the yield in this district is the lowest. At the other extreme, only 8% of Sarreyer's production was bought by the syndics in a district where the yield was the highest. The small but profitable district of Champsec was still in private hands in 1799. In Lourtier, the third most productive area, the syndics were only able to buy 15% of the rights. Allions and Jonchivres were equally productive but the former was a larger and more fragmented district than the latter and the syndics bought 59% of the rights in Allions but only 8% in Jonchires. As we have seen however, by centralizing their share of the crops, the syndics unlike a private owner, were able to minimize the cost of fragmentation, or to give "value added", to use a modern term, to the products obtained as tithe payment to the benefit of the community.

By 1799, according to the total number of transactions recorded, the community had purchased 61% of the area in Bagnes (measured in quintes) on which tithes could be collected. This process of purchasing the rights to peasant production previously held by private owners had the effect of greatly increasing the economic and administrative powers of the syndics during the 17th and 18th centuries.

In addition to the four syndics appointed annually, reference to seven councillors started to appear routinely in the 17th century on the community's official documents. While it is not useful, given the focus of this chapter, to prove that certain families were represented more frequently than others in the communal administration, it should be recognized that the people had the means to ensure that local power was

not concentrated in the hands of a few during long periods of time. In order to prevent this situation, the syndics never served two consecutive mandates and the seven councilors always came from different villages every year. Therefore a decentralized administrative representation existed, thus acknowledging the extent to which the population of Bagnes was scattered throughout the various villages that make up the community. The following table shows this breakdown :

TABLE 2
POPULATION AND BUILDINGS IN THE VILLAGES OF BAGNES
IN 1798

Name	Number		
	Dwellings	Other buildings	Population
<u>Left bank</u>			
Chable	62	76	304
Prareyer Lyappey Versegeres Es-Places	) 60	) 89	) 338
Champ-Sec Lurtier	) 103	) 179	222 319
Bruson Sapey	) 54	) 65	305 18
<u>Right bank</u>			
Villeta	35	71	260
Cotter Fontanelle Medière	) 66	) 160	180 87 124
Verbier	53	106	263
Sarreyer Montagnes	) 76	) 125	269 142
	—	—	—
	509	871	2,831

Notes:

- the spelling of village names is that of the original document.
- the distinction between the right and the left bank in order to locate the villages in relation to the Dranse did not appear in the original.

SOURCE: Meyer (1908: 14-15)

In order to place these figures in perspective, another census, taken four years later in 1802, shows that Bagnes' population was 3,201 and that the commune was the most populated in Valais. By comparison, there were only 2,247 inhabitants registered in Sion, the capital of the canton. The commune of Martigny, located on the Rhone plain, and before it was subdivided into five communes, only had a population of 2,409. In 1802, all the the 170 communes in Valais had a population of slightly more than 60,000 (Annuaire 1974: 45-59). It was in the order of things therefore, that Bagnes with such a sizeable population would establish an administrative structure that would respond to, and respect the interests of all the villages, so as to prevent any thoughts of secession, especially since in 1802 most communes had a population of only 200 to 400, while, as Table 2 shows, most villages in Bagnes had about that many inhabitants.

The fact that Bagnes had achieved this administrative unity gave a demographic strength to the commune which was certainly instrumental in the process of purchasing tithes. More inhabitants meant the community's financial base increased because the syndics made the purchased titles pay for themselves by selling the crops. A sizeable local market already existed for this produce due to the large population and the absence of communal borders between the villages. In this way they built up their cash base to finance their new purchases. The very fact that the community was able to make these investments is evidence in itself that there was a substantial amount of money in circulation in the commune between 1650 and 1800. Yet most of the money the syndics

paid out left the commune and never came back in. Without going into the minute details of the sums of money paid to non resident owners, it can obviously be assumed that each "exported" florin had first entered the commune and for that reason, certain structures must have existed so that one such florin could have been earned outside the commune before ending up in the communal coffers. It can also be assumed that during the same time as the purchases were being carried out, the agro-pastoral subsistence economy turned into a market economy. Moreover, as this happened, private property gradually became a basic element determining a family's position in the social hierarchy in exactly the same way it did in the prevailing capitalist society.

This new type of economy was based primarily on the sale by Bagnards of cheese and live animals and secondly, on dried beef, butter, hides and pelts. Cheese was still a prime item of export at the beginning of the 20th century as this excerpt from Courthion's book written between 1895 and 1903 indicates:

"Le fromage gras est scrupuleusement vendu; il faut qu'un accident ait brisé une pièce en morceaux informes pour que ces éleveurs de bétail se résignent, la mort dans l'âme, à en goûter une fois dans la vie" (Courthion 1972: 99).

Bagnes' principal market was the Aosta valley region, the second largest center in Savoy in the 18th century after Turin (Janin 1976: 130-139).

In commercial matters, the first half of the 18th century in Bagnes was dominated by the legal proceedings instituted by the syndics against the residents of neighboring communes, located along the Grand-Saint-

Bernard route that linked Aosta and Lake Léman. Action was taken against these communes because they had managed to obtain confirmations of franchises forcing the Bagnards to sell their products to them alone before the Bagnards had the right to sell them elsewhere. The merchant-peasants of Bagnes however, wanted to sell their cheese and animals in the Aosta valley in accordance with the rights granted them in the franchise of 1328 (see p. 34). They preferred to use the route through the Fenêtre pass, located at the far end of Bagnes valley, rather than the Grand-Saint-Bernard route as it was lined with toll houses and swarming with carters who held a monopoly on the transportation of any produce over their territory. (These monopolies were explicit in the franchises granted the communes of Sembrancher and Bourg Saint Pierre, hence the severe conflict with Bagnes.) The archival material on this problem (C.A.B.: P. 467/1 to P. 467/24, 1486-1739) is as lively as it is voluminous, and these inter-communal struggles are still very much remembered in the oral tradition of Bagnes. The Fenêtre pass has symbolic importance today undoubtedly reflecting the economic importance it had in the past. However, the fact that the Fenêtre pass was not recognized as an official route makes it difficult to provide any conclusive information about the volume of trade that existed between the Bagnards and the inhabitants of the Aosta valley. It can only be assumed that trading must have been quite brisk and profitable to Bagnes, considering how much money flowed in, enabling the syndics to buy the titles to tithes.

The peasants who established successful businesses selling meat and milk products wanted remuneration in cash so they could buy the salt

they needed for preserving next season's cheeses. Salt was also used in the preparation of dried beef and it was a vital part of a cow's diet. Not every family could afford to get into the cheese and meat business as salt, this essential staple, was an expensive item. There is an expression in the local patois still heard today when someone comments on the price of some food item: "as expensive as salt". In this short statement is summed up the long history of the problems procuring salt.

People retain memories of these hard times more readily because the very fact of becoming involved in the market economy meant a change in someone's social status. This change in status was not so much due to the prestige that accompanied a successful trade but to the cash it brought in, which the earners were quick to invest in the consolidation of their property thus placing themselves in position to oppose the egalitarian spirit associated with the partible inheritance system carefully applied in all Valais (Courthion 1972: 70-72 and 79).

In a subsistence economy where little cash entered a community, a family's social status in a village was determined by the number of members in the whole extended family. In a wealthy family, the consequence of partible inheritance was that all children would end up poorer than their parents. However, two or three nuclear families would emerge from a single estate and increase the size of the extended family. Valais' system of inheritance was thus preventing the perpetuation of the more obvious inequalities between rich and poor from generation to generation. Families of more modest means or severely deprived ones, in the absence

of cash, countered the eventual fragmentation of land by not carrying out the division. Courthion wrote that even in his day, in many valleys of the canton, including Bagnes, family meetings were held during which brothers decided among themselves which one of them would marry, often because one sister had already reduced the size of the estate by taking with her, on her marriage, her portion of the family property. Brothers formed alliances called frarêches; this term appears in notarial deeds still kept by some families (Private archives of Bagnes: Jean-Michel Besse papers, Villette, Pg 6/1 and 6/2, April 19, 1761). According to Courthion, "it is on this association that the ambitions and expectations of each brother were placed" (1972: 79, my translation).

The gradual entry of Bagnes into the prevailing market economy increased the likelihood of emerging inequalities between rich and poor because the system of inheritance could now be rendered inoperative at that level. As Courthion nicely put it: "Money, the ultimate sanction of all rights" (1971: 71) became the sine qua non condition for either achieving higher status in their villages for the rich or resisting dispossession of their lands for the poor. Such totally opposite interests to acquire ready money illustrate the extent to which inequalities gradually became more pronounced between 1650 and 1800.

For instance, well-off families, who had money, were able to offer financial compensation to a daughter who was getting married, in exchange for her share of the family estate (Private archives of Bagnes: Louis Maret papers Le Châble, Pg. 4, 21.12.1719; Pg. 7, 18.5.1733; Pg.

8/1, 29.1.1744). These three marriage contracts filed in the archives, indicate the amount of money each woman received (in each case, the husband already had his share of the family property). This money allowed the couple to purchase the basic quantity of salt needed to launch a potentially prosperous cheese trade. The brothers in these families would settle away from their parents' home, confident that they would be able to establish as viable a farming operation as their parents' since their part of the family estate had now increased, their sister having been compensated in money for her inheritance share. A profitable trading activity could eventually enable them to acquire more property.

On the other hand, poorer families who had no cheese to sell, also looked for ways to acquire money to repay small debts or in some cases to get out of debt, a situation which might have been due to the preceding generation's improvidence. A peasant therefore, might set up shop as a tanner or shoemaker in his village. His wife might card wool and weave cloth, or one of them might move down to the Rhone plain and take temporary work tying up the vines or harvesting the grapes on vineyards belonging to wealthy families from Sion. They sought payment in salt if it could not be in cash (C.A.B.: P.341, 1688). Young Bagnards often joined seasonal parties of farmworkers from the Aosta Valley who went to hackle the hemp growing on the huge Piedmontese and Milanese estates and returned home to Bagnes with spices and silks for resale (Janin 1976: 177). Finally, the syndics counted as much on the poor as on the rich to swell the commune's revenue; they, therefore sold lumber

to the rich and grain to the poor. (C.A.B.: P. 336, 1684; P. 364, 1693-1694; P. 1064/2, 1709 to P. 1064/80, 1798.)

These were, then, the most common ways money was raised in the community and this explains how the syndics could eventually buy the tithes. Either the more prosperous sold farm produce to markets outside Bagnes or the poorer segment of the population worked as skilled craftspeople in the village or found work outside Bagnes. Both groups shared a common goal; they needed money to buy land or protect private property from dispossession. A sizeable amount of property was needed in order to be able to leave some to each child and enough was needed to avoid seasonal work outside and to increase peasant involvement in cattle raising and selling the hides and meat. All this combined to establish the importance of cattle in the local economy quite early.

This section of the chapter has shown how the community gradually opened itself to the market economy prevailing outside Bagnes. At the same time, the community achieved relative political autonomy by obtaining franchises and the delegation of judicial powers and freed itself from outside economic control over two thirds of the peasant production. In addition, this section has outlined the history of how the communal representatives achieved more independence in decision making, how private property came to determine social status of families in the local social hierarchy, and finally, when and why cattle raising acquired a substantial economic importance. These three processes have a modern day relevance insofar as they are perceived as being essential components

of collective identity in the negotiation of territory between the farmers, tourist developers and hydropower producers. As users of the land, the tourist and hydroelectric industries slowly became part of Bagnes' economic structure during the 19th and 20th centuries. The circumstances in which they became a vital part of the local economy will be described in the last three chapters of this study. However, it is useful to indicate at this point the role that tourism and hydropower play in Bagnes at the present time, since the origins of cultural assertion, the subject of this study, are found in the problems these industries pose in Bagnes today.

1.4 Social and Economic Changes

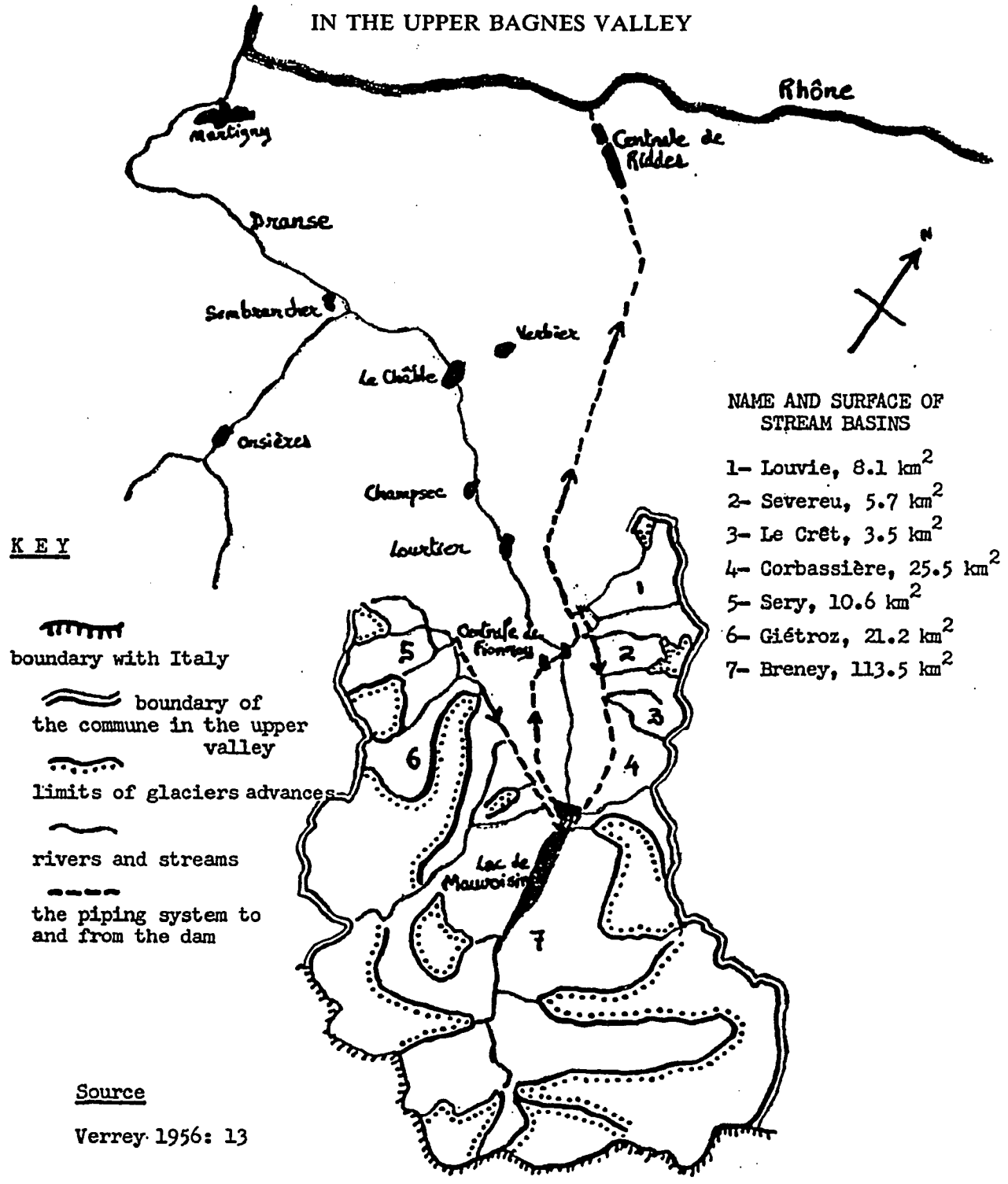
The tourist industry is the main source of income and wage employment in Bagnes at the present time. It also provides a wealth of financial benefits to the commune. Yet, the industry is a source of concern for much of the population. This concern is attributable to the amazing speed at which the resort of Verbier has grown. The best indicator of this growth is the number of nights spent by tourists in a given place: for example, two adults and two children renting a chalet for one month, account for 120 overnights. In 1938, 8,302 overnights were recorded in Verbier. This figure is based for the most part on guests registered at one hotel and on Valaisans from Martigny staying at some 30 chalets. By 1958, Verbier exceeded 65,000 overnights and by 1978, the resort's accommodation facilities had increased to such an extent that 865,000 overnights were recorded. By 1980, this figure had climbed again to over 912,000 (Dubois 1960: 85; Office régional du tourisme de Martigny 1981: 19).

In its early days, the resort benefited from local labor which had been trained in the 1920s at French seaside resorts. Bagnard capital also financed the construction of the first hotels. However, Verbier's real development took place in the 1960s as a result of the water royalties received by the commune from the promoters of a huge hydroelectric dam built at the far end of the valley. These royalties provided the commune with substantial investment capital. Between 1955 and 1976, the commune spent 47 million Swiss francs in such public works as an electricity

distribution system, drainage, roads and drinking water supplies in and out of the resort. Foreign and local private investments in tourism were ten times this amount in the same period (446 million [Sauvain 1980: 41]). Public and private projects created jobs for local workers while they also encouraged more tourism in the valley.

Similar amounts were spent on the construction of the Mauvoisin dam (520 million Swiss francs [Forces motrices de Mauvoisin SA 1972: 2]). It took 18 years, 1946 to 1964, to complete the project. A reservoir now floods the natural bed of the Dranse and adjacent pasture land for some 12 kilometers behind the dam situated at an altitude of 1,964 meters. Map no. 2 shows the extent of the network for collecting and channelling the water required to operate the two main power station owned by Forces motrices de Mauvoisin, one of which is located at Fionnay in Bagnes commune and the second in Riddes, on the Rhone plain. When these two plants opened in 1956, Mauvoisin had the capacity to generate 6% of all the electricity produced in Switzerland (Verrey 1956: 19). Forecasts made in 1979 indicated that by 1985, Mauvoisin would be the ninth largest arch dam in the world, with its height of 237 meters (Mermel 1979: 101). The facilities for collecting the water, illustrated below, channel into the dam nearly all the water that flows over an 188km² area of the commune's total area of 282km².

MAP 2
THE MAUVOISIN DAM AND PIPING SYSTEM
IN THE UPPER BAGNES VALLEY



NAME AND SURFACE OF
STREAM BASINS

- 1- Louvie, 8.1 km²
- 2- Severeu, 5.7 km²
- 3- Le Crêt, 3.5 km²
- 4- Corbassière, 25.5 km²
- 5- Sery, 10.6 km²
- 6- Giétroz, 21.2 km²
- 7- Breney, 113.5 km²

KEY

- boundary with Italy
- boundary of the commune in the upper valley
- limits of glaciers advances
- rivers and streams
- the piping system to and from the dam

Source

Verrey. 1956: 13

The sheer size of the facilities gives an indication of the huge royalties the company operating the Mauvoisin dam had to pay and thus, the financial resources the commune had available for investment in the tourist infrastructure. Those royalties are levied under Valaisan law in compensation for the use of the water needed to produce electricity. The energy produced, adjusted to the investment expenditures of the company, serve as the base for calculating the royalties. Lump sum payments are added as well as a pre-arranged amount of free electricity. Communes are allowed to collect these royalties since the adoption of the Law on water power concessions (Valais 1898); this law prescribes that streams, rivers and lakes whose beds lie on communal territory belong exclusively to that commune. Only the waters of the Rhone belong to the canton. Valais, along with Grisons, another power producing canton, are the only Swiss cantons where the public waterways are not all under cantonal jurisdiction (Oser 1927: 11; Guex 1971b: 77). Furthermore, every water concession contract must be brought before the residents of the commune concerned and must be approved by a secret vote⁹.

In October 1945, the men of Bagnes (at that time only men were entitled to vote) approved, by a vote of 749 to 79, the first water concession contract between the commune and the promoter of the Mauvoisin project, himself a Bagnard (Michaud 1982: 121). One of the provisions of this contract was that the commune would be paid a royalty

⁹ A number of countries, among them, Canada, China and Brazil could benefit by following the Swiss example so as to allow the local population itself to profit from the economic impacts of major resource development projects, including royalties.

of 4.5 million kw/h of free electricity per annum. This provision among others, is a reflection of the close link existing between hydropower production, communal investments and their spread effects on private investment and in turn, on the increase in tourism. Local consumption in fact, exceeded the royalty in 1958, that is, only two years after the Fionnay plant opened. In 1976, following the communal investments of the 47 millions francs mentioned earlier, free electricity accounted for only 17% of the total local consumption (Services industriels de Bagnes 1964).

The linkage between these major new uses for the territory also affected the agricultural sector of the economy. The diversion of mountain streams led to a restructured irrigation system and filling the reservoir caused grazing land to be lost. In the latter case, the cattle owners' associations affected were compensated for their losses so they could purchase land elsewhere. This incident provided the backdrop against which a fierce controversy arose over a communal bylaw in 1960 regarding the disposition of public property. (See chapter V.) According to a former communal councillor, elected during this period, the new irrigation system itself, was responsible for the consolidation of land holdings, the remaniement parcellaire (Michaud 1982: 122). Consolidation is a long and difficult reshaping of the surveyors plan which forces, within the framework of a general plan, all a farmer's properties to be regrouped in order to increase productivity. The entire valley was affected by the reorganization plan because Vollèges commune also lost its sources of irrigation water (Bérard 1963: 173-186). Following a vote

taken in Bagnes in 1963 and enforced since 1972, the consolidation of land holdings is closely linked to the hydroelectric industry and its installations, insofar as access to the irrigation system imposed its own restraints on the designers of this land reform.

In contrast, the main impact tourism had on farming was the spread of wage employment. For example, of the 1,648 employees registered in Bagnes in 1976, 458 worked in construction, 253 in business and banks and 399 in tourism (Sauvain 1980, 46). These figures do not take into account those working in Bagnes but not living there. Farming has suffered more from the conversion of its most productive land into residentially-zoned land, than by the loss of labor to these new economic activities. The relatively flat land, on the immediate outskirts of the village, now houses the local generation of children who no longer need to move to the Rhone plain or farther afield in search of work. The tourist industry has brought to a halt the rural exodus which since 1860, had been typical of the commune's demographic pattern, as it was in so many other Swiss mountain communes (Bernhard 1929). Between 1860 and 1941, Bagnes lost 726 inhabitants, the number of permanent residents dropping from 4,327 to 3,601. So many emigrated that the birth/death ratio was not sufficient to offset the number of departures. Between 1941 and 1950, the population increased by only 8. However by 1960, the population had increased by 628 and between 1960 and 1970 there was another jump with an additional 304 (Annuaire 1974: 46-47). Today the population stands at approximately 4,800.

Migration had been so much a part of the lives of the two preceding generations that parents today encourage their children to settle on the outskirts of the village. Residential areas grew so much more rapidly that the demand for land came from Bagnards in the 1970s, more so than from tourists. This is why residential zones outside the villages were included in the land consolidation plan even though the objectives of the land reform were "to protect, preserve and enlarge agricultural areas" (Valais 1961: 1). The land consolidation program has undoubtedly set aside a large part of the communal territory for farming and thus reduced the amount of land available for real estate speculation aimed at the tourist market. However, the consolidation plan also caused the prices of the residential zones to rise.

During the 1970s, also, the close knit relationship between hydroelectric royalties, communal investments and the growth of tourism began to disintegrate, as each year a decreasing amount of hydroelectric royalties, in proportion to other revenues, was paid into the communal coffers. Yet at the same time, an alliance of several segments of the local social classes emerged in Bagnes. It aimed at strengthening the political clout of the Communal Council in view of the growing importance of tourism in the local economy. Events described by Weinberg (1983) with regards to the introduction of new rules to elect councillors, in 1968 and 1972, can be reasonably linked with the emergence of this class alliance in the commune. The number of councillors was reduced from 15 to 11 and 25 committees were merged so that each councillor would have exclusive responsibility for a single dossier. In addition,

twelve electoral units which ensured each village's representation at the council in the past, became five electoral regions and village - based counting of ballots was replaced by a system centralized in Le Châble. Weinberg reads into these changes a bureaucratic tradition expanding at the detriment of village representation. However, this was accomplished without dramatic disruptions in communal politics, such as the replacement of the political personnel responsible for the reform. In fact, its main promoters are still in power after close to twenty years and all villages counted at least one representative during that period. This political apparatus enhanced what unified the villages as well as the capacity of the people of Bagnes to address fundamental issues raised by economic development.

In the early 1980s, the class alliance supporting these changes in the electoral process and restructuring of the administration favored some regulation of tourist activities on the communal territory, but not so restrictive as to sacrifice the material benefits of the last twenty years. The concern that people within this alliance felt over the rapid expansion of tourism, a perception referred to at the beginning of this section, is that the commune will lose its distinctive identity if the resort is allowed to prosper unchecked.

As evidence of this, in the space of roughly twenty years, Verbier has obviously acquired the appearance and the atmosphere of just the kind of place that vacationists seeking peace and quiet would try to avoid. As a result, many tourists are now buying houses and land further

down the valley at prices far beyond the means of young Bagnard couples. This competition over the control of residential areas is part of the problem of the communal territory being at stake between different users' groups. By 1981 there was already some talk of changing the "zoning plan" which had been in effect for hardly any length of time (Bagnes 1981). Undoubtedly the purpose of the change would be to extend the residential areas at the expense of agriculture.

In their capacity as elected or employed public administrators, communal representatives became directly involved in the competition over the ways the territory should be used. Buying little if any land, it drew up a series of regulations that determined how an owner could use his or her property. In Bagnes, every renovation or new construction must be approved by a qualified authority (communal, cantonal, federal); disposal of landfill from the resort, burning brush and cutting hay are other activities that are systematically regulated. The communal administration has intruded even further into the daily lives of residents by specifying suitable hours for hanging up washing (a question of aesthetics in the villages) and operating noisy machinery on construction sites. Even the equipment used by farmers to dry out hay in barns must be used at reasonable hours so as not to disturb summer vacationists.

By intervening in the smallest details of the daily lives of tourists, building contractors, real estate developers and peasants, to name just the most visible parties involved in the negotiation of territory, the communal administration is called upon to mediate between groups who have different views on economic development. The groups however are

unanimous in their criticism of the administration's power to interfere with the use of private property. Resorting to this rhetoric is useful to everybody in voicing their dissatisfaction; however, it allows the communal administration to have the final word defining the Bagnard consensus towards tourism. During a discussion before the "Conseil Général de la commune de Bagnes" (a communal legislative assembly composed of 45 elected members) in 1982, the President of the commune (head of the executive composed of 11 elected persons) emphasized that tourism's future growth should be guided by the following principles:

- "- One should keep control of events"
 - "- the question is: where do we go?"
 - "- development is looking for something better, not just more"
 - "- past experience must be a lesson for the future"
- (minutes of the General Council's meeting held March 11, 1982: 3, my translation).

A policy of this nature acts as a catalyst unifying the divergent socio-economic interests found in the commune because economic benefits resulting from tourism are uncertain for all social classes. People dissatisfied with the consensus must nevertheless endorse it lest they become ostracized by the majority. Most people are prepared to make their grievances known to the communal administration at every opportunity. However, the search for a compromise, which is a typical Swiss trait, is not compatible with disloyalties that are too apparent.

The following chapter will present a detailed description of the Swiss institutions which permit citizens to participate in their government and voice their opinions. An attempt will be made to show why the perception of loss of cultural identity associated with the growth of tourism can only be resolved at the communal level.

CHAPTER II

Citizenship and Federalism in Switzerland

2.1 The Citizens

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the political institutions and mechanisms through which local communities such as Bagnes can influence decisions affecting them. It will be shown that the long-standing grass-roots democratic tradition in Switzerland provided almost unlimited opportunities for political organization and participation in decision making at all levels of government. However, this does not mean that opportunities are always exploited to the full, as the evidence will show.

2.1.1 The Bourgeoisie

In order to be a Swiss citizen, it is necessary to be a bourgeois of a commune; this term does not refer to one's socioeconomic status in that commune but rather to a person's civil status. This fact is readily evident on the Swiss passport which indicates the bearer's commune of origin rather than his birthplace.

In most cantons, including Valais, a person's origin is the same as the bourgeoisie to which he or she belongs¹⁰. Only a father can hand down the right of bourgeoisie to his children. The inequality of citizen-

¹⁰ The French nouns "Bourgeois" referring to a person and "Bourgeoisie" referring to the association of these persons within a commune will be used as if they were English words in the text. The adjective form of "Bourgeoisie" is "bourgeoisial" in the masculine and "bourgeoisiale" in the feminine.

ship existing between Swiss men and women is similar to the situation of the Amerindians in Canada which prevailed until the Indian Act was modified in 1985: a woman lost her native status when she married a non-Indian. In Switzerland, when a daughter marries, she must forfeit the rights inherited from her father to assume the rights recognized as her husband's. Moreover, a Swiss woman loses all her rights if she marries a foreigner. However, the Federal Constitution provides (art. 44, 3rd para.) that a child born in Switzerland of such a marriage be considered a Swiss national at the formal request of his parents. He may then inherit the right of bourgeoisie held by his mother before her marriage. A foreign woman who marries a Swiss is automatically accepted into her husband's bourgeoisie.

Membership in a bourgeoisie confers Swiss nationality and grants the right to vote in federal elections and in all other federal votes wherever the constituent may live. If living in Switzerland, all non-bourgeois citizens need merely to have "déposé les papiers", an established expression, at the office of the Contrôle des habitants in their commune of residence within three months of an election. As is well known, Swiss women did not obtain the right to vote until 1971 and in several communes they still cannot participate in local elections.

A foreigner who wants to become a Swiss citizen must be accepted by the group of bourgeois of the commune. The same is applicable to a Swiss who wishes to change his bourgeoisie. For the reasons given earlier, only men are entitled to make such a request. The local

administration responds to this request by organizing a referendum in which all the bourgeois of that commune participate. It is interesting to note that in Bagnes, women of the bourgeoisie have been allowed to vote since 1930 (Bagnes 1930). To have a reasonable chance of success in the referendum, the applicant must establish his good reputation within the commune. A favorable result confirms his successful integration. Acceptance depends on the candidate's ability to impress the group with his qualities.

His financial situation is one of those; he must not constitute a risk to the community. If suddenly he became poor and without resources, the commune would be bound to meet his needs, since in Switzerland responsibility for social welfare and assistance falls within the jurisdiction of the commune. Furthermore, an admission fee is set by the representatives of the bourgeoisie. This fee is determined by the Conseil bourgeoisial in accordance with precedents in such matters. For example, in the commune of Bagnes, an amount of 50 francs for each complete year of residency, is deducted from the established admission fee. However, two communes, within a few kilometers of each other may, according to their respective wealth, impose amounts as diverse as 600 francs and 8,000 francs to grant the right of membership. When relevant, this right of membership is automatically granted to the applicant's wife and minor children. The designated amount is payable at the time of the successful outcome of the communal referendum; if the candidate loses, the case is postponed and the costs of the plebiscite are borne by him.

Prior to each ballot, the Conseil bourgeoisial voices its opinion on the application before it. Handbills are then distributed to every bourgeois household, the substance which reads as follows:

AN EXAMPLE OF AN ANONYMOUS NOTICE ANNOUNCING A VOTE
ON A REQUEST FOR ADMISSION INTO THE BOURGEOISIE

Message du conseil bourgeoisial

Consultation de l'assemblée bourgeoisiale au sujet d'une demande d'achat de la bourgeoisie.

En séance du 198., le Conseil communal et bourgeoisial a décidé de préavisier favorablement la demande d'agrégation à la Bourgeoisie de Bagnes, présentée par M. né le citoyen français, né de mère suisse, divorcé, domicilié à Verbier depuis le 12 janvier 1968.

De 1945 à juin 1959, M. a exercé une activité bancaire en France. Entre juin 1959 et décembre 1967, il s'est occupé du département "promotion-construction-ventes d'appartements" au sein d'une entreprise de construction d'immeubles à Grenoble.

Depuis son arrivée à Verbier, M. a été successivement:

- Conseiller technico-commercial dans la branche "construction d'immeubles", (1968-1975).
- Exploitant d'un tea-room et d'une galerie d'art (1975-1977).
Actuellement, il est inspecteur d'assurances à ".....".

M. s'est très bien intégré à la vie locale et il est membre actif de nombreuses sociétés culturelles et sportives de la station.

Le Conseil a fixé le droit de bourgeoisie à Fr. 5400. (Fr. 6000. - moins Fr. 600. - pour 12 années de domiciliation). Il vous invite à vous prononcer sur cette demande lors de la votation fixée au 198 ...

Bagnes, juin 198 ..

Le Conseil bourgeoisial

Membership in the bourgeoisie of a commune allows access to its lands and/or the revenue derived from their development if there has been a distribution of the profits earned during the year. In this case, all resident bourgeois receive an equal share. This also explains why entry into the local bourgeoisie of a wealthy commune costs more than membership in a less affluent commune. The bourgeois of Bourg-Saint-Pierre, a village located on the main route to the Grand-Saint-Bernard tunnel which links Switzerland and Italy, receive an annual income from the tolls charged to motorists using the tunnel. Their excellent municipal facilities, which include a swimming pool, a skating arena and a community hall, reflect the comfortable circumstances to which the residents have become accustomed.

However, in most Valaisan communes, earnings are lower and are credited to the general budget. Such is the case with the proceeds from the sale of lumber to local contractors or the tax revenue associated with "taillage". This tax is imposed on cattle owners and amounts to a few francs per head of cattle that graze on bourgeois land. In Bagnes however, the communal administration rather than the cattle owners have paid the tax since 1982. This money and the income from several sources enable the bourgeoisie to cover its current expenditures such as the cost of reforestation or subsidies for the improvements of the roads leading to the alpine pastures, called alpages. The bourgeoisie, owner of these meadows, grants their use and enjoyment to cattle owners' associations (consortages d'alpage). These associations herd their animals up to the high pastures and for about three months in the summer, the cattle are

entrusted to the care of the herdsmen who will milk them and make cheese.

The bourgeois also derive certain advantages from their status. In several ski areas in Valais, there are three different ski lift rates: visitors are required to pay more than permanent residents, who in turn pay more than the bourgeois of the commune. These conditions feature more and more frequently in the concession of ski hills to interested companies, because a good portion of these lands is subject to a right of usufruct, held by the bourgeois. Similarly, although it may seem merely symbolic, the bourgeois privilege of purchasing seed potatoes and firewood at a lower price than the ordinary residents, indicates belonging, a slight, but indeed tangible way of affirming such an identity.

2.1.2 The Commune of the Bourgeois and the Commune of the Citizen.

The political organization of a commune establishes a distinction between the bourgeois population and the resident population:

"Le Valais possède actuellement deux espèces de communes, l'une bourgeoise, l'autre politique. Cette dualité est d'origine récente. Jusqu'en 1848, il n'existait qu'une seule commune: la bourgeoisie ou commune bourgeoise" (Ghika 1966a: 187).

The Federal Constitution came into force in 1848. It recognized the right of every Swiss citizen to settle in the commune of his choice and it guaranteed the right to vote in all matters except those pertaining to the

local bourgeoisie. With the adoption of the Law on the Communal System on June 2, 1851, the canton of Valais complied with the federal constitutional measures respecting the rights of non-bourgeois. This was not so restrictive for the canton, as the duality of the bourgeoisial and municipal powers had already begun to establish itself in the years preceding the adoption of the Constitution.

In 1815, following the signing of the Federal Pact, Valais became the 20th canton admitted into the Swiss Confederacy. The second article of this constitutional law stipulated that every Confederate should bear arms for his country (Lasserre 1941: 101). From 1817 onwards, Valaisan laws have applied this principle, seeking to supply the army with the largest possible number of recruits: those Swiss enjoying the right of establishment in Valais all became potential soldiers, as did foreigners who had been living in the canton for at least six years (Calpini 1963: 17). In this subtle way, the first integration of foreigners into a commune was achieved outside the formal bourgeoisial procedures.

The Law to Abolish Begging, promulgated in 1827, also involved the non-bourgeois of the commune. The law of 1803 on this issue had been so rarely observed (its aim was to confine beggars within the limits of their respective communes), that in 1827 the State Council of Valais made provision for a communal tax, the proceeds of which would be distributed to the poor. As a result, the Council ordered a committee for charitable assistance be formed in each commune. Every taxpayer was eligible to serve on the committee, as the costs of helping the poor (residents or

vagrants) were assumed by all members of the commune, both bourgeois and non-bourgeois. All residents were thus invited to the annual rendering of the welfare accounts. This formal right of participation in one area of the communal administration was something new for the non-bourgeois (Kämpfen 1965: 158; G. Perraudin 1974: 1).

In spite of this legal measure, the conditions of the poor did not improve, nor did the social position of the ordinary resident. In fact, this law was perceived by the communes as a challenge to their autonomy to make decisions; those who were prepared to act within the law were content to only appoint the members of the committees, while for the most part handouts and charity continued to be the accepted way of fighting poverty (Salamin 1976: 33, 62-63). In view of the committees' passive stand in these matters, it is necessary to judge with care Paul de Courten's evaluation (1929: 3, 1952: 136), which is reiterated by Kämpfen (1965: 158), about the law of 1827; they both claim that favoring the participation of "outsiders" in local administration was the underlying basis in 1839 for the formation of the Primary Assembly in the communes of Valais which included all men domiciled there¹¹.

However, its formation was much more the outcome of the bitter struggles in which liberals and conservatives had been engaged during the 1830s. The cantonal Constitution of 1839 reflected the prevailing philosophy of the liberal party, which was anti-clerical and pro-industrial. For liberals, the existence of the bourgeois commune and the desire to

¹¹ Women were only admitted in 1971.

further the equality of citizens represented two incompatible situations. Despite the opposition voiced by the conservatives against this point of view, the Lower-Valaisans (who were French-speaking and were more numerous than their German-speaking counterparts) defended the Constitution, while the Upper-Valaisans (German-speaking) temporarily set up a separate government in the commune of Sierre (Arlettaz 1979: 119 et sq.). The constitutional compromise of 1839 provided that primary assemblies would be created in all communes, on the condition that the non-bourgeois would account for no more than a quarter of the members, a proportion that was not reached anywhere in Valais at that time. From 1844 to 1848, the years of their greatest political gains, the liberals did away with this condition (Ghika 1966a: 188). Moreover, the Constitution of 1839 set five years as the required period of residency for non-bourgeois before they could obtain the right to elect communal councillors (Ibid.).

The Federal Constitution of 1848 recognized the right of free movement of goods and people throughout Switzerland. The first line of article 43 establishes this principle: "Tout citoyen d'un canton est citoyen suisse". While acknowledging the importance of the canton in the Confederation, this article assured internal mobility because citizenship still depended on membership in a bourgeoisie or commune of origin.

In Valais, the Law on the Communal System and, later, the cantonal Constitution of December 23, 1852, sanctioned the existence of the Primary Assembly, thus giving political rights to Swiss of all cantons.

Ever since then, this body has had the power to intervene in all municipal affairs, except those pertaining exclusively to the bourgeois. Moreover, a Swiss citizen now needed to reside only two years instead of five in a commune where he was not a bourgeois, before being allowed to vote.

The commune as a political body reinforced its influence in Valais at the time of the revision of the Federal Constitution in 1874. The residency requirement which permitted a Swiss to achieve the status of "resident" was again reduced, this time to three consecutive months (Ghika 1966a: 188). In addition, the Confederation assigned to the cantons the responsibility of choosing between a unitary system of administration involving both the commune and the bourgeoisie or a system of several public bodies coexisting on the communal territory.

Ghika maintains that this constitutional revision dealt the "coup de grâce" to the bourgeoisies (1966a: 188). Nevertheless, it seems to have been executed smoothly, because in an exhaustive study of the content of the Valaisan press during that period, no mention is made of the attack on bourgeoisial powers as being one of the grounds for the mass rejection of the 1874 constitutional reform in Valais (Frass 1979: 295-297). With 87% of the electorate casting their ballots, the bill was voted down by more than 5 to 1 (*Ibid.*). However, with the majority of cantons having decided in favor of the new constitution, Valais adopted the system of the dual administrations while certain cantons, such as Neuchatel, chose the system of the single commune (G. Perraudin 1974: 2).

Summing up, and bearing in mind this legislative background, the key period in the progressive erosion of the powers of the bourgeoisies in favor of the political commune took place between 1840 and 1875. The canton also lost a good number of its families through migrations to other cantons and foreign countries in those same years (Bassi 1975). On the internal political scene, conservatives and liberals took a stand regarding the necessity of proportional representation of Upper and Lower Valais on the Grand Council which presided in Sion, the capital of the canton. The size of the population, always a factor in agricultural countries, thus became more relevant in the commune than the status of each individual. After around 1875, state intervention was generally directed at regulating the powers of the bourgeoisie so as to allow the residents to be heard and their interests taken into account.

2.1.3 The Primary Assembly in 1980

Over the past century, the Canton of Valais (or more officially the State of Valais) has not developed in isolation. Political and economic decisions made at the federal level affecting such matters as currency exchange control, export financing and the entry of foreign workers and business persons into the cantons, have placed the political class of the canton in a defensive position where it is essential that its cooperation with the communes be strengthened.

It is in this context that one can best understand the extensive reform of the canton's political institutions which took place November 13, 1980, and which replaced and abolished the old Law on the Communal System, dating back to June 1851.

This law restored to the people (that is, the Primary Assembly), the power to intervene in the public law-making process, which until this time was controlled by the Communal Council. Since 1980, the situation seems to have reverted to that which existed before 1839 except in the fact that residents are quick to exercise their right to vote and that communal autonomy, with respect to the canton, is no longer represented by the bourgeoisie, but by the Primary Assembly. This latter body has acquired certain privileges under the new law. Article 16 entitled "Inalienable Fields of Jurisdiction" specifically states that the Primary Assembly's representatives, grouped together in the General Council (consisting of between 20 and 60 members depending on the total population of a commune, and who are elected a week after the communal councillors), must approve every loan, expenditure, guarantee, sale, exchange or partition of property, when the amounts in question exceed a certain percentage of the municipality's gross revenue (excluding grants and equalization receipts). For example, the sale of a communal holding, producing more than 3% of the gross revenue of the previous fiscal year, must be approved by the General Council; the same applies to a loan of 10% or more of these revenues. The Council also assumes responsibility for the granting and transfer of hydraulic concessions.

Of course, most of the decisions of the Primary Assembly, represented by the General Council, must receive "the endorsement", that is, the official sanction of the State Council in Sion (Valais 1980: art. 123), but the power of the people has been reinforced in that their right to deliberate on local laws, in the alienation or mortgaging of property, (Valais 1851: art. 2) has been replaced by the right to "deliberate and decide" in broader matters than in the past (Valais 1980: art. 16). Some people would say, especially in Bagnes, that it is a detail of no consequence since before the 1980 law made it binding, the General Council's decisions were, in practice, respected if not readily upheld by the Communal Council. Yet, the word "decide" did not appear in the old Law. Besides, all the communes did not necessarily have general councillors to represent the Primary Assembly.

To be accurate, the creation of a General Council was prompted when the communes saw their populations, especially on the plains, increase beyond the limit that would allow everyone to participate in the democratic process. The Constitution of Valais (revised in 1907) thus allowed members of the Primary Assembly to delegate their authority to elected representatives as soon as the commune's population exceeded 700. In Bagnes, with a population of 4,000 in 1920, the General Council was instituted in 1924 and functioned until 1932 when its dissolution was demanded and obtained by the Primary Assembly (Michaud 1982: 116). Members of this body preferred to attend in person, in the communal square, the public presentation of communal accounts and the new regulations proposed by the Executive. That situation lasted 24 years

until 1956, when a General Council made up of 45 members was re-established in the commune (Ibid.).

One of the innovations of the 1980 Law on the Communal System was the granting of "a right of initiative in matters of regulations which concern the Primary Assembly or the General Council" (Valais 1980: art. 57). In Bagnes, the application of this provision of the law was confirmed by a positive vote in 1981. This means that 20% of the electorate of the commune are now entitled to call for a vote for the purpose of revising or abrogating a communal regulation which has been in force for at least four years or, for that matter, passing a new regulation. A committee composed of three to seven members must introduce this initiative with the requisite support and if the Communal Council approves it, a preliminary bill must be drawn up, incorporating the changes put forth by the original proposers. If the General Council rejects the contents of the bill, the matter is put before the people. If both Councils reject the initiative in the first instance, a vote is mandatory (under article 67 of this law, referred to as "mandatory referendum").

The commune's authority to make decisions was greatly enhanced as a result of this clause. The Valaisan legislator probably expected that a popular vote against a communal regulation would save him the costs of arbitration. If this regulation resulted from the application of a federal law, the popular verdict in a commune would also carry more weight, in the event of a cantonal confrontation with Bern, than anonymous

representations headed by civil servants acting on behalf of the affected commune. In both cases, the canton reduces its expenses, increases the popularity of its administration with the communes and joins forces with them in a show of solidarity against federal intrusions. The situation becomes clearer still if one realizes that 30% of the representatives in Sion are also presidents of their communes, the two positions not being incompatible.

Returning to the powers of the General Council, it must be noted that decisions of the Council are required to be posted in the villages in virtue of article 16, cited above. Furthermore, these decisions must be put to a referendum ("optional" under article 66) if 2/5 of the General Council members or 1/5 of the electorate request one in the 60 days following its posting. One last variation of the law prevents the Council from deliberating if a majority of its members are not present at a session (Valais 1980: art. 24). In Bagnes, the quorum required is 23 general councillors. If absences were frequent in the past, they have now become the exception (Vaudan, p.c.).

Consequently, it is now clear that the commune is the fundamental political body of the nation. A person is known as "Valaisan" outside his canton and as "Swiss" outside his country.

2.2 Federalism in Switzerland

The law-making processes established within the context of Swiss federalism allow and require frequent consultations of the citizens of the communes. In section 2.1, it was shown that the long-established sovereignty of the communes no longer represented a threat to Valais, such that in 1980 the cantonal administration did not hesitate to strengthen the powers of the Primary Assembly. What is more, the compulsory creation of the General Council is seen as a means of restoring, under a different form, the legislative prerogatives to all communes; that is to say, in a form which is compatible with the State objective of supralocal control, while at the same time, satisfying the enduring desire for communal autonomy which is firmly rooted in the regional historic tradition.

It is the bourgeoisie which lost the most from this process which was initiated in 1839. The right of referendum and the right of initiative at the communal level, sanctioned by the 1980 law, are still too new to determine the reaction of those primarily affected, the inhabitants of the communes. However, tighter control by the citizens on decisions having a local impact can be foreseen. How will this participation express itself when the issues shift to cantonal and federal levels? This is the question to be examined below. At the end of the chapter, an attempt will be made to identify the political basis which will allow the assertion of local issues to take shape as it does at the present time.

2.2.1 The Rules of the Democratic Process

The Swiss political system is called "direct democracy" by some analysts, (M. Bridel *et al.* 1952) and "semi-direct" by others (Meynaud 1969, 1970; Flüeler and Gfeller-Corthésy, eds. 1975) or "mixed" (Sausser-Hall 1946). The principal difference between the last two forms and the first stems from the fact that the highest authorities in the country, the seven members of the Federal Council, are not elected by the people but by the members of the Federal Assembly (the National Council and the Council of States). This form of government differs from a pure representative democracy because in the latter all members of parliament are elected directly by the people. Furthermore, the elected members are invested with full powers to pass legislation and make decisions subject only to periodic elections designed, not to change past decisions, but to reappoint or dismiss representatives.

The Swiss form of government is closer to direct or semi-direct democracy because the sanction of the people may be exercised during the course of a legislature on individual laws, bills or administrative decisions. Then the role of the representative in the law-making process is to reflect the diversity of interests which exist in Swiss society. Most Swiss see nothing wrong with a representative who serves on several company boards during his mandate because the people have the ultimate power to accept or reject each and every law of the country. An earlier writer has described the system as "Swiss parliamentarianism", because of the absence of examples of comparable systems save those of ancient

civilizations (Fahlbeck 1905: 288-302). He even goes so far as to describe the federal constitution as a "communal constitution" because, with the exception of the two chambers in the Federal Assembly, an institution borrowed from the United States, citizens' rights emerged from customs long in practice in some cantons and a good many communes.

The decision-making process in Switzerland is, as a result, extremely slow, since it is the gradual change of attitudes rather than the balance of power between political parties that will produce the majority needed to authorize the implementation of a legislative or constitutional change. For example, the antecedents to the 1979 Federal Law on Land Management go back to 1944 and to the intervention of a national councillor: he noted the need to provide a constitutional basis for urban and rural planning in the cantons and communes. It was not until 1969, 25 years later, that the people voted in favor of a constitutional amendment (Flüeler and Gfeller-Corthésy eds. 1975: 663-664; Federal Constitution 1972: art. 22 quater). In the meantime they alternated from "pilot projects" to laws or regulations, from "notices" to "directives" respecting temporary "protection plans". As we have seen, the law itself followed 10 years later (Switzerland 1979). This long procedure is all the more important since -- and this is another characteristic of the Swiss system -- judicial power is not the final arbiter in the disputes which can arise between the cantons and the Confederation. The Federal Court (28 judges elected for six years by the Federal Assembly), the equivalent of the Supreme Court, can indeed overturn cantonal rulings but cannot invalidate federal laws (McRae 1964: 4).

It is through the so-called "constitutional" referendum that the government is able, on its own initiative, to obtain the authorization to revise the Constitution; however, consultation is compulsory. Presented with a draft of the amendment, the people vote on it. The most sensational example of this occurred in 1959 when the Federal Assembly proposed granting suffrage to women. Men, by their prompt rejection of this motion were far more conservative than their own representatives. (They reversed their decision in 1971.) In a referendum such as this, a double majority must support the government, that is a majority of the electorate of the country plus at least 13 of the 26 cantons and half-cantons. (For example, Basle-Town and Basle-County; each has the status of a half canton and each has a half vote.) Cantonal constitutions can be revised in the same way. Since 1949, all federal emergency decrees which do not have a constitutional basis must be put before the people and the cantons in the year following their promulgation.

The people can also voice their opinions in the "legislative" referendum. This is compulsory in two-thirds of the cantons and optional in the other third and at the federal level. Federally, 50,000 signatures from the electorate, filed in Bern within 90 days following the adoption of a law, or the request of cantonal governments, will force an optional referendum. The same procedure applies to decrees of a "general application", to decrees which must be put immediately into effect and which do not contravene the Constitution and to international agreements of an indefinite duration, or those which are binding for more than 15 years. Such is the case with Switzerland's membership in the United

Nations, which has still not been endorsed by the people; for many, the neutrality of the country would be compromised by joining the organization. An optional referendum does not require the double majority of people and cantons. One is sufficient.

In addition to this supervisory role exercised by the people, there is another means of intervention: the right of initiative. Serving together on a committee, or when defending a particular point of view within a political party, men and women with similar interests or concerns are able to initiate a process for the partial amendment of the Constitution, or for the adoption of a new amendment. This is achieved by collecting a certain number of signatures in support of a bill to be put to the popular vote. At the federal level, only the constitutional initiative is admissible. If new laws are to be introduced, they must first be derived from an amendment to the Constitution.

In matters relating to Valais, the Cantonal Constitution of May 12, 1907 made it compulsory to hold legislative referenda on all bills and decrees of general application (de Rivaz 1965: 442). This extension of citizens' rights supplemented the 1852 constitutional provisions regarding financial matters (Roux 1979: 239). As well, since 1907, the Valaisans have benefited from the right of legislative initiative which does not exist at the federal level. In 1891 they voted by more than 7 to 1 in favor of the right of constitutional initiative within the limits of their own canton (Frass 1979: 306). In order to introduce this latter motion before the cantonal parliament, 6,000 citizens were needed to support the

draft; to secure the legislative initiative, 4,000 were needed (Sauser-Hall 1946: 72-73). Since the vote of September 24, 1972, these numbers have changed to 12,000 and to 8,000 respectively (articles 101 and 31 of the cantonal Constitution).

By contrast, to introduce an initiative at the federal level, a committee must collect within an 18 month period 100,000 signatures of voters who are in favor of a bill to amend the Constitution. The request for a vote may be accompanied by a general proposal for an amendment (which has happened four times since 1848) or by a final draft to be submitted to the people (55 times as of December 31, 1973 [Federal Constitution 1972]). In the latter case, the two Houses then have three years to decide on the rejection or adoption of the draft initiative or to offer the people a counterproposal (in the form of a draft compromise instead of the initiative). The submission of a counterproposal may lead to the withdrawal of the original initiative with the members of the committee who proposed it feeling either satisfied with the counterproposal or with a new legislative process. If this is not the case, the people will vote twice on the same day: on the original initiative as well as on the counterproposal. Meynaud (1969: 14-15) is critical of this procedure on a number of counts, the most cynical being, that the counterproposal splits up the votes of the advocates of change, while a double no vote clearly favors the status quo. The following gives an overall view of the period 1945-1968:

"Observons que sur les 22 votations, 4 portaient sur des contre-projets devant lesquels les instigateurs avaient retiré leur texte. Dans deux autres cas les autorités avaient également établi des contre-projets mais sans que

les instigateurs se désistent. Dans 16 cas le scrutin portait uniquement sur le texte de l'initiative, avec dans tous les cas recommandation de rejet par les autorités.

La grandeur même du nombre des initiatives retirées [25] suggère que le but de l'opération peut être non d'aboutir à un scrutin populaire mais d'influer sur les autorités. Effectivement, [...] l'initiative tend à être utilisée comme un moyen de pression dont l'objet est de mettre fin à une inaction des gouvernants dans un domaine déterminé ou de réorienter l'activité de ceux-ci dans le sens souhaité par les promoteurs de l'opération" (Meynaud 1970: 7).

"[...] la présence d'une masse importante de partisans au stade de la réunion des signatures peut certes constituer un sérieux atout auprès des pouvoirs publics et faciliter l'obtention d'un contre-projet avantageux, constitutionnel ou autre" (Ibid.: 24).

The procedure regarding a proposal drafted in general terms, the one which has been used only four times, requires that it be debated before the two Houses who then have two years to draw up a constitutional amendment to be put to the popular vote: if the two Houses are not in agreement on the spirit of the general proposal, it is left to the people themselves to decide. At this stage of the consultative process, the majority approval of the cantons is not required. If the electorate supports the proposal, the Houses must draw up a new draft embodying the wishes set forth in the initiative and they must hold a new vote, this time including an account of the cantons who are for and against the proposal as in the case of the compulsory referendum (Sauser-Hall 1946: 71-76; Federal Constitution 1972: art. 121; Flüeler and Gfeller-Corthésy, eds. 1975: 274).

This description of the three methods by which the people can directly intervene in State matters, together with the circumstances

particular to Valais, is in a sense the handbook of rights and procedures. The number of times these rights are exercised will give us an idea of how "the system" actually works. There is a considerable gap between the rules and their application.

2.2.2 Applications

Let us consider the last procedure, the right of initiative drawn up in general terms. Each time the electors rejected the proposals made in 1935, 1941, 1951 and 1966 (Federal Constitution 1972: 68).

The constitutional initiative has always been used to deal with a vast range of issues, but as of December 31, 1973, only 11 of 55 motions had obtained the majority needed to be put into effect (Federal Constitution 1972: 53-68). In four of these eleven cases, the counterproposals put forward by the government were accepted, rather than the committee's original motion, which brings to only seven the total number of successful original proposals (Masnata and Rubattel 1978: 176).

As mentioned, the issues have been wide ranging. In 1893, an initiative introduced into the Constitution (art. 25 bis), a description of the manner in which cattle were to be slaughtered from that time on (Sauser-Hall 1946: 75-76). It was also due to a popular initiative that proportional representation by political parties on the National Council in

Bern was adopted in 1918. This had twice been voted down before, in 1900 and in 1910.

More recently, an initiative "against the abuse of economic power" was rejected by voters in 1958, as was the initiative "against settlement of foreigners" in 1970, which recommended limiting the number of foreigners in each canton to 10% of the total population (except in Geneva where it could be 25% because of the great number of international organizations located there). Thus from one end of the political spectrum to the other, one initiative does not necessarily succeed any better than another. However, as Meynaud wrote, the 557,000 who voted in favor of the initiative against foreigners were able to force the administration to legislate part way in their favor. For example, the number of residency permits has been fixed at the level reached in 1970; the Confederation has taken over from the cantons the control of entry of foreign workers and attempted to restrict their numbers in certain designated industries (Flüeler and Gfeller-Corthésy eds. 1975: 313-314).

In the past forty years, in fact, only a single initiative, has been successful in an electoral sense: in 1949, based on a draft entitled "for a return to direct democracy" (Meynaud 1969: 73-78), the people voted to include Article 89bis in the federal Constitution, dealing with the period during which emergency decrees are valid.

Thus, initiatives are important because they indicate the trend of public opinion to the government since electoral success is fairly rare.

However, according to Masnata and Rubbatel (1978), public opinion is never measured in a wholly objective fashion. Indeed, during the period prior to a vote, the process of collecting signatures is conducted by organizations having considerable financial means:

"Contrairement à ce que le terme 'démocratie semi-directe' pourrait faire croire, le simple citoyen n'a pas les moyens d'organiser un référendum (...) ni de 'lancer' une initiative constitutionnelle (...). Les initiateurs sont habituellement les grandes organisations politiques et économiques.

"[...] l'Automobile Club de Suisse dépensait 900 000 francs en 1961 pour sa campagne [for a referendum] contre une taxe sur les carburants" (Masnata et Rubattel 1978: 174-175).

In the case of the legislative referendum, governmental defeats occur much more frequently, at the rate of 60% (Meynaud 1970: 9), since it is those who are already dissatisfied who invoke this optional procedure to oppose the will of the State. The fact is, compromises are more common before a law is enacted (Hughes 1975: 145-146); out of 476 opportunities to invoke their right between 1945 and 1968, the Swiss have only taken advantage of it 25 times (Meynaud 1970: 6). This is consistent with what was written earlier about the slowness of the decision-making process. The government attempts to satisfy as many people as possible in order to avoid holding a referendum. In spite of some failures, always bitter for those in power, these figures indicate the extent of the tacit agreement which exists between the people and the government.

Public participation in the political process can also be examined in terms of voting practices, bearing in mind the constraints described previously.

To put voting in context, it is useful to know that between 1944 and 1973, Valaisans expressed themselves on a total of 210 legislative and constitutional items (105 federal and 105 cantonal). For this, they went to the polls 77 times for a federal vote and 55 times for a cantonal vote. On 17 occasions, cantonal representatives took advantage of a federal voting day to submit one of their decisions to the people. Thus, in a period of thirty years, the Valaisan people voted 115 times ($77 + 55 - 17$) or a little less than four times a year, without counting the elections for federal, cantonal and communal politicians - which is quite a different matter.

Some issues which are typical of those found on the ballot of a Sunday vote are given in Table 3.

TABLE 3:
THE VOTE OF NOVEMBER 30, 1980 IN THE CANTON OF VALAIS

ITEMS ("Vote on ...)	RESULTS	
	VALAIS	BAGNES
1. the amendment of paragraphs 2 to 10 of article 52 of the cantonal Constitution	NO	NO
2. the revision of the wheat program in the country (federal decree of June 20, 1980)	NO	YES
3. the federal law on road traffic (amendment of March 21, 1980: seat belts and protective helmets)	NO	NO
4. the new equalization of the net revenue of the Federal Liquor Board from the taxation of distilled spirits (federal decree of June 20, 1980)	YES	YES
5. the cancellation of the canton's share in the net profit from filing fees (federal decree of June 20, 1980)	YES	YES

Source: Bulletin Officiel du Valais, Sion, December 5, 1980, No. 49.
(my translation)

It is immediately evident from this table that to be Swiss requires a lot of ingenuity. The issues are as delicate as they are diverse and the vote results tell us little of the consequences of a yes or a no vote. The voters must rely on more than just casual conversations to become

informed and to shape their opinions. With a 53.3% turnout in this case, participation was higher than usual in the commune of Bagnes. With one exception, the Bagnards voted in the same way as other Valaisans. Only 9 votes separated the supporters and the opponents of the wheat program, a series of measures designed to subsidize wheat production and to assure the Confederation's self-sufficiency in times of emergency. In the vote regarding road traffic, foreseeing a positive result, people's attention was riveted on the obligation of wearing a seat belt in a car or a protective helmet on a motorcycle. For nearly a month in the commune, conversations (sometimes sufficient enough) were punctuated with accounts of traffic accidents which were not fatal due to the absence of a seat belt; the experience of the local people being that if you go off the road in the mountains, your chances of survival depend on the amount of time it takes to be thrown free of the car. On voting day in Bagnes, 1,508 people had that thought in mind and voted against the seat belt law while 69 people thought otherwise and voted in favor. However, once votes across Switzerland were tallied, use of the seat belt became obligatory. The experience and concerns of those living in the mountain regions of Bagnes and Valais were discarded. This is a common phenomenon which will be discussed later on.

In the thirty years between 1944 and 1973, Valaisans devoted 77 Sundays to a federal vote. A total of 105 items, legislative or constitutional, were on the ballot. The most active period when no fewer than 16 votes were held to decide on 23 issues (Annuaire 1974: 482-515) was between 1952 and 1956. In 1971, 1972 and 1973, there were far fewer

voting days, only 9, but in those three years 19 federal issues were considered by the people; moreover, the results were all positive, the people supporting the government proposals (Ibid.: 512-515).

On 12 of these 77 Sundays, less than 20% of the Valaisan population turned out to vote. The lowest participation (12.9%) was recorded on May 19, 1968. Furthermore, on two of the days in 1954 and 1969, when the turnout was poor, Valaisans were also asked to decide on strictly cantonal matters. Thus federal votes do not necessarily attract more of a turnout when cantonal issues are being considered at the same time. At the other extreme, when more than half of the Valaisans participated in a vote which included at least one federal issue, the number of voting days amounted to 16. Discounting these 28 days, the voting rate remained between 20 and 50%, for 49 of the 77 Sundays, that is 64% of the time (ibid.: 492-515). Note that women were involved in eight votes during this period without greatly altering the overall profile of voter participation, at least as regards the Valaisan statistics.

Let us now take a look at the voting days between 1944 and 1973 which were restricted to cantonal issues. In about one third of the cases (18 out of 55), less than 20% of the electorate voted and in only one of nine times (6 of 55) did more than half the population come out to vote (Annuaire 1974: 522-535). It can thus be observed that during that period, Valaisans participated less in cantonal voting than in federal voting. The poorest attendance ever (10%) was on September 10, 1972; the issue was the adoption of a new law on elections and voting, a

subject which should have interested people who were so often called on to vote. Otherwise, the rate of participation ranged between 20 and 50% for 31 of the 55 days. In round numbers, this means that in little more than half of the time, only 2 to 5 people in 10 turned out to vote on a cantonal matter.

If Valaisan voter turnout is now compared to the overall Swiss participation during those 77 federal voting days, it can be seen that the Valaisan rate was higher than the national average on only ten occasions. This figure, already very low, would have been even lower had there not been, on three occasions, communal elections taking place on the same day. Then again, in four of these ten cases, cantonal issues stirred public opinion in Valais, as in the case of Sion's bid to hold the 1968 winter Olympics. This happened in 1963; the outcome was negative but close, and the follow-up to this was another vote in 1969 when the electorate favored a bid to hold the 1976 Olympic games throughout Valais rather than just in the town of Sion. On the three occasions when turnout was heavy at the polls and communal and cantonal questions were not also at stake, it can be noted that the citizens of Valais (76.4%) joined with the rest of Switzerland (63.3%) only once, March 5, 1961, to prevent the Confederation from levying a tax on gasoline in order to finance the national road system (Annuaire 1974: 492-515 and 522-535).

From this account, it becomes apparent that commune residents are little concerned with the legislative and constitutional questions which are

submitted to them. To attract people to the polls, it seems that the governments should adopt legislation which is controversial or alternatively, set the same day to vote on federal and cantonal laws, the former already more compelling than the latter.

One last example in support of this conclusion: on March 30, 1952, Valaisans approved by 6 to 1, a federal law dealing with improvements to agriculture and maintenance of the peasant population, while the rest of Switzerland was about equally divided on the matter with the YES vote barely winning out. Valaisan voter participation was 64.4%, just above the Swiss average of 64.1%. On the same day, a decision was also required on cantonal issues but only 59.6% of the population entitled to vote turned out. The difference between these two figures means that nearly 5% of the voting population felt insufficiently informed (or were they too hurried to bother ?) to take a stand on cantonal matters. Such voting behavior begs the question: why is it that more of the Swiss electorate do not take advantage of the channels available to them to actively participate in the political process ?

2.2.3 The Centralization of the Decision-making Process.

One simple answer to low voting turnout would be to say that it is the fault of the "Swiss system" with its all-embracing political institutions, which gives rise to a feeling of helplessness and powerlessness in its citizens. According to Laurent Rebeaud, this perception is due to the

centralization of the decision-making process which for a hundred years has characterized the evolution of Swiss society:

"La Confédération est en principe l'organisation par laquelle les cantons réalisent leur association, tout en restant autonomes dans les domaines où ils le veulent. La source du pouvoir fédéral est donc cantonale.

"Mais la centralisation a fini par inverser les priorités: à l'origine fille des cantons, la Confédération leur sert aujourd'hui de mère. Elle est devenue une autorité autonome, plus puissante qu'eux" (Rebeaud 1978: 115).

The Confederation has limited financial means since it only collects a small fraction of the total amount of taxes levied. Its power to intervene into public matters is based essentially on its ability to manipulate the legislative and constitutional processes. For the past century, in order to maintain its dominant position, the Confederation has balanced the differences among the cantons, lest one of them capable of imposing its will on the others became more powerful than the Confederation itself. In French-speaking Switzerland, the cantons of Argovia and Zurich immediately come to mind. Consequently the Swiss put up with long waiting periods brought on by seemingly endless consultations before a law is promulgated. There is a constant search for a compromise which will curb extremism. Hence, groups with economic clout like the Vorort and the Union of Swiss Peasants are consulted even before the political parties (Katzenstein 1980: 76). This makes sense when we bear in mind that the topics are very specific and that opinions are developed outside partisan politics. Indirectly, this situation explains the weakness of the political parties and their lack of ideological coherence (for more on this subject, refer to Girod 1965: 31-34). The private sector enjoys such

considerable influence that in the end, it proves itself useful to the government, which scrupulously chooses the appropriate grounds for debate and the most judicious times in which to make decisions. Under no pressure from the political parties, the government manages to maintain its authority, acting as a referee between groups who disagree on issues. Dominated by "reformists", by men and women who daily exercise the art of compromise (Rebeaud 1978: 58), the national institutions of participation become removed from the everyday concerns of ordinary people. Accordingly, these institutions' capacity to influence social changes at the local and regional levels is lost. Local aspirations relate to specific interests which can be easily lost in a national compromise. Abstention from voting, which has been briefly discussed is not surprising in this context¹². Those who vote regularly are in a state of perpetual electoral readiness and as well, they are faced with a variety of issues requiring a vote, two factors which have been stressed. There is thus fostered in a substantial segment of the electorate, the feeling of no longer being a person but a machine primed to vote on anything at all. What is important is in fact happening elsewhere, particularly at home, in familiar surroundings where calling on collective interests enables a point of view to be transmitted far more effectively than the polling booth.

Over twenty years ago, the anthropologist Clifford Geertz wanted to show to what extent this "primordial attachment" influenced the attitudes and aspirations of a social group (1963: 109 [Geertz also used "primordial

¹² Abstention from voting has been documented by Rebeaud (1978) and Masnata and Rubbatel (1978).

ties" p.114]). He claimed that in certain historical circumstances, these ties may lead to "primordial discontent" (p.113) and consequently influence a variety of political decisions (p.128). At the time, he was writing about the huge efforts made by civil authorities, in new states created following decolonization, to give citizens a sense of nationhood, or in his own words, "to construct a powerful national community" with its citizens being divided by the primordial ties of assumed blood ties, race, language, region, religion and custom (*Ibid.*: 156, 112-113).

In the narrow context of Bagnes valley, it is possible to find popular attitudes (in the general sense of this term) which reflect "primordial discontent" in all its respects. A likely source of this discontent is the centralization of the decision-making process and its consequences, particularly the feeling that the participatory institutions currently in place are not responsive to the specific interests of the population. Let us pursue the author's argument: he states that "a sense of political suffocation" generates new social conditions which transform the dormant ties within a community into active ties which then replace the conventional methods available for expressing such discontent (Geertz 1963: 114). But Switzerland is not a nation that grew out of decolonization, nor do the 4,800 Bagnards constitute a race or an ethnic group. While they are quick to say they belong to "the large country of Bagnes", their interests and attitudes are in fact similar enough to those of other Valaisans that they cannot be disassociated from them. In Bagnes however, a subtle struggle exists between "natives" and "foreigners" over the authority to use as they see fit sections of the communal territory

which they hold in absolute ownership or under concession.

Although Geertz was not writing about Switzerland, his analysis of the emergence of "primordial discontent" may be applied to this country in view of Rebeaud's description of the sense of frustration pervasive in a large segment of the Swiss population. At the commune level as in Bagnes, the emergence of a coalition involving different interest groups aiming at defending the territorial integrity of the commune against, for instance, the expansion of tourist activities, can also be linked to Geertz's analysis insofar as identification with the land is the rationale for this coalition to mobilize support. In other words, identification with the land can be added to the list of primordial ties he established. Doing so is consistent with the general ethnographic observation made in Bagnes that the power of the residents to oppose "foreigners" is based on their recognition of a direct (material) and personalized (ideological) link with the land. The focus on "negotiating territory" set forth in the present study can thus serve to demonstrate how a collectivity makes use of the cultural heritage associated with the land to modify or to attempt to modify the social relations which link the commune to outside forces impinging upon development within.

This chapter has thus established the following points. First, limited as they were up until the middle of the 19th century to men born in a commune from a bourgeois father, political rights have progressively been granted to all residents of a commune with Swiss fathers. Political representation of these men (and of women since 1971) has been formal-

ized with the creation of the Primary Assembly and the General Council in the commune. In the process, the latter conserved its role of being the centerpiece of the political structure in Switzerland; in Valais the powers of the Primary Assembly have even been reinforced since 1980 through a new Law on the Communal system, whose most immediate effect was to increase the solidarity between canton and commune before federal intrusions in Valais. Second, this chapter has shown that federal institutions encourage direct participation of the population in the legislative process through various mechanisms such as the legislative referendum and the right of initiative. However, these mechanisms require a large number of popular votes and participation is surprisingly low in Valais especially in cantonal matters as opposed to federal issues, a fact which confirms the gradual centralization of decision making at the federal level of government. Moreover, given this relative indifference towards the legislative process, it was argued that most problems faced by the Swiss population can be settled better at the communal level of government. This discussion sets one of these problems in context, namely the need for the resident population of Bagnes to have a say in the ways in which the land of the commune is used.

CHAPTER III

**The Contemporary Economic Base
of Valais and the Origins of Tourism
in the Canton**

3.1 The Integration of Valais into the Swiss Economy

This chapter concerns the three industries which compete for the control and use of the land in the commune of Bagnes: agriculture, hydroelectricity and tourism. The cultural assertion reaction which has accompanied economic development in recent years cannot be understood without reference to the larger economic context in which the commune is embedded, because the people associated with this reaction have different interests in relation to each of these industries. The fact that for the time being, these interests have lost their divisive influence in the community can be explained by the presence of what the majority perceives as a larger issue, that of keeping control over who uses the land and for what purposes in the commune.

It will be argued that the ways in which Valais has been integrated into the surrounding economy inhibited both the hydroelectric and tourist sectors from mobilizing over time passionate supporters who could offset the influence of cultural assertion as it spread to the majority of the local population. In that regard, it will be shown that the capital required to harness the hydropower potential of the canton came mainly from outside Valais while tourism established itself as an industry after a series of events that have little to do with Valaisan promotional skills. Both of these topics will be dealt with following a discussion of Valais' policy toward agriculture, because the latter sector did mobilize support in the population while tourism and hydroelectricity were perceived as "foreign".

The section on agriculture will describe a joint effort by the peasantry and government to invest heavily in commercial farming, to expand the surface of arable land through irrigation, and to access new areas by road construction. In the process, however, cantonal authority was reinforced often at the expense of local solutions and autonomy.

3.1.1 Agriculture

Hydroelectricity and tourism did not become the major industries of the canton because of the specific support of the government of Valais. In fact, as will be described in this section, the picture reflected by the legislative program and the actual policies enacted since the 1860s is one of promoting agriculture as the principal indigenous resource from which all prosperity should flow. The development of viticulture, the planting and harvesting of fruit trees, cultivation of gardens and cattle raising embodied the social and religious values with which the authorities wished the canton identified. The 1885 business report of the State Council clearly shows the mistrust the highest authorities had toward industry in general:

"Aujourd'hui que dans beaucoup de pays l'industrie souffre de l'excès de production, que des chomages et des grèves fréquentes sont à l'ordre du jour, ne devons-nous pas penser que c'est avec raison que le peuple valaisan ne s'est pas laissé distraire du travail de la terre auquel il a préféré se livrer, et que l'on a fort bien fait de ne pas se laisser décourager du travail du sol, pour se vouer à des industries, qui pendant qu'elles sont florissantes procurent, il est vrai, des jouissances faciles, mais qui amènent à leur suite tous les malaises dont se ressentent aujourd'hui

les pays industriels lorsque le pain diminue sans que le goût de la dépense soit restreint pour autant" (quoted in Arlettaz 1976: 48).

Three years later, the message is shorter but no less telling:

"C'est le produit de la terre seulement qui doit nous guider dans nos dépenses, et ce qu'elle nous donne, ne suffit pas pour nous permettre d'adopter le luxe et d'accepter le trop plein des industries qui se déversent chez nous" (1888, Ibid.).

At the turn of the century, the Valaisan political class realized the canton was lagging behind in the area of industry but also refused to believe that the foundation from which to catch up would be an impoverished if not ruined agriculture:

"[L'industrie] est le seul moyen de nous affranchir graduellement de l'importation. [Mais avec] la volonté énergique de tous, le Valais, si richement doté par le créateur, parviendra lentement à équilibrer son bilan commercial" (Business Report of the State Council for 1896 quoted in Arlettaz 1976: 49).

"L'importation" was the critical problem for the government; furthermore, the "bilan commercial" which one would rather define today as the degree of self-sufficiency, was about the only figure used to establish its economic priorities. Let us observe how the government came to this conclusion.

An indication that an agricultural crisis was in the offing became evident between 1860 and 1890 when imports of wheat from the United States to Switzerland tripled while prices of wheat produced in the Alps collapsed (Arlettaz 1976: 36). One of the tables drawn up by Arlettaz shows that in 1883, 51,000 quintals of grain represented 53% of the

total value of agricultural imports. By 1895, the number of quintals had more than doubled while the proportion of imported grain remained constant. On the other hand, in 1910 the number of quintals had again doubled but the proportion of grain in the statistics only represented 34.7% of imports. Even more striking, in 1883, a quintal of grain was worth an average of 38.5 francs while by 1910 it was only worth 18.04 francs (Arlettaz 1976: 38). This means that two things happened in the course of the period: first, other agricultural products besides grain came into Valais and second, the grain cost less to the consumer. These two factors, increasing imports and low prices for Valais' wheat, provided the basis for the government's pro-agriculture position because these factors could not be controlled effectively by local communities. In the case of grain, it was clear there was a crisis. As far as other commodities were concerned, the situation seemed more promising and policy could thus be based upon developing the canton's potential for these products.

On the subject of cattle raising for example, the Prefect of the district of Entremont had already noted the following in 1858:

"L'écoulement facile du produit des vaches laitières et la recherche du bétail par les marchands étrangers expliquent pourquoi nos propriétaires tendent à diminuer la contenance de leurs champs pour augmenter celle de leurs prés" (quoted in Papilloud 1974: 115).

Papilloud himself has compiled figures which substantiate the prefect's observations. He states that since 1855 (1974: 112, figure 10) there was a considerable spread developing between the price of rye, which was falling in real terms, and the price of beef, whereas in the

preceding years, between 1820 and 1855, their fluctuations had been nearly parallel. Thus the peasant who had converted his rye fields into pasture land starting in 1855, realized a gain since the price of beef was in his favor. Papilloud then concludes,

"L'élevage devient le principal bénéficiaire de ce changement de structures. Si l'on en croit l'évolution des prix, la production animale aurait profité de la baisse des prix des céréales" (Papilloud 1974: 115).

3.1.1.1 The Period 1860 - 1913

Between 1860 and 1950, two successive policies were adopted with respect to the constraints which Valaisan agriculture had to live with for nearly a century. The first may be associated with the years 1860-1913. These dates refer respectively to the arrival of the railway at Sion and to the election of Mr. Maurice Troillet to the State Council. During this period, the government wished to replace the money "lost" importing grain by exports of produce provided by arboriculture, cattle raising and viticulture (Arlettaz 1976: passim).

The most striking action reflecting this general policy was the government's request in 1861 for aid from the Confederation to combat flooding on the Rhone plain. Between 1855 and 1861, overflow from the river had caused so much damage that public opinion was ready to accept federal intervention into the affairs of the canton (and into those of the communes which until then, had carried all the costs of flood control themselves [de Kalbermatten 1964: 7]). It was hardly a mutually agreeable arrangement in view of the fact that the Confederation was very exacting, as it continues to be today when subsidies are requested.

Predictably, its engineers recommended that supervision of this ambitious project should come from outside the canton "because [...] there are communes which, having no urgent needs, prefer to repair churches or build new ones at great expense" (quoted in Arlettaz 1976: 33, my translation). The Federal Council would not follow this advice, which was obviously biased, but while it offered to defray only one third of the costs, it imposed an agreement between Valais and a rail company so that their respective work would be coordinated to avoid duplication in building dikes along the river.

The Confederation attached a great deal of importance to the railway, whereas the cantonal authorities wished to protect and if possible extend the arable land of the plain. The Confederation counted on the railway to strengthen the internal market for Swiss products, an idea which also suited Swiss companies of a national scale who shared this objective. For example in 1893, the Compagnie des chemins de fer Jura-Simplon successfully proposed the construction of a tunnel under the Simplon pass which would connect the eastern end of the canton with Italy. Its financial backers included the Banque de Winterthur, Sulzer et frères also of Winterthur, Locher et Cie of Zurich, while the engineers came from Hamburg, Germany (de Preux 1907: 3).

However, from the point of view of the canton, the railway only complicated the problem of the trade deficit in agricultural production. By assuring the regularity of supplies and shipments at increasingly lower costs, the train (which reached Brig in 1878 and Simplon in 1906) became

the gauge measuring the productivity of Valaisan agriculture. It virtually forced peasant production to adapt to the conditions of the internal Swiss market. This was detrimental to Valais inasmuch as Swiss policies designed to maintain the balance of trade favored the export of industrial products from prosperous cantons and the import of foreign agricultural produce, which could now be easily sold in all cantons because of the railway system. Lacking industry, Valais suffered under these trading conditions.

Between 1860 and 1913 a sort of general consensus emerged in the canton. Arlettaz writes of the protectionnisme agraire which prevailed at that time (1976: 19). It was founded on the program designed by a local elite dedicated to the promotion of the regional interests of Valais within Switzerland. This elite grew out of the ancient aristocracy, the majority of whose members understood that the preservation of their social position would be entirely dependent on a sound agricultural economy. This group counted on local resources since it did not possess the financial capacity to be on an equal footing with the large Swiss or foreign business families who invested in the canton, particularly in the secondary railway lines, like the one between Martigny and Orsières in the District of Entremont (C. Michelet 1969: 49).

These people served on the central committee of the Association sédunoise d'agriculture, founded in 1868 and whose president at that time was a former State Councillor of the Radical Party. There were 77 members divided into 27 sections

"chargées de travaux touchant à tous les secteurs de l'agriculture et de l'élevage: les engrais, l'irrigation, les assolements, l'engraissement du bétail, la viticulture, les pépinières, les laiteries, les instruments aratoires, etc. La société organise immédiatement un cours pratique d'arboriculture suivi par une quarantaine d'élèves; elle ouvre un bureau de renseignements agricoles.

[...] La société sédunoise est animée de l'idée de rééquilibrer progressivement la balance commerciale du Valais en plaçant entièrement sa confiance dans l'agriculture; diminuer les besoins dus au luxe et à l'inertie et développer toutes les productions du sol, tel est son programme" (Arlettaz 1976: 35).

Similar associations were formed in Sierre in 1872, Martigny in 1875 and Chamoson in 1877 (C. Michelet 1969: 25). Other towns on the plain--Monthey, Viège and Brig--also had their associations before 1880 (Arlettaz 1976: 35).

The rapid proliferation of agricultural associations can be explained by their quality of being open to a great number of people: peasants of modest means mixing at ease with notaries, lawyers and state officials; most visible were the agronomists and even businessmen with only a marginal interest in agriculture. Membership in these groups meant one could gain access to the corridors of power in Valais. Members advocating innovative work methods were regular contributors to the editorial pages of the newspapers. They organized campaigns favoring the use of chemical fertilizers (1877), mounted exhibitions to display the different fruits of the canton (1877) and backed plans for developing viticulture (Arlettaz 1976: 35, 38).

Construction of dikes to prevent the Rhone from flooding, undertaken under the supervision of the government, contributed to a con-

siderable extension of arable land. During the course of the work (1863-1894), 6,820 hectares in all were drained (Arlettaz 1976: 34). Louis Courthion, author of an important book on Valais in 1903 had harsh words on the consequences of the diking for the system of land ownership.

In Fully, for example, Courthion maintains that dividing up the predominantly agricultural land benefited only the wealthy peasants. In the past, grasslands and marshes were common property which every bourgeois could use, provided he owned animals that could graze there. The cattle owners thus found it advantageous to preserve the system of common ownership; the poorest amongst them begged for land to improve so they could keep cattle and take advantage of the common property. On the other hand, households without cattle or horses only received a symbolic amount of money to compensate them for non-usage of the common pasture land. More general discontent led to pressure in favor of distribution of some of the communal property to private owners. The first allocation took place in 1868 even before the drainage work had started in the area and Courthion deduced, from the demands for land that followed, that the poor were quickly deprived of their new property after the first apportionment. After 1875 when the work was finished, two other allocations were made, but this time, only usufruct was transferred while ownership was retained by the community (Courthion 1972: 64-69). The author predicted in his conclusion (and time has proved him right) that new land would be allocated on an individual basis:

"Il est fort à craindre, en effet, qu'une aussi sage mesure ne puisse être longtemps maintenue; déjà l'on voit les

plus riches et les plus entreprenants s'ingénier à pratiquer le trafic des meilleures parcelles, si bien que petit à petit, le soin d'un bénéfice présent étouffant celui de la prospérité générale dans l'avenir, les populations se laissent gagner au principe du partage définitif et à l'investiture de ces biens. De la sorte, si le droit pour le ressortissant d'aliéner le lot qu'il détient n'est pas encore acquis, il ne saurait sensiblement tarder à l'être" (Courthion 1972: 67).

Courthion carries this idea further, by establishing the fundamental difference which henceforth (that is, in the 20th century), would set apart plain dwellers and mountain dwellers concerning land ownership:

"Et, tandis que l'homme de la plaine s'éloigne [du] régime [de la communauté], nous voyons le montagnard s'y maintenir, par cela même que les pâturages en montagne - en haute montagne surtout - ne se prêtent pas à de telles transformations" (*Ibid.*).

The disparities between the plain and the mountains that resulted from the improvements made to the land by diking the Rhone caused a new policy on agriculture to be formulated at the beginning of this century. Courthion had sensed what was soon to become a necessity. The change in the government's priorities was associated with the election of Mr. Maurice Troillet; this man (particularly through his use of everyday speech) made his mark on the economic position held by Valais for 40 years. In his view, Valais in the 20th century must adopt a plan ensuring that agriculture would flourish equally well whether practiced on the Rhone plain or in the mountains. Developing new resources on the plain must be undertaken in conjunction with policies to improve agriculture in the mountains on a sustained and viable basis. This is precisely what happened.

3.1.1.2 The Period 1913 - 1950

The overall objective of the first policy remained just as pertinent in the second phase of its application (1913-1950). As clearly stated by Arlettaz when he wrote about the establishment of the Association Sédunoise d'agriculture, the policy was "to progressively restore Valais' balance of trade by placing complete confidence in agriculture" (1976: 35, my translation). Troillet added something new; he openly challenged the former attitude which recognized only one acceptable way of gaining wealth, that is, by reducing consumption and increasing savings. The state then acted in a manner which was unjustifiably paternalistic. Instead, Troillet said, in order to prosper, one must invest and to do this, one must borrow money: "only later, will we seek financial balance with the benefit of the more extensive resources of a revitalized economy", wrote C. Michelet, describing the government's new program (1969: 58, my translation).

The word "invest" is too strong to describe what was really in question. The idea was to strike the public's imagination; the terms used at the beginning of the century, such as "productivity" and "rationalization of work" were as common-place then as are "communications system" and "compatibility" today. "Investing" was in style in those days, but it actually meant "to procure a subsidy" rather than be concerned about a project if it only had long term effects (Guex 1971b: 79). It was in such a project that Maurice Troillet placed all his hopes: the resumption of dike construction along the Rhone.

The first attempt was a partial failure because the method of spikes (rocks placed as a breakwater to stem the torrential flow of the river, thus preventing flooding) caused the river bed to rise above the level of the land. This had to be rectified by a regulated irrigation system which would raise the level of the plain with alluvial deposits at the same time as draining it through canals (de Preux 1918: 3; C. Michelet 1969: 64). During a conference organized by the Agricultural Association of Valais, the public sector engineer, Henri de Preux, praised this "logical and essential final touch" (1918: 3, my translation). He promised the communes they would not need to spend more than 3.5 million francs because of the availability of subsidies; on the other hand, the reclaimed land would be worth 40 million francs (1918: 6). The agricultural surpluses yielded by this land thus attracted the attention of the government and the communes. A veritable forest of all types of fruit trees could be planted which would be the pride of the canton. Referring to the emigrants who deserted Valais in the 19th century, de Preux concluded by promising "our own accomplishments will outshine the stories from America" (1918: 12, my translation).

The government's plans for the mountain region to keep it from reverting to antiquated ways while the plain was rapidly expanding consisted in finding new ways to circulate information on modern agricultural techniques. At the time, statistics revealed serious regional disparities. The effectiveness of newspapers had not been tested and agricultural associations existed mainly in communes of the plain. In addition, there was at times rivalry within the canton itself, farmers from

the plain competing with their mountain counterparts. This situation was not at all reassuring for the government, since the mountain regions also sent a flood of immigrants streaming down to the plain; these men and women increased the labor force, lowered the workers' salaries and ruled out the prospect, seriously contemplated by the government, of capital accumulation in the canton which could eventually finance the development of industry. The entire economic program thus risked being compromised because of the increasing disparities between the plain and the mountain regions.

Then the government began looking for someone who would serve as an intermediary between the peasants and its own policies. In 1917, a bill had proposed an expanded program on the professional teaching of agriculture at the primary level as well as courses at the high school level aimed at young people between the ages of 16 and 20. These measures clearly meant that the local teachers would, henceforth be in partnership with the government. The teachers themselves inspired confidence:

"Quant aux professeurs, il n'est pas nécessaire de créer des professeurs spéciaux, ni un appareil nouveau. Nos instituteurs qui, pour la plupart, sortent de la campagne, sont tout désignés pour cette tâche [...]. L'expérience nous démontre que c'est précisément l'instituteur qui est le mieux entendu en cette matière dans nos village, beaucoup ont donné l'exemple et sont de vrais modèles d'agriculteurs avisés et au courant des dernières méthodes agricoles. Quant aux cours complémentaires, le programme en sera naturellement plus étendu. Il comprendra l'utilisation des engrais, la connaissance des plantes, des maladies de la vigne et des arbres, la taille, la plantation, etc. Tout cela, l'instituteur peut l'enseigner très facilement" (M. Troillet 1917, quoted in Guex 1971a: 62-63).

After a long discussion over the ideal location of a winter agricultural school for the residents of Haut-Valais, this law was adopted in 1919. In 1923, the property formerly rented to the government by the monks of Grand-Saint-Bernard for agronomic research was formally opened under the name of the Châteauneuf School of Agriculture:

"Si les fils de paysans peuvent acquérir chez eux l'habileté manuelle nécessaire à l'exercice de leur métier, ils auront tout à gagner à faire un passage prolongé dans une exploitation rurale modèle au point de vue technique et économique. [...] Le rôle d'une école pratique d'agriculture est de transformer rapidement les conditions dans lesquelles beaucoup de cultivateurs travaillent encore" (Guex 1971a: 92).

Thus the teachers would participate with the agronomists in the technical training of the ideal peasant which would be useful to the State¹³. The success of the "Troillet's plan", as Michelet called it, depended on the circulation of agronomic information; personal contacts made through the school and word of mouth replaced newspapers and agricultural associations as the means of reaching the peasants (1969: 58).

Mountain farmers would then be encouraged to intensify cash crop agriculture and diminish their commitment to raising cattle and producing cheese. New varieties of fruit trees appeared on the plain and according to this "plan", the mountain region was expected to follow the lead by

¹³ The government seemed to act alone on this matter since, in 1920, the people rejected the government's proposal to increase the teachers' salaries (Annuaire 1974: 516).

developing the resources best suited to its altitude. Hard work and constant attention would yield a quality product which would easily sell on the internal market. In the Bagnes valley, the most successful were seed potatoes, strawberries, raspberries and black currants (Sauvain 1980:135). A household's investment in this type of farming was first of all an outlay of funds to purchase equipment and top quality seeds, then a sacrifice of certain subsistence crops, for example beets grown for fodder, to get the time and space required by the new type of farming.

In the years between the wars (C. Michelet 1969: 72-73), the expansion of commercial farming was stimulated by the major mountain road construction program initiated by the government. The income from these seasonal jobs encouraged more than one family to start cultivating berries. When a construction site closed down and while waiting for a new project to begin, commercial farming supplemented the income of the households affected. This change in agricultural production also brought about a change in the division of labor between the sexes. During the day, women assumed the work of the men who were on construction jobs and often ended up being ultimately responsible for the family's commercial farming venture. The old people in Bagnes, especially the women, still remember the demanding work that cultivating strawberries required, such as the long back-breaking hours spent under the blazing sun. In addition to their household duties they often took on contracts to do sewing at home; Anne Troillet-Boven has written about the work of the women of Bagnes with great sensitivity (1973: 28, 176). For years, cottage industry has been very much part of the Swiss way of life

(Steinberg 1976: 131-139). Thus since the 1920s, the need for a ready source of cash to meet the increased opportunities to spend money, from "colonial produce" to household appliances further introduced the market economy into the more isolated valleys; furthermore, new or improved roads offered the peasant family outlets for the sale of their products. But roads, from their construction to their use, were not the only factor favoring stepping up Valais' commercial agricultural production. The other part of the "plan" concerned organizing producers into new associations.

For each agricultural product the objective sought was to ensure stable supplies to consumers and to compensate, by importing if necessary, for the sporadic local production due to seasonal and geographic factors. The peasants when unified could also counterbalance the wholesalers in the same market when it came to setting the prices.

The first organization of this kind was the Valaisan Federation of Dairy Farmers (known as F.V.P.L. in Valais). When it was founded in 1919, it assumed responsibility for the federal subsidies which since the beginning of the war had been paid by the Cantonal Bureau of Supply (C. Michelet 1969 : 76). However, according to Cyrille Michelet (*Ibid.*: 177-215), president of the F.V.P.L. between 1933 and 1965, the association had several difficult years in terms of getting a fair price for dairy products because membership was thin. This changed in 1935 when a federal regulation was passed to support milk prices. As Valais' minister in the Federal Assembly in Bern, Maurice Troillet urged his colleagues to include

in the regulation that federal subsidies would only be available to producers' associations such as the F.V.P.L. . Consequently, in one move, 403 dairy producers and cattle owners' associations in Valais joined the original 68 federated groups (Ibid.: 211), proof that the State can flex its muscles in Switzerland as elsewhere.

Vine-growers in Valais also were an important segment of the agrarian economy, constituting 27,732 of the total population of 128,000 in 1916. In that year, the government had already offered assistance to producers who had financial difficulties. The canton did not actually have enough cellar space available to house the annual production which in 1914 amounted to 20 million liters. Valais' cellars could only hold 11 million liters which meant that grapes and unfermented juice were exported and then in certain seasons, the wine, bottled in neighboring cantons, was repurchased at high prices (C. Michelet 1969: 77). However between 1920 and 1930 the phylloxera infestation devastated the vineyards and production fell. Consequently the need for an organization of producers was deferred during those ten years.

The Confederation and the canton became visible again in 1929. In order to stabilize prices, the authorities agreed to subsidize 50% of the construction and installation costs of the first cooperative cellars in Valais (Ibid.: 78). Wine merchants, whether retailers or exporters, were against these measures because up until then they had bought the vintage from wine producers at prices they alone determined (Guex 1971a: 282). Over the next three years while cellars were being built in the plain at

Sierre, Sion, Leytron and Ardon, the merchants denounced the government's involvement in their affairs. Once built, these cellars immediately joined together to found the Valaisan Federation of Wine Producers, better known later under the name PROVINS. By 1943 there were 2,000 members with a cellar capacity of 15 million liters (de Rivaz 1965: 459). The new federation also succeeded in opposing the merchants by selling wine directly to consumers.

The situation was somewhat different for the fruit and vegetable producers. From the beginning, the organization process involved both merchants and producers. Their shared objectives were to fight against foreign competition and to oversee the quality of products intended for export (Guex 1971b: 58). In April 1934, Maurice Troillet presided over the simultaneous founding of the Valaisan Federation of Fruit and Vegetable Producers and the Valaisan Union, the latter group being responsible for marketing the crops of the former. Nowadays both organizations are known as PROFRUITS and the producers are in full control of prices (C. Michelet 1969: 83).

Again it is worth stressing the presence of State Councillor Troillet in the melee because in any conflict he sided with the associations. As we have seen, they were not established with unanimous support, even amongst the peasants. Let us take the case of the decree by which Valais was integrated into the national policy of assistance to cheese and milk producers. It was approved in Bern following a request presented by Maurice Troillet in 1935. Overnight, dairies and cattle owners' associa-

tions, the very bastions of village individualism, were united in a federated union. In the sector of viticulture he was accused, in 1931, of ridiculing the Valaisan parliament by forcing it to vote credits with regard to expenditures already incurred. Troillet had alone decided the manner in which the federal grants would be divided amongst the cooperative cellars and the other cellars, clearly favoring the former group (Guex 1971a: 284-285).

The State Councillor also lent his support to the men devoted to his plan of action. To mention just three: C. Michelet of the F.V.P.L., H. Wuilloud, the prolific editor from 1913 to 1963 of the bi-monthly paper Le Valais Agricole and A. Luisier, first president of the F.V.P.L., head of the Châteauneuf School, founding member and director of PROVINS, manager of the Federation of Hérens cattle breeders. Their work in promoting agriculture had a considerable influence on the transformation of this sector of the Valaisan economy. Sometimes in a region's history, certain individuals carry out the policies of the State so forcefully, that their names must be associated with a large number of changes. Between the years 1913 and 1950, Valais was a classic example of this situation.

It must be kept in mind therefore, that in order to implement this second agricultural policy, the cantonal government had availed itself of most of the levers of economic intervention in agriculture. The party in power won the support of workers by promoting the large construction projects (first roads, then hydroelectric dams) as well as courting peasants with promises of seasonal jobs and farm subsidies. The ap-

proximately 15,000 foreign workers who were in Valais in 1910, were reduced by two-thirds while "Troillet's plan" was in force (Annuaire 1974: 67). Local workers and peasants made up a solid electoral base and Troillet owed his long term in office (1913-1955) to his capacity to mobilize new support for his program within these two social groups. The business middle class living on the Rhone plain winced slightly when the State Councillor issued statements like this one in 1928:

"Que les populations aient donc confiance dans les solutions que nous leur présentons et que nous savons bonnes et utiles" (quoted in Guex 1971a: 233).

On the other hand, teachers, agronomists and innovative peasants admired this kind of stand. In every commune in Valais, at least one of these followers, for example, A. Fellay of Bagnes, could be found at the head of such and such a cattle owners' association or cattle breeding syndicate. Many received direct remuneration from the canton for each hour of work spent supervising or chairing a meeting¹⁴.

The establishment of the federations of agricultural producers thus completed the economic picture for the period 1913-1950. The success and failure of Valais' farm policy can thus be briefly assessed. Until the 1950s, the government's purpose was to promote the canton's integration into the internal Swiss market, primarily by developing commercial farming. Furthermore, under the rationale that it was necessary to promote agriculture in order to improve the balance of trade, the government succeeded in increasing its own powers of intervention in this

¹⁴ Maurice Troillet's detractors regarded these people as mere party underlings (Guex 1971a: 259).

sector.

The positive aspect of this policy is found in the social legitimacy it gave to the practice of having dual occupations, peasant and worker. The state itself created or subsidized seasonal employment that was complementary to cash-crop farming. The farm policy of the government, often described as a patriotic endeavor, was such as to secure the tacit support of the non-agricultural population. Most communes of Valais preserved their rural character even though the portion of the population entirely dependent on farming in Valais dropped to 23.9% in 1960, from 75.4% in 1888 (Annuaire 1974: 92,60).

On the other hand, policy promoters raised hopes of economic prosperity through commercial farming and made the failure a bitter one if success is to be measured not just by the re-election of politicians but by the comparative prosperity of the canton. Until December 31, 1948, Valais' share in the federal tax for national defence only rose 1.18%, that is 15 francs per person, while the inhabitants of the wealthiest canton contributed six times as much under this heading (Guex 1971b: 271)¹⁵. Instead of generating capital that could have financed the local development of industry, as this policy ultimately aimed at, the Valaisan peasantry went into debt; in 1947 the peasant assets amounted to 11 billion francs, and liabilities to 5 billion (*Ibid.*: 243). Still worse, in the absence of a clear industrial policy, tourism and the hydroelectric

¹⁵ This tax can be used as a measure to compare standards of living in the cantons of Switzerland because it is the only tax whose amount is proportional to income in the country.

industry had prospered to the extent that their financial ability to purchase land, and thereby ensure the continued growth of their revenues, was disproportionately greater than that of the peasantry.

In other words, these two sectors of the Valaisan economy outgrew "Troillet's plan". Valais faced too many competitors. As Guex wrote of 1948: "The problem stems from the way Switzerland views exporting. In order to sell its turbines, the country has to buy fruit" (1971b: 262, my translation).

3.2 Hydroelectricity in Valais

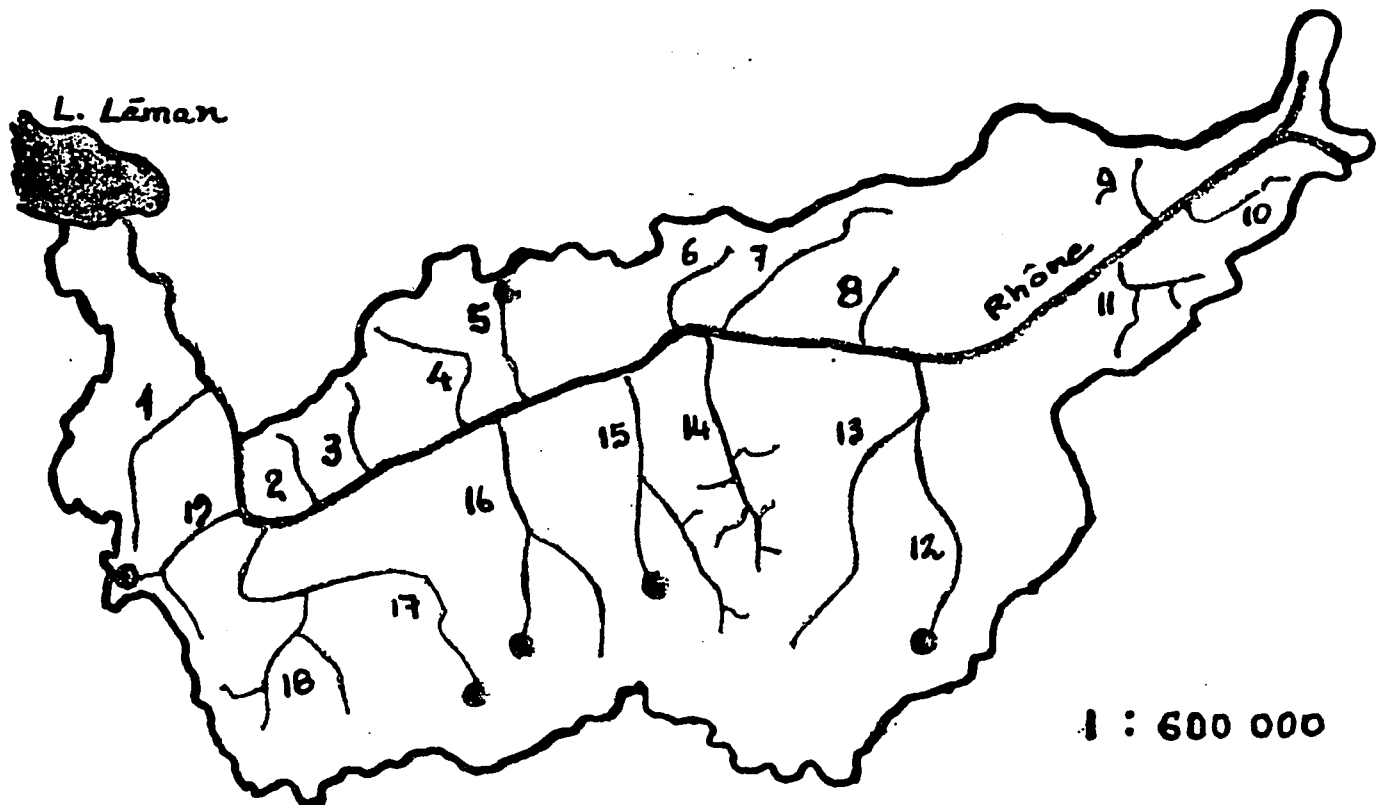
This section will show the role that the production of electricity plays in the energy supply of the canton and the extent to which it contributes to that of Switzerland. This is relevant because each specific purpose of the exploitation of hydropower has different consequences for land use in the producing area as well as for the number of job opportunities created after the completion of a dam or power station.

3.2.1 Summary of Geographic Data

The Rhone Valley is a deep trough whose peripheral limits almost exactly define the cantonal boundaries of Valais. The valley is flanked on either side by two mountain ranges which face southwest: the Bernese Alps which dominate the Swiss plateau and the Pennine Alps whose peaks can be seen from the Lombardy plain in northern Italy. The bed of the Rhone lies at 400 meters above sea level while most of the mountains which soar above it rise to some 4,000 meters. The Grand-Combin Massif which separates the valleys of Bagnes and Entremont reaches 4,137 meters at its highest point. The plain is fed by a dozen main rivers which flow into the Rhone in a series of right angles. This configuration of transversal river valleys and the great differences in altitude make the canton's natural potential for hydropower immediately apparent.

This immense hydrographic basin is shown on Map no. 3. The rivers

MAP 3
THE RHONE RIVER BASIN



NAME OF RIVERS AND OF STORAGE LAKES WHEN APPLICABLE

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1 - The Viege | 10 - The Elm |
| 2 - The Salenfe | 11 - The Binna |
| 3 - The Lizerne | 12 - The Saaser Visp — Mattmark |
| 4 - The Morge | 13 - The Visp |
| 5 - The Lienne — Zeuzier | 14 - The Tourtemagne |
| 6 - The Raspille | 15 - The Navizence — Moiry |
| 7 - The Dala | 16 - The Borgne — Grande-Dixence |
| 8 - The Lonza | 17 - The Dranse of Bagnes — Mauvoisin |
| 9 - The Fiescherbach | 18 - The Dranse of Entremont and of Ferret |
| | 19 - The Trient — Emosson |

whose energy potential is already being exploited by one or more power producing companies are identified. The 6 largest storage reservoirs, each having the capacity to hold more than 50 million cubic meters of water, are also indicated. Water stored in these artificial lakes, allows electricity to be sold during the winter, at a time when not only the prices are better but also when there is not enough natural precipitation to supply the conventional power stations. The reservoirs refill naturally, although 90% of the water is collected during the summer season. Water accumulates whatever the summer weather brings; if it is hot and dry, -- Valais is one of the driest regions in the Alps -- the glaciers melt; if it is cold and wet, natural rainfall raises the water level in the reservoirs (Chavaz 1956: 5). Building these reservoirs on the floor of certain lateral valleys has greatly facilitated control of the Rhone's periodic flooding. Now, the spring run off from its tributaries are better regulated. In this way the reservoirs have supplemented the diking and drainage work carried out in the Rhone valley.

3.2.2 The General Economy of Hydroelectricity

The production of hydroelectric energy has had a considerable impact on Valais' recent economic history. While the generating power of water has been known since earliest antiquity, the technology to transport this energy over long distances is not even a hundred years old:

"La solution de ce problème, qui permet une grande indépendance entre le lieu de production de l'énergie et son lieu d'utilisation, date de 1891. L'expérience décisive eut lieu en Allemagne et consista dans l'établissement

d'une ligne entre Lauffen sur le Neckar et Francfort, distants l'un de l'autre de 175 km. La preuve fut établie que l'électricité pouvait se transporter [...] en ne subissant qu'un déchet minime" (Oser 1927: 10).

It is this same technology which allows the interconnection of power stations and the switching over to sub-stations when one plant is overloaded. Thus the electrical network extends beyond the borders of the canton. This prompted Cyrille Michelet, former President of the Grand Council of the State of Valais¹⁶ to remark: "the problem of long distance transportation is a little too well resolved; energy produced in Valais is supplying the major systems of other cantons" (1969: 84, my translation). In the context of European demographics, Valais with its 200,000 inhabitants is not a significant consumer of electricity, but its territory is a major source of energy.

The ownership structure of the power-producing companies illustrates the canton's integration into the Swiss economy. The 27 operating in the canton are owned by 23 firms and Authorities of which 21 have their head offices located there. The relative importance of those firms could be assessed in various ways. The electricity produced has been selected as the most appropriate reference basis. Indeed, in this case, ownership and output are legally bound to one another, as is clearly stated in a booklet put out by Grande Dixence S.A.:

¹⁶ This position is equivalent to that of the House Speaker in the Congress of the United States; one is elected to the Presidency of the Grand Council for the period of a year by 130 peers representing the 13 Districts of Valais in Sion.

"Grande Dixence S.A. est une société de partenaires dans laquelle chaque actionnaire s'engage à prendre l'énergie électrique produite au prorata de sa participation et à couvrir les dépenses annuelles dans la même proportion" (Clavel n.d.: 1).

Then, knowing the average annual output of each of these companies (in millions of kw/h), and knowing the distribution of ownership amongst the various shareholding firms, it is possible to calculate the millions of kw/h which "belong" to each shareholder according to the exact percentage of its financial commitment in the companies. This amount gives a rough idea of the hydroelectric power which an ownership group may theoretically have at its disposal. For example, the Société suisse d'électricité et de traction, based in Basel, owns 10% of the capital stock of Kraftwerke Mattmark, 25% of the Société des forces motrices du Grand-Saint-Bernard, and 20% of Electricité de la Lienne: since these three Valaisan companies annually produce 562, 90 and 215 million kw/h respectively, the Société suisse d'électricité et de traction "controls", according to its proportional ownership of shares, a total of 121.8 million kw/h of the entire production of Valais which itself works out to 8,632 million kw/h (Ibid.).

Making the same calculations for each of the 23 private firms and public authorities who are shareholders in the 27 generating companies in Valais¹⁷, the distribution of kilowatts is as follows:

¹⁷ The number of ownership groups and communities does not include shareholders who, according to my calculations, "control" less than 12 million kw/h of the average annual production, nor does it include holders of shares traded on the stock market; however "their" kw/h have been included in the overall distribution presented here. The thermal power station at Vouvry is

TABLE 4

The Distribution of Ownership in the Electricity -
producing Companies of Valais

	in millions of kw/h	in percentage
Swiss Authorities	526.6	6.1
Valaisan Authorities	209.0	2.4
Federal Railroads	449.2	5.2
Electricité de France	389.4	4.5
Swiss private companies	4,563.9	52.9
Valaisan private companies ¹⁸	2,318.6	26.8
General public	175.3	2.0
	8,632.0	100.0
or more concisely:		
"Foreigners" (Swiss and others)	5,479.9	63.5
Valaisans	2,527.6	29.3
Federal Railroads	449.2	5.2
General public	175.3	2.0
	8,632.0	100.0

Source: Data compiled from the section entitled "hydroelectric economy" in Fichier Industriel 1980 (Fédération économique du Valais 1980).

Even if the engineers who persuaded investors to take the risks were often Valaisans, and in certain cases, drew up the plans for the dams, the capital needed was far too great to be entirely raised within the canton. In fact, the above figures indicate that Valaisan interests control no more than some 30% of the total electricity produced in

not included in any of the calculations.

¹⁸ Ciba-Geigy of Basel is listed as a Valaisan company because it employs 2,300 workers in its factories at Monthey which operate on electricity produced in Valais. The firms considered as Valaisan are those with head offices in the canton.

Valais.

Electricity is the major natural resource of the canton. It is not surprising therefore that such an ownership pattern, with Valaisans holding no more than a minority position, adds weight to a local perception as to foreigners taking over a large portion of the land.

3.2.3 Hydroelectricity and Land Use

Moreover, in Valais, land use is strategically affected by the destination of the locally produced electricity. When electricity is exported from the canton, the facilities required to produce it are immense and are often scattered over the land of several communes in order to maximize each valley's potential output through the use of pumping stations. The transformers are concentrated in one area where the equally sizeable system of infrastructure for transporting the energy begins. Using the energy solely for export purposes however, reduces the need for labor once the facilities are in place. The consequence of exporting energy is that permanent jobs are created mostly outside the producing region. The gigantic work force required at the time of construction, followed by employment contraction, leads to the resumption of former activities in the producing region, but in ways modified by some reduction of the land previously suitable for agriculture. When on the other hand, the electricity is consumed locally, for example to operate a manufacturing plant, the transformers and the transmission lines

become more numerous as the company expands; as these facilities become more conspicuous, the potential for conflict increases between the users of the land which is now supporting different activities beside simply producing electricity. However, sources of permanent employment are created in the producing region and changes in land use patterns from agriculture to industry can be negotiated under different terms.

The first major dams were built in the canton by firms using manufacturing methods which required a great amount of energy per unit of output. At the beginning of the century, in the years between 1897 and 1911 (Zurbruggen 1952: 122-131), these companies obtained attractive concessions to the water rights of certain rivers and built industrial complexes which were directly supplied with electricity from a nearby dam. Today, these companies are the largest employers in the canton. Alusuisse SA specializes in the conversion of bauxite into aluminum and has 3,000 male and female employees. Lonza SA hires 2,500 to work in its plants which manufacture chemical products and fertilizers. Ciba-Geigy SA employs 2,300 Valaisans. Through the process of water electrolysis, this internationally known corporation markets chlorine, caustic soda and hydrogen as well as manufacturing plastics, dyes, insecticides and drugs (Fédération économique du Valais 1980). It is Valaisan electricity which prompted the growth of these three companies into huge multinational corporations with branches worldwide. They constitute a sizeable portion of the Valaisan economy, seeing that the fourth largest industrial employer in the canton is a local company hiring only 470 people (Ibid.: 58).

These manufacturing companies financed their growth in Valais by investing in the newest dam building projects. Ciba-Geigy provided 25% of the capital of the Société des forces motrices du Grand-Saint-Bernard in 1954 (several years before the actual construction of the dam) so that it could draw additional supplies of energy from the same river where the Compagnie des forces motrices d'Orsières operates; this company has been wholly owned by Ciba-Geigy since 1931 (Maret-Rausis 1956: 182-186). Lonza draws most of its electricity from the old Ackersand I plant and has nearly doubled its output by making a 60% investment in the Ackersand II and Morel dams which belong to Aletsch AG; the remaining 40% is made up of unregistered shares and Lonza exercises effective control. Four other investments of a lesser scale assure Lonza, through access to the board of directors, the capability to obtain, if need be, new energy resources for its factories. Three quarters of Alusuisse's hydro requirements are provided by Rhonewerk AG, a plant which it controls outright. Like Lonza, Alusuisse has diversified its investments amongst other power producing companies (Fédération économique du Valais 1980: chapter entitled "économie énergétique"). Moreover, knowing that Alusuisse bought 99.6% of Lonza's shares in 1973 (Höpflinger 1978: 196), the former company is unquestionably the largest producer of electricity in Valais. According to the method of calculation proposed earlier (p.132), these two companies together store and use nearly one quarter of the canton's total hydropower.

Besides supplying the industrial sector of the canton's economy,

hydroelectricity produced in Valais also meets the electrical needs of households and craft industries. Until about 1930 the power needed was generated by such inexpensive technology as a turbine placed in the current of a river or waterfall. In 1916, de Preux noted 546 installations like this in Valais (compared to only 32 facilities which operated at over 20 horse power [de Preux 1917: 21-25]):

"[ce] sont les oeuvres des travailleurs aux fortunes modestes qui n'entendent pas laisser perdre les forces que dédaignent les gros capitalistes. Et il y en a comme vous voyez beaucoup. [...] A l'électricité marchent des scieries, des moulins à blé, à huile, à chaux, des barattes à beurre. Dans tel village de montagne un forgeron organise un petit atelier avec un tour ou un marteau-pilon en dérivant les eaux d'un faible ruisseau qui tombe en cascade pittoresque, il organise sa petite transmission, actionne sa machine à l'électricité et fournit le courant nécessaire à l'éclairage des habitations" (*Ibid.*: 24).

Nowadays these domestic installations have almost all disappeared following the construction of the large dams. Indeed, the viability of the storage lakes depends on funnelling into one central place all the water from the mountain springs, streams and waterfalls by means of feeder pipes, siphons and pumping stations. Since the construction of these reservoirs, all households in the canton have access to the central network of electricity distribution, whereas in the past only areas favored by the natural environment or by proximity to a large company had electricity. But domestic needs only account for a small amount of this newly generated energy.

In 1974 a Valaisan economist assessed the energy consumption of households, agriculture and public utilities at only 5% of the canton's

total output (Fauchère 1974). This figure can be adjusted upwards by a few percentage points, knowing that the large industrial companies supply electricity to the communes located besides their factories. For example Ciba-Geigy supplies the communes of Monthey and Val d'Illiez while the communes which make up Martigny and its surroundings receive part of their power from Lonza according to a contract established long ago (Association suisse des électriciens 1976: 208-212). Fauchère does not seem to have taken this point into account in his proposed distribution of electricity production amongst the different users¹⁹.

The third use for Valaisan hydropower are the national railroads; they account for about 5% of the total output (infra: p. 133). Electrifying the Simplon line (including the ventilation system in the tunnel) was done in three stages in the years between 1919 and 1924. At present, the private railroads are almost all connected to the main electrical network (Zurbriggen 1952: 86, 72). Switching to electricity meant the water reservoirs essential for steam traction could be demolished; coal yards have also disappeared from the Rhone valley countryside and smoke no longer hangs over the plain.

¹⁹ Domestic consumption for 1979 may be indirectly estimated, knowing that on the Swiss scale, combining all the uses, the average annual consumption per head was 5310 kw/h (Goldsmith 1980: 32). Valais' population in that year being 218 000, it can be determined that 1158 million kw/h of electricity was used in the canton. Knowing this electricity was distributed as 28.2% for household use and 31.5% to supply the needs of the craft industry, agriculture and utilities (Hofer 1980: 1), Valais' domestic consumption would then work out to 691 million kw/h, that is, precisely 8% of the canton's total output (8632 million kw/h in 1979). There may certainly be criticism for using the Swiss rates of consumption to reflect Valais, given that tourist overnight visits (listed under "services") and agriculture are, in proportion to the population, greater in Valais than elsewhere. Nevertheless, the canton's total output is such that this figure of 8% is closer to the truth than not.

Finally the amount of Valaisan electricity exported to the rest of Switzerland and neighboring countries may be measured by deducting the other uses which have just been outlined. Heavy industry controls 26% of the electricity generated in Valais and almost all of that is used locally. Some 10 to 15% is used for domestic purposes and railways. Therefore about 60% of the canton's hydropower is available for export. This proportion may vary; it depends as much on the respective demands of each category of use from one year to the next as it does on the serious dry spells which may occasionally affect the canton.

On a nation-wide scale, exporting is a way for Switzerland to ensure its own security in electrical supplies. Electricity is traded with neighboring countries by means of an interconnecting system with a nominal power of 16,000 MW, about 1.3 times the power of all Swiss generating stations (GEK 1978: 43). This daily business of exchanging kilowatts by the fixed hour allows Switzerland to make substantial savings, as it does not need to build within its borders the facilities to produce the power needed to meet its own peak requirements.

Having said this, Switzerland has always had until now a surplus as far as electricity exports are concerned and to a greater extent so has Valais. As a statement from the Union of Swiss Power Stations emphasized, there has always been a very productive complementary arrangement between the canton and the country since Switzerland exports mainly in the summer, while in the winter, the bulk of the exported hydropower comes from the storage lakes (1980: 2). Within

Valais lie three of the largest reservoirs of the country; the total usable capacity of all the artificial lakes in the canton represents 42.5% of the Swiss total capacity (Fauchère 1974). For 1979, in Valais itself, the annual output of electricity derived from the storage lakes amounted to approximately 4,540 million kw/h, that is more than half the total output of 8,632 kw/h.

Valais' superiority in hydropower, compared to the resources of other cantons in the overall energy picture of Switzerland, may be partly explained by the advantages the canton's physical geography has provided the hydro companies. In addition to the inexhaustible supply of water contained in Valais' glaciers (2/3 of Switzerland's glaciers are in this canton), the topography of the land has meant that "places, where the least amount of concrete is needed to gather the largest volume of water, have been harnessed first" (Dubois 1960: 97, my translation). For each new project, the investment required depends on the difficulties the terrain presents. But this is the extent of nature's influence on companies' decisions for the most appropriate place in which to build a dam.

Beyond that, it is more specifically the economic conditions that prevail in the industry in which the company is engaged which determine the profitability of a construction site and consequently how the locally produced electricity will be used. If economic conditions look favorable for the establishment of manufacturing plants in the producing region, the company or consortium involved will make a better offer for the water rights than another company, for example, who wants to develop hydropower potential for export; this latter group will, under these

economic conditions, have more difficulty raising the necessary capital given that they are at a disadvantage compared to the first group.

To Valais' detriment, a federal law was introduced in 1916 which had the effect of quickly altering this pattern of classic competition with respect to the type of use which could be made of the electricity generated in the canton's valleys. With the adoption of the Federal Law on the Use of Water Power, the Confederation intended to standardize, as much as possible, the cantonal procedures for granting water rights. An article in this law prevented the canton from raising the royalties to be paid by the lessee when he exported electricity from the producing canton (Switzerland 1916: article 49/4). This article thus annulled part of the Valaisan law of 1898 which introduced such an increase in royalties in order to encourage manufacturing companies to establish themselves in the area and thus improve the regional economy (Valais 1898: article 10). As this chapter has shown, this is effectively what happened with Lonza, Ciba-Geigy and Alusuisse at the turn of the century. After the federal law came into effect in January 1918, no other companies followed them; it was as if the industrialization of Valais came to an abrupt halt. As evidence of the effects of this one article of the Swiss law, between 1907 and 1915 Valais' power production had increased 8.5 times compared to only 3.5 times between 1915 and 1942 (there were 10 power stations in 1907, 20 in 1915 and 33 in 1942 [Zurbriggen 1952: Annexe 3]). A company could therefore establish itself outside Valais and take advantage of its electricity as if it were actually based there. Since the calculations above are based on unequal periods

of time, it should be noted for the skeptics that between 1918 and 1928, immediately after application of the federal law and just before the crash in 1929, the number of power stations only grew from 21 to 26 (*Ibid.*).

Economic conditions following the second World War, again stimulated the increased use of the Valaisan territory to produce electricity. However, the manufacturing sector did not benefit from these investments, as it did at the beginning of the century. The anticipated increase in the consumption of electricity in Europe and in Switzerland was the driving force towards raising the necessary money. Considerable amounts of capital were thus invested in the construction of storage reservoirs. They allow a greater flexibility in the way the output is distributed, since the power plants may call on the reserve supplies at peak periods. Because of this flexibility, a company can bear higher transportation costs to send the electricity over greater distances (Dubach 1975: 23). The presence of an exchange market on energy exports thus determines the facilities' earning capacity and profit. In absolute terms, total costs may appear astronomical to any board of directors; those based in the industrial capitals of Switzerland in cities such as Basel, Zurich and Bern considered these costs safely within the bounds of a secure investment.

This general context is useful to the discussion of land use in the Bagnes commune insofar as it provided evidence on the actual uses of electricity in Valais and showed in particular that exports represent some 60% of total production. Bagnes is the basis for a large proportion of

this output because two exporting companies operate on its territory: Grande Dixence S.A. has a production network that extends from the Hérens valley to the outskirts of the village of Fionnay, where a power station has been built inside a mountain, near a small artificial equalization lake, while the hydropower yielded by the Mauvoisin dam situated at the far end of the Bagnes valley, the second largest reservoir in Switzerland, is also used for exports as the shareholding structure of Forces motrices de Mauvoisin S.A. illustrates²⁰.

The significance of the export pattern of consumption lies first with its impact on land use and economic development in general. Paradoxically, the more exports there are of hydroelectric power as compared with local industries consuming electricity nearby the site of production, the less is the encroachment on arable land and the better is the agricultural situation. In Bagnes, the use of electricity for exports explains in part why agriculture has kept a predominant position as a major land user relative to what this position could have been if manufacturing were the prime consumer of Mauvoisin's electricity. In that regard, the Swiss law which prevented Valais to raise a tax on electricity exports was beneficial to the agricultural sector of the economy. Second, the employment consequences are also entirely different depending on the destination of electricity. It has been shown here that exports allowed

²⁰ The company belongs to five Swiss firms: Forces Motrices de Laufenbourg SA of Laufenbourg holds 25% of the Valaisan company Forces Motrices de Mauvoisin SA (hereafter FMM), giving it effective control of the dam's production, while F.M. Bernoises SA of Bern and F.M. du Nord-Est de la Suisse of Baden each have a 20% interest; F.M. de la Suisse Centrale of Lucerne and Electrowatt of Zurich hold 15 and 10% respectively. Also, Electricité de France own 10% of the shares.

workers to return to their farms when construction was finished because local industrial jobs were simply not available. If this second observation is set in relation to the earlier discussion on the farm policy of the State of Valais, an additional conclusion may be reached, namely that exports went unopposed because they appeared to the State as being consistent with its farm policy; the maintenance of the family farm was imperative to provide the household with a living at times when construction employment was harder to find. While the farm policy mostly meant in Bagnes that women had to increase their contribution to farm work, it was also an encouragement for both spouses to invest in the future of agriculture in their commune, especially when commercial farming was associated, at least in speech from a State Councillor being Bagnard himself, with such great design as being able to finance future industrial growth with Valaisan capital rather than through more foreign investments in the canton.

3.3 Historical Background to the Rise of Tourism

It is important to provide the historical background to the birth and rise of modern tourism in Valais because it originated with the outside world and its perceptions rather than through deliberate efforts from the local population to promote it. In this sense the process is quite similar to what happened in the canton when hydroelectricity exports became the dominant use of Valais' energy. Only the timing was different. It will be seen here that tourism in the Alps has a history of its own and that it is not an innovation typical of the 20th century. However, the principal feature of that history from the point of view of those visited, is its somewhat unpredictable course. From the earliest period during which the Alps were "discovered" and as times changed, so did writers' perceptions of the Alps, as well as people's reasons for visiting.

Such an unpredictable course explains the absence of any long-standing coalition of people in any of the visited regions of Valais (perhaps with the exception of the Saint-Bernard hospice and the baths of Leuk) that was entirely dedicated to the promotion of tourism as it started to develop more consistently in the second half of the 19th century.

3.3.1 The Discovery of the Alps

By the end of the 16th century, nearly all the major passes were known and had been named (see the list prepared by de Beer 1967: 22-

23, based on information contained in the six books available at that time on the Alps). The early authors concentrated more on the routes through the mountains and the means of crossing them than on the geographical features of the countryside. One of these books was devoted entirely to Valais (Simler 1574) while the hospice of Grand-Saint-Bernard, in the district of Entremont, was described in 1550 in the famous Cosmographie Universelle written by Sebastien Munster:

"Au plus haut de cette montagne [Mons Jovis in latin] il y a un hospital basty sur de grands rochers, là on donne à manger, et hebergement pour neant à tous passants, qui y veulent estre receuz, et hebergez" (quoted in Beck 1914: 135).

The topographical descriptions were so precise that there already existed what Vallot called "an individualization of summits" (Vallot and Engel 1930: 43, my translation). It was the scholars and the military who drew the maps and wrote the travel journals; the population in general, from the aristocracy to the masses, even in Switzerland, were fearful of the mountains as legends and superstitions about the Alps kept the mountains distant from their everyday concerns: "The Alps were haunted and inhabited by strange spirits and fearsome dragons" (de Beer 1967: 14).

The 17th century saw several explorers attempt to refute these beliefs and demystify the mountain. As in America, during the same period, it was a question of rolling back the barriers of the strange and the unknown, which at times people were reluctant to do. Take the following example: in 1702, a Zurich botanist made nine separate trips into the mountains to compile a list of reputed dragon sightings in the Swiss cantons. In 1706, he actually published a catalogue of Swiss

dragons. Scheuchzer admitted that most of them were imaginary but they so resembled sightings made in other countries that their existence elsewhere was thus proven (de Beer 1967: 76-97).

The 17th century was also the age of medicine. Public health became a matter for specialists. The urban elite in Europe were divided between those who believed in the effectiveness of medical advice and those, no doubt from experience, who feared the dangers associated with the proposed treatments. It was in this atmosphere that the therapeutic benefits of an Alpine holiday began to establish the reputation of the Alps amongst that minority which was privileged either by wealth or a well-paid job. The thermal waters at Leuk in Valais had already been described in Munster's Cosmographie Universelle. On the other hand, Leuk is not mentioned on the list of "famous spas of Christendom" visited by Montaigne, the author of Essais; he preferred Baden which he believed was located in "Souysse":

"j'ai choisi jusques à cette heure à m'arrester et à me servir [des villes d'eaux] où il avoit plus d'amenité de lieu, commodité de logis, de vivres et de compagnies" (Montaigne 1964: 652 - orig. 1580).

The baths were also featured in the first tourist brochures; in perfectly modern terms, except of course when referring to the causes of ailments, Martin Zeiler in 1642, described the water pouring through the Tamina gorge, and urged people to visit the spa which was an hour and a quarter by foot from Pfaefers in the southeast corner of Saint-Gall canton:

"The water is very suitable for paralysed and tired limbs, especially those of working people. It removes the cramp which results from anger or abuse of wine, (...) it cures those who have been damaged by torture, gunshot and sword wounds, clots of blood resulting from bruises, falls,

and blows, and frost-bitten limbs" (quoted in de Beer 1967: 47).

In the 18th century, alpine exploration became more frequent. More than a hundred scientific treatises and narratives about the mountains were published during this period. The work which enjoyed the most success was the epic poem Les Alpes written in 1732 by the Bernese scholar, Albert de Haller (1708-1777). Thirty editions of this poem, which sang the praises of peasant virtues and the tranquility of the countryside, were published during the author's lifetime. This is how Vallot summarizes its theme:

"[...] dans leurs moeurs et leurs travaux, dans leurs coutumes et dans leurs jeux, les habitants des hautes vallées apparaissent ignorants des désirs et des passions funestes, mais invariablement animés de sentiments honnêtes et modérés" (1930: 76).

The idealistic movement towards a return to nature heralded by de Haller would soon materialize in the philosophical writings of Diderot and Rousseau. For example, Rousseau wrote about the customs of the Upper Valaisans in his autobiographical novel Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse published in 1761:

"Quand j'arrivais le soir dans un hameau, chacun venait avec tant d'empressement m'offrir sa maison, que j'étais embarrassé du choix; et celui qui obtenait la préférence en paraissait si content, que la première fois je pris cette ardeur pour de l'avidité. Mais je fus bien étonné quand, après en avoir usé chez mon hôte à peu près comme au cabaret, il refusa le lendemain mon argent, s'offensant même de ma proposition, et il en a partout été de même. [...] Cependant l'argent est fort rare dans le Haut-Valais; mais c'est pour cela que les habitants sont à leur aise; car les denrées y sont abondantes sans aucun débouché au dehors, sans consommation de luxe au dedans, et sans que le cultivateur montagnard, dont les travaux sont les

plaisirs, devienne moins laborieux. Si jamais ils ont plus d'argent, il seront infailliblement plus pauvres" (Rousseau 1960: 53-54 - orig. 1761).

The scholars, for their part, became interested in the Alps in order to understand the various stages in the formation of the earth's crust. In 1742, Jean-Georges Sulzer (1720-1779) launched a major project of correcting, with the help of trigonometric instruments, the acknowledged elevations of the summits of Rigi and the Saint-Gotthard pass. Jean-André Deluc (1727-1817) attempted without success but not without effort, to prove that the altitude of a certain spot could be determined by measuring the amount of time it took to boil water at that point. In 1760, G.S. Gruner of Bern (1717-1778) published a theory in German, explaining the advance and retreat of glaciers based on observations made of the Grindelwald glacier. His thesis was very soon summarized and translated into French (Gruner 1770). Equally fascinated by the study of glaciers, the Genevan geologist Henri Besson, author of Manuel pour les savans et les curieux qui voyagent en Suisse, published in Lausanne in 1786, visited Valais in 1777 to study the particular features of the canton. He also gave a list of the mineral deposits which could be found and mined in the Entremont valley, a véritable Eldorado of riches somehow overlooked by prospectors (de Beer 1967: 115-127; Vallot and Engel 1930: 119-145).

The educated elite of Europe were fascinated by all of this, for "whoever prided himself on being well-informed set up a 'laboratory' in which to give demonstrations or, at the very least set up an 'exhibition of curios'" (Vallot and Engel 1930: 119, my translation). The less

ambitious travellers opted for curios, coming to Valais to collect rock crystals which until then had been sold by Savoyard peddlers in the cities²¹. It was therefore around the middle of the century that people with the means to travel began to view the mountains in a different perspective. They were no longer seen as the haunt of some mythical beast or as a laboratory of natural phenomena nor were they merely reserved for those seeking a health cure.

The mountains became objects of contemplation:

"Tous les phénomènes de la Physique générale s'y présentent avec une grandeur & une majesté, dont les habitans des plaines n'ont aucune idée; [...]. De grands spectacles de tout genre varient à chaque instant la scène; ici un torrent se précipite du haut d'un rocher, forme des nappes & des cascades qui se résolvent en pluie, & présentent au spectateur de doubles et triples arcs-en-ciel, qui suivent ses pas & changent de place avec lui [...]. Plus loin de grands espaces hérissés de glaces éternelles, donnent l'idée d'une Mer subitement congelée dans l'instant même où les aquilons soulevoient ses flots. Et à côté de ces glaces, au milieu de ces objets effrayans, des réduits délicieux, des prairies riantes exhalent le parfum de mille fleurs aussi rares que belles & salutaires" (de Saussure 1779: viii-ix).

This same de Saussure (1740-1799) whose first name was Horace-Benedict, great grandfather of the renowned linguist Ferdinand, pointed out whenever he could in his book, Voyages dans les Alpes (begun in

²¹ De Saussure, a Genevan naturalist, writes that certain risks were attached to the job of crystal hunting. The quartz deposits were visible to the naked eye but difficult to get to. The peasants went into the mountains in August scrambling over the rocks or dangling from ropes in order to take soundings of the rock faces. In Volume II of Voyages dans les Alpes, published in 1786, de Saussure said that competition from Madagascar had effectively lowered the price of the local crystal and there were no longer any people to speak of in Chamonix who collected and sold quartz as their only occupation (1786: 147-148).

1760) to indicate "coaching inns" where travellers could stop (for example 1786: 429, 538). Here is where they could avail themselves of what he astutely called, for lack of a better term, the inhabitants' hospitalité mercenaire (1796: 388).

The hotel industry in the Alps had its beginnings in Chamonix where the first hotel opened in 1770 and the second, due to the success of the first, in 1775 (Vallot and Engel 1930: 165). At the foot of the Mont-Blanc Massif, known in those days as the "Glacières de Savoie", there were such crowds of travellers that Gibbon (historian of the Roman Empire, 1737-1794) felt compelled to write in 1784 that "going to Switzerland and seeing the Alps and the Glaciers have become fashionable" (quoted in Vallot and Engel 1930: 285, my translation). In the summer of 1788 alone, Engel says 1,500 people visited Chamonix, most of whom were English (Ibid.: 286); in fact one of the hotels was appropriately called the Hôtel de Londres. A typical trip went as follows: it took ten days to go from London to Basel; from there, the travellers journeyed across the Swiss cantons as far as Lausanne, then on to Geneva skirting the edge of the lake before arriving at the "Glacières". This route became known as the "grand tour" from which the English word "tourist" is derived (Ibid.: 170-171).

The Mont-Blanc region was the subject of the first real guide book prepared for travellers. Judging by the advice, descriptions and ratings of the attractions contained in his book Description des Glacières du Duché de Savoye which appeared in 1773, the author, M. T. Bourrit (1739-

1819), appealed directly to the prospective visitors. Bourrit was so absorbed by his subject that he went as far as Paris to present his findings to Buffon, the famous naturalist; the second edition of his book, published in 1785, was dedicated to Buffon. In 1787, it reappeared as the first volume of a larger work (Bourrit 1787).

3.3.2 Valais and Bagnes in Travel Journals

Bourrit was the first to write enthusiastically about Valais alone, while de Saussure had merely described the well-travelled paths used by merchants to go between Italy and Geneva; famous roadside attractions included the hospice of Grand-Saint-Bernard (1786: ch. 42 and 43), the Pissevache waterfall (ch. 48) and the saltmines at Bex (ch. 50 and 51). Following a trip he took with his son in 1789 to learn more about the Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn, de Saussure wrote about the Simplon route. In Valais, it was the countryside surrounding the village of Simplon which he described in detail from a geologist's point of view (1796: 330-337). As for the two mountains mentioned above, they were climbed from the Italian side which is of less interest for this study (1796: 406-414). From atop the Simplon pass in 1775, the route followed by the Milanese on their way to Martigny and Geneva, de Saussure saw what he called encombremets, that is, limestone columns almost 40 feet high standing in the middle of the Rhone, at a point where the river flows through a large marshy area between Sion and Sierre (1796: 326). It is interesting to note that almost all the places which de Saussure did

not have the curiosity to investigate, were marked Glacier on the maps which accompany each volume of Voyages dans les Alpes; Bagnes valley is found in the top right corner of the map. The information he does give is so incomplete, that he shows the area, which today constitutes at least half the commune's territory, as being covered by the "extensive glaciers known as Tzermotane or Hautema" (my translation, with de Saussure's underlining). So much for de Saussure and Valais.

Bourrit described Valais in a far more detailed way than did de Saussure. In a book on the Alps, Bourrit wrote the following about Valais:

"[...] j'ai parcouru quatre étés le Valais, pays peu connu, qui mérite à tant d'égards de l'être; & c'est dans un dernier voyage que j'ai découvert une immense vallée de glace; la plus élevée de toutes celles des Alpes" (Bourrit 1787: ix).

He went into even more detail when he explained the plates which accompanied the text. For example, he described the Bagnes valley in this way:

"La Sixième Planche représente le Glacier de Chermotane. Cet amas de glace, qui touché au pâturage même, se termine à pic sur un petit lac où l'on voit des isles flottantes. La première sommité, en commençant par la gauche, est celle du mont Gelé; la deuxième le mont Avril, & la troisième la tour de Bouchine. La gorge des fenêtres [the Fenêtre pass] est entre les deux premières sommités.

"La Septième Planche offre l'aspect de la vallée de glace de Chermotane, que j'ai le premier parcourue avec M. le Prieur Murith" (Bourrit 1787: xv).

In the text itself, Bourrit presented a striking picture of the region:

"Enfin après huit heures de marche [from the hospice of Grand-Saint-Bernard] nous nous vîmes sur le glacier de la Valsoret [...]. Nous étions sur le lieu le plus méridional du Valais, le plus désert & le plus affreux qu'il y ait

peut-être au monde. Presque au pied du Velan, dont le sommet est un massif énorme de glace, nous n'en étions séparés que par le glacier, à l'extrémité duquel s'élève un mur de rochers taillés à pic, entrecoupé de neiges prodigieuses par leur épaisseur & leur hauteur; d'effroyables précipices, des amoncellemens de glaces & de rocs, des blocs d'une grandeur démesurée nous interceptoient la vue générale du glacier. Il fallut nous y élancer, nous aider de nos mains, descendre de même, & courir mille hasards pour jouir du spectacle magnifique de tous ces objets & des horreurs qui les accompagnent" (Ibid.: 283).

There were certainly others before Bourrit who wrote about Valais. Simler in the 16th century has already been mentioned and as well, there was Rousseau's portrait of the Valaisan people. There was de Chaignon's report written for the French minister of foreign affairs in 1749 (reproduced in Ghika 1966b). Eschasseriaux, Napoleon I's chargé d'affaires, who was in Valais from July 1804 to February 1806, could only repeat Rousseau's earlier impressions when he wrote:

"[...] l'intérieur des familles ne présente rien d'extraordinaire; on y aperçoit souvent cette simplicité de mœurs, que la plume d'un écrivain célèbre nous a déjà retracée avec tant d'intérêt" (Eschasseriaux 1806: 24).

It was Bourrit however, who made Valais better known; through his "Descriptions" and "Travel Journals" (which are listed in Beck 1914: 363), he sparked the interest of a far wider audience than the ambassadorial circles for whom de Chaignon and Eschasseriaux wrote.

While some cast a critical light, for instance, de Senancour, a contemporary of Bourrit, who in 1793 predicted "we will not be taken in by the English obsession for overdoing things, venturing out in all sorts

of weather to see icefields and to sketch waterfalls" (quoted in Schmid 1952: 26, my translation), there were others writers who were not afraid to tackle the mountain roads in order to visit the famous attractions of the region. To reach the springs at Leuk, in 1795, one had to climb ladders "which were placed so close to the perpendicular rock walls [in order to rejoin the paths] that one had to turn sideways to get through" (Anonymous 1907: 81 - orig. 1795, my translation). This same visitor remarked, "for the naturals of this country [this terrain] is no more difficult than flat ground" (*Ibid.*: 82).

Travellers drawn to this part of Valais had to choose between visiting the hospice of Grand-Saint-Bernard or Bagnes valley itself. Past Martigny, at Sembrancher, there was a choice of roads: the lefthand fork led to Bagnes and the right fork led to the hospice, about twelve kilometers further up the road. Eschasseriaux devoted an entire chapter in Lettre sur le Valais to the journey he made with his family from Sion to Saint-Bernard (1806: 81-102). His description of a fragile structure bridging the Rhone just before Martigny takes the reader back to those early days of travel:

"quelques poutres, quelques légers liens de fer, et quelques planches sans liaison en forment toute l'architecture; la plus petite voiture fait ordinairement trembler tout le pont, dont chaque planche fait, sous le mouvement de la roue, le même effet que les touches d'un piano font sous les doigts de celui qui les agite" (Eschasseriaux 1806: 83).

Between Martigny and Sembrancher, Eschasseriaux drew a parallel between the entrance of the Gemmi valley where the Leuk springs were located and the Entremont valley:

"Tout ce qui peut agir sur les sens de l'homme par la terreur, se trouve rassemblé dans cette vallée, depuis Martigni jusqu'à Saint-Branchier. Un torrent en furie qui, dans tout son cours, se précipite de cascades en cascades, se brise d'angles en angles, de rochers en rochers, et ébranle de son bruit de tonnerre toute la vallée [...] jonchée partout d'immenses décombres; des arbres, des rochers, partout brisés et roulés par des avalanches [sic], dont on voit à côté de soi le théâtre et les ravages: voilà, et en peu de traits, cette partie de la vallée d'Entremont" (*Ibid.*: 85-86).

Once at Sembrancher,

"le chemin remonte et s'éloigne de la Drance, le bruit effrayant de ses eaux s'affoiblit, l'escarpement de ses bords n'intimide plus le voyageur; on respire au sortir de la forêt de sapins et des ruines qui bordent la Drance, en voyant dans le lointain les frais paysages de la vallée de Bagnes [...] que le temps, les progrès de la végétation et l'industrie des habitans du pays ont convertis en gras pâturages, en champs fertiles; de beaux villages, des sites agréables, des terres cultivées, s'élèvent sur le revers, et presque jusqu'au sommet des monts lointains" (*Ibid.*: 89-90).

While this last excerpt constitutes all that an interested person might learn in 1806 about Bagnes from reading a travel account, the valley would attain instant notoriety throughout Europe in 1818. On June 16th of that year, the Dranse suddenly overflowed its banks and a huge rush of water swept away 40 people, cattle, buildings and entire forests. In the space of an hour and a half, the water which had built up behind a wall of ice formed by the movement of the Giétroz glacier, located at the far end of the valley on the present site of the Mauvoisin dam, broke through and flooded Martigny. The next day, timber and full grown trees were found floating on Lake Léman by inhabitants of the canton of Vaud. This disaster made Bagnes known far beyond the cantonal borders; this was apparent by the donations which came from far and wide to aid the

victims.

The Bernese were the most generous, sending 26,900 "Swiss francs", followed closely by the Vaudois with 800 francs less. Geneva canton contributed 18,200 francs. But the astonishing donations were from Swiss "living abroad" who sent 14,500 francs followed by the more modest French contributions and by an "English campaign in Switzerland" and by "money donated by English visitors travelling through Valais" which together raised 10,200 francs.

This reference to English travellers is surprising. It is possible there were a good many but certainly not of sufficient number to warrant a special mention in the Charity Accounts (1820: 9-14); and certainly not enough to be the only ones mentioned, or were there ? A direct allusion to their "considerable voluntary donations" following this tragedy can be found in a book published in London in 1830, The Tourist in Switzerland and Italy (Roscoe 1830: 74). Moreover, its contents suggest the English familiarity with Valais at that time, if only because the canton was en route to Italy.

Perhaps they were a sizeable group of travellers. Five of the eight chapters about Switzerland in this book pertain to Valais (whereas there are 18 chapters about Italy). One third of the chapter entitled "Martigny" is an account of the disaster just described. While the name of the Getroz glacier is correctly written according to the spelling of the time, Bagnes valley is identified as "Bayne". Even though a large portion of

the Swiss section of the book is about Valais, the author does not however promote a visit to the Dranse in Bagnes and it is obvious from his writing that he never went there himself (Roscoe 1830: 74-79). Neither did he visit the Saint-Bernard hospice, but he does devote the rest of the chapter on Martigny to a description of what he has read about the "good monks of whom much has been said throughout Europe" (Ibid.: 79-85). Thus, primary sources about Valais and Bagnes were few.

In fact the Saint-Bernard hospice remained the principal attraction of the Entremont region. Travellers tended to bypass Bagnes as did for example, Alexandre Dumas in 1832. According to his journal, this prolific French novelist was able to get as far as Bourg-Saint-Pierre in a charabanc which he shared with friends, whereas Eschasseriaux, 25 years earlier, had had to abandon the same means of transportation at Sembrancher and complete the remaining distance to Saint-Bernard by mule (1806: 90). Obviously over these years, the road to the hospice had benefited from much needed improvements. At the hospice visitors could expect to find lodging with the monks, while in Bagnes valley there were no inns.

A Vaudois from Montreux discovered this for himself at the time of the Giétroz disaster. He had already written several accounts of his travels in the Alps and in the Jura when he came to the valley to make a study of the build up of water behind the glacier. Under the auspices of the Valaisan government, work was already in progress to channel the flow of the river in order to avoid flooding. On his arrival in Bagnes

this traveller was quick to remark: "there is not a single inn in this area, but one is easily consoled by the hospitality found in the homes of the kind inhabitants" (Bridel 1818a: 5, my translation). Near Lourtier, as night fell,

"une connaissance de Bagnes qui nous accompagnait, nous procura un asile chez les frères Michaud, particuliers aisés de ce village [Les Morgnes], qui nous accueillirent amicalement et nous forcèrent d'accepter leurs lits" (Ibid.: 6).

In 1819, Bridel wrote a long article for the magazine Conservateur suisse about Bagnes valley, and continued his theme in 1820 with his Essai statistique sur le canton du Vallais; these writings could not help but make the valley and the canton known (Bridel 1819, 1820). However, travellers were not necessarily any more adventurous. As we have seen from Roscoe and Dumas, the most popular attractions still had no competition.

Thus in tourism as in the exploitation of hydropower, Valais and Bagnes were, depending on the point of view, indebted to, or dependent on external circumstances for their integration into the processes of social change which were affecting all of Europe. In strictly tourist matters, travellers and scholars "tamed" the mountains from the middle of the 16th century to the middle of the 18th century, disproving myths which were prevalent "even amongst people who should be above this sort of thinking" wrote de Saussure (1786: 144, my translation). Then, tourism became a popular activity amongst the European aristocracy, especially the English in the Mont-Blanc region. It was not until a series

of alpine clubs were established in the major European countries between 1857 and 1870, that the number of foreigners coming into Valais became significant enough for the Bagnards to feel the social and economic effects of the tourist industry. It has just been shown that the travel narratives and some of the specialized studies written before 1850, which were invaluable to the discovery of the Alps and certain specific places, did not seem to have "reached" the Valaisan countryside. In fact, judging by the publicity which followed the disaster at Giétroz, Valais was at the periphery of tourism's growth; as compared to Chamonix or Interlaken, the canton was never included in the standard "tour" of visitors to the Alps. At best, Valais was known to travellers who, en route to the Savoy, the Bernese Oberland or Italy, took the Rhone road in one direction or the other and cut across the marshes of the plain.

* * *

This chapter has thus set up three building blocks to be used as a foundation for further analysis of the economic base of the Bagnes valley: state policy toward agriculture, hydroelectric production and consumption patterns in Valais, and the earliest perceptions of European travellers towards the Alps in general and Valais in particular.

The chapter has sought to identify the relative importance of domestic and external forces in the development of agriculture, energy production and tourism because these origins are critical to the understanding of the consequences of economic development when all three can

be found together in a particular community. Conflicts and compromises that have been carefully worked out in the negotiation of territory in Bagnes valley have their roots in these historical patterns. Thus, hydroelectricity production was shown to be clearly developed from the outside in terms of investment capital, ownership and overall consumption; tourism in the area was similarly initiated by foreign curiosity and expectations while by contrast, agriculture was the exclusive preserve of the local population and government in Valais.

CHAPTER IV

**The First Phase of Tourism:
Coexistence with Agriculture**

4.1 Land Used for Tourism

This chapter will describe the changes that took place in land use during the early period of tourism in Bagnes, that is, up to the First World War. Those changes affected the agricultural sector of the economy to the extent that a part of the commune's territory came to be shared with tourism, as opposed to the competitive process existing today between tourism and agriculture. This chapter will make the case for a historical perspective on tourism, insofar as this background informs contemporary perceptions of Bagnards in relation to the expansion of tourism. Early changes in land use will be examined so as to identify the sources and mechanisms of the power relationships built up between promoters of tourism and peasants. The analysis will be confined to the commune of Bagnes now that the overall development of tourism in the Alps and Valais is known to the reader.

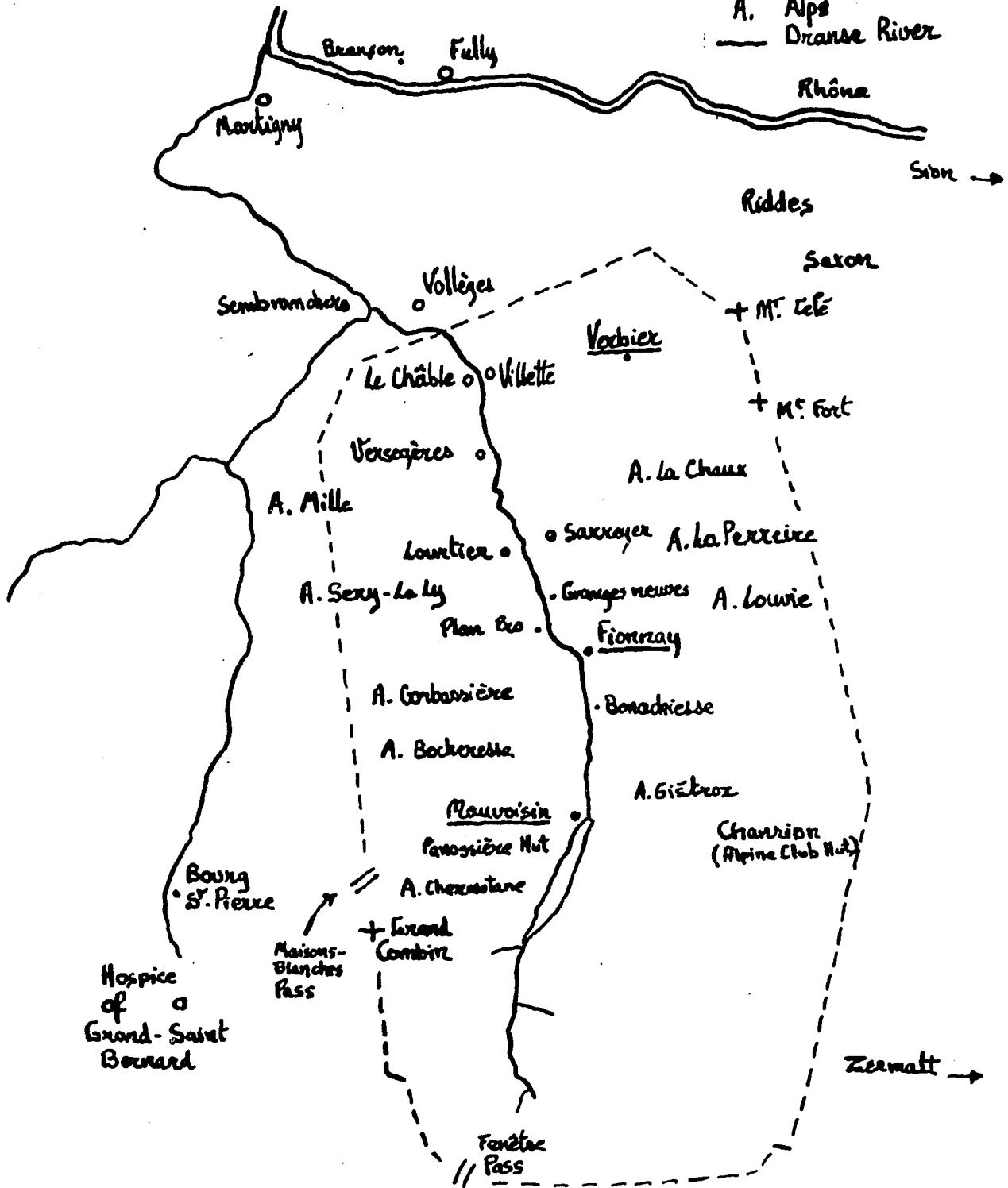
4.1.1 The First Hotels in Bagnes Valley

In February 1853, the Communal Council gave permission to tear down 2/3 of the covered market stands in the public square of Bagnes' main village, Le Châble, to permit the construction of what, in all probability, was the first hotel in the valley. There still exists an invoice dated November 1856, giving the cost of an overnight stay and three meals a day for one person. At the time, this establishment was known as the Hôtel Perrodin or the Hôtel du Grand-Combin (Carron et al.

MAP 4

THE DRANSE RIVER BASIN
IN THE DISTRICT OF ENTREMONT

Key:
 --- Bagnes Commune
 A. Alps
 — Dranse River



1983: 15). The commune owned the market stalls and it was to a tenant's advantage to sublet "the various stands to craftspeople who would sell their products there" (Ibid., my translation). It is easy to understand how much the hotel owner valued the location, right on the public square, as he paid 120 francs to the commune for the rental of the site. The communal accounts of 1840 show a total rental fee of only 4.5 francs for the market stalls. This seems to be about the norm since, in 1830, the rent was 4.15 francs (Communal archives of Bagnes - hereafter abbreviated as C.A.B. -: L. 60 for 1840 and 1830). Thus in one year, 1853, the commune collected the equivalent of 25 years of rental and still kept one third of the stalls for its further profit.

This proved a good investment for the hotel owner as well, for within a few years, the alpine clubs were founded in Europe, a series of events which would soon draw visitors to Bagnes and establish tourism as a profitable industry. Alpine club members saw themselves as the very people incisively described by Toepffer, the Genevan writer: "a tourist wants peaks, wants mountain passes, wants adventures, thrills and miracles" (circa 1836, quoted in Vallot and Engel 1930: 229, my translation). His book, Voyages en Zig-Zag was published posthumously in 1858-1859.

Toepffer broke with the literary tradition which until then had been a competition among writers to best describe the local attractions. In Valais these were the hospice of the Grand-Saint-Bernard and the thermal springs at Leuk. Any book on Valais would have been incomplete and

consequently a poor one if it had not also mentioned the "cretins" encountered on the Rhone plain. Travellers reported seeing these simple-minded people, who were usually suffering from goiter, near the towns of Branson and Fully, at the entrance to the district of Entremont (Bourrit, 1781, de Saussure 1786: 483-485, Eschasseriaux 1806: 31-33, Aspin 1810: 81, Bridel 1813, Roscoe 1830: 101). Following Toepffer's book and the founding of the alpine clubs, writers changed their style. They no longer concentrated on specific sights, but started to describe the different alpine areas in detail. In like fashion aspiring mountaineers hoped that on every outing they made, they would be the first to scale a peak or cross a yet undiscovered pass.

The first alpine club was founded in London and the movement quickly spread to the continent. The Austrian Alpine Club dates from 1862; in 1874 it merged with the German Alpine Club which had been established in 1869; the Swiss Alpine Club was launched in 1863, the same year as the Italian Club; in 1870, the French followed suit.

Valais became a favorite area of the members of these associations. What was previously seen as inhospitable about the canton's countryside suddenly became its main attraction. The first area to become popular was the Viège valley where the Saint-Nicolas river branches off. The village of Zermatt lay at the end of this valley. With the spectacular Matterhorn within easy reach, members of the Alpine Club of London found just what they were looking for and even the least adventurous among them explored every corner of the region. It became a sort of

branch club and the whole organization even celebrated its centenary in Zermatt in 1957 (Williams 1964: 38). When reading Williams' book, one can easily establish what availability of accommodations meant in those days and how they contributed to the public image of Valais as a tourist haven. Hotels inns and mountain cabins were springing up all over and the various services and activities offered were the main factors attracting the guests.

From the early travellers to the mountain climbers and tourists, expectations had changed. In the past, from the days of the Saussure to A. Dumas, to personalize the chronology somewhat, a traveller's aim was to journey from place to place and the accommodations were considered either satisfactory makeshifts or, oftentimes quite unpleasant²². By contrast, in the 1860s, what became most important to visitors was their stay at a hotel and the exploration of the surroundings.

Conflicts between hotel owners and local communities also emerged in certain circumstances. In Zermatt, the innkeeper Seiler (1820-1891)

²² Having arrived at St. Rémy, the last village on the Italian side of the Grand-Saint-Bernard pass before Valais, de Saussure made the following comments:

"Nous dînâmes là dans un bâtiment neuf, très-propre, que le Capitaine MARCO, maître de l'auberge, venoit de faire construire. Les voyageurs que le mauvais temps oblige souvent de séjourner dans ce village, y sont très-bien logés, & beaucoup mieux traités qu'on ne l'atendroit d'un lieu aussi retiré & aussi sauvage; des vins étrangers très-bon dans leur genre & le reste à proportion" (1786: 429).

As for Dumas, he stopped at Bourg-Saint-Pierre before travelling on to the hospice at Grand-Saint-Bernard and without doubt, the most appropriate word here to describe the accommodations would be makeshift:

"Il n'y avait vraiment qu'un aubergiste suisse qui pût avoir l'idée de faire coucher des chrétiens dans un pareil bouge" (1948: 130 - orig. 1832).

had to defend himself in court during 18 years (1871-1889) against the bourgeoisie. The latter claimed he was not allowed to use the communal land, especially to obtain firewood for free, because he had not been accepted as a member of the bourgeoisie by the members themselves. In fact, Seiler had obtained the same rights as those of other bourgeois in Zermatt through an appeal, as a Valaisan, to the State Council in Sion who used its power to legislate in this matter because, by 1871, Seiler had been a long-time resident of Zermatt (Kämpfen 1965).

Nonetheless, Seiler pioneered the tradition of excellence found today in Swiss hotels. Guest returned from their walks to find bowls of fresh fruit in their rooms. At mealtimes, Seiler presided over the gathering from one end of a huge table where his clientele partook of déjeuner à la fourchette which he advertised along with the proverbial service actif et prix modéré. Early each morning, Seiler personally greeted each hiking enthusiast, suggesting walks in the surrounding countryside and the best paths to take to see the local attractions. He listened religiously to the accounts of each expedition, no matter how modest it was. At the end of their stay, guests were sent off with the traditional Bon voyage! and with a box of chocolates, two gestures which ostensibly encouraged them to return the following year. This same man organized a rescue party in 1865 to bring back the bodies of four of the seven member team which was the first to reach the summit of the Matterhorn; returning to Zermatt, following their successful ascent, these four were swept away by an avalanche. To conclude this brief portrait of Seiler, it is interesting to note that César Ritz learnt his hotel trade around the Seilers' massive

table. Realizing how ill at ease some people were, being seated with so many others, Ritz introduced the concept of individual tables in the dining rooms of his now renowned hotels (Williams 1964: 33, 36-37, 48).

In 1862 or 1863, a second hotel opened in the valley of Bagnes in the far end of the commune which until then had only been used by herders and their cattle. Remembering that the Swiss Alpine Club had been founded in 1863, the local promoters had indeed chosen a judicious moment in which to invest. The following year, one of the partners involved in the project, who was also President of the commune and the former Prefect of the district of Entremont, had a brochure printed advertising the beauty and the charm of Bagnes valley and indirectly, the new hotel. This booklet, unmistakably promotional in its style, differed radically from the works of the early Alpine travellers.

As background for his material, Eugène Besse relied primarily on the memories which any Alpine enthusiasts might have retained of the Giétroz glacier disaster in 1818. In fact the brochure is entitled Un voyage au Giétroz, vallée de Bagnes..., where Bagnes, is definitely secondary in importance. From the second paragraph on, the author tells of "the vast panorama of natural beauty which stirs the hearts of the idle young "gentleman" and the impressionable "miss" and "mistress"; his use of the English language in the French text leaves no doubt as to the nationality of most of the tourists at that time. Besse then goes on to describe the activities of the recently founded associations which he referred to in German as Alpen-Clubs (underlined in the original),

"dont les membres sont spécialement engagés à faire de nouvelles découvertes, à gravir sur des sommités [sic] encore ignorées ou à explorer des contrées inconnues. - Au nombre de ces contrées peu connues et au nombre de celles fournissant pourtant plus qu'aucune autre des sujets de curiosités en ce genre, se trouve la vallée de Bagnes avec ses châteaux, ses lacs, ses pâturages, ses troupeaux, ses cascades, ses gouffres, ses glaciers et ses hautes cimes dont quelques-unes le disputent aux plus élevées de l'Europe" (Besse 1864: 3).

Assuming any knowledge which strangers to the valley might have had of the region, was based on books about the Giétroz disaster, Besse attempts to refute one writer's claim that "the roads are too difficult, I would almost say too dangerous, for the curiosity seeker to venture on" (Bridel 1818b: 9). At Sembrancher, the President of Bagnes goes on to write,

"C'est ici que l'on quitte la route du Grand-St-Bernard pour prendre celle de la vallée de Bagnes en face du Bourg. Après avoir passé un pont nouvellement construit sur la Dranse, on monte insensiblement par une bonne route jusqu'au torrent de Merdenson.
 [...] On arrive au principal village (Chables) par une route très-agréable et horizontale. [...] La principale auberge est l'hôtel Perraudin, bâti depuis quelques années, où l'on rencontre une hospitalité vraiment cordiale.
 [...] La route du Chables à Champ-sec (1 lieue), continue à être excellente. [...] D'ici à Lurtier, 3/4 de lieue, la route monte assez sensiblement. Néanmoins, elle est encore praticable à petits chars. [...] A Lurtier on prend la route à mulets qui conduit à l'établissement du Giétroz, distant de trois lieues" (1864: 4-5).

At this point in the itinerary, Besse makes comparisons between Bagnes Valley and other places which may attract the tourists. One was the Pissevache waterfall located between Martigny and Saint-Maurice described many years before by de Saussure (1786: 508-509). Besse felt that this account gave "only a very poor idea" of the waterfalls' rush

down "the sheer rock faces, reaching for the sky like towers" in his own commune. Near Bonnachiesse, before reaching the hotel, "there are gorges very like those at Trient" (between Martigny and Chamonix). In the next paragraph, Besse continues to praise the excellence of the roads:

"D'ici à l'hôtel du Giétroz la route est très-bonne et vient d'être tout dernièrement réparée. [...] on passe le pont à voûte de Mauvoisin jeté sur la Dranse de l'une des parois du rocher à l'autre, à une hauteur de plus de 100 pieds et qui rappelle la Via-Mala" (Ibid.: 6).

This other attraction, renowned in its day, is at the source of the Rhine. The bridges which span the swelling waters of the river were built during the first half of the 18th century. The Mauvoisin bridge bears the date 1828.

As President of Bagnes commune, Besse is undeniably partisan, when he ranks the valley with the top Alpine sites. From the "most interesting excursions" to "the enchanting chalet at Champ-Riond" and "the natural beauty of our mountains" ..., the reader's head spins with his collection of glowing comments. Towards the end of the book, Besse gives a list of the plants which could be found at Giétroz: from the alpine columbine to the single-flowered campanula and the foul-smelling meadow rue, the author enumerates at least 37 varieties of flowers, all with equally exotic names. The birdwatcher and the mineralogist could be rewarded to the same degree as the botanist. The real thrust of his message however is made clear in conclusion of the brochure:

"On s'étonne, à juste titre, qu'avec tant de sujets d'intérêts et tant de motifs de curiosité, cette vallée n'ait pas attiré, jusqu'ici, d'avantage [sic] l'attention des voyageurs. La cause en est que, jusqu'à présent, il n'y avait point d'établissement où les touristes aient pu être reçus convenablement" (1864: 7).

As well as the two hotels in the valley, passers-by could stop at the Cortey restaurant at Champsec (under construction in 1863) or at Councillor Bruchez house at Lourtier, were adds Besse, "arrangements are truly hospitable", or still at Fionnay where "a magnificent chalet has just been built as a restaurant (Maret) to provide refreshments to weary travellers" (Besse 1864: passim, my translations).

Apart from a few exaggerations, the valley deserved the praise heaped on it by Besse's flamboyant little brochure. By 1871 there were already signs of a new influx of tourists. Recognizing the presence of more foreigners in the area, the communal authorities of Bagnes deemed it wise to make a federal decree known to its population. On Sunday morning, January 8, 1871, following the weekly announcements heralded in the public square, the secretary of the Council announced an official rate of exchange for the English sovereign and half-sovereign which might be in circulation in the commune (C.A.B. : P.1066 for 1871). Since there is no further mention of foreign currency in the official records, it may be assumed that from then on the local people kept a close eye on the exchange rates themselves.

In order to determine the number of tourists coming to Bagnes at that time, material from the hotels' guest registers has been compiled. This modest piece of research is valid to the extent that the hotels and services were themselves factors in attracting tourists. One reason for stopping off at the Giétroz Hotel in Mauvoisin, owned by Eugène Besse

and his partners, was that travellers could spend the night after their eight hour walk from Martigny, and before they went on to Aosta in Italy, some twelve hours away over the Fenêtre pass (Baedeker 1885: 266). Moreover, this edition of the Baedeker guide listed no fewer than 46 possible excursions in the Upper Bagnes valley which is beyond Fionnay. Some of these included ascents which were difficult considering climbers' equipment in those days and 20 of those excursions led straight out of the valley (Ibid.: 266-268). Lastly, it is known that Aosta was most often the destination of travellers who stopped overnight at the hospice of Grand-Saint-Bernard. However, the Bagnes valley road and the hotels along the way now provided an alternative. From that moment on, tourism began to flourish. Evidence of this is seen in some remarks found in the Hôtel de Mauvoisin register (new name for Hôtel du Giétroz after 1871). For instance, in 1874 two English travellers en route for the Fenêtre pass by mule wrote in French that they were "very happy to find a hotel in such an out-of-the-way place; without it, it would be impossible for most travellers to explore the Bagnes valley up to the end".

As mentioned earlier, this hotel was built in 1862 and 1863. In spite of the favorable circumstances namely, the founding of the Swiss Alpine Club and tourists' interest in new mountain areas to explore, the first registrations were not entered until September 2, 1868, at the very end of the season. It appears the early days were difficult and even after the hotel opened the problems did not disappear all at once.

There were 42 guest registered in 1869. The 1870 season seems to have been interrupted and in 1871, when there were ten less visitors than in 1869, the partners split and Doctor Carron of Villette assumed the risks of running the business on his own. For purposes of comparison, we can look at three periods of six years each, showing the number of guests who stayed at the hotel from the time Carron became the sole proprietor (there is also a six year interval between each of the three periods shown below). The season lasted from June 15 to September 30.

TABLE 5
NUMBER OF GUESTS AT HOTEL DE MAUVOISIN, 1871-1900

1871	32	1883	72	1895	98
1872	47	1884	65	1896	66
1873	39	1885	95	1897	99
1874	89	1886	88	1898	85
1875	47	1887	108	1899	97
1876	62	1888	94	1900	86
	<u>316</u>		<u>522</u>		<u>531</u>

Source: Hotel register

Some elaboration is in order. During the first period, 1874 was the most profitable year. It was at the height of the season of that year, at the beginning of August, that Doctor Carron, feeling highly optimistic, asked the communal authorities to extend his lease. In fact, the com-

mune had reserved the right, at the time the first agreement was signed (Carron *et al.* 1983: 19-20) to buy back all the buildings at the end of 20 years, in 1881. Noting "the sacrifices he was making in order to maintain his hotel" (Protocol of the Communal Council quoted in Carron *et al.* 1983: 20), the Council extended Carron's lease until 1894 and at the same time granted him the right to purchase a plot of communal land adjacent to the hotel, probably as a place to keep a cow. Nevertheless, the owner's hopes were not realized since the number of visitors did not peak again until 1885. This shows how genuine the risks were. What is more, the stability in the figures for 1883 to 1888 and 1895 to 1900, is perplexing. And yet, around 1890, anticipating presumably an increase in his clientele, Carron added a second floor to provide more rooms (F. Perraudin 1967: 6).

To find out why registration stagnated between the latter two periods, a comparison has been made of two editions of Baedeker guides as they relate to the region under study. Two new items which appeared in the second guide should have contributed to an increase in the number of tourists. First, the rating of a second hotel located just inside the commune at Villette, facing Le Châble, was raised to that of the hotel at Mauvoisin and as well, was indicated in the edition, by means of a comment in parentheses as being, "not expensive" (Baedeker 1885: 266; 1896: 302-303). Also, despite Eugène Besse's assurances in 1864, that communal roads were good, the road between Le Châble and Champsec was described by Baedeker in 1885 as "bad"; in 1896, however it was changed to "a good road" as far as Lourtier; the mule path had become

a thing of the past (Ibid.). Even so, Mauvoisin did not experience any gains from these favorable comments.

Were visitors perhaps in some way dissatisfied ? The Baedeker guides hint this may have been case. In the 1896 edition, the editor is careful to point out that the fees for excursions into the mountains were those in effect at Mauvoisin, but that guides were generally only to be found at Martigny on the plain or at Le Châble. This detail, important to those seeking a guide in Mauvoisin, was not mentioned in the 1885 edition. Conceivably, many travellers had been disappointed and wrote directly to Baedeker to complain²³.

Judging from the prefaces of the two editions, it is apparent that Baedeker did not particularly recommend a visit to the district of Entremont. Not once amongst the various itineraries suggested in the guide book were trips to Bagnes valley or Aosta. In both the 1885 and the 1896 editions travellers were advised, once arrived at Martigny, to continue on the Chamonix via the Balme pass. This factor also could have contributed to the drop in the number of overnight guest registered in Mauvoisin during these two periods.

There were occasional references to the Baedeker guides in the guest register of the Mauvoisin Hotel; in 1891 an Englishman commented on the editor's oversight concerning the state of the road to Chermotane,

²³ In fact, in the preface of each edition, readers' comments were solicited (1885: v-vi; 1896: v).

before the Fenêtre pass, which was completely impassable as a result of rockslides. Furthermore, according to Lanquar (1977: 6), all travel guides, regardless of the publisher, until World War II, were known as "Baedeker". Hence the emphasis on the contents of this guide book in particular.

If books such as these played no part in encouraging tourists to visit Mauvoisin neither did the activities of the Swiss Alpine Club in the region bring more business to the hotel, at least as far as the transition between the second and third period was concerned. However, a link can be made between the rise in the number of travellers between 1876 and 1888, that is from the first to the second period, and the building of the Panossière cabin in 1881. This refuge, built under a rock face by the Monte-Rosa branch of the Swiss Alpine Club, was later bought by the Genevan branch of the club in 1885²⁴. In 1893 the cabin was entirely rebuilt and enlarged. Consequently another increase in the number of people staying over at Mauvoisin could have been anticipated, even more so because a second cabin had been built in 1890 at Chanrion by the Genevan branch of the club. Guests invited to the opening ceremony

²⁴ In Carron et al. (1983: 51-67) additional information on cabins in isolated locations may be found. Here is what Baedeker wrote in 1885 about the Panossière cabin: *"a most interesting excursion [...] This club-hut, finely situated on the margin of the huge Corbassière Glacier, is the starting point for the Combin de Corbassière (12,212'), the Tournalon Blanc (12,182'), the Col des Maisons Blanches [...]. The Grand-Combin (14,163'; 7-8 hrs.) is best ascended from this point, but it requires experience and a steady head"* (Baedeker 1885: 266).

stopped at Mauvoisin²⁵. However the general public did not turn out in the same numbers during the third period as they did when the first cabin was opened at Panossière notwithstanding the notation of the 1896 edition of Baedeker about the Chanrion cabin being "well-appointed in a magnificent location".

It remains to be seen if other changes, peculiar to Bagnes valley this time, rather than originating in Geneva or from a Leipzig publisher, can account for what happened at Mauvoisin between 1895 and 1900 when Doctor Carron saw his clientele stagnate in comparison to the previous period. A new hotel in Villette, a new story on the Mauvoisin Hotel, the construction of the cabins high in the mountains and an improved road were all factors which did more to favor the reputation of Mauvoisin than the possible lack of guides and its omission from the typical itineraries suggested by Baedeker, did to harm it. We will now examine the process of change in the location of tourist-use land as the 20th century sets in the commune in order to look further into the development of the tourist industry in Bagnes.

²⁵ The entry in the hotel register for August 23rd, 1890 reads: "the following members arrived soaked to the skin at Mauvoisin, where they were warmed, dried and refreshed" (my translation). Then follows a long list of the names of the people present at the cabin's inauguration.

4.1.2 The Resort of Fionnay

Based on the 1887 season, the Mauvoisin's best year for visitors in the last century, Doctor Carron's establishment appeared to have achieved its long-awaited success because in relation to the 1870s, the guests were certainly more numerous. In the autumn of 1887, in his home village of Villette, he must have confided in some friends, because one week before filing a request for authorization to build a restaurant-pension in Fionnay, a rival reached the communal authorities before him.

On February 19, 1888, the Council granted both requests "with the outlook that [its] sacrifices would encourage travellers to come in far greater numbers to visit our beautiful valley" (Protocol of the communal Council quoted in Carron et al. 1983: 28, my translation). The sacrifices in question were the exclusive use of communal land and the supply of the necessary timber and firewood required by the concessionnaires for a period of ten years. Anticipating unauthorized enlargements of the buildings, the Council reserved the right to expropriate without compensation, the private meadows which lay within three meters of any hotel and in addition specified that the sale of these buildings to persons other than Bagnes' bourgeois would bring about the retrocession of the land to the commune (Ibid., for 1889). One must read between the lines here. In fact the Council announced it was not necessarily prepared to make a new concession of land if the owners were "foreigners". It also appeared that the two applicants received preferential tax treatment as their hotels did not show up on the taxation roll until 1893 (Ibid.:28-29).

As for Doctor Carron, he must have regretted the indiscretions over his project in 1887-1888 since he now had to share the exclusivity of the right to accommodate tourists in Fionnay. However, the ten-year protection was useful, for once it expired, a third hotel opened for business. Construction on this hotel has started well before 1898 as there is proof of purchase of the land in 1891²⁶. During the year when the monopoly enjoyed by the first concessionaires terminated, the Corthay bakery (established in 1893) changed its name to Pension Panossière. So as not to be outdone by the competition, Dr. Carron made additional investments with a view to enlarging his own establishment at Fionnay, while his first neighbor waited until 1905-1906 to do the same. In fact it was his neighbor's ultimate successor who would finally complete this work. The establishment known as the Hôtel de la Rosa-Blanche, then Hôtel du Grand-Combin, changed name and ownership several times. In 1894, the man who was then President of the commune bought it; it was afterwards registered on the tax roll under the name of a company before being resold in 1903. In the following year, the new owner also bought the Pension Chanrion, the black sheep of Fionnay. This tiny building, just a few steps away from the hotels, had been the object of countless complaints since 1893 for not respecting the exclusive rights of the first concessionaires. Finally in 1906, the Pension Panossière was in turn resold. One may note in passing that the owners of the pensions relied on the image established by the Swiss Alpine Club cabins for their own

²⁶ Deed under private signature "executed in Chables of Bagnes, October eleventh, 1891" between Casimir Carron of Versegères on behalf of his wife, Adèle and Félix Métroz of Champsec (purchaser). The amount agreed upon was payable October 11, 1894 (Private archives of Bagnes, Thérèse Dumas papers, Versegères, my translation).

reputation. At a glance, it can be seen that a great deal of money found its way into Fionnay in a very short space of time.

Therefore to recapitulate: two hotels in 1893; an "unauthorized" pension established the same year; another hotel, a bakery converted to a pension and an addition to an existing hotel in 1898; a repurchase in 1903, a second in 1904 and a third in 1906; another addition to yet another hotel in 1905-1906 (Carron *et al.* 1983: 27-41).

The total number of tourist beds, ultimately the most important statistic, is known for the year 1904. When the telegraph lines were installed in the village, the bill for the work was divided among the four establishments, in proportion to the number of rooms each had. The proprietor of the Chanrion pension was still recalcitrant since he does not seem to have paid his share unless perhaps the house was closed for the year, as it was up for sale. In the following list of available accommodations, the names of the owners appearing on the original document have been substituted by the names of their establishments:

Hôtel du Grand Combin	35 rooms
Hôtel Carron	36 rooms
Pension Panossière (including the store)	11 rooms
Hôtel des Alpes	25 rooms

Source: Private archives of Bagnes, Thérèse Dumas papers, Versegères.

Consequently as the 20th century was about to begin, there was a new location for tourist-use areas in the communal territory. Let us further observe how such a change is reflected by looking at the

registrations recorded in the hotel guest registers.

In order to simplify the presentation, only the two "Carron hotels", the one at Mauvoisin with 24 rooms and the one at Fionnay with 36 will be discussed. What is to be determined is which of the two hotels suffered the most from the shifts of the clientele to another location. Another approach, looking at the gains of all the hotels of Fionnay, would not really prove anything since these gains could be interpreted as being induced from the presence of the Mauvoisin hotel and of the Swiss Alpine club cabins.

First the figures for Mauvoisin set out in Table 5 for the third period will be compared with those of Fionnay for the same period:

	<u>Mauvoisin</u>	<u>Fionnay</u>
1895	98	88
1896	66	25
1897	99	74
1898	85	47
1899	97	99
1900	86	49
	<u>531</u>	<u>382</u>

Source: The registers of the Hôtel de Mauvoisin and the Hôtel Carron.

This compilation shows that the new establishment at Fionnay was not really a serious threat to the original Mauvoisin hotel whose clientele was fairly stable from year to year; at Fionnay highs and lows were the

rule. It also shows that 1897 was a promising year for both hotels and on the strength of it, the investment needed in order to add a story to Fionnay the following year, was probably justified. Even if the figures for Mauvoisin were better, deciding to enlarge Fionnay shows Dr. Carron had a hint of what was coming, that is, Fionnay would develop as a tourist area which in the long term could hurt his other hotel at the far end of the valley in Mauvoisin. He thus chose to strengthen his position in the emerging resort and stave off competition there. He was confident he would be able to convince guests staying at Fionnay to go on as far as Mauvoisin (a two-hour walk), if only to have dinner there. Unfortunately the figures are not available for the number of meals served in the hotels, but good sense presumes that an owner of a "chain" of hotels would be ill-advised to denigrate the quality of the services offered in his second hotel; in fact, the contrary would rather be the case.

Dr. Carron's children benefited from their father's decision, because only nine years later, the positions of the two hotels had clearly reversed themselves:

TABLE 6
 NUMBER OF GUESTS AT HOTEL DE MAUVOISIN
 AND HOTEL CARRON. 1909-1914

	<u>Mauvoisin</u>	<u>Fionnay</u>
1909	98	258
1910	106	210
1911	144	256
1912	111*	362
1913	134	218
1914	58**	88***
	<u>651</u>	<u>1,392</u>

* no page for the month of September in the register

** only opened in July

*** only opened in June

Source: Hotel registers.

The drastic reduction in the number of tourists in 1914 is clearly related to the First World War. But it could also reflect the fact that a third Carron establishment opened that same year. This time it was a pension at Versegères, a village situated between Le Châble and Champsec. With Dr. Carron now deceased, his heirs would probably have wanted to devote all their energies to this new project. As well, the reader will remember that between the two periods (1895-1900 and 1909-

1914) the owner of the Hôtel du Grand-Combin, one of Carron's rivals in Fionnay, made an addition to his building. Business was therefore flourishing for one and all in Fionnay. Lastly, the period 1909-1914 was also the golden age of Alpine tourism across Switzerland (Bergier 1984: 298-300). Bergier maintains it was not until the 1960s, when mass tourism was at its peak, that Switzerland enjoyed the same volume of tourist activity.

This section has shown that between 1853 and 1914 tourism developed firmly in the commune, as new sights were looked for by travellers, as opposed to the former situation where a few very popular places attracted a large number of visitors. The first hotel built at the entrance of the commune was quickly followed by a second one located at the far end of the valley where no other buildings existed previously. More numerous accommodations were made available to tourists at the end of the 1880s in a hamlet previously used by local peasants during the summer only. These hotels and "pensions" were located at a walking distance of four hours from Le Châble and two hours from Mauvoisin. It was thus possible to present data on the locational shifts in tourist uses of land in the commune. It was shown that the owner of the Mauvoisin hotel had to invest in the new tourist location in order to protect his earlier investments and that hotel ownership in Fionnay was less than stable, especially at times when the number of visitors stagnated. In short, this section has presented a local history of tourism from the point of view of hotel owners. The second part of this chapter will be devoted to the repercussions on peasant activities of the changes just described in the

location of the land used for tourism. It will be argued that a coexistence between tourism and agriculture was achieved during the period and that such a historical background is crucial to the understanding of contemporary attitudes and perceptions of the Bagnards concerning the expansion of tourism in the 1980s.

4.2 The Relationships Between the Tourists and the Local People

Bergier argued that tourism was a privilege of the elite at the turn of the century (1984: 298-300). Several other authors have given indications to the effect that the royalty and high aristocracy had a predilection for fashionable resorts like Zermatt or St. Moritz. (Williams 1964; Bernard 1978: 143-168.)

The social status of the tourists is an important question to the extent that it is a major determinant of the relationships between the visitors and the local population. For example, from the accounts referred to above, it appears that the higher the status of the tourists, the greater the distance separating them from the local population, as one would expect.

Some comments entered in the hotel registers and the list of services offered to visitors to Bagnes' hotels shed light on the social inequalities existing between tourists and residents at the turn of the century and they confirm the presence of well-to-do visitors in the Upper Bagnes valley at that time. However, as this section will show, cases of extreme contempt for the peasants were few and social distinctions do not seem to have been as pronounced as elsewhere. Coexistence between tourism and agriculture may have been facilitated in such a context.

4.2.1 Social Inequalities

A certain segment of the tourist clientele was indeed arrogant. In 1876 a Lausanne woman suggested two easy excursions for ladies who were "collectors of all types of rocks". She claimed to be "very pleased with the hotel and the willingness of my guide to look for rocks" (my translation). Imagine the scene: this person obviously left the difficult part of the rock collecting to her guide. Regarding the guide, the word "willingness" replaced the word "patience" which had been crossed out. This seems to imply that the guide was not necessarily patient but that his dependence on his fee had prompted him to indulge in what he no doubt perceived as a city-dweller's fancy. Still on the subject of rock-collecting: in 1884 a Parisian school teacher remarked with disbelief that it was the "mountain dwellers" who led him to the most beautiful specimens (the quotation marks are those of the tourist). He goes on to imply he would be able to avoid their company if only his fellow tourists "would report where samples were to be found"; he adds, perhaps in order to excuse himself from being too blatantly scornful of the local help, that such information is important "for those who want to study the mineralogy of the country" (my translations). A final example: two Englishmen travelling with two guides and a porter showed their true colours when they wrote the following in the register in 1888: "We found the hotel a perfect home and the landlord a perfect gentleman" (Mauvoisin hotel register for 1876, 1884, 1888).

A number of entries are more commonplace than the examples

quoted; many describe the weather, a major factor in Fionnay and Versegères because in Mauvoisin even poor weather enhances the scenery. Wine stewards, guides and proprietors are also complimented often in the registers. Some tourists write comments on other tourists and the majority give a detailed description of all their jaunts. The three examples quoted in the previous paragraph are by no means unique, but imply that relations with the local residents were sometimes as tense as general principles of the social stratification were strict in those days.

These principles are particularly apparent in the services available to tourists in the hotels. A list of them has been drawn up, excluding those common to all innkeepers. The list thus includes only the services that are exclusive to each hotel owner and provide the basis of the competition between them. The source of this information is a book on the district of Entremont published in 1906. The author is the well-known Louis Courthion, turned chronicler on this occasion of the local history for tourists' reading. The original edition included twelve pages of advertising which were printed on colored endpapers bound into the book. These were paid for by hotel proprietors in Geneva and Valais (Courthion 1906).

Dr. Carron bought 1/3 of a page to advertise his two establishments, the Hôtel de Mauvoisin occupying only a small corner. This is a further indication of how the tourist-use land had shifted to a different area. Dr. Carron's rival, the owner of the Hôtel du Grand-Combin, bought a full page, one third of which featured a picture of Fionnay. The Hôtel

du Giétroz at Villette also took out a page. There was a quarter-page advertisement for the Hôtel de la Poste at Lourtier which included the now classic description: "romantic setting in the midst of fir trees and larches". Only the services offered at the Fionnay and Villette hotels will be described below since Lourtier was more of a stopover midway through the valley.

Maurice Guigoz, the proprietor of the Hôtel du Grand-Combin, emphasized the attractions of a middle-class home: "first class cooking, a good selection of wines, spacious accommodations, living rooms and smoking rooms". As well, he also promised "a lake, waterfalls, dense forests of fir trees". He appeals to the local people, especially the Valaisan clientele, mentioning specifically a "large room suitable for clubs and meetings" (the sociétés). Dr. Carron's advertisement also focused on certain special features, one being, not surprisingly, the fact that the hotel boasted a doctor in residence. Instead of writing in full sentences he adopted a clipped style and turned Anglomaniac for the occasion: "Glassed-in veranda. Baths and showers: English sanitary [in English in the text]. Catholic and Protestant services". Finally the Hôtel du Giétroz is advertised as being in the lower part of the valley: "Le Châble, a good-sized village is the main town and business center of the valley". The Giétroz is equipped with electric light; it is surrounded "by beautiful tree-lined fields" and has a "shady" garden. Should these features not be taken seriously, the proprietor then named reputable people who had recommended his establishment. Furthermore, he is the only one to list his prices. Perhaps he was directing a barb at his competition in Fionnay

when he ended with: "persons suffering from contagious diseases will not be admitted". Take note that in speaking of the "good-sized village" of Le Châble, the inn-keeper must have certainly included the neighbouring villages of Villette and Le Cotterg, but even with these, the population only amounted to 1,300 (Courthion 1906: 66). As early as 1906, this shrewd proprietor was promoting the winter season, advertising in heavy type: "Sledding, skiing, sleigh rides" (Courthion 1906: advertising pages, my translations).

The services available to tourists contrasted sharply with the customs and conditions of daily life of the local people during this period. Information about their way of life comes to us from local authors, self-taught ethnologists or agronomists. A good example of such a contrast is seen in the cattle herders who drove their herd to the valley's alpine pastures during the summer. Existing on a far simpler diet than that of the guests of the Grand-Combin, the herders "eat mainly rye bread and milk prepared in a variety of ways" (Gabbud 1909: 109). On rare occasions, it was varied by a marmot they might have poached or by eating the "deliveries", a local expression for meticulously weighed out portions of wine, meat and eggs that cattle owners, according to custom, had to provide to their herders on some ritual feast days.

High on the alpine meadows, the herder is far indeed from the "spacious accommodations" of the Grand-Combin or the "glassed-in veranda" of the Hôtel Carron:

"A ce dernier point de vue [housing the herders properly] la vie du pâtre est des plus misérables. Après avoir passé des journées entières à la pluie, à la neige même, il n'a, là où les écuries manquent, qu'un froid abri dans une hutte dont le toit, le plus souvent, coule comme une écumoire" (Wuilloud 1908: 69).

Cheese was made in these huts as they were close to where the cows were milked. The animals were left outside overnight and were moved every three or four days to different parts of the pasture so that their manure could enrich the grass for subsequent years. There were no less than 23 huts scattered over the high pastures of La Chaux and more than 20 on those of Mille (Wuilloud 1908: 41; 65). All the workers could not be housed overnight, especially at La Chaux, when their numbers reached 16 men and boys. The alternative accommodation is described in detail by Courthion and is far cry from a hotel:

"Quant aux pâtres, s'ils ont besoin d'un abri, c'est à chacun de se procurer ou créer le sien. Ils l'établissent en pratiquant un creux régulier dans le sol et en y dressant une voûte solide et étroite, de la forme d'un très petit four à plâtre. Les pierres sont ensuite bourrées de mousses, la surface de la voûte recouverte de tranches de gazon et le fond du trou jonché de foin sec sur lequel est jetée une couverture. Chaque berger doit ainsi avoir sa 'garette', car, pour la solidité même de la voûte, l'espace en est si exigü qu'on y pénètre en se traînant sur le ventre" (1972: 43-44).

As soon as the cheeses were made the boys carried them to the store-house of the alp: this is where the entire wealth of the cattle owners' association was kept during the summer. The buildings were also in miserable condition at the beginning of the century. Above Lourtier, on the high pastures belonging to the alp of La Perreire, "the ceiling of the store-house is far from watertight; watch out for days of heavy rain: the water drips onto the cheeses which eventually crack" (Wuilloud

1908: 44). The Giétroz alp, very near Mauvoisin, had a store-house full of rotten cheese: "dilapidated roof letting in the rain" (*Ibid.* 52). At the Bocheresse alp located on the left bank of the Dranse, between Fionnay and Mauvoisin, "the loft is clean and in good condition; unfortunately the building is not worth much, it is open to the wind on all sides which makes it too dry. In addition, the roof is defective (*Ibid.* 58, my translations). Cheese needs a certain amount of moisture in order to "age", to ripen; however, it should not be subjected to a real downpour.

One may argue that a comparison of the services offered to the tourists with the living conditions of the herders and shepherds of the alp presents an incomplete picture of the social distance existing between visitors and residents. However, since hiking was the hotel guests' favorite pastime, on these outings they were most likely to see the herders, the most visible of the peasant group. For the most part, visitors were oblivious to the peasant life lower down in the valley since they spent no time there except on passing through on their way to and from Fionnay. What two women from the city on a five-week holiday at the Mauvoisin found especially picturesque were "the cow bells, the masses of ice which break off from the glacier, the mountain tops and the rocks"; they concluded with compliments to the hotel staff "who knew how to render their services in a prompt and obliging fashion" (Mauvoisin hotel register for 1885, my translation). In this extreme case the only living persons were those staying in the hotel and the cows seemed to be born wearing bells; there are many other references to herders and shepherds in the registers but there does not appear to be

anything written about the farming vocation of Bagnes as if tourists were alone in the valley. This perhaps represents the worst case of contempt for the peasants.

One way to further study the extent to which tourists were at a distance from the residents is to include more people in the analysis, that is the peasant themselves, the hotel owners, the guides and porters and to a lesser degree, the representatives of the communal administration. This will help to clarify how coexistence between tourism and agriculture was achieved. To do this, Adams' concept of "power relationship" is useful because it provides a framework in which to include relevant data²⁷. It is this analysis which is most interesting from an anthropological point of view, if the contexts and the events which characterize the social impact of tourism on this rural community are to be examined.

²⁷ *"Power, in general, refers to the tactical control that is exercised by a party over the environment; power in a social relationship, therefore, refers to the control that one party holds over the environment of another party" (Adams 1970: 117).*

The term "environment" needs some elaboration so there will be no confusion over what is meant here by the word "territory". The first part of Adams' proposition is intentionally very broad: there are as many environments as there are specific contexts where power may be exercised. In the second part of the proposition, Adams identifies a social relationship as being one of these specific contexts. He continues, *"With respect to any given social relationship, other individuals or parties may be considered as parts of the environment" (Ibid.).* Thus, a study of power relationships between the parties present depends on empirical answers to the following questions: *"An analysis of power in any situation requires an understanding of the physical relationships that exist, i.e., what specific aspects are controlled, how great is that control, what are the tactical possibilities of mobilizing the control at some point in time when it needs to be exercised" (Ibid.: 118).* To the extent that they apply, these questions will be answered in the form of a summary table, in an annex to this chapter.

4.2.2 Power Relationships

Adams (1970: 118) proposed that power likely to be exercised in a given area should be studied by examining what the parties in opposition specifically control: in Bagnes valley the acquired rights of the guides and land owners must be placed at the foreground of peasant power.

The researchers of the Centre de recherches historiques de Bagnes have been able to uncover at least one documented case of peasant opposition against the construction of a hotel at Fionnay. In the agreement signed in 1899 by the communal representatives and the developer, one will immediately note that the rights of cattle owners association to their supply of water were reserved. Reading this document, one may also observe that the developer anticipated problems with his future neighbors, despite the fact that he too was a Bagnard, since he succeeded in including the provision in the agreement "that the Commune will lend its moral support to obtain a public utility status for [the] road [leading to the proposed hotel]" (Carron et al. 1983: 38, my translation). This status is prerequisite to the opening of proceedings to expropriate private lands. It is granted, if there is good reason, by the canton. In this particular case, the concession of bourgeois lands did not permit construction of the complete road. This is why private land was needed. The documents consulted by the research team reveal that the commune's moral support was not sufficient in the face of the strong opposition of the land owners; thus the hotel was never constructed. Further on in this chapter, the extent of peasant control over the territory of Fionnay

will be seen.

Before this, a look at the guides. Their acquired rights are more abstruse. If the owners of meadow land through the exercise of their rights are able to block the growth of tourist activities, the guides exercise their rights by negotiating with the visitors how their activities take place in the territory. The guides' rights originate in the practice of hunting for food and sport.

The early chamois hunters of Bagnes valley had acquired so much knowledge about their territory that they were destined to become mountain guides. Old photographs showing the guides holding hunting rifles are still kept by some families in the commune. When the Swiss geologist Studer wanted to visit the Combins glacier in 1851, he called upon the services of a hunter; they were accompanied by the hunter's brother-in-law, a cheese maker of an alp (Studer quoted in Carron *et al.* 1983: 81). In 1857, two hunters from the village of Lourtier were the first to make the ascent of the Grand-Combin. Inspired by a prize offered by a Valaisan mountain enthusiast and despite the fears of their families, they returned safe and sound (Besse quoted in *Ibid.*: 87-88). A month later, an Englishman, William Mathews, proposed they repeat the expedition and was asked to pay an exorbitant fee, for those days, of 30 francs per person (a total of 90 francs including a mule-driver to transport the supplies). By way of comparison, this amount was equal to what the commune received in 1860 in cattle-tax from the association of the alp of Mille for 134 cows and 287 sheep (C.A.B.: L.60, for 1860).

The guides even had the mule carry up a mattress for their own use (Mathews quoted in Carron *et al.* 1983: 89-95).

Thus the guides took care of their own physical comforts as well as their financial well-being. Since the guides were also shepherds or cheese makers, the guest were able to benefit from the guides acquaintances on neighboring alps. A bowl of warm milk to start the day and at night a few blankets on a bed of dry hay, that was the way to attend to client's needs (Studer 1851, Mathews 1857, Hoffmann-Burkardt 1867, quoted in Carron *et al.* 1983: 82, 92, 97, 102). In addition the herders and the shepherds would relay the guides' messages to the inn-keepers. After his ascent of Le Pleureur in 1866, Hoffmann-Burkardt used this method to have wine and provisions brought to him in preparation for another climb the following day (*Ibid.*: 101).

For the guides, a good meal was also more important than social conventions. On this Hoffmann-Burkardt wrote the following:

Bien que ce fût un vendredi, les guides avaient tous trois bravement taillé dans le jambon, sans qu'aucun d'eux parût se gêner de ses camarades. [...] Comme on plaisantait un peu à propos du vendredi et des jeûnes, Felley dit que le pape, dont il avait probablement vu le portrait quelque part, n'était pas non plus devenu si gras à force de jeûner" (quoted in *Ibid.*: 98).

In the same vein, Courthion wrote about Maurice Troillet of Le Châble (1841-1917) alluding "to the boisterous noisiness of his impertinent and teasing nature" (quoted in *Ibid.*: 133, my translation). The following anecdote has been passed on by word of mouth about another guide, Juvence Bruchez of Lourtier.

"Il possédait une étable privée sur l'alpage de la Liaz, ce qui lui permit un jour de répondre fièrement au gendarme qui l'interrogeait sur ses allées et venues: 'Je viens de chez moi et je retourne chez moi'" (Carron et al. 1983: 122).

Such independence of spirit may have been the reason for including the following directives in a booklet issued in the guise of permit by the State of Valais to each guide from 1882 on:

"1. La politesse. Le guide ne doit jamais oublier qu'il est au service du voyageur et salarié par lui; il ne doit donc pas déplaire au voyageur par des manières grossières ou par des obsessions (sic) maladroitement ou l'abuser par de faux renseignements.

" [...].

"Il est recommandé aux guides de s'assurer contre les accidents. Il y a pour eux un devoir de conscience à mettre, par un léger sacrifice annuel, leurs familles à l'abri de l'éventualité de la privation ou de la misère" (quoted in Carron et al. 1983: 109).

The free and easy manner of the guides which necessitated the inclusion of these rules in their booklet did not mean they were disinterested and lazy. They willingly offered their services to customers, sometimes without charge when the expedition might be favorable for their careers. This notorious little booklet (issued by the Department of Justice and Police of the canton) contained several blank pages where clients could attest to a guide's contribution to the success of an expedition, an endorsement the guide would not fail to point out to a prospective client who was not sure whether to employ him. Travellers could also register their comments on the guides behavior, and if a page was removed (the booklet was paginated) the guide's license was withdrawn. Unconventional behavior resulted in "a fine of between 5 and 50

francs or the temporary or permanent suspension of the license" (my translation). In the case of a suspension, the guide who continued to practice his profession risked a fine of between 100 to 200 francs. A guide working without a permit could also be fined by the State. From 1882 to 1915, the annual fee for a license was 10.40 francs (Police regulation quoted in Carron *et al.* 1983: 106-109).

A final point: there was a tendency, at least in Bagnes, for skills and knowledge to be passed down in the family. Of the 32 short biographies of Bagnard guides compiled by the Centre de recherches historiques de Bagnes, no less than ten are devoted to the Bessard family (two generations of three sons and their brothers-in-law). Other family relationships are included: two families of an uncle and a nephew and one association between a father and a son (Carron *et al.* 1983: 122-141).

The passing down of skills within a family assured a certain continuity in the profession. Those seeking a guide needed only knock on a few doors to always find some experienced men. Sometimes travellers paid the price of this family business extending into a veritable territorial corporation. Indeed, the guides tended to consider the upper part of the valley as being their exclusive domain whenever a visitor wanted to contract an expedition. This was the situation in 1884 when four travellers discovered holes in their water flasks, pierced by the guides of Évolène, a village in the Hérens valley east of Bagnes. In Mauvoisin these travellers had been content to hire a Bagnard porter and had set off without guides probably in the direction of Évolène before

coming back to Mauvoisin.

The corporate nature of territory was even visible at the communal level through the rules it decreed. In 1857, Mathews wrote the following about his Chamonix guide:

"Il y fut condamné à une amende par cette commune à principes libéraux. Il était accusé de haute trahison pour avoir fait l'ascension du mont Blanc depuis Saint-Gervais, contrairement à un récent règlement dont il ne connaissait pas l'existence" (quoted in Carron *et al.* 1983: 94).

Had they been contemporaries, Gussfeldt, a devoted fan of the region, might have replied:

"A cette époque on ne connaissait pas d'autre point de départ que Chamonix, et l'on semblait ne pas douter que le Mont Blanc possédât plusieurs faces; on eût convenu volontiers qu'il n'avait qu'un seul versant, comme l'ombre n'a qu'un seul côté. [...]. Aujourd'hui même [1894], les gens de la vallée ne peuvent admettre que l'accès de Mont Blanc ne leur appartienne pas à titre de privilège exclusif. Quiconque arrive du sommet en venant d'Italie avec des guides étrangers est reçu avec une froide politesse" (Gussfeldt 1899: 142-143).

Incidentally, Gussfeldt is guilty of an error of omission by not speaking of the former situation when, as Mathews has pointed out above, an individual was subject to an immediate fine. Neither did Gussfeldt make any reference to the rule by which "the guides of this area [Chamonix] are the only ones allowed to ply their trade there" (quoted in Carron *et al.* 1983: 110, my translation). In 1891 the State Council reacted to this rule by issuing a directive forbidding French guides "to practice their profession on Valaisan territory" (*Ibid.*).

When no regulations existed, it was the village solidarity itself

which proved to be the most effective in protecting the interests of the local workers. For example, in 1890, the Genevan branch of the Swiss Alpine Club had to come to terms with local Bagnard sensitivities when it wanted to move the wooden part of the Chanrion cabin. The promoters had in mind a structure having two levels, a wooden floor and 10cm thick walls made of larch. It was prefabricated in Chêne, near Geneva then shipped by train to Martigny and from there to Lourtier. The person in charge at Martigny had the "utmost difficulty finding porters to transport it on their backs from Lourtier to Chanrion. [...] in the end he hired men from Salvan" (Viollier 1915: 157, my translation). This commune is 40 km from Lourtier, closer to Chamonix than to Bagnes; if it was necessary to go that far to find porters, it is easy to imagine the ill feeling which prevailed in Bagnes and its surroundings prior to the arrival of the wooden framework from Geneva. The only work left for local people was the laying of the foundations which was done by two Bagnard masons.

Thus it is interesting to contemplate for the moment that the local people's desire to take full advantage of tourism is not a new phenomenon. As well, the tourist industry recognizes that it cannot have complete control over the employment situation. A few years later in 1912, when the cabin was enlarged, the Genevan branch wisely entrusted the work to a local person who was not only a contractor but also the President of Bagnes... (Viollier 1915: 160).

As a final note, guides and porters were so completely at ease around the hotels, at least in Mauvoisin and Fionnay, that on several occasions, misinformed travellers wrote complimentary remarks about them in the registers, thinking they were the proprietors.

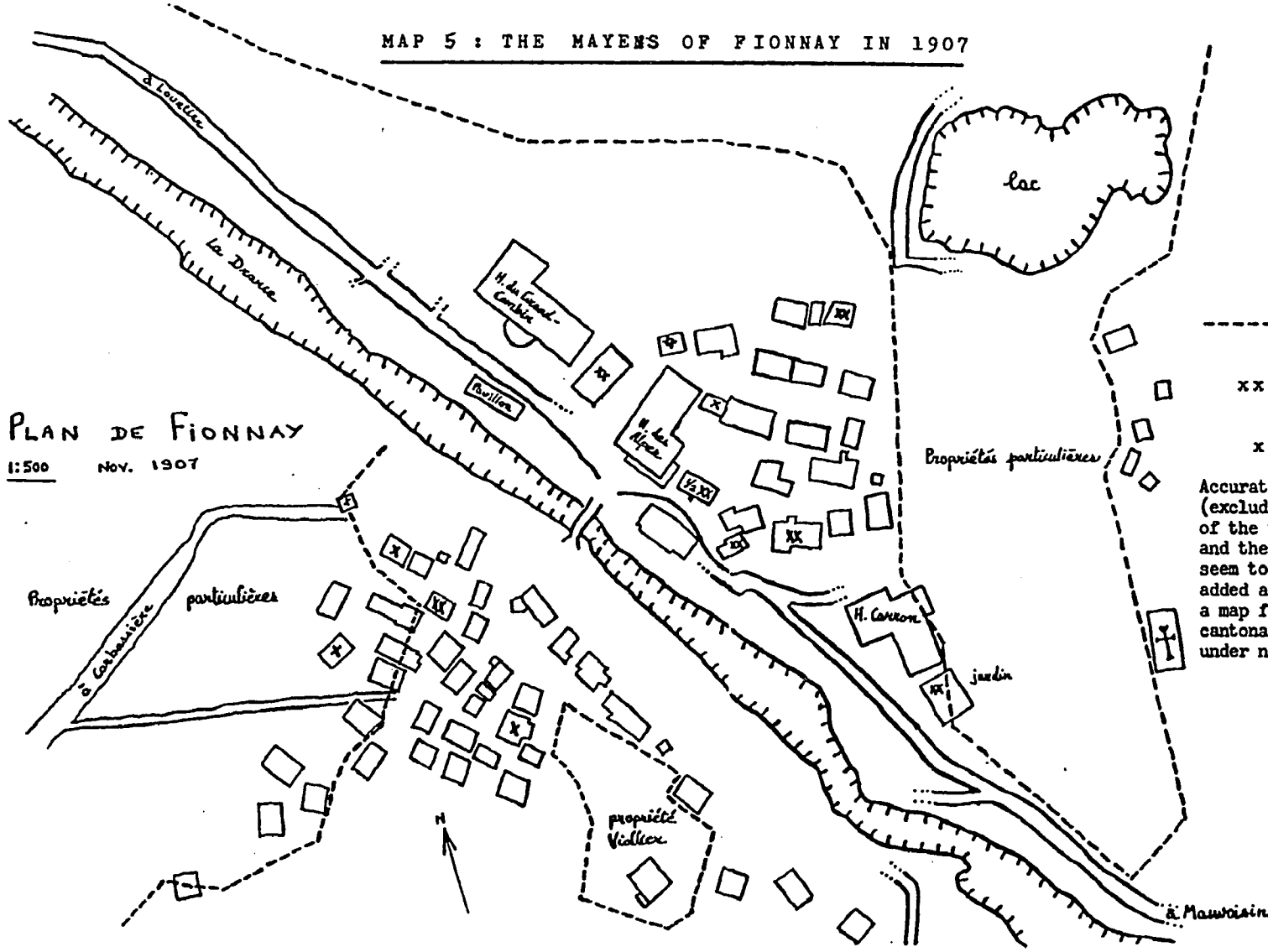
There is less information available about the relationship between the visitors and the peasants. In section 4.2.1 it was shown that the tourists did not "notice" them, implying an aloof attitude on the part of the visitors toward the peasants. The tourists were indifferent to their way of life and work. Those who tried to popularize the valley in their works wrote in a like fashion. The following extract from promotional literature published in the canton of Vaud, makes the point that behind all this idyllic scenery, there certainly were people tilling the soil and shovelling manure:

"Le charme paisible, reposant, idyllique de Châbles, le plantureux aspect de Lourtier avec ses beaux vergers et ses riches prairies et la splendeur sauvage et magnifique de Fionnay se complètent et font de ce vallon béni un tout parfait, un chef d'oeuvre de la nature, pourtant si belle partout, dans nos Alpes. [...] Chaque localité a son charme et chacune d'elles, pour sa part, offre aux visiteurs une variété de scènes et d'attraits qui permet à chacun de satisfaire ses goûts personnels. [...] Pour l'amateur de pittoresque quelques rues montantes, tortueuses, bizarres, où l'on peut prendre plus d'un joli croquis et nombre d'instantanés typiques" (Viollier 1903: passim).

The author of this piece, a Vaudois, was in 1907 in Fionnay, the owner of the largest undivided parcel of land encircling a building in the village. Consequently he must have known enough Bagnards to at least have mentioned them; but apart from the names of the highly recommended guides, the excerpt above is the central message of this 16 page

brochure. There were numerous Bagnard families in Fionnay (25 different family names and 73 barns and haylofts). The map reproduced below shows clearly the proximity in 1907 of the areas used by hotel owners with those occupied by agriculture.

MAP 5 : THE MAYENS OF FIONNAY IN 1907



PLAN DE FIONNAY
1:500 Nov. 1907

KEY

- boundary of communal land
- xx owned by an inn-keeper
- x owned by a guide

Accurately reproduced (excluding illustrations of the trees and rocks, and the notes which seem to have been added after 1907) from a map filed in the cantonal archives in Sion under number A.V. 70 Bagnes
16

Most of the buildings shown on the map are still there today. They are very close together, separated by only one meter on average. During the hotel era in Fionnay, the presence of the local people was thus definitely felt. All the more so, as the farming season and the tourist season overlapped. At the beginning of the summer, just before the cattle and their herders moved up to the high pastures (at the end of June) but after the cows were first let out onto the meadows adjoining the villages (in the middle of May), the peasants who had property there led their animals up to the mayens of Fionnay to enjoy the first grass of the season in the upper valley²⁸.

From July until mid-August, teen-age boys and girls lived in the mayens located above their village or in Fionnay, where they tended the young cattle which could not be sent up to the high pastures, either because the family lacked the means or the right to use them²⁹. The poorest families "who did not own even one cow and yet wanted to make a few soft cheeses would care for the dairy cows of people who were well-off but were so busy and short-handed that no one in the family could be spared from the farm work to go up to the mayen" (Gabbud

²⁸ A maven is a type of property that includes both a building and its adjacent hay meadows. The term refers to this ensemble. In Fionnay, the buildings are concentrated on land belonging to the bourgeoisie along a small stretch of the Dranse and privately owned meadows ("propriétés particulières") lie around the village, as shown on Map 4. Fully private mayens are found on the mountainside above a village elsewhere in the commune.

²⁹ The capacity of an alp is fixed; each member or consort enjoys one or more rights "to alp" a cow ("droit de fonds" or "fonds de vache"). The member uses them for his cattle or rents them. During the period under discussion in this chapter, the hazards of inheritance meant that a member might only hold a fraction of his fonds de vache (1/12 of a cow for example); therefore he or she was obliged to lease the missing portion (Suter 1944: 98).

1909: 54, my translation). Teenagers and women drove the cattle daily onto the adjacent communal lands called avantages and went out of their way to find hay in almost inaccessible places before returning to the mayens. Some women still tell of the feats performed by their mothers who managed to cut a small corner of hay growing wild on the steep rocky slopes or on the path switchbacks. Gabbud maintains that even the well-off families took advantage of this way of using the communal property (1909: 55).

Towards the end of August, the peasant population in the mayens of Fionnay increased in order to cut and gather the hay growing on the private properties shown on the map, that is, all the hay that had not been already grazed by the young cattle. The hay was stored in a loft above the barn and at the beginning of winter, as soon as the first snow fell, was brought down to the owners' respective village by sled. Other families carried it home on their backs, after it had been cut and had dried in the fields, at about the same time as the hotels were closing for the season.

It is thus quite surprising with so much coming and going to the mayens that the tourists were not more aware of the peasants. Compared with other settlements in the commune, Fionnay had the greatest concentration of mayens. It was indeed a "village of mayens" much like the smaller ones at Granges-Neuves or Plan-Pro on the road between Lourtier and Fionnay. Elsewhere in the area, for example above Versegères or Sarreyer, the mayens were scattered such that each one had

its own lateral jurisdiction over one level of the steep slopes which rose sharply from the banks of the Dranse to overlook the villages. In Fionnay therefore, the tourists could observe a highly original system of farming, if only because of the seasonal living arrangements.

The attitude of the hotel owners certainly did nothing to further the contact between the visitors and the peasant families. The proprietors of the hotels thought that the best way to minimize problems that might arise by the peasants objecting to tourist activities, was to position themselves between the tourists and the Bagnards. Having isolated one group from the other, the hotel owners put themselves in the role of an intermediary sympathetic to everyone's interests.

The real issue was the desire of the hotel owners to consolidate their power over the use of land in the emerging resort. They wanted without opposition, to be able to buy the buildings they needed or to construct them, if need be, to oversee the upkeep of buildings and to divert the water supply (at that time there was an artificial waterfall behind the hotels). In addition, they wanted to be assured among other things, of a steady supply of dairy products and of manpower in order to maintain their properties. It was they who had the most to lose if an open conflict arose between themselves and the peasants or between the local people and the visitors: for instance, such would be the case if tourists started to buy buildings for their own use, thus angering the peasants and creating such a feeling of ill will that the village would no longer be a pleasant place in which to spend a vacation.

Although it was of no loss to the hotel owners, there is at least one actual case similar to this latter situation. It concerned the property of Edmond Viollier whose descendants still live in Fionnay. He is the Vaudois writer whose work has been quoted earlier and whose chalet is illustrated on the map. In fact, it seems very likely that this map was drawn for use by those who opposed the purchase by Viollier. The boundaries are precisely indicated and they show the encroachment of this private property on the predominantly communal lands. One can see at first glance that most of the structures are built on communal territory. This map was found in the cantonal archives in Sion and not in Bagnes, meaning it must have been added to the dossier on Bagnes following a recent reclassification of old documents presented to the State Council. The petitioners were probably critical of the communal administration's decision to authorize the sale of this land, thereby reducing the size of the holdings of the bourgeoisie. In all likelihood, taking the appeal to Sion was the final step in the long drawn-out dispute between Viollier and Carron since the Vaudois brochure, dated 1903 and already mentioned, does not include the Hôtel Carron in its list of recommended hotels and guides for Bagnes. The Centre de recherches historiques de Bagnes points out this irregularity without any further comment; a possible explanation, however, is that Dr. Carron had adopted a pro-peasant position against foreigners who wished to settle in Fionnay.

In the consolidation of their power, the innkeepers generally had the support of the communal administration, especially when their initiatives

allowed the commune to collect new revenues. The administration went as far as to protect the local hotel owners from competition from foreign-owned hotels by using its power of authorization (see p. 179). But the communal councillors faded into the background as soon as a matter became too contentious. The long trial that opposed Seiler to the bourgeoisie of Zermatt testifies to this (see p. 168). Left to themselves, in the face of the acquired rights of the families and the cattle owners' associations, the hotel owners were more or less obliged to round up support one person at a time, in an attempt to gradually protect themselves from the peasants' recourse to their acquired rights. These tactics, enticing or otherwise, might be used in any sort of situation such as the choice of the supplier of milk or of rounds of goat cheese or when services were needed such as recommending a guide or porter. In addition to accumulating personal support, all the Fionnay innkeepers respected peasant custom by not seeking privatization of their landed concessions (contrary to the case of the Viollier property). These lands belonged to the bourgeoisie and their legal status as common property essentially eliminated any risk of conflict between the users over rights of way for themselves and their animals. The proximity of the buildings, as seen on the map, indicates the importance the innkeepers attached to maintaining harmonious relationships with the peasant families.

This respect for the integrity of common property clearly illustrates the reciprocal power held by the peasants in the face of the expansion of tourism which was happening during the period under discussion. At the outset, at Mauvoisin, home of the alps, a tourist was not seen as a

threat. Viewed as somewhat eccentric in the eyes of the peasants, tourists were seen more as objects of amusement than as competitors for the use of the land. In Fionnay, home of the mayens, the change in the location of the tourist-use areas raised some new factors, the most basic being the rights of way and the maintenance of the rurality of the site. In order to develop their own industry in this part of the commune, hotel owners were obliged to respect the acquired rights of the first occupants.

For their part, guides and porters, themselves firmly entrenched in the peasantry due to their seasonal occupations of hunting, cattle-tending and cheese-making, sought to remain independent from the recommendations from hotel owners. In the first place, evidence of this may be seen on the 1907 map; at the beginning of the road leading to Corbassière, a guide had built a small dwelling on the boundary of the communal lands and the privately-owned fields. At this location he could not have possibly been any closer to the tourists who had yet to engage the services of a guide. No doubt, he could also argue with them that his services were indispensable. This was a well-travelled route as it led to the Panossière cabin, half a day's journey away and the departure point for many other excursions such as the ascent of the Grand-Combin and the route to Bourg-Saint-Pierre and the Grand-Saint-Bernard hospice via the Maisons-Blanches pass. Even the guides' spirit of independence discussed earlier, fits perfectly with the practice of the profession considering the ambiguous position they were in with the hotel owners.

Thus, the early days of tourism in Bagnes valley proved to be an opportune time for the hotel owners to show that agriculture and tourism could coexist in Fionnay. With communal permits in hand, allowing them to build their hotels, it was up to them to convince the peasants occupying these lands during the summer that their interests would not necessarily be threatened by this new economic activity on the land. The inkeepers were particularly successful in showing that problems associated with the changes of land use could be discussed and settled locally.

For example, it is not exactly known how a rival hotel owner was prevented from building a fifth hotel in 1899; however, lack of written information implies that this matter was informally settled between the occupants expecting to be inconvenienced by the construction of the road and the ousted hotel builder (see p. 195). On the other hand, when the peasants and presumably their ally, Carron, wanted to appeal to Sion to stop the privatization of bourgeois lands for a foreigner's benefit, their efforts resulted in a bitter failure, assuming the incident did actually happen in Fionnay as described. Historically, these contradictory results constitute the first example of what was stated at the conclusion of chapter II: that the local people firmly believed a problem could be resolved locally with more success than by resorting to a central governing body (or in the context of chapter II, to the supralocal institutions established to allow participation in decision making). In the case above, the peasants' specific interests were to protect their user rights of the common holdings from tourist intrusions.

On the other hand, the hotel owners had so successfully isolated the peasants from the tourists, reinforced in this by the visitors' "instinctive" aloofness toward the local people, that the considerable difference in their respective social conditions did not appear to have become a matter of conflict. Even more important, by making the guides and porters sympathetic to the peasants' interests, the hotel owners succeeded in preventing any recourse the local people might have had in asserting their acquired rights in Fionnay before the communal administration or the Primary Assembly. This action might otherwise have jeopardized the duration of the agreements binding the commune to the hotel owners regarding their use of the communal lands.

In this context, one can better understand how everyone's interests were accommodated. In the case of the peasants and the hotel owners, each party endeavors to prove that the other is really in control of the situation. Like the farmer's harvest, the tourist business is uncertain. The reader can easily visualize days when a farmer and an innkeeper would meet over a glass of wine from the Fully vineyards and discuss the ups and downs of their respective occupations, trading round for round³⁰.

The Bagnard innkeeper of those days thus became an intermediary,

³⁰ Mountain landowners of Bagnes owned vineyards at Fully because flooding there was often caused by the irregular flow of the rivers located in the mountain district of Entremont. This run-off periodically held up spring planting in the plain. When that happened, in exchange for any amount of rye or wheat, the mountain farmer became the owner of a vineyard which prospered on the gentle slopes of Fully, the cultivation of which was impossible in Bagnes because of the commune's location at a higher altitude (Courthion 1972: 68).

placing himself between the parties, gaining personal support from all sides in the hope of strengthening his own position in the community and eventually his business. The situation in Bagnes is certainly representative of other regions in the Alps where the peasantry strictly controlled the use of the communal lands in the early days of the tourist industry. By reconstructing the power relationships at the time the tourist-use areas were changing to different locations, from Mauvoisin to Fionnay, the circumstances whereby this intermediary emerged, have been described³¹.

The emergence of this position of power in the community, which made possible the coexistence of agriculture and tourism, proved to be a determining factor in later changes in location of the tourist-use areas in Bagnes territory. This chapter has spelled out the ways in which outside influences linked with the growth of tourism, such as the founding of alpine clubs in Europe and the new tastes developed by visitors to the Alps, could be handled locally with relative success. In the perception of the resident population, tourism has thus long been seen as an industry that could bring benefits to the commune, as long as it was ready to establish itself with some consideration for ongoing activities of peasants on the territory of the commune. To summarize the material in this chapter, the following table presents an overview of the power relation-

³¹ The innkeeper is not yet in historical terms, a "mediator" (Silverman 1965: 173) whose functions are "critical" in that they would threaten the structures of either agriculture or tourism, nor does he meet Silverman's second criterion, whose functions are exclusive: "*exclusivity means that if the link is to be made at all between the two systems with respect to the particular function, it must be made through the mediators*" (Silverman 1965: 173).

ships in the community during the first phase of tourism, using Adams' framework.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 4

Synthesis of the powers held by the parties present in Fionnay and Mauvoisin from 1860 to 1914

Column headings:

- (a) : "what specific aspects are controlled";
- (b) : "how great is that control";
- (c) : "what are the tactical possibilities of mobilizing the control at some point in time when it needs to be exercised" (Adams 1970: 118).

COMMUNAL ADMINISTRATION

(a)	(b)	(c)
- land concession to hotel owners	- complete, since the commune is the legal entity which enforces its regulations	- moderate, because the councillors must come to terms simultaneously with the need to preserve power and the need to satisfy the dominant ideas of both the hotel owners and the peasants
- tax collection		

HOTEL OWNERS

- | (a) | (b) | (c) |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the cost of services offered to guests - the offer of certain services rather than others - the position of intermediary between the parties present | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - subject to competition from other hotel owners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assured, because of the communal administration's declared interest in "encouraging more travellers to visit our beautiful valley" coupled with the fact that the commune discourages foreign owned hotels - none when the peasants' acquired rights are threatened |

GUESTS

- | (a) | (b) | (c) |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the demand for the services - the decision whether or not to return to Bagnes - their comings and goings on the territory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete regarding the growth, stability and decline of the tourist industry. The saying "the customer is always right" could not be more appropriate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - moderate as to obtaining certain services since the guests must confront the hotel owners' power - none for a boycott of Bagnes considering the rudimentary channels of communication. Bad publicity in a guide-book might in some circumstances have some influence |

GUIDES AND PORTERS

- | (a) | (b) | (c) |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - knowing the territory - refusing to work - being excellent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - subject to competition amongst themselves and from the guides and porters of other villages who arrive in Bagnes with tourists - subject to the regulations of the State of Valais | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - moderate to assured in particular circumstances appealing for village solidarity - none, considering the lack of an organization to protect their interests |

PEASANTS

- | (a) | (b) | (c) |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of the land - assertion of acquired rights against the expansion of tourist use and occupation of the territory - the Fionnay mayens | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete on "private properties", on the high pastures and buildings administered by the cattle owners' associations - subject to the decisions of the communal administration regarding the communal lands administered by the bourgeoisie | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - moderate by means of protests to the Communal Council or before the Primary Assembly - assured if they are prepared to unite and take advantage of the competition between hotel owners |

CHAPTER V

Negotiating Territory

5.1 Introduction

The second phase of tourist development in Bagnes occurred after World War I. It was characterized by another shift in location of tourist-use areas, that is, from the upper part of the valley to the plateau of Verbier, a large area of pasture land situated just above the village bearing that name in the commune, at some 15 kilometers from Fionnay on the right bank of the Dranse. This shift in location was another instance of the unpredictable course of the history of tourism in the Alps (see p. 145). Again, new expectations on the part of the clientele, namely the practice of skiing and skating, were responsible for the downfall of Fionnay in favor of Verbier.

In contrast with the period covered in chapter IV, the principal tourist season in the Alps became the winter months. This happened despite the fact that countries neighboring Switzerland (for example, France in 1936) initiated the obligatory month-long paid holiday, usually in August; this decision had the immediate effect of attracting tourists of the most modest means to mountain hotels during the summer. In 1938, winter and summer seasons somewhat complemented each other, with overnight registrations in the whole commune of Bagnes, including Fionnay, amounting to 6,775 while Verbier had 8,302 (Dubois 1960 : 85). According to the same author, winter sports had decisively replaced summer outings in the mountains by 1958. At that time, Bagnes had 11,220 overnights (+ 68% compared to 1938) and Verbier 67,908 (+ 71.8%), with the numbers for Bagnes being caused by the presence of tourists in

the mayens of Bruson, on the left bank of the Dranse; during the 1950s, Fionnay served as a base station for the engineers and workers involved in the construction of the Mauvoisin dam and contributed little to overnight registrations in the commune at that time.

Whereas the first phase of tourist utilization of territory described in the previous chapter was based on land located at the periphery of the commune's agricultural core, the second phase meant that farming activities practiced on the plateau of Verbier either had to be abandoned or relocated. In Verbier, meadows and buildings were privately owned and well demarcated from bourgeois land. Promoters of tourism could build accommodations after buying land without having to go through the concession procedure required from hotel owners in Fionnay because, on the plateau, bourgeois land essentially consisted of higher altitude areas located near and above the tree line, and used in the summer by four cattle owners' associations. This land provided grazing areas for the animals of the associations' members.

Thus, the shift to Verbier of the location of tourist areas meant that a competitive process emerged between agriculture and tourism. This stands in sharp contrast with the coexistence between these sectors of the local economy that characterized the Fionnay situation. It is adequate to speak of competition for land, as opposed to unresisted sale to tourists or promoters, because the typical family farm in Bagnes, as elsewhere in Valais, was made of a large number of landed properties and buildings scattered over different altitudes and villages. Selling one or

two properties in Verbier to a tourist meant that a peasant would try to find elsewhere in the commune land with similar qualities as that sold, and the farm could still operate. While competition thus involved peasants among themselves, the larger context was a competition for land between agriculture and tourism. Moreover, material benefits provided to the Bagnards by the tourist industry came in the form of jobs held by a relatively large number of people in Verbier. These were often seasonal and gave the peasants a highly prized opportunity to earn supplementary income while maintaining the family farm. Thus, with those benefits gradually accumulating, peasants who sold land in the 1950s were less inclined to sell more in the 1980s. In fact, most Bagnards can now afford not to sell land and prices have skyrocketed.

This happened because between 1958 and 1978, the tourist industry in Bagnes expanded at a frantic pace, with overnight registrations in Verbier alone reaching 865,000 (see p. 57). That period of growth came about while the communal administration was spending hydropower royalties to increase services to the Bagnards; these expenditures in fact became "investments" as the availability of these services also encouraged more tourism in the valley, generating revenues for the commune and jobs for the Bagnards.

Most of these investments were made through Services industriels de Bagnes, which since 1959 has operated as an independent body under the Communal Council and is responsible for "building and operating the infrastructure of the high and low voltage electrical network, the

drinking water reservoirs and filtration plants" (Besson 1984: 26, my translation). At its inception, the Services industriels assumed a debt of 500,000 francs which by 1982 had reached 8,000,000 francs (Baillifard 1984: 67). This gives a good idea of the extensive construction undertaken to put the electrical network in place, as well as the number of jobs generated in the commune. Investments were even higher than that since the debt figures do not, of course, include the profits reinvested from the revenue obtained from rate-payers dues³².

The Communal Council thus became an important economic agent in the development of tourism whereas it merely had powers of authorization in the Fionnay situation. There, coexistence between agriculture and tourism was a matter of respecting the peasants' acquired rights on the use of communal land and ultimately, depended upon the ability of hotel owners' to mobilize personal support among the peasants, through favors and exchange of services, so that authorizations of tourist use would continue to be granted when needed. With tourism in Verbier, this power of authorization has come to rest with the federal government because substantial foreign investments, particularly in the form of real estate, contributed to the expansion of the tourist industry not only in Verbier but all across Switzerland. The advent of charter flights during the 1970s had put the Alps within reach of all the major world capitals and

³² In 1982, the main facilities consisted of 33km of aerial 10kV lines, 37km of underground 10kV lines, 77 transformer stations of 10kV/380V, 40,000 kVA total installed capacity, 26,500kW installed capacity for electric heating, 86km of drinking water pipes, 6,500m³ of drinking water stored in enclosed tanks (Idem.). The water filtration plant, located in Verbier, went into operation in 1967; it was the first facility of this type to be built in Valais.

this alone opened up a whole new era for tourism. As a result, the Confederation found it necessary to regulate foreign investments on a case by case basis in 1976, with a view to restricting them. The passage of this legislation which limited the ownership of real estate to Swiss, the so-called "Lex Furgler", stirred opposition in Bagnes to the extent that the law was generally perceived as an infringement on the decisional autonomy of everyone, from the communal administration to the individual Bagnard, as if both were suddenly unable to deal with problems of tourism and property values by themselves.

The effects of the Lex Furgler in Bagnes will be discussed in chapter VI because it is part of the explanation of the process of cultural assertion among the Bagnards. The present chapter will show how problems raised by increased tourism in the commune have been addressed locally. This will be done first through a description of the system of rights of use that are attached to communal property in Bagnes and second, by showing how these rights have been made more specific for bourgeois peasants using that property as well as for the main ski lift operator in the commune. This will constitute the basic data illustrating how coexistence between agriculture and tourism on public land may be approached in the future, as distinct from the means resorted to in that regard at the time of tourism in Fionnay. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of private property and the ways in which its conservation by the Bagnards is at stake with the expansion of tourism. Documenting this recent development will permit us to assess the position of peasant households in relation to these men and women who have given

up agriculture to find work in the tourist industry. Relationships between the Bagnards involved in either of these sectors of the local economy are of course critical to any prospect of coexistence of tourism with agriculture in the future. It will be argued that raising cattle has come to constitute a common ground for sociability and communication between the Bagnards despite the decreasing number of farm operations in the commune.

5.2 The Use of Communal Property

5.2.1 The Bourgeoisie.

A simple definition of communal property might be that all land in the commune owned by no one belongs to everyone who is a member of the Primary Assembly. It thus includes those having rights of residence as well as the bourgeois. The former group has the right to cut firewood anywhere on the communal lands except on these parts that have been granted to bourgeois for a specific use such as a quarry or as an enclosed pasture. Strictly communal lands are thus becoming more and more scarce, as will be seen shortly. The second group, the bourgeois men and women of Bagnes, is represented by a Bourgeoisial Council consisting of three communal councilors who administer the bourgeois commune's property; they keep an account which is separate from the political commune's property. The differences between these two communes were explained in chapter II: the political commune was formed in the middle of the 19th century to make sure that Swiss citizens who were not bourgeois would be able to exercise their political rights in their commune of residence; the bourgeois commune was formed to protect the property and local rights of those born in the community from a bourgeois father. Correspondingly, all public property that is not owned by the bourgeoisie falls under the jurisdiction of the Primary Assembly.

Nonetheless, the bourgeois commune is indeed the principal property

owner in Bagnes. In the first place, it owns the Maison de commune or City Hall where the councilors hold their meetings, where the archives are stored and where most of the communal officials have their offices. It is as well, in Bagnes, the owner of 2,519 hectares (ha) of forest, 62ha in the commune of Riddes and 78ha in Saxon commune (Fellay and Porchet 1978: 10). In addition to these forest lands, 15 of the 16 alps in Bagnes, an area covering 4,356ha, belong to the bourgeoisie.

The alps are the high mountain pastures where cattle and sheep graze from the end of June to the end of September. Three alps are operated privately for a rental fee paid annually to the bourgeoisie. Three others are not used for cattle raising: the alps of Greneys and Louvie are leased to the State of Valais and make up a hunting preserve covering an area of some 300ha high up on the right side of the valley between Lourtier and Fionnay. The third produces no revenue at all. The one alp not owned by the bourgeoisie belongs to a cattle owners' association. This is an economic organization whose members are responsible to one another for carrying out certain duties and supplying certain provisions and who share in the revenue generated from the exploitation of a resource, in this case, the land holdings of the alp. Similar associations are in place to manage irrigation systems, drinking-water supplies, or stud bull services. Local cattle owners' associations administer the other nine alps of the valley. In exchange for taxes paid in the name of the bourgeoisie which remains the proprietor of the lands, the associations enjoys the rights of usufruct. In such cases the members own the buildings located on the alp and the cheese making equipment.

One of the nine cattle owners' associations has granted its operator's rights to a family from Vollèges for an annual rent of 1,000 francs. Sheep are raised on two of the remaining eight alps and cattle on the other six (Fellay and Porchet 1978: passim).

The bourgeoisial regulation adopted in 1930 and still in force, states moreover that the bourgeoisie owns the quarries on its lands, whether in operation or not. Thus for a long time, even before the 1930 Act, the bourgeoisie has earned revenue from the deposits of steatite and ophite used in the manufacture of stoves. For example, in 1904, a lessee of a quarry agreed to pay an annual fee of 2,055 francs to the bourgeoisie for a period of four years (Michaud 1982: 120), that is, almost double the annual amount of all the taxes paid by the bourgeoisie to the State and to the communes of Riddes and Saxon (Bagnes 1910: 9). The stoves are quite appropriately known as bagnards and are much in demand nowadays by both tourists and residents not fortunate enough to have inherited one. Most of them bear the date of manufacture as well as the initials of the couple who were the first owners. The oldest date back to the end of the 18th century. Those who have kept the stoves in their families over the years attach great symbolic value to them.

Lastly, the bourgeoisie is responsible for the mayentzes, the communal lands bordering the alps and the forests. In the past, anyone could, without permission, pasture an animal or collect firewood on communal property but not on bourgeois lands. Nowadays, the mayentzes form part of the bourgeois wooded property for the purposes of reforest-

ation and eventually the enlargement of the alps. The 1930 regulation was the way this last appropriation of communal lands was instituted (Bagnes 1930: 7).

5.2.2 The Cattle Owners' Associations

The right to use bourgeois land thus belongs to usufructuaries who by their work maintaining and improving the land, have warranted a potentially permanent right to the collective resources of the community. The cattle owners' associations are the most visible of such groups in Bagnes ever since the groups in charge of land irrigation were replaced by a centralized system of management (see p. 61). The date for the inalpe is decided at a general meeting of the members of each association. At this time, the men and a few women drive their animals up to the association's main barn and entrust them to the care of the head herdsman and his helpers for the rest of the summer. At this meeting the daily salaries of the shepherds and the herders, as well as the cheese makers will be determined. Bagnard cattle owners thus give the care of their animals to trained people for the summer. In the two valleys immediately east and parallel to Bagnes, Hérens (Berthoud 1967: 191-195, Bourdin 1973: 117-125) and Anniviers (Loup 1959: 85; Crettaz 1982: 73-76), the same situation prevails. But in Lötschental in Upper-Valais, the association manages the alp itself, making sure there are not too many animals for the amount of available grass, and leaves each member to care for his own animals (Friedl 1974: 51-54). Here, each owner has his

own mayen and a reserve of hay in case poor weather prevents outdoor grazing. In addition he milks his own cows and makes his own cheese. Friedl calls this "the individual management system" (1974: 53). Consequently in Bagnes, there are many more occasions where consultations are required among members before decisions can be made.

Each cattle owners' association has its own board of directors or Comité. The president's job is to provide a link between the members and the board of directors. The vice-president is responsible for carrying out the decisions made at the meetings, regarding such things as repairs to buildings on the alp (following the advice of a three-member improvement commission). He also distributes small cards to each owner indicating the time and place the supplies needed by the herders and shepherds will be delivered. The secretary-treasurer is in charge of the accounts; he pays the workers, draws up the financial statements and calculates the cost of summering each member's cattle on the alp. The three members are elected for three-year periods on a rotation basis. In some cases, the barns on the alp are connected to the village dairy by milk pipelines (a pipe-lait); in these associations the job of secretary-treasurer tends to become a permanent position as the members think it sensible to have the same person in charge of both the alp and the dairy accounts. Each association has its own inspectors. Violations of the rules or lapse in the objectives result in fines which must be paid in money or by extra work. A member can be expelled by a compulsory repurchase of his "cow rights". As a last resort, a tribunal may be set up to settle disputes among the associates or between the associates and

the committee. Women are not known to have ever been elected to the comité even though some are members of these associations.

On Bagnes' six alps used for cattle raising, the members own the lower mountain pasture (montagnes basses) as well as the buildings and equipment. Located halfway up the mountain, these areas are where families previously owned mayens which were adjacent to the bourgeois lands. Between 1927 and 1941 the cattle owners' associations were able to increase the productivity of their alps by purchasing the mayens which were closer to the bourgeois lands they were already using. The association that administers the largest area of low pastureland, 50ha, is also the one which made the first acquisition.

These mayens were originally hay meadows and they were purchased as part of a larger plan to amalgamate two alps. Since the mayens were situated in between the two alps, acquiring them was vital to the success of the merger because they would be converted into grazing areas. How this land merger took place is described in minute detail by the geographer Karl Suter (1944: 32-42). Reading this account of the reorganization, which is based on the memories of those involved in the original transactions, one gets the idea that farming was not at all an activity fixed in routine and backward custom.

For example, the pasturelands of Sery, one of the two alps that were merged, "were very infertile" (Suter 1944: 35) because of their proximity to a glacier and its moraines. The problem in those years was

indeed the shortage of labor to maintain the alp, for demographic reasons. (See section 1.4 where it is indicated that the population of Bagnes decreased steadily between 1860 and 1941.) The rock debris, no longer cleared away by the herders or the members, was allowed to accumulate. The members did not seem inclined to work longer or to increase the size of the work parties organized to "unload" their alp (a verb that perfectly describes the heavy work of removing the rocks preventing the grass from growing). To enlarge the alp was a logical expedient. A first vote on the matter had 103 of 120 voters in favor of a merger with the cattle owners' association of La Ly who were then invited to join. The owners of the mayens who were asked to give up their fields were, for the most part, members of the La Ly association and according to Suter, it was again the labor shortage which seems to have persuaded even the most recalcitrant among them. The amalgamation and the larger scale of operations would in time produce substantial economies for everyone.

Once the lower mountain pastures started to be used in 1928, the least productive pastures could be abandoned since so much hard work was required to maintain them. In addition to the removal of stones, buildings needed to be reinforced, roads cleared, watering troughs and irrigations ditches cleaned. Since the cows did not have to be moved around as much, they produced more milk which in turn increased cheese production. Furthermore, instead of allocating cheese to each member in proportion to his cattle's yield, the cheese could be sold in bulk to the Valaisan Federation of Dairy Farmers (see p. 121) and the revenue divided

up as in the old days:

"Les consorts ne sont donc plus obligés de s'occuper de la vente de leurs produits laitiers, de leur fromage avant tout. Ils sont également libérés de la tâche pénible de transporter les produits de l'alpage au village et de les y soigner" (Suter 1944: 41)

The main advantage of the low pasturelands is that the cattle are able to graze for a longer period of time in summer. The members send the cattle up to the alp earlier and bring them down later. Grass can be left to grow on the higher slopes still in use, thus providing more "meals" for the animals, as their owners say. But more than that, should the spring sun shine fairly constantly, the hay crops from private meadows will be larger and families can afford to store supplies for the winter since the cattle are already grazing on the alps. This could mean an additional calf could be kept over the winter. On the other hand, a late start due to poor weather will mean a shortened summer grazing season since the insurance contracts covering injuries to herders are in effect only until October first. Even if there is still grass on the alp at that date, the association cannot extend the grazing time to compensate for a delayed start. Neither is it worth extending the insurance since most of the cows will soon calve and therefore not produce enough milk to make profitable arrangements with the herders.

These benefits explain why, by 1941, all of Bagnes six cattle owners' associations had followed the 1927-1928 lead of the Sery and La Ly members and acquired mayens in order to assemble their own low pasturelands. Today this area totals 154ha compared to 2,646ha for the

bourgeoisial lands of La Marline, Grands Plans, La Chaux, Mille, Chermotane and Sery. Nevertheless, the association of Sery was the only one to have acted before the Mountain Regulation (Bagnes 1930) were adopted.

5.2.3 Negotiating Decisional Authority with Valais

The reason for the reluctance of the five other cattle owners' associations to act in a similar fashion as Sery and La Ly members to improve the productivity of the summer grazing season, was a true sense of insecurity that existed in the commune regarding the perpetuity of the usufruct all associations enjoyed on the bourgeois land. The Mountain Regulation of 1930 was an important piece of local legislation insofar as it confirmed this right of usufruct after some 40 years of uncertainty in this regard. Without perpetual rights, an association had no incentive to maintain its buildings or clear the pastureland from rocks nor dig irrigation ditches or spread manure, only to see the bourgeoisie taking away their right of usufruct. Such a threat persisted since the 1890s, when the cattle owners' associations and the bourgeoisie were faced with an attempt by the government of the canton to change the existing system of rights of use of communal property. The story begins precisely in 1892.

A handwritten notebook kept by Maurice Gabbud and a brochure published that year indicate this was the time when the government

proposed a bill to the commune regarding regulations for using the bourgeoisial holdings, based on an 1880 decree requiring all communes to be provided with such a document. Bagnes had not yet done so and Gabbud's only comment about the draft (Anonymous 1892) is in the form of a question mark in the margin of his notebook. One is left to imagine that a cautious civil servant from Sion drew up a draft that the commune summarily put aside, making it meaningless (Private Archives of Bagnes, Maurice Gabbud papers, Lourtier: Notebook No. 23). Still according to Gabbud, the government made a fresh attempt six years later, this time ordering the writing of a regulation and the immediate holding of a bourgeoisial vote to approve it.

On September 11, 1898, the vote revealed a majority of 67 in favor of a mountain regulation proposal that specified full equality among all households in the use of the bourgeoisial holdings. Considering there were approximately 1,400 eligible male voters, it is easy to understand from such a slender majority that the project provoked a huge controversy and generated considerable insecurity, not yet legally sanctioned but just as real among members of the valley's alp associations. This was the first vote on this issue. The main points on which the bourgeois voted on may be consolidated as follows from different drafts of the proposed regulation: a certain number of "land rights" or grass rights would be awarded to each of the commune's alps. For example, Sery would receive 120, La Ly, 85 and so on. Then a drawing of lots would be held. Each bourgeois, regardless of sex, would be eligible to obtain a grass right up to two per household. Lastly, the existing cattle owners' associations

already using the mountains of the bourgeoisie would be disbanded, their property assessed by tax experts, and the new members, following the draw, would pay set amounts to the former members before taking over. The ground rights would remain within the competence of the bourgeoisial responsibility. A petition drafted on the day following one of the votes tells of "a real upheaval, the most serious disruption ever to affect the commune" (C.A.B.: P. 1070/11: 2)³³.

To add to the confusion, the enactment document allowing division of the rights of usufruct to the alps following the vote on September 11, 1898, was then rejected in a second vote by the bourgeois on February 2, 1899. A fine of 100 francs was then imposed on the Communal Council by the Department of the Interior, and the Council was threatened with reprisals if the difficulties were not resolved before the first of May. Unfortunately Gabbud's notes do not indicate the nature of these reprisals. Knowing them would reveal the extent of the State's power on an uncooperative commune or its limitations.

The root of the problem was that in 1880, there were many poor people in Valais. As shown in chapter III, imports of foodstuff in those days, inflicted real hardships to the agricultural economy. The govern-

³³ This petition discloses that, at the time, there were 920 households in the commune and that several might not have a right to the use of the bourgeoisial holdings since the capacity of the alps had been set at 1,700 grass rights (920 times two rights gives 1,840 people for a capacity having varied from 1,645 to 1,775 grass rights from the time of the first to the last draft of the regulation; this information is closely examined by Maurice Gabbud's in his notebook). In addition, the petition mentions that if a household did indeed obtain two rights, one member could send a cow up to one alp and the second could send a cow up to another.

ment had no achievements to boast of, because the combination of its accounts with those of the Cantonal Bank, founded in 1856, led to the bank's liquidation at the end of 1871. Courthion describes the consequences of the bank's failure:

"Dans les principales localités, les hommes de loi et les commerçants, non obérés, se mirent dès lors sur le pied de pratiquer le prêt sur billet à ordre, c'est-à-dire à courte échéance et à lourds intérêts [...].

"De 1871 à 1895 (date de création d'une banque hypothécaire cantonale), le petit agriculteur fut ainsi la proie de ces prêteurs isolés, qui opéraient sans règlement adopté, sans contrôle et parfois sans imposition. En raison même de la rareté du numéraire, l'on exigeait trois, quatre cosignatures, et le prêteur qui maintenait ses taux au-dessous du huit pour cent était presque tenu pour un bienfaiteur" (1972: 126).

Embarrassed as it was, the State looked to the communes for a scapegoat and found one in the system of allocating the use of the bourgeoisial lands: it was held responsible for the impoverished state of the citizens. The 1880 decree, referred to earlier, originates from this conclusion, even though it went unheeded in Bagnes for almost 20 years.

One thing is certain, the State did not help alleviate poverty in Bagnes by its intervention, since the proposed regulation was intended to resolve only the problem of unequal access to the usufruct of the collectively owned lands. Although a poor person might have acquired a right to use the bourgeoisial lands through inheritance, he or she still had to have cattle and meadow land to keep animals during the winter to exercise the summer grazing right advantageously. As the 1898 vote indicated, Bagnards were divided into two camps, almost equal in numbers. The group in favor of dividing rights to the alps between all households must have included a strong contingent of poor who were able to register

a protest against the existing distribution of wealth in the commune. Their situation could not possibly improve without effective rights of ownership in the communal lands, and this was not even contemplated in the new regulation. However, there is no evidence that the poor represented a long-term landless class³⁴. Elders in Bagnes interpret the numerical importance of those in favor of a reform in the distribution of grass rights at the turn of the century, as a protest against the practice of richer cattle owners to hoard grass rights for themselves.

What followed shows the government persisting in its policy of intervention into local bourgeoisial affairs. As we have seen to date, the principle of division was accepted, the legislation to enact it was rejected in a second vote and the commune was then fined and given an ultimatum. On April 30, 1899, the day before the deadline imposed by the State expired, a vote among the bourgeois gave two more votes to the majority first established in 1898. For some unknown reason, the State Council refused to sanction the adopted regulation. A new vote on February 2, 1902 reversed the decision and rejected the idea of division; the losers threatened the State Council with an appeal to the Federal Court. Another citizens' vote on February 1, 1903 was cancelled before hand as the Communal Council wanted time to draw up another bill opposing the draft once accepted in 1898 and 1899, then rejected in 1902.

³⁴ McGuire and Netting have shown recently that "*tendencies toward rigid [economic] stratification extending over several generations*" in the Upper-Valais commune of Törbel (1982 : 286), based on data covering the period 1851-1915, were broken down, among other factors, by "*the continual fragmentation of estates through partible inheritance and their reconsolidation through marriage, inheritance from celibate relatives, and purchase [of land]*" (*Ibid.*; see also p. 281).

On December 30, 1903, the State Council, suspecting something, imposed its own regulation, with an enforcement date of February 1, 1904 and its exclusive application until Bagnes proposed its own text and received sanction from the State (Valais 1903).

"This ultimate draft was the spark that lit the powder keg" writes Camille Michaud, drawing on the memory of his grandparents' conversations (1982: 117). Without delay two cattle owners' associations instituted legal action against the commune; however these proceedings were not resolved until 1921 after good many hearings before courts at all levels, dismissing the associations' case after their several successes on paper which prevented, in the meantime, any modification of the method for using the alps. Between 1921 and 1930, the State Council did not consider it appropriate to do anything, going so far as to doubt the legitimacy of its power of intervention.

It is impossible to precisely reconstitute the opinions and interests of every party to the issue during those years. It is only known that the government ended its direct intervention in 1904 and to the best of our knowledge no other document exists which continued the controversy after this date, other than a petition signed by eight people calling for an immediate vote to determine which of the proposed regulations debated should be applied (C.A.B.: P. 1070/21: 1904 or 1914). It is also known that the existing method of allocating the rights of use remained unchanged, the division never having taken place. Article 4 of the 1930 regulation seems to sum up what was basically at stake as if it had been

placed there to make peace:

"Each alp will be left in the care of the cattle owners' association which was in charge at the time of the adoption of the present regulation and within the existing boundaries of the said alp, contingent on the following clauses.

"However, the Council reserves the right to make provisions against any attempt to hoard grass rights or operate the alp in a manner detrimental to the bourgeois" (Bagnes 1930 : 5, my translation).

Their status now clear, the cattle owners' associations could invest in sizeable improvements to their property, such as purchasing the low pastureland adjacent to their respective alps as described previously. The biggest losers were those with rights of residence who anticipated gaining easy access to the collective property after the 1880 decree, had they obtained the right of bourgeoisie in Bagnes. Still, to really lose, they had to own cattle and even more, they had to have been denied a grass right in a cattle owners' association. In view of these three conditions and the wave of emigration which caused so many bourgeois to leave the commune, the losers were probably only a small group. The losers were not even among the poor whom the State wanted to help because at least they owned cattle. Each year the residents and the bourgeois in search for room in the alps of Bagnes had only to hope that an alp was not filled to the capacity set by the internal rules of the association. Only then would the members accept "foreign cattle". Here is where they were most disadvantaged compared to other bourgeois. In subsequent years the residents probably required no protection since those in good standing are nowadays members in certain alps' associations and contribute their share of the costs of the summer grazing.

At present, the main challenge facing the cattle owners' associations in Bagnes is the considerable cost of operating the summer grazing period, to say nothing of the equally large amounts of money needed for property improvements and equipment. Salaries of the employees of the alp (the domestiques) constitute a hefty portion of the costs. Fewer people are attracted to the job since the living conditions on the alp are not easy. Scarcity of workers has made salaries rise considerably. Just 20 years ago the pay was 40 francs a day; today the chief herder and the cheesemaker make 100 to 120 francs a day. On the Mille alp, one of the barns on the low pastureland is equipped with automatic milking machines, whereas the Sery-La Ly cattle owners' association is still weighing the pros and cons of a similar investment. Those opposed to the idea are not convinced that modern equipment will help recruit new workers. In addition, members have to pay for their employees' food. Satisfied with dairy products in the past, workers now insist on having meat or at least vegetables daily. On holidays, they are likely to get a more elaborate meal. All this adds up to extra expenses for the members. The shortage of herders is such that the associations have no choice but to pay. In 1980 the workers had eggs brought up to the alp, prompting one disillusioned member to remark: "in the past, the cattle provided a living for the peasants and nowadays, it is the peasants who provide a living for the cattle". The meaning of this comment, which is as pertinent as it is explicit, will be examined later.

5.2.4 Challenges to the Communal Organization of Land Use

The tourist industry considers that the way it uses the communal property does not have a harmful effect on farming. In the summer, the pastures provide grazing for cows and in the winter, downhill runs for skiers. The seasonal uses of the land complement each other and what is more, tourism brings revenue to the commune and provides jobs for the people. The hydroelectric industry justifies its own use of the communal property by the superior interest the government places in energy supplies. The industry sees the financial compensation it offers to make up for the detrimental effects of its installations, as an expression of generosity for which the communes should show more gratitude than they generally do.

These two rationalizations are greeted with scorn by communal administrators when the most basic social conventions are not at stake. When they are, for example, during a close negotiation with promoters of tourism or hydroelectric companies, today's representatives of the commune assume a confident stand in their dealings. This self-assurance is based on the knowledge that these arguments will be unsubstantial to the majority of the electorate when their terms are up for renewal.

Why, then, this confidence ? In 1960, the commune's bourgeois were consulted because the Communal Council wanted to introduce a new by-law to replace the 1930 Mountain Regulation. The tourist industry was to be specifically affected, but the origins of the new regulation

were directly linked to the hydroelectric development at Mauvoisin. In fact, the bourgeoisie and the Chermotane cattle owners association had argued bitterly as to how the compensation paid by the Société des Forces Motrices de Mauvoisin should be divided among them. This payment offset the loss of use of certain bourgeoisial lands which were flooded (Michaud 1982: 120). The new regulation was intended to "avoid future legal proceedings" in the event of a similar situation (Bagnes 1960: 6, my translation). What was proposed concerned the tourist industry inasmuch as future disputes over bourgeoisial lands and compensation that might be precipitated would originate from this growing industry. The result of this vote would then exert substantial influence on the communal administrators' decisions when faced with the tourist promoters' demands in Bagnes valley.

Let us begin at the end, by noting that the Council's proposed replacement to the 1930 regulation was rejected in 1960 by the majority of the electorate, both men and women this time. The major difference in the two regulations was that the bourgeoisie could now sell an alp on its own authority, including the buildings and real estate belonging to the cattle owners' associations (by expropriation) as well as the bourgeoisial lands. As might be expected, the sale of an alp would have been to the detriment of the association concerned or of private tenants, as there were a number (see p. 225) who had use of the bourgeoisial lands. Not only were the associations by-passed in gaining approval, but the bourgeoisie claimed for itself the authority to entrust to the associations lands "equivalent to the lands expropriated" (Bagnes 1960: 6, my transla-

tion). If compensation in kind "presents too many problems", stated the regulation, the money from the sale of the alp would be divided, one half to be paid to the bourgeoisie, the other, to the cattle owners' association.

This type of arrangement could have been popular once it is accepted that bourgeoisial property could be sold. This had already happened: in 1930, the bourgeois had approved a sort of reorganization of their property. Four alps had then a legal status different from the others; the bourgeoisie leased the lands and buildings to the highest bidder for a six year period. However, the bourgeoisie had still to assume the costs of maintenance and improvements (Suter 1944: 95). The tenant-herders had little inclination to spend money on any major improvements since they might well lose their investment the next time the property was up for auction or still worse, find themselves having to pay more rent, considering the increased value of the improved alp. In 1930, the property and buildings on La Marline, Crêt, Louvie and Chermotane alps were sold at auction rather than being leased and the revenue credited to the bourgeoisie. The associations that acquired them had the same status, as a consequence, as the associations enjoying usufruct on other alps.

The problem posed by the 1960 regulation was the remainder of the article regarding compensation. It introduced the idea that a sale could be made for purposes other than farming. It specified that if land "was sold at a price out of proportion to its agricultural value [...] the share

allocated to the cattle owners' association would be equal to the loss they sustained" (Bagnes 1960: 6-7, my translation). The commune thus anticipated potential buyer interest from parties prepared to pay such a price "out of proportion" with what cattle raising could fetch.

The administration recommended accepting its modified regulation, knowing that the tourist industry would need space for expansion. Since the last regulation regarding use of bourgeoisial assets, the number of overnights recorded in Verbier had spiralled. As noted in chapter I, Dubois (1960: 85) reported that in the 20 years between 1938 and 1958, the resort of Verbier had experienced the most significant growth among 16 other Valaisan resorts, climbing from 8,302 annual overnights to 67,908. In absolute numbers this put Verbier sixth, but in proportional terms, first (718% as opposed to 179% for Zermatt in third place). And these are only the figures for 1958. It was immediately evident in 1960 therefore that the resort was growing at an amazing rate and furthermore that rejection of the Council's proposal had not stood in the way of subsequent expansion as it was also shown in section 1.4 (1,174% increase in overnights from 1958 to 1978). Nevertheless, in 1960, the commune received by default, a mandate from the people which specified that the growth of tourism should be negotiated as plans are submitted. At the time, there was no question of giving a mandate to the administration in order to simplify its job by identifying in advance the areas -- in this case, the alps of the commune -- whose patterns of use the inhabitants were ready to see changed without being called upon to vote again.

With the procedure firmly established, promoters of tourism then met with communal administrators who knew how far they could allow the tourist industry to grow. This explains why local ski lift operators only obtained rights of way instead of formal title to the bourgeoisial property. The only real success of the promoters was procuring, at a very low price, the usufruct of lands for the construction of base stations for the ski lifts. By 1978, the ski lift network in the commune extended over more than 31km (Fellay and Porchet 1978: 5).

5.2.5 Negotiating Royalties with the Tourist Industry

The most significant change in policy regarding the tourist use of communal and bourgeoisial properties occurred in 1975. The territory of Verbier was specifically affected. The commune "believing SA TELEVERBIER to be financially sound and viable" decided it was entitled "to just compensation for the lands which will hereafter be available" (Bagnes 1982: 1, my translations). The amount due would be determined in proportion to the revenue derived from the ski lift facilities built by the company. Therefore as of 1976, each additional investment of one million francs became liable to the following royalties:

"une indemnité annuelle correspondant au 1,2% du bénéfice net annuel de la SA pour les installation légères (téléskis, télé-sièges) et 0,6% de ce même bénéfice pour les installations lourdes (télécabines, téléphériques)" (*Idem.*: 2).

Along the same lines, in October 1982, the commune and the

bourgeoisie proposed the signing of an agreement with Téléverbier concerning the development of a new part of the territory, the La Chaux Mont-Fort region. The bourgeois men and women of Bagnes were asked to vote to approve or reject a large-scale project which might again question the current use of a strategically located part of the territory. This would be the first time the resort would expand beyond its "natural boundaries". Until that time, a policy of common sense had limited Verbier's expansion to the slopes surrounding the plateau on which the resort is built. One of the issues covered by the vote concerned the extension of the ski lift system. It would now include a large part of the La Chaux alp so that tourists would be able to ski in the summer, at altitudes of 2,700 to 3,300 meters above the alp, around Mont-Fort. It was proposed that four chair-lifts and a cable-car be built to give skiers better access to more runs. On the installation of each new piece of light equipment such as a chair-lift, the commune would receive 100 shares in Téléverbier S.A. and an annuity of 12,000 francs indexed to the company's dividend rate. On the installation of a cable-car, the commune would receive 150 shares and another annuity of 15,000 francs, also indexed (Bagnes 1982: 8)³⁵.

The vote supported the settlement negotiated by the commune and the bourgeoisie. Sharing in the profits of the commune's principal

³⁵ At the end of the 1979 fiscal year, the book value of one share of Téléverbier S.A. was 2,064 francs as determined by dividing the total assets by 20,000 shares. Some equipment, fully amortized, was only worth one franc in the assets but continued to produce income for the company (Téléverbier S.A. 1980: 8).

business indicated a noticeable development in the relationships of power between the local people and the promoters: in 1960, the residents had rejected the idea of selling bourgeois land; then, the promoters acquired the rights of way and the surface rights one by one at little cost; gradually these costs increased until it included profit sharing.

Nevertheless, this agreement was not reached in complete harmony. This was evident from the statement issued by the bourgeoisie and the Communal Council explaining the voting issues. The statement revealed that starting from 1976, the La Chaux cattle owners' association opposed the claims of the bourgeoisie for six years. Subject to the agreement of its members, the bourgeoisie claimed authority to grant the rights of way and surface rights to a third party. The association, for its part, believed its right of usufruct was "equivalent -- and even superior -- to a right of ownership" and consequently challenged any bourgeois intervention on its land (Bagnes 1982: 3, my translation). In rejecting this interpretation of usufruct, "the council cannot therefore, in this case, allow the La Chaux cattle owners' association to act as the proprietor" and still less that it attempt to negotiate a separate agreement with Téléverbier S.A. to arrive at the same end result, a series of projects to be built on the alp land. The commune's statement included a clear reference to the association's bid. The public administration thus acted as spokesperson for those in the commune who denounced the La Chaux members' desire to monopolize the revenue which would be derived from tourist use of the land. Téléverbier S.A. decided that it was in its best interests to concur with the commune and the bourgeoisie rather than set

a precedent by entering into a separate arrangement with the La Chaux cattle owners' association. The agreement merely concedes the following: "The usufruct of land used for agricultural purposes carries with it the right to be compensated for loss of grass and other damages caused by the installation of mechanical lifts on the land. The compensation may be fixed by mutual agreement or failing that, by experts." (Bagnes 1982: 3, my translation).

Rejecting the agreement would have probably left the way open for a negotiation between the La Chaux members and Téléverbier, while the commune and the bourgeoisie would have instituted proceedings against the association, contesting the association's right to grant use of property which it did not own. By voting for the agreement, a majority of the bourgeois supported the public administration and again showed themselves in favor of negotiating each individual case according to its own merits in relation to the use of the communal territory.

Moreover, there was still opposition to the commune and the bourgeoisie. It came from the people who maintained that public profit sharing was clearly a form of blackmail, because of course, the ski lifts could not be dismantled and relocated in another commune. On the other hand, the people's mandate and the self-assurance of the communal representatives during those negotiations indicate clearly that the arrangement fully conformed to the historical pattern regarding the use of collective property.

Indeed, the agreement signed by Téléverbier is, for all practical purposes, modelled on the conditions of the agreement regarding the concession of water from the Dranse River basin to the hydroelectric companies. They complied with these conditions long before Téléverbier was a business sufficiently secure to be subjected to similar terms.

The right to levy royalties from water concessions is based in the history of the use of water by households and the extensive system which was built to supply them over the years. Cantonal laws sanctioned this use by acknowledging ownership of the water to the communes under a legal title similar to the one under which the bourgeoisies owned the ground rights of the alps, with one slight difference being that the water falls under the jurisdiction of the Primary Assemblies instead of the Bourgeoisial Assemblies with regard to the land (Protocol of the State Council, September 29, 1891, art. 2, quoted in Zurbriggen 1952: 37).

The requirement for a business concern to obtain a water concession is justified because its own consumption of water curtails the consumption of others. Thus all the communes bordering streams had to be consulted before dam building projects could go ahead in Bagnes; Vollèges and Sembrancher also had to approve the concessions of water and were proposed royalties to do so. In Valais, communes' ancestral rights to their water are based on water being used for manufacturing or irrigation purposes by private individuals or owners' associations. In certain cases these general uses provided the commune with some revenue.

For example, in Bagnes in 1801, seven businesses paid what was called a license-fee to run a shop and use the surging water from Verbier's stream. Records show that two tanners, a miller and a blacksmith established themselves in the village of Le Cotterg; another miller worked further downstream in a part of Villette called Perrey and two blacksmiths had their shops in Villette itself (C.A.B.: P. 705).

At the beginning of this century, the Versegères stream supplied two sawmills, each with its own diversion channel. Each paid royalties to the commune. The gearwheels used then can still be seen at the bend in the road between Versegères and the tiny community of Les Places. A little lower down, before it emptied into the Dranse, the water power from the stream served another use: it turned the huge grindstone of a cider press.

Elsewhere, up near Montagnier, one can still walk along the system of canals on the right bank of the Dranse built to supply hydraulic power to the village woolen mill. The mill had to convert to electricity in 1933 following a drop in the rate of flow of the Dranse when the generating station at Champsec opened in 1929. A resounding lawsuit followed. The mill resumed production for a short while at the end of the 1940s, then closed down. Nevertheless, for over a hundred years, it had provided Bagnes' sheep breeders a convenient outlet for their wool. Founded in 1837 (Courthion 1906: 71) under the corporate name Société Gard, Fusay et Cie. (H. Michelet 1968: 183), its aim was "to set up a workshop for carding wool and weaving cloth. The final step in clothes making was

done at home" (Troillet-Boven 1973: 176, my translation). A few years later, a carpentry operation shared the water right to the Dranse with the mill. Each year the stream was diverted by a temporary dam set up in a canal 625m long and 1.60m wide -- no mean feat of local ingenuity. The water power turned a paddle wheel about 5m in diameter and 1.20m in width. The water then flowed into the bisse des Vollégards, which supplied the neighboring commune with irrigation water (Private Archives of Bagnes, Maurice Gard papers, Le Martinet).

Water was equally important for farming. Valaisans built and maintained many of these irrigation canals known as bisses, which collected the water and carried it to the cultivated fields and the pastures. Trough-like channels made of wood 30 to 50 centimeters wide hung over precipices and crossed streams: "Each is a veritable little masterpiece of primitive engineering" (Stevenson 1955: 207). In 1907, there were 207 bisses in Valais covering a total distance of 1,388km; not including the 370km of branch out canals registered (Chavan 1915: 7) called raves coursières in the district of Entremont (Bérard 1963: 78). They linked the bisse to land in areas needing irrigation. According to the sources quoted by the two above authors, the earliest bisses date from the 14th century. Up where the village fields were located, a whole series of regulations determined how the water was to be distributed for each hour of the day during the summer. Every family had its prescribed hours for watering and by means of a temporary arrangement called a delarve (a wedge made of wood or metal) or by building up a small pile of stones across the bisse, could make the water in the bisse overflow on

one of its fields or pastures; unblocking the channel left the use of the bisse to the neighbor. During dry summers, the peasants (women in daytime, men at night) spent two or three hours a day, putting such devices in place and overseeing the watering (Chavan 1915: 19).

A system of bisses and rayes still in operation in Valais today has been described by the ethnologist Robert Netting (1974). The author is articulate in his account of how the people of Törbel, through the centuries, had so well integrated the regulations regarding the irrigation water that no one was able to explain how the whole system worked. He arrived at the following interpretation:

"A system in which no one possesses comprehensive and comprehensible knowledge of its total operation has a kind of organic stability. Mistakes in order or efforts to take a larger share than one is entitled to attract notice and encounter immediate resistance from those whose turns are most closely integrated with one's own. Regulation and self-correction are paradoxically more effective when the parts of the system are not interchangeable and their interdigitation is an impenetrable maze" (Netting 1974: 73).

Around the use of this prime communal resource, water, developed a whole pattern of social relationship founded on cooperation, sharing and informal solutions to conflicts, for example, throwing away the wedge of someone who did not adhere to his watering hours (Netting 1974: 72).

In Vollèges, at the entrance of Bagnes valley, the irrigation was supervised by wardens paid according to the area watered, so as to avoid any waste (Bérard 1963: 78-84). They were also responsible for locating any water leaks; an ingenious system warned them of any sudden drop in

the bisse's flow: a paddle wheel turned a hammer which would strike a plank of wood as long as the water flowed at the desired level (Chavan 1915: 19). The wardens were hired by the owners' association operating the bisse following a yearly auction. Bérard says that the candidates chosen usually were young men who had put in the lowest bid possible in order to prevent fellow members of another local political clan from taking the job (1963: 78). The work to maintain the bisses and the rayes was organized by a recteur who recruited workers from inside the owners' association and supervised the work parties. This job carried with it considerable local prestige and as Courthion wrote in 1903, even served as a political steppingstone for anyone who aspired to positions of authority in the commune (1972: 70). While the bisses now belong to the past in Bagnes valley, they have entered the cultural heritage of the population to the point where they serve as a reference to design regulations that compensate for the lost access to communal property.

Besides agriculture, using water to run small business operations helped each village achieve self-sufficiency in relation to others. With one or more streams running through, each village was able to operate its own sawmill, blacksmith shop or flour mill. Gabbud commented on this, when writing about what he called "the industrial Dranse", giving the example of his own village, Lourtier and the village of Champsec. Referring to the electricity companies' attempts to obtain the concession of the Dranse, he looked ahead to the day when substantial royalties would be paid back to the commune. "Will the Dranse eventually reward the commune after all the disasters it has caused ?" wondered Gabbud as

he wrote about the company Lonza S.A. who in 1916, applied for the concession of the water upstream from Fionnay. At that point, the commune demanded 3,000 francs to ratify the concession certificate, 10,000 francs to sanction it (following a citizens vote) and 5,000 francs yearly from 1918 to 1921 inclusive, 1921 being the year of possible renegotiation, as well as 3 francs per unit of horsepower generated. The company contested the relevance of this latter fee and the amount required if the agreement was approved. Consequently, the vote never took place (Private Archives of Bagnes, Maurice Gabbud papers, Lourtier: Notebook no. 14: 76-77).

This short description of ancestral rights to the utilization of water has thus indicated that nothing was contrived by the communal administration, nor was it a form of blackmail to enter into the last agreement with Téléverbier S.A., over the use of the communal territory bordering Mont-Fort. On the contrary, obtaining royalties is an assertion of how soundly rooted in history is the present-day social organization of land use in the commune.

5.3 The Conservation of Private Property

In 1980, a member of the Sery cattle owners' association stated categorically (as quoted p. 239) that nowadays it is the peasant who provides a living for the cattle. This ironic twist does not merely refer to the herder's salaries and food requirements as suggested. Such a statement implies a much deeper dissatisfaction. In a broad sense, it reflects the worsening relationship that has gradually evolved between the local population and tourism, and more specifically the current discontent felt by cattle owners towards tourism.

Tourism should be an asset to the commune rather than a liability. Indeed, the industry creates permanent and seasonal jobs in Bagnes. In 1976, at least 651 Bagnards found permanent employment in Verbier. In addition, 173 summer jobs and 447 winter jobs were held by men and women of Bagnes (Sauvain 1980: 51). Tourism has also been instrumental in curbing out migration by the Bagnards, down to the Rhone plain and into the large European cities. Not so long ago, Paul Veyret explained what he called "the metamorphosis of winter" by the following: "In the past, the mountain dweller would go and earn a little money in the city; nowadays, the city dweller comes to the mountains and spends a good deal of money" (1962 : 38, my translation). It is precisely this influx of money that determines how Bagnards perceive tourism. Its principal impact in the commune has been through a large increase in land prices and rezoning of some of the better land for housing purposes. Cattle raising has been affected as a matter of course, as well as the people

who wish to live in their commune of origin. The young people who no longer emigrate have to meet tourist prices if they want to build a house in their commune.

It is true that the Confederation does grant subsidies which help reduce the costs of owning a building as well as guaranteeing up to 90% of the mortgage loans required to build or purchase housing. Nevertheless, the initial costs are high in or near a resort town, and a guarantee will not exempt the borrower from repaying the loan, so an owner's income must be quite substantial; the cost of housing in any case cannot exceed 40% of income to get the subsidies (Switzerland 1982).

The rise in land and housing prices does not just concern families trying to decide whether to carry on the family tradition of farming or to buy a dwelling. Everyone is affected by the most tangible sign of tourism's presence, namely, taxation. Farming families are particularly vulnerable. Switzerland does not require individuals to pay any personal income tax, except for a small amount towards national defense. The main source of taxation is property. The assessed value is multiplied by a pre-determined tax rate (for example 1.2%) to determine tax payable. The citizen's canton of residence collects approximately one third of the amount due the commune and, if applicable, due to any other commune where the individual owns property. With the expansion of tourism, building and especially land values have escalated on a scale beyond comparison to any previous situation. As a result taxes have increased correspondingly and the effects of this fiscal inflation are particularly

felt in the agricultural sector of the local economy.

At the time of the fieldwork done for this study, there were some people who scoffed at communal assessments which had the result that a cow left to graze for an hour in a meadow located in an area zoned for housing, ate the equivalent value of a steak dinner.

Other meadows less well situated also appreciated in value. An auction organized by the Bagnes land consolidation association in May 1981 gives evidence of this. For example, a full-time peasant successfully bid on a piece of land of which the starting price was 2.10 francs a square meter, which was, in fact, the commune's assessment for tax purposes, with a bid of 5.10 francs a meter. The initial tax assessment remains in effect after the auction, but it can be expected that in several years, the assessed value would catch up with the market value and then, the full extent of the price increase will be reflected in the amount of taxes payable by the new owner. Beyond this particular case, 37 other lots in the Verbier-Villette-Montagnier district were up for auction that same afternoon. Only one remained unsold and 17 were sold at their tax assessment value. Therefore, there was competitive bidding on a little more than half of the lots; 38 had been auctioned in the morning, 20 of them having received more than one bid.

These lots were not the best in the commune. Their boundaries, at the time of the auction, had been established following the land consolidation which had taken place among all property owners and after the

dissatisfied among the group had voiced their opposition to certain aspects of the division before the association. In a few cases these owners had been successful in their claims. Most of these lots were considered leftover pieces of land of little value to anyone but a handful of people owning property near-by, some of whom did not even attend the auction. Considering the circumstances, the number of competitive bids was thus relatively high. Results of another auction in the Verbier-Villette-Montagnier district in April 1981 were similar to those which have just been described.

A fuller account of these auctions will give an idea of the mood of the men and women who attended them. The rise in the price of farm land will be there for all to see. Auctions results give a better idea of the territorial negotiation that is going on in the commune at the present time, than would a set of figures showing the increase in the assessed value of all the land in Bagnes in recent decades.

It should be noted beforehand that in cases where the sale of the lots was uncontested, as occurred in both April and May, the bidders included representatives of public authorities and of companies against whom it was pointless to bid. "Mr. X doesn't care, it's not his money" the crowd has been heard to say when one of these officials outbid a Bagnard. In that particular case, bidding started at 2.55 francs, increasing by ten centimes stages to a selling price of 6.65 francs. Generally, no one bothers to counter when the opening bid is made by a representative of the commune, the bourgeoisie or a member of a large company.

Many people were unhappy to see the commune expand its real estate holdings at the expense of individuals. One person declared that at least "in buying reeds, the commune was not putting its money elsewhere", insinuating that land was often expropriated in the resort of Verbier without good reason. One member of the association defended the commune's action by pointing out that "the reeds" in question grew in the commune's sole remaining rush patch since those bushes growing on Verbier's plateau had been destroyed to allow residential construction. He thus cited protection of the environment as the justification for the Council's decision to purchase this lot. Another councillor said one had to pay attention to fully understand the commune's position; for example, when a small piece of land in a residential area in an expensive district was put up for sale, the councillor started bidding only after a moment's hesitation in the room. There were no other participants, and his opening bid was not challenged. Pressed to pass comment on what interest this little lot might have for the commune, he replied impatiently, "well then, it's always useful to own a bit here and there". In fact, many lots are purchased by individuals and officials with the intention of trading them at a later date when a concrete project will require consolidation of several pieces of property into a single lot.

Spontaneous applause and cheers greeted some cases of sales which were uncontested, especially when the successful parties were farming families. In May 1981, a woman who was a sheep breeder acquired three lots without contest. Nor did anyone oppose a young bachelor whose well-known intentions to rebuild the family farm, abandoned earlier by his

parents, were respected by all. The April auction was attended by another farmer from Vollèges commune, who had the reputation in Bagnes of being a hard worker (un monstre bosseur). For example, he had built a modern barn in his village without applying for any grant as he found the application procedures too time-consuming. He was successful with a few high bids but once the auctioneer circumspectly informed the audience that a particular lot bordered this man's own land, the other bidders dropped out in his favor.

Competitive bidding is a tangible sign of increasing land prices and a source of potential frustration for the population. Anyone who anticipated making an easy acquisition must think extremely fast during an auction, when confronted with unfriendly bids against all expectations. Sometimes carefully formulated plans and dreams, discussed late into the night by husbands and wives, can be dashed in a matter of seconds. A setback can tarnish a reputation and reveal a broken promise. A hard-won victory leads to wild speculations in the audience about long-kept secrets and some surprising bids may expose collusion practices. Hence the strained atmosphere in the hall; murmurs of satisfaction mingle with grumbling from the discontented and even good-natured jokes can be heard, like one case when a bidder questioned whether a lot in fact really existed, with the result that it remained unsold.

Table 7 on the following page is a summary of the transactions. The competitive bids on farm land are highlighted. The lots in residential construction areas appear on a separate line. The data from the

two May sessions are combined with that of the April afternoon session³⁶.

The competition between alternative uses of the agricultural territory of Bagnes is at the root of the dramatic price increases. As the

TABLE 7

THE RISE IN THE PRICE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND IN BAGNES

A Summary of the auctions held on april 11 and May 23, 1981 in the Verbier-Villette-Montagnier district

RESULTS				
TYPE OF LOT	Uncontested acquisitions	Won following higher bidding	The value more than tripled	Total numbers of lots sold
Zoned for building	9	5 (in which 2)		14
Zoned for agriculture	41	51 (in which 30)		92
	—	—	—	—
Totals	50	56	(32)	106

Source: Notice issued by the land consolidation association of Bagnes, March 18 and April 24, 1981, with the author's annotations in the margin.

³⁶ Another series of lots was up for auction in that morning; these proceedings were not documented by the author as permission to do so had not yet been requested from the association officials.

table shows, no less than 30 agricultural lots were bought at a cost of more than triple the starting price. In the residential areas, the number of lots purchased at their opening bid (9) is higher than that for competitive biddings (5). The reverse is true for farm land. The difference can perhaps be explained by the fact that lots situated in zones reserved for building residences are of interest, first and foremost, to their immediate neighbors who would like to decide for themselves what should be done with this land and the number of potential buyers is limited accordingly. These lots are also much more expensive, a fact that discourages many prospective buyers if they intend to use the land for any purpose but that of building a house. However this was not necessarily so in the case of farm lots. In fact, the most dramatic price increases occurred when the agricultural future of a piece of land seemed threatened, either in view of the identity of the bidder or that of his or her known motives to acquire the property. It is in these circumstances, that the bidding reflects the competition referred to earlier, among the potential users of the communal territory, with each one having in mind an entirely different plan for the use of the land.

A good example of this was seen during the April 1981 morning session. A member of the land consolidation association, who already owned a great deal of land in the Verbier area, bought approximately half of the lots up for sale. According to one of the organizers, by the noon hour most of these lots would not have found buyers otherwise and he was very pleased that the member was present. Only one lot would be a loss to farming since this purchaser was a vintner from the Rhone valley

who would likely allow the land to quickly become overgrown. Some of the onlookers maintained he was a speculator "with ulterior motives". Others claimed he had not even seen the land before the auction and said frankly "he doesn't know what to do with his dough". In the afternoon, this particular buyer asked one of his opponents of the morning whether a few lots still interested him "because I didn't know what it was I had acquired". Whatever his motives, this man is a typical example of someone acquiring land at least for investment purposes if not for speculation. In the course of the four auctions described here, several participants privately confessed "they were buying for after-tomorrow". In the long run, this land will be lost to farming if tourism continues to develop at its present rate, unless the agricultural sector is able to buy it back. In the short term the land will be maintained by peasants in return for a few blocks of cheese. However the status of this land will have changed and with this change will emerge a new power relationship, one that associates the owner and the farm operator. We will come back to this.

The use of the land for tourist recreation facilities is another trend accounting for the increase in land values in Bagnes. Let us consider again what can be learned from the auctions held by the land consolidation association. In April, a great deal of attention was focused on a group of developers who wanted to build a golf course straddling the Bagnes and Vollèges communes. As each onlooker filed into the hall at 9 o'clock, two representatives from the golf group could be seen seated behind maps with many sections already colored in green. No one

knew whether the colored portions referred to land already purchased, or to lots up for sale during the day. However the fact remains that this map was an unusual way of imposing their presence. They may have hoped to avoid opposition by such a display. After all, the other bidders were not likely to have even brought their own pencils along. The golf course developers were particularly interested in the largest areas available but they also bought smaller lots to be used in time as a form of barter with owners of property adjacent to the projected golf course. Consequently, these owners, already unhappy to see wealthy tourists buying up farm land, found they were also competing against a golf course for land which did not even feature in the developers' immediate plans. Farmers, who desperately wanted to outbid them and win a lot, often ended up paying "a fortune" for much less valuable lots.

By the beginning of the afternoon, the audience had some time to discuss the golf group's morning purchases. Until that day, their plans had not been taken seriously, Bagnards being as unfamiliar with the sport of golf as a Washington tourist might be with cow bells. The developers, anxious to buy the first lot up for sale, ended up paying four times the asking price. The next two lots brought them up against a popular figure in Bagnes, a man active in certain voluntary associations concerned with the promotion of cattle raising, the local folklore and patois. Respect for him increased considerably when he acquired the lots by paying seven times the asking price for the first one and five times for the second. The group representing the golf interests purchased four other lots and would have probably bid on others, had it not been for the crowd's more

periodic comments. Widespread grumbling was heard in the hall, echoing the opinion that the land consolidation was certainly not designed to encourage such changes within the commune. The largest of the four lots to be auctioned that afternoon fetched seven times the opening price something which provoked a slightly confused remark from one of the golf promoters, that one should not come to an auction to buy unless "one is ready to turn half of the commune against oneself".

In May, the golf promoters appeared at only the afternoon session. One member of the group had been replaced by another and both cast wary looks around them before bidding. Having paid a little more than three times the communal assessment for the first lot, the golf group demonstrated their more cautious attitude when the second lot came up. The promoters bid first and were countered twice, then another interested party joined in, muttering that he wanted "to fix them by pushing up the price". The man was caught however when the promoters, alarmed by this third bidder, suddenly stopped bidding. The winner thus became the reluctant owner of a lot located quite far from his major holdings and he continued to rail against the golf project. The promoters put in a few more opening bids during the afternoon but made no follow up offers; they thus obtained two more lots.

The use of the land for recreational purposes has an immediate impact on agriculture by reducing the availability of farm land in the face of continuing high demand. While the golf course is the most striking example of this, the construction of tennis courts and plans to

open a campground near the Le Châble-Verbier cable-car are two more examples of the confrontation between tourism and agriculture. These "innovative changes" as they are described by their promoters, give tourism a bad name in the community because many Bagnards perceive that tourism is encroaching on what they consider to be their territory as distinct from tourist areas.

The changes made in the bourgeoisie's alps to accommodate hiking and skiing are significant in that regard. Signs showing directions to pedestrians have been set up across the commune's forests and high pastures by the local Sociétés de développement, with walking distances indicated in minutes. One of these sociétés, active in the valley itself, outside the resort, planted those signs for tourists to converge on beaten paths that were off the main areas used by farmers, only to see the number of pedestrians increasing each year and walking off those paths or taking signs back home as souvenirs. Larger signs are also aimed at informing skiers that certain areas are not recommended to them when the snow cover is too thin, for in the summer, pastures would be found damaged by the sharp edges of hundreds of skis. Thus visitors no longer confine themselves to enjoying the services offered in the hotels, nor are they seen only here or there as was the case in Fionnay. Visitors are omnipresent. Locks must be put on isolated farm buildings and the Bagnards have lost the exclusivity of knowing where mushrooms are likely to grow after a few days of rain. In fact, strained meetings of Bagnards and tourists occur when they are picking mushrooms and berries in the communal forests or when tourists boast about their catch when stopping

by a village café to refresh themselves. Tourists also like the Alpine flora. Unsuspecting the difficulty of harvesting hay when the grass has been trampled down, some visitors can be found delicately cutting flowers in the middle of a private meadow, before being told of the problem that such behavior creates at harvest time. Somewhat embarrassed, those tourists always apologize too late. Overall, not only are the long-term prospects of farming affected by recreational use of Bagnes' territory but, gradually, the inhabitants perceive that to enjoy living in their commune of birth is an acquired right that should be respected.

Let us again refer to the auctions to show how this situation develops. The most rewarding moment of the April auction was witnessing the delight of a bidder when he recovered a part of his family's former property, a botza located near the proposed camp ground in Le Châble. That property had been lost at the time of the land consolidation reform. The buyer hoped to get some weekend exercise clearing the young forest that had grown up and perhaps build a modest chalet for himself since the water and sewage system extended as far as his property. A few spectators to the auction commented on this bid afterwards by saying "it shows we must take the law into our own hands". Another instance of local people being upset is the case where competition drove up the bidding on a residential lot so that the final price was triple the assessment value. A Bagnard and his next door neighbor, a Genevan, were bidding against one another. The Bagnard, on winning, was extremely unhappy and said that when the Genevan had established himself in Bagnes, as a favor he "had sold him a garden

behind his house for practically nothing" adding, shrugging his shoulders, "now I'm paying for my generosity".

When the shift of tourist-use areas from Mauvoisin to Fionnay was discussed in chapter IV, reference was made to the circumstances leading to an easy coexistence of tourism and agriculture. When people were attracted to Verbier's ski slopes there was a similar shift in location from Fionnay to Verbier, but which led this time to increased competition between agriculture and tourism. The first part of this chapter explained that this competition was particularly acute where control of communal property was in question. While the conflicts now extend to private property, the competition is not so much an all-out struggle between tourism and agriculture as it is a matter of defining a new coexistence between these sectors of the local economy and of course, between the Bagnards involved in them. In the background there is the fact that if the territorial needs of the tourist industry are not contained, they will have to be met outside the resort, that is in the valley itself, in the future; the example of recreational activities other than those related to skiing indicate that this latest change in location is already underway.

In the process of searching for a new form of coexistence between tourism and agriculture, the peasants are able to mobilize support from people who have given up farming as a full-time activity. Evidence of this is seen in the ease with which many of those clearly identified with agriculture acquired a good number of lots at the auctions; the applause that greeted their acquisitions, unusual as it is in this type of public

gathering, is also revealing. This support is all the more striking since someone who gives up farming and chooses to stay in Bagnes will most often live on the tourist industry itself. It thus seems that this industry is not able to gain grass roots support commensurate with the economic benefits that it generates in the commune.

This paradox can be simply explained by saying some people gave up farming because of tourism in the first place and consequently felt frustrated. There are first these approximately 200 landowners owning less than 800 m² of land and who, in return for financial compensation, were excluded from the allocation procedures when the land consolidation system went into effect. This land reform is associated with the growth of tourism because, without the possibility that jobs would be found in this new and developing industry, the land consolidation scheme probably would not have received the support of the people in the 1964 vote. Secondly, tourist developers making "offers that couldn't be refused" also deprived many families of their farms; land, which for centuries had been closely conserved, as described in the first chapter, was greedily bought up and today many former farming families who sold their land regret their decision.

Other large property owners who gave up farming are now employed in the retail business, service industries or communal bureaucracy. According to officials with the land association, a very small number in this group gave their property to the committee in return for financial compensation. This was to their advantage, providing they no longer

farmed, as each member of the association was required to contribute 10% of the value of his land, without compensation, toward building access roads to service the newly-created lots. By deciding to retain their rights to land allocation, these landowners thus had to adhere to the regulations in effect for farmers and consequently share with them similar costs as to the consolidation process.

There is another reason why landowners and farmers are brought together. Since most of this property is meadowland and the commune stipulates that hay must be cut as it presents a fire hazard, an unofficial market has evolved in Bagnes, placing the upkeep of this land in peasant hands. This creates a new situation as the farm-workers, who in the past maintained land belonging to notaries and politicians, for example, are now too expensive to hire, considering the economic return on today's farming operations. Landowners, unable to find "their" peasant, might end up paying 50 to 60 centimes a square meter to a landscape company from Verbier to cut the hay according to the communal regulations. By contrast, those who make an arrangement with a local peasant receive payment in the form of honey and cheese in return for the permission to cut the first and second hay crops. In 1981, one kilogram of honey was considered worth one mesure of meadowland (380 m²-another name for quartanne) whereas the value for the cheese fluctuated according to which alp association the peasant belonged. Certain associations had the reputation for producing cheese with outstanding characteristics, such as the best flavour, long storage life or good melting qualities, the latter being an important factor in the preparation of

raclette and fondue. Minute differences could lead to months of friendly conversation or jokes between producers and local consumers. Through these payments in kind, a whole new sociability developed between the peasants who owned cattle and the landowners who did not. So as not to be left out of the agricultural economy and the prevailing spirit of camaraderie surrounding it, some families who owned enough meadowland even took up cattle raising again, explaining it was just "for pleasure" when asked about the motives of such a decision.

One way to evaluate "hobby farming" is to consider the local importance given to raising cattle. The cows in Bagnes and in the neighboring valleys of Entremont to the west and Hérens, Conthey and Sion to the east, belong to a breed of only 6,000 animals called the "Hérens". They are small (400 kg) in comparison to other cattle, and are very well adapted to the alpine environment of steep slopes and fast changing temperatures; their movements are brisk and their eyes scintillate whenever something catches their attention. Their main characteristic is their fighting instinct: two cows, unless they already "know each other", will not graze for long before a small fight between them will have determined which one is stronger and can graze on the better parts of a meadow. Again, alpine ecology accounts for some meadows having better grazing spots than others. This is even more the case in higher altitudes, such as on an alp. In every farm, there is a Reine (a Queen) that dominates the other cows because she can consistently push them away, usually with no further damage. A fight may last from 20 seconds to 20 minutes according to the strength of each animal.

These fights make up for most of the interest and dedication that a farmer demonstrates towards the well-being of his or her Reine, because when summer arrives, this favorite animal will meet other Reines and fight again. She must especially be prepared to win on the day of the inalpe, that is the date set by each of Bagnes' six cattle owners' associations for the members to walk their animals to the central barn of their respective lower mountain pastures (see p. 227).

These are the six most important dates in Bagnes' calendar of non-religious events: at the end of the day, there will only be six Reines left and the prestige that one obtains from having the Reine de Sery or Reine de Chermotane is such that the owner of the animal gains instant recognition, and maintains a reputation as being a good cattle raiser -- a person who "knows how to make a Reine". Typically, losers will emphasize that they have raised their animals "for the milk" as opposed to raising them "for the horns". This convinces nobody, but is accepted by everyone as a sound face-saving explanation for defeat, except when a contest involved the Reine of a past summer. In that case, "something has gone wrong" and the owner with his supporters will try to find reasons for such a setback, including the owner's methods used "to make a Reine".

"Making a Reine" consists of caring for the animal in terms of a variety of empirical observations made about each cow's behavior. Spacing calving, giving the cow more or less room in the barn, feeding the animal with the right ingredients (always a secret), putting on a nice

sounding bell on the cow's neck, are methods that have confirmed efficacy in the trade. For instance, according to the Bagnards, a bell that rings in harmony with the 3 or 4 bells of the other cows belonging to the same stable will inspire pride in the Reine heading for the lower mountain pastures on the day of the inalpe. Feeding habits sometimes reach a degree of sophistication similar to that of haute-cuisine, and it sometimes happens that a cow will not even fight once on the alp, simply, because she is homesick, while in other cases, the animal will reward the owner with a victory in return for the gentle treatment it received during the winter season. Local prestige is conferred upon those owners able to find the unique combination of all these methods to "make a Reine". Prestige will be used mainly to influence decisions within a cattle owners' association. However, Bagnard men being expert and tireless conversationalists, with the ability to debate meticulously and at length, everyone who contributed land or labor to the success of a Reine's owner, may claim some responsibility, or receive some credit, during most of the coming winter months at the time of the apéritif in the café.

In short, to be a Bagnard is to share in this knowledge on how to raise cattle. On the day of the inalpe, owners and their families and friends watch the cows fighting. On the alp a "good cow" will be noticed before a fight actually occurs simply because she would stand upright, with her head very still, while other cows would turn away from her as if they were certain to lose in the event of a fight. Later in the day spectators will try to predict whether the winning cow will be able to

keep her position during the whole season and whether some cows are strong enough to make it next year to the cantonal matches organized each spring in the Rhone plain. There, the most able fighters are confronted with Reines of other communes³⁷. In the plain, the cows acquire a market value as distinct from the prestige value it has in Bagnes. A sale is only known to be arranged when the buyer is from another commune and more prestige can be acquired in Bagnes if the seller succeeds in raising yet another Reine in one of the cattle owners' association.

It is in the context of the camaraderie that surrounds the raising of cattle that the peasants can mobilize support in favor of agriculture in the commune. Peasants and producers associations have adapted their technology to the presence of the tourist industry in order to continue farming. They have also been able to obtain subsidies from the commune to "maintain the Hérens breed" because the Confederation does not account for the lower milk production of such animals in its subsidy allocation policies. Finally, peasants are able to obtain time and labor from non-farmers to help them. Extending the notion of prestige to all those who contributed to the farm work necessary "to make a Reine" certainly helps a peasant to mobilize labor among friends, neighbors and

³⁷ These matches, five or six each spring, are organized by a local cattle breeding syndicate. This is distinct from a cattle owners' association because they do not own land but provide services to their members, such as the inscription of their animals in the breed register, and most syndicates also own a stud bull. In April 1981, the regional fighting contest was organized in Sembrancher for all the qualifying cows of the Entremont district. The cows are ranked in one of five categories according to the width of their thorax and winners in each category participate to the cantonal finale in Aproz, near Sion.

relatives who have abandoned farming but have kept land or have time to spare. Keeping prestige for oneself is now the surest way to work alone in the fields for many years to come. In terms of the argument developed in this study, the peasants have in this instance successfully reinterpreted the Bagnard cultural heritage. They contribute to the definition of cultural identity in Bagnes by showing how a preferred activity such as cattle raising can be maintained in the commune.

5.4 Conclusion

In the first section of this chapter (5.2.1) it was shown that the bourgeoisie has always been the principal property owner in Bagnes and that over time, communal land that could be used by residents as well as by bourgeois has progressively diminished in size in favour of strictly bourgeois management. Thus, while political rights of residents may have increased during the 19th century (see chapter II), their access to property has thereafter been reduced. However, residents could still benefit from bourgeois land by being a member of a cattle owners' association; or they could use other public property such as water, by contributing in time or money to the maintenance of the distribution systems, either for irrigation or drinking water. The declining population in Bagnes until the 1960s has favored this informal extension of rights of use to residents.

The second section emphasized the internal organization of cattle owners' associations because they are the main users of bourgeois land (5.2.2). It was suggested that such an organization permits innovations to take place because there are frequent occasions for members to express their views. An example of this has been described in detail, namely the private acquisition on a collective basis of lower mountain pasturelands that could be used for grazing in conjunction with the higher altitude alps owned by the bourgeoisie. This internal dynamic for change was contrasted with the challenge posed by the State of Valais which attempted to intervene directly in the mode of allocating rights of use of

communal land between bourgeois as well as between bourgeois and residents. This historical event is significant because several deceptive tactics used in turn by the commune, the bourgeoisie or the cattle owners' associations, caused the state intervention to fail. In terms of the argument developed in this study, it is an example of how local solutions to local problems can be found without, and even against, outside interference.

Tourism and hydroelectricity production have posed different challenges to the communal authorities and the population in general; it was seen that a negative vote on a new proposal of Mountain Regulation in 1960 has turned a commune defeat into a confident attitude by communal representatives in negotiating the expansion of tourism on a case by case basis with promoters. Ownership transfers were restricted to rights of way. Knowing that key decisions would belong to the Primary Assembly or to the Bourgeoisial Council, the commune was able to participate in the tourist economy on its own terms, namely through communal investments in municipal services, and to finally mold the tourist expansion into the same cast as the hydroelectric industry with regard to obtaining royalties for the use of communal property. Although royalties never reached a level high enough to satisfy everyone, this is a real achievement insofar as the collection of royalties from electricity companies was authorized under Valaisan law, while in the case of tourism, it was a commune-based negotiation that forced payments and participation to profits on tourist activities. The fact that such an agreement has not been challenged in court by the ski lift company

concerned is further evidence of how successful the negotiation turned out for the commune.

The last section of this chapter (5.3) provided the context in which tourist promoters had an interest in buying peace in the commune by acting in conformity with the communal administration's wishes regarding the compensation for using communal property. Tourism has expanded to such an extent in Bagnes that private property is now much sought after by young couples of the commune who want to build a house for themselves. They compete for land with Swiss and foreign tourists, speculators, entrepreneurs, the bourgeoisie and the farmers. A situation was described where this competition is particularly visible, lending itself to analysis. The competition for controlling private property has also led to the emergence of a perception on the part of a majority of Bagnards, especially the non-peasants among them, that they were being driven into a corner by the expansion of tourism. Checking tourism's growth in order to negotiate a new form of coexistence with that industry, "new" being in reference to the past situation in Fionnay, therefore, becomes a genuine political platform involving more people than the strictly peasant household.

With those issues in mind, the next chapter will consider how the changes in power relationships in the commune induced a reaction of cultural assertion on the part of the Bagnards regarding economic development in their commune.

CHAPTER VI

Cultural Assertion

6.1 Achieving Coexistence with Economic Development

The question that this study proposed to answer was spelled out in the introduction: what are the political and economic bases of the power acquired by the Bagnards to maintain control over land use in their commune ? All events described thus far in relation to the negotiation of territory in Bagnes have shown that control over economic development has been achieved mainly through the political process using the commune as the principal instrument of intervention. The economic leverage to compete with outsiders in acquiring and conserving property has been much weaker.

This concluding chapter will first argue this point. It will then suggest that such an uneven power base in controlling land use, and more generally, economic development in the commune, may be the explanation for the emergence of the reaction of cultural assertion that can be witnessed in Bagnes at this time. Cultural assertion on the part of the local population might to some extent compensate for the absence of strong economic power to negotiate the control and use of land in the commune. In other words, cultural assertion allows the Bagnards to voice their opinion by defining a form of power, other than the political and financial, to establish their claim over the use of the commune's territory. In brief, cultural heritage becomes a source of power. As Adams wrote,

"[...] the actual control over aspects of an environment is a tactical matter. That is, I may have a gun, and you none; but my ownership of the gun gives me no power

over you if I have made the tactical blunder of not having it in my possession" (Adams 1970: 117, underlined in the original).

To expand the significance of this metaphor for the present study, cultural assertion means demonstrating that a group actually has the ability to mobilize support against an opposing party, an ability the opposition no longer believes achievable. As the existence of peasant activity on the land is the most effective argument against alternative uses of this land, it is a matter of fact that the most dedicated developers have adopted the attitude that from the moment a person is no longer involved in the peasant economy, then this person's contribution to any discussion about land use is no longer valid. It is at this point that cultural assertion enters the negotiating process. For the platform "we are peasants, respect our land", a platform used successfully in Fionnay, is substituted the assertive statement "we are Bagnards and this is our home". In other words, concerned Bagnards no longer refer to the acquired rights of peasants in the public debate on how tourism should expand in the future but more globally, to the acquired rights of the bourgeois of Bagnes. Indeed, all people value their collective identity highly, like one may own a gun in Adams' terms, but not all people find in certain historical circumstances that referring to such an identity may lead to the emergence of an alliance among different segments of social classes in a community, so as to negotiate coexistence with external pressures for change in that community. The second part of this chapter will describe how certain components of the collective identity have become mobilizing elements in the negotiation of territory in Bagnes.

At the time of the first inroads of tourism in Bagnes valley, during the second part of the 19th century, the basis of peasant political power in relation to the visitors sheltered in the hotels of the commune, was their acquired rights to the use of communal and bourgeois property in and around Fionnay. Economic sources of power accounted for the fact that some Bagnards were able to set themselves up as hotel owners whereas others were either too poor or uninterested to do so. Class differences were real and present in the commune, but 19th century tourism had no role in influencing outcomes in the relationships between social classes in the commune because as indicated in chapter IV, the hotel owners made sure that tourists and peasants would interact as little as possible. The fact that tourists were not even thinking of buying private property in the commune at that time also contributed to the ease of their interaction with peasants.

Indeed, chapter IV has shown that the coexistence between tourism and agriculture depended to a large extent on respecting peasant control over land use; the hotel owners mobilized personal support from the peasants on that issue, especially by abstaining from making any request to the bourgeoisie for privatization of the land on which their hotels were built. Thus, the tourist industry in its rudimentary stages was merely grafted onto the existing practices and acquired rights of farmers. Moreover the areas in which the tourists were interested were situated at the periphery of the agricultural core of the commune.

The expansion of tourism in Verbier and the construction of the

Mauvoisin dam at the far end of Bagnes valley took place at a time when the hotel owners' role as intermediaries in the promotion of tourism was waning and when agricultural practices were changing.

In order to understand the rapid decline in the hotel owners' power, it is necessary to go back to the descriptions of the general economy of hydroelectricity in Valais and to the origins of tourism. In chapter III it was seen that the presence of tourism in Bagnes was not felt until a relatively late date, the valley being at some distance from the major routes of Alpine exploration during the 18th century and even later. As was indicated in that discussion, although some places were popular, vast areas were still unknown. The way parts of North America during that same period were marked "terra incognita" on maps, in the Alps these areas were called "Glaciers". The enthusiasm of the wealthy for alpine club activities prompted the first significant influx of visitors to the canton. At the same time, the completion of the railway lines as far as Sion (1860) was undoubtedly also a factor that made Valais more accessible to a greater number of people.

Although the first innkeepers in Bagnes were born and bred in the commune, the events mentioned here were incentives from outside the commune, and what is more, were somewhat overdue considering the rapid growth of tourism in subsequent years. While the hotel owner would have had just enough time to convince the peasants who were in direct contact with the tourists that agriculture and tourism could coexist, there was not enough time to mobilize more permanent and unfailing support

from the peasants for his activities. The public administration only supported him insofar as it could justify to dissatisfied members of the commune, that it permitted only local entrepreneurs "to favor public prosperity". The hotel owner may have wished he could have rallied personal support from among his clientele (the reader may remember the proprietor of the Hôtel du Giétroz at Villette who gave references in his advertisement). However, even if clients made return visits to one hotel or spent longer holidays, they could not give lasting support as they kept moving from one activity to another. When they tired of hiking and climbing peaks from all possible angles, they turned to skiing as the next popular activity.

In the 1930s, roughly fifty years after the first significant tourist visits to Mauvoisin and Fionnay, tourism became an industry. The innkeepers became cogs in its wheels, as did the real estate promoters serving the vacation home market, as did the building contractors and their employees and as did as well the ski lift companies. The profitability of the latter companies depends on extending the network of ski lifts, and consequently attracting more visitors. Private apartments and chalets, and rental properties, now compete with the hotels to provide accommodation for tourists. The ski lift companies take on the job of promoting the resort internationally. Publicizing a resort by advertising the merits of hotels on the colored end-papers of a popular book is a thing of the past.

Chapter III also showed that after World War II, major investments

in electricity production were made in Valais, in order to satisfy the energy requirements of Switzerland and neighboring countries. These requirements justified construction of the facilities needed to export the electricity. After the war, it was this sector of hydroelectric production that yielded the best return on the capital invested. In 1980, exports represented 60% of the total production of Valais (see p.139). This use of electricity consequently allowed greater financial support to be mobilized by the companies using the land for that purpose in Bagnes.

The recourse to this financial might appears nowhere as clearly as in the fate met by the whole area of the commune that was first to see the expansion of tourism in Bagnes. Although the Hôtel de Mauvoisin still exists, the hydroelectric installations built there brought an end to Fionnay's role as a resort. In 1959, the Hôtel du Grand-Combin was sold to Grande Dixence S.A. and another story added to accommodate the workers from their power station in Fionnay. In 1961, the same company bought the Pension Chanrion and soon demolished it. In 1956, the Hôtel des Alpes met the same fate when it was bought by Forces motrices de Mauvoisin S.A. while the Hôtel Carron was turned into an office for the engineers of the same company which was building the dam at Mauvoisin. This hotel also served as a recreation center for its employees and today the manager of the FMM power station at Fionnay makes his home there. By 1959, the company had also acquired the Pension Panossière with the intention of tearing it down (Carron et al. 1983: passim). Members of the Centre de recherches historiques de Bagnes sum up this period, writing that the hotel owners "were extremely pleased to sell the hotels

to the hydroelectric companies who occupied the resort between 1950 and 1960" (Ibid.: 41, my translation).

It is obvious that the construction going on in those days to build the dam and the piping system controlling the supply and flow of the water would have prevented a good number of tourist seasons from operating normally. The outright purchases of the hotels undoubtedly proved generous considering the vendors saw absolutely no alternative solution. The only known objection came from the owner of the Hôtel des Alpes who demanded the tourist attractions, especially the artificial waterfall, be reinstated on completion of the construction. We have just seen how radically this matter was resolved.

With the demolition or the refurbishing of the hotels, the electricity companies assured themselves that tourism, through its stream of requests for tourist uses of the land, would never again surface as a contender for the territory of Fionnay. These companies physically ruled out any such competition. Just to ensure a sizeable territorial base vis-à-vis the peasants, FMM also bought a number of meadows in Fionnay. Now the peasants must ask permission from this company to pasture their cattle in the spring and cut hay in the summer on these lands. The users secure their usufructuary position by making improvements to the meadows, such as the spreading of manure, which in everyone's eyes (both fellow peasants and FMM) justifies a renewal of the permission they need.

Innocuous as it may be, granting the meadows "for the hay"

demonstrates in a small way the good will the power companies (Grande Dixence S.A. being a landowner as well in Fionnay) must now show toward the peasantry. This was not exactly in keeping with what the city-based boards of directors of power companies had in mind for the use of the territory in upper Bagnes valley. Counting on the fact that agriculture would continue to lose importance in the local economy, as was the case all across Switzerland, the companies expected the peasants would soon have less interest in meadows as distant from the villages as those located at Fionnay. The companies thus participated in the reorganization of the irrigation system of the best lands as part of the commune's program for the consolidation of land holdings. However, the loss of agricultural land to the tourist economy meant that even the least productive plots were not relinquished.

In the second section of chapter V, it was seen that the peasantry no longer had exclusive use of the communal property as they did during the hotel era in Fionnay. Nowadays, the ski lift companies share this use, giving them a significant amount of power in this area. Nevertheless, farming practices changed in relation to the ability of the peasants to make money through the permanent and seasonal jobs generated by increased tourism in Verbier. Contrary to all expectations, this revenue did not prompt a "sudden" abandonment of farming. Indeed, compared to the more than tenfold increase in the number of overnights recorded in Verbier between 1958 and 1978, the number of people in the commune who declared some income from farming had only fallen 17% between 1964 and 1976 that is, from 651 to 539 (Sauvain 1980: 142). Sauvain estimated

that in 1976, 38% of the Bagnard population were still involved in agriculture in some way or another (Ibid.: 152). He noted, moreover, that between 1970 and 1976, there was an increase in the number of people claiming income earned in agriculture according to the federal census on Bagnes (Ibid.: 142).

This new development has been observed elsewhere, notably in northeastern Italy (Holmes 1983), as industrial wages increased in real terms after the Second World War, allowing for greater savings within the worker-peasant household, and as the welfare state, through unemployment benefits and old age pensions, provided a cushion that reduced the need for those households to plan hardships ahead of time. Holmes analyzed the use of these savings as it increased the involvement of workers in agriculture in terms of a process of "deproletarianization of rural livelihood [...] bringing the relationship between land and labor full circle for the Rubignacchesi" (1983 : 744-745).

Sauvain uses yet another set of figures to determine agriculture's place in Bagnes' economy. These figures, based on communal records, show that in 1976, 101 people claimed their main occupation to be farming and 479 considered it as a supplementary occupation. Among the latter group, no fewer than 300 benefited from two incomes. In other words, they continued working in agriculture while at the same time earning a professional or trade salary (Sauvain 1980: 216; the total number of 580 may include smaller family farms not considered in the census [Ibid.: 142]). It could be said that 179 persons were involved in

the "passive peasant-worker strategy" described by Holmes for northeastern Italy when pensions and savings become the main source of income for a peasant household (1983 : 737). Moreover, the number of peasant-workers is likely to have grown since 1976, following the general increase in the commune's wealth; he noted in that regard the following apparent anomaly:

"Les double-actifs de Bagnes disposent en 1976 dans leur profession principale d'un revenu supérieur à la moyenne et on constate qu'une proportion importante des ménages des catégories de revenus les plus élevés garde encore de la campagne. Cela laisse supposer que bon nombre d'entre eux n'aurait pas besoin sur le plan financier de l'apport de l'agriculture qui tend à passer d'une activité de complément à une activité de supplément, voire de loisirs" (1980: 183).

These families are purchasing the very latest in agricultural technology as labor saving devices to facilitate their work in the fields (harvesters and loaders) and in the village (dryers of hay and automatic milking machines). Increasingly, a powerful tractor or jeep complete the family farm equipment. Many a conversation centered around "the tractor" in the village of Versegères in 1980-1981: who had just bought one, who was going to and who would not. Owning a tractor is the most tangible proof of a peasant household's success in adapting to the new economy brought in by tourism.

This type of expenditure gives more meaning to the statement made by a member of a cattle owners' association when he said that peasants were now providing a living for the cattle, rather than the reverse. In order to mobilize labor within the family and among friends and neigh-

bors, peasant households must be wealthy enough to acquire the latest technology and be able to conserve enough grazing land in the face of strong pressures to sell. Labor might otherwise be mobilized by other peasants who can afford the expenses related to "making a Reine" and generate prestige for them and their benevolent labor force. Thus, peasant households invest time and money in cattle herding in the same way as tourist promoters and electricity companies count on their financial strength in order to put down roots on the communal territory.

Similarly, during the 1960s, the commune was strengthened as an economic agent when royalties from electricity production permitted the Council to make decisions on its own relative to the use of these revenues, most notably in the public works sector, generating private investments of importance from both the locality and the outside. Thus, in comparison to the hotel era in Fionnay, the new situation with tourism in Verbier is that the notion of power is no longer based on the mobilization of personal support. An ability to mobilize wealth has become an important factor for furthering interests, whether in attracting a tourist clientele or in controlling the use of land to harness water power for electricity production. However, the Bagnards are at a disadvantage in terms of using wealth against "foreigners", for instance by outbidding them during a land sale, because the main source of income for the "natives" is found in the tourist industry striving in Verbier. Fewer tourists ultimately means a lower economic leverage for the Bagnards. But more tourists means losing more land and power in the community. Thus, using wealth to consolidate existing agricultural activities in Bagnes

permits the Bagnards to show their own distinctiveness from the tourists by sacrificing few if any material benefits brought in by the industry. The negotiation then comes to be defined in political and cultural terms. This is the general context in which the coexistence between agriculture and economic development has to be achieved from the point of view of the Bagnards.

6.2 The Cultural Assertion Process

The concept of cultural assertion was defined in the introduction to this study. The ethnographic data outlined then identified three major components of Bagnard cultural heritage that are used in the assertive process: private property, communal autonomy and cattle raising. It must now be explained how these components have been efficient instruments for mobilizing people in favor of local control over economic development.

Tourism in particular triggers a reaction of cultural assertion from a majority of Bagnard men and women, because tourism's prime target is land, both public and private. Over time, the use of publicly owned land has become regulated through political decisions, as was illustrated in chapter V, and now private property is at stake. This is an important issue because the size of one's private property holding has long been the main criterion determining a family's position in Bagnes' social hierarchy, especially from the time of the opening of the local economy to market relations (see chapter I).

Those who continue to be committed to private property as a criterion for determining an individual's place in the social stratification system in the community see tourism as a threat. That industry offers fresh avenues to those it employs to demonstrate upward mobility. Persons who have made a successful investment, whether in the hotel business, banking, ski schools, restaurants, real estate, construction or

medical services, often have a little villa on the edge of their village of origin and commute to Verbier. Many have an expensive apartment in the resort, with two cars in the driveway; they may vacation in foreign countries, and some even provide a university education for their children. These are criteria that determine social stratification for people living outside the valley; they are the criteria of a non-rural society.

The tendency nowadays is for those who are not originally from Bagnes to try to adopt one or more of these ideas and habits. There are about 400 non-bourgeois residing in Verbier permanently, for whom the most expedient way to claim a social position in the community is to act in this fashion. If these status markers do not succeed in integrating them into the community, they are at least recognized by the tourists themselves and they inspire confidence in business encounters. Some native Bagnards are prompted to emulate this behavior. Particularly susceptible to these new ways are young families who own little or no property and thus have low status within the rural system of stratification, but who have acquired enough money to copy the spending habits of successful entrepreneurs and business people. Such behavior is perceived by the majority as an assimilative influence posing the most serious challenge to the platform "We are Bagnards and respect our home", which is now used to define the terms of a coexistence with tourism.

Through cultural assertion, Bagnards systematically isolate and marginalize all non-bourgeois who adopt "foreign" ways to enhance their social position in the community. Wealthy bourgeois who copy non-rural

markers of stratification can sometimes, if they want to, convincingly argue that their lifestyle is forced upon them by the professional necessity of relating to their clientele. This is perceived as being enough of a commitment to the Bagnard way of seeing things in relation to the longer-term objective of controlling the use of land by the tourist industry and the electricity companies. The issue is that peasants alone will not have enough power to confront these forces in the future. Thus other Bagnards must act as differently as possible from "foreigners" so as to make the point that the voice of any Bagnard in the negotiation of territory is as strong as the opinion of a peasant. The behavior of young people, the 20 to 40 year olds, is thus critical to the future of cultural assertion, and the Bagnards who assume a stand of cultural assertion are particularly interested in bringing that latter group to their views regarding the political situation in the commune. The participation and integration of the 20 to 40 year olds into the voluntary associations of Bagnes is a recurrent topic of most annual meetings. Cohesion between generations can also be found in each brass band of the two major political parties in the commune (see Weinberg 1976); occasions to share in "the spirit" of being Bagnards are numerous, as wealth, politics, gender and family affiliations cross-cut membership in these associations in a very intricate pattern. This contributes to reinforce collective identity.

It is worthy of attention that the spread of wage employment in the commune has brought the 20 to 40 year olds closer to one another than ever before. Those born in the 1950s in more remote villages like Champsec, Lourtier and Sarreyer remember playing soccer with children of

Le Châble and Villette and being astonished by the latter's crude language toward them and individual-oriented strategies in playing, as compared to their own discipline and team play. They did not know much about each other in the first place. The elementary level in school was village-based, and only at the Collège in Le Châble would they develop closer relationships. Today, most of them have a driver's license and all are active members in at least one voluntary association and sports club.

Some associations are not even voluntary. There are age grades in Valais, defined in such a way that everyone is considered to change his age on January first of each year. Men and women alike, when asked for their age, always answer with their year of birth and most have to think for a moment before being more precise in saying "I am 34"; they would rather say "I am of the 1952 class". When someone dies, the pallbearers are age-classmates and in most cases, they are the first to offer condolences to the parents at the cemetery. With time, an age-class will merge with the next one as its own members die. Apart from marriages and funerals, all members of an age class meet at least once a year for an evening in a café, or in a restaurant, or on a Sunday picnic on an alp, these outings being known as la sortie de la classe; whereas in most communes of the Rhone plain, men have their meetings separately from women, in mountain areas both sexes meet and celebrate together.

Certain classes are known to be more fun to be in than others. In most cases when the young people of Verbier prefer not to attend a class

meeting with "peasants from the villages" (and vice versa), the explanation offered is likely to be that their reunions are dull and unimaginative or that a class may simply have "a bad president" with "no one to take his/her place". Every five years, some special event will be organized, like a visit to the Rhine waterfalls, or a trip to Munich, Paris or Rome for several days. True, differences of wealth often become issues as to the choice of destination or length of stay, but accommodations to each other's interests are far more frequent than conflicts; difficulties in arranging a sortie have been linked to conflicts of personality between two aspiring class presidents or treasurers. The ideology of age group membership is to set aside whatever distinguishes one person from another in terms of material possessions or politics in order to enjoy being a Bagnard together and to accumulate memories for future conversations. Similarly, bringing together people with the same name is more and more frequent, and is a tradition-in-the-making. Those included may be the bearers of identical first names, like in la sortie des Bernard or la sortie des Danielle, or of family names like la sortie des Fellay. For such events, the place chosen by the president is usually a part of Bagnes' territory, like an alp or a mayen were roasted chops, raclette and quantities of wine would be served until late in the afternoon.

On most occasions of such celebrations, the first conversation of the day will involve emphasizing the beauty and convenience of the area chosen by the president of the association. When the land is owned by the commune or the bourgeoisie, some people might claim that they were there for the first time since they were gamin (kids) caring for a few

goats, and comment on the extent of changes that have affected the commune in the meantime; others might remark that here at least, il n'y a pas de touristes (there are no tourists) because you have to know the place and they do not know the place³⁸.

Privately owned land is also used for recreation by the Bagnards. Typically, the participants express admiration by wondering out loud how the owner was able to keep such a beautiful site for him or herself, a question that will be left unanswered purposely because it is a compliment. Marks of respect are aimed at confirming to an audience the importance of protecting communal areas from more tourism so that Bagnards can enjoy being there together. These comments are in sharp contrast with those made, for instance, about a brand new villa located near a village: "it is too big for this family", "it must be difficult to keep up" or "there, he had one of the best meadows in the commune", the latter implying that the owner gave up a recognized position in the social stratification system in the commune.

Criticizing imported lifestyles may also have some objective foundations in the sense that local criteria of social stratification are effectively being upset and will be modified even more in the years to come. The consolidation of land holdings discussed in chapter V will likely lead to this turn of events. In that discussion it was observed that a number of

³⁸ There is a complex Bagnard concept of "knowing" that is applied to practically all everyday life situations, which emphasize on how certain persons cannot know something because of their age, sex, height, weight, profession, family background, education and so on. Commenting on the weather is the only situation where one does not need to "know".

large landowners who had abandoned the practice of agriculture had not given up their properties to the owners' association in charge of the agrarian reform in Bagnes. In refusing full compensation for their land, they had even incurred a cost equal to 10% of their holdings (see p. 269), so that a pool of land would be constituted for building access roads. Their reluctance to abandon the ownership of land to full-time farmers may be explained by their perception that not owning land would be equivalent to the loss of a prestige position in the community, an attitude which reinforces de facto the status of private property as the principal criterion of stratification in the population. It is certain however that the remaniement parcellaire will modify social stratification. The number of parcels that a household may own has been greatly diminished, remote location of meadows has been compensated for in cash, and there is no longer a positive value attached to a household's ingenuity in making ends meet. At the commune level, 33,000 small pieces of property have been or will become 6,000 larger parcels belonging to more than 2,200 owners (Sauvain 1980: 124). In other words, subsistence through the combination of agricultural resources spread out over the whole communal territory is becoming a thing of the past.

Can it be said that what I have called an element of cultural assertion is simply a rear-guard reaction defending the ownership of agricultural lands and buildings as markers of social position as against such criteria as the ownership of a villa and two cars ? Landowners who have kept their land through the consolidation process are in effect those who stand to lose the most from such a drastic change in the measure-

ment of position in the local system of stratification, especially if they have abandoned agriculture and cut themselves off from the peasant economy and the sociability that surrounds agricultural practices. However, this interpretation would not account for the two other elements of cultural assertion in these landowners' reaction: first, the support they give to the bureaucrats and elected officials who attempt to control the demand of the tourist and electricity production sectors for land, and second, their interest in the cattle raising activities of full-time and part-time farmers.

Thus, cultural assertion must be seen as a reaction whose effectiveness, its "positive, creative aspect" as Clemmer underlined (1972: 219), depends on a combination of factors having in common only the fact that they have been selected from the cultural heritage and are brought together in a coherent form. All Bagnards fear being uprooted from their place of birth and becoming a minority within their own territory numerically as well as culturally. And they want to deal with that problem themselves, by negotiating a coexistence with economic development that will allow for a degree of decisional autonomy compatible with the commune's history.

The wish to settle locally the problems raised by tourism is best illustrated by the reaction in Bagnes to the "Lex Furgler" (Switzerland 1981), whose adoption by the Swiss parliament in 1976 was alluded to in the introduction to chapter V. That law was specifically drawn up to prevent foreigners from buying property in certain parts of the country;

Bagnes was even mentioned by name in the law as being one of those areas that needed protection. One might have expected that this bill would be well-received in communities where people felt that the expansion of tourism had gone too far. Of course, real estate promoters saw this as an infringement on their constitutional rights, namely the right to earn a living (Federal Constitution 1972: art. 31), and protested on that basis against losing a lucrative source of income (O.R.T.M. 1981). However, those Bagnard men and women who assume a stance of cultural assertion were equally angry at the law, insofar as they feared the spread of a perception in the commune that federal intervention could, through a tough law, effectively solve the most critical problems raised by tourism, in this case, the loss of property to foreigners.

Moreover the law did not address the issue of Swiss citizens buying property in Bagnes and thereby causing disruptions in the local economy. An overall consequence was the support the law mobilized for the communal administration in its attempt to control the territorial greed of promoters of tourism.

In other words the "Lex Furgler", aimed at curbing non-Swiss investments in the resorts of the country, hardly met expectations as to the control of the industry itself because the "emic" definition of a tourist in Bagnes is very broad. As could have been predicted from the material in chapters I and II showing the commune as the central political institution in Switzerland, a tourist is first and foremost a non-Bagnard who enters the commune for the purpose of leisure rather than

work. If one indeed works, he is a resident as opposed to a bourgeois. From that perspective, the law only addressed a small part of the problem -- "just enough to bother everyone", as a communal representative once said, since the Swiss were still allowed to own property for leisure purposes in Bagnes.

The federal law indicated to most Bagnards for the first time that there were material risks in being too dependent on tourism. Throughout this study, the close interaction between the different sectors of Bagnes' economy has been described, with hydropower royalties being invested by the communal administration in an infrastructure designed to increase services to the population. In fact, these expenditures also encouraged private investments in Verbier on a 10 to 1 ratio, just as Hirschman's principle of the Hiding Hand might have predicted. Job creation among the local population followed as did the consolidation of land holdings in agriculture and an increasing demand for residential areas by young Bagnard families. As was also shown, full-time peasants counted on gaining access to resources through the large landowners who had abandoned agriculture, paying a merely symbolic rent (see p. 269) and thus reducing their costs. A number of male wage-earners having little land and whose wives or mothers agreed to increase their own daily labor, also took advantage of the opportunity to maintain the land of others to increase their involvement in agriculture as tourism prospered.

Only the interruption of a small number of construction projects in the resort, in 1977-1978, chilled all the entrepreneurs and business people

in the commune, with repercussions reaching part-time farmers fearful of losing their seasonal wages in the service sector of the tourist industry. Full-time farmers were even faced with the possibility of paying higher rent on agricultural land which they used but did not own. Young families who had incurred debts in order to settle in their commune became fearful of the consequences of the law. When the tourist industry prospers, high housing costs are compensated for by increasing income and perhaps by the enhanced value of one's investment. However, this value can plummet when tourists are no longer attracted to the area, leaving these young families in debt or ruined, or forced to commute to work at distances far from their homes. This observation applies as well to entrepreneurs who have invested time and money in starting a business. Thus, most Bagnards somewhat abruptly convinced themselves that making any long-term decisions in such a context was difficult. They believed even more certainly that the control exercised over the commune's territory by the tourist industry was far too great relative to the risks associated with the industry.

Still, it is clear to most people that the tourist economy will not retreat overnight in Verbier and down in the valley below. The second-home and apartment market has already developed to such an extent that a core clientele is there to justify at least the survival of the main businesses and of the basic employment structure in the commune. Likewise, the ski-lift operations of the Verbier region are among the largest in the Alps. Federal intervention was thus perceived as a threat to the communal administration's autonomy to make decisions and to

design its own arrangements for defining a type of coexistence with tourism, one that would take into account both its cyclical nature and its basic contribution to the local economy.

Elected representatives and officials of the commune were thus able to reinterpret in contemporary terms this basic component of the Bagnard cultural identity, the defense of communal autonomy, so as to mobilize support in the community to negotiate for and by themselves the future expansion of tourism. In 1982, as described in chapter V, the administration was able first to impose payment of royalties on public land used for purposes other than farming, and second, to acquire shares of Téléverbier S.A. The communal administration greatly increased its power on that occasion by satisfying almost everyone in the community, from those who held that for once Téléverbier was under control, to those who thought that partnership with the company would certainly lead the commune to apply less stringent rules in matters ranging from the construction code to parking regulations in the resort. For his part, the President of the commune said at the General Council meeting which preceded by some months the vote on the agreement with Téléverbier; "Development is looking for something better, not just more" (see p. 66). This statement reflects the generally held view that coexistence with tourism can be achieved by stabilizing the relationships between the different sectors of the local economy.

This statement also applies to the attitude of the population toward cattle raising in the commune. Several times in this study, farmers of

Bagnes were seen to be spending freely on maintaining a family farm or mobilizing labor toward that goal among friends and neighbors. It may be recalled that Sauvain referred to 38% of the population being involved in agriculture and that the absolute number of farmers tended to increase with "agriculture becoming a supplementary, if not a leisure activity" (my translation, see p. 288). It is as if these people were using tourism not so much to increase their income as to improve their farm operations and aspire to a better social life in their community.

In terms of the argument developed in the present study, maintaining a family farm and above all, raising cattle, are part of the process of cultural assertion, as they permit the Bagnards to express their own distinctiveness from the tourists in relation to land use in the commune. On a Sunday afternoon outing above Verbier or Bruson, a Bagnard va voir les vaches ("goes out to see the cows") while a tourist going to the same place, from that Bagnard's point of view, regarde le paysage ("looks at the scenery"). Bagnards watch cows carefully because they see more in each animal's behavior on an alp than would any ordinary observer who, not being a Bagnard, does not know what to look for in that behavior. Of course, these cows produce milk; more important however is the prestige associated with owning a "good cow" and this quality no longer depends on milk production (see p. 270-273).

Cattle raising is part of the cultural assertion process in Bagnes because it creates prestige positions in the agricultural sector of the local economy. These positions existed before (Gabbud 1909: 62) but peasants

have been successful in maintaining them while the economic contribution of cattle raising lost most of its significance in terms of providing a household with material independence.

6.3 Conclusion

Cultural assertion is a manifestation of solidarity between members of a community against perceived threats from the outside. This popular reaction is based on the long-established knowledge and practices typical of that community and proceeds by situating them in a contemporary context. The concept of cultural assertion has been used as a summation of the "series of processes that construct, reconstruct, and dismantle cultural materials, in response to identifiable determinants" (Wolf 1982 : 387).

These determinants have been identified in this study as hydro-electricity production and tourism as they impinge upon land use in the community. Cultural assertion has therefore been given its shape and form by history. This study has shown further that selecting and reinterpreting major components of a population's cultural heritage can be an instrument of power for a community trying to mitigate outside pressures for change. For cultural assertion to be effective in this respect, a consensus between different segments of the local social classes must emerge around a single issue or a series of related issues. In this study, such a consensus has been built during the 1970s in favor of the regulation of tourist activities on the communal territory in order to achieve a larger degree of local control over economic development.

In Bagnes, that which ties people together in the process of cultural assertion is identification with the land. The analysis therefore

began with the changes in local patterns of land use and tenure, and the competition for land between major industries and households, understood in the context of structural changes in the Swiss economy and economic development in the community.

Land tenure in Bagnes is a dual system of private and communal property deeply rooted in history and still crucial among the preoccupations of the Bagnards, largely because of the commune's land acquisitions and management over the course of several centuries. This role of the commune stands in sharp contrast with the sale of communal property to private owners recorded elsewhere in the Alps, such as in Savoy at the end of the 18th century (Nicolas 1971), or in the distribution of that property among all households which occurred in the Rhone plain, when the first attempts were made at draining the marshes in this area between 1860 and 1880 (Courthion 1972). During the 20th century, agriculture gradually adapted to the spread of wage employment in Bagnes. Seasonal work, first on large construction projects and mountain roads and thereafter in the tourist industry, has permitted most households to reduce or abandon the ploughfields near and around the villages of the commune. This land was turned into meadows producing several crops of hay each season and cattle raising continued. Collectively owned pastureland was expanded to include the lower mountain pastures of the mayens located above the villages, land which previously was privately held and provided hay to the households who owned them. Now, the cattle owners' associations operate on a collective basis after having consolidated a great number of the mayens into six large areas

reserved for early summer grazing. This change in land tenure is consistent with Netting's observation about another commune of Valais, namely that "land use by and large determines land tenure" (1976 : 137). This change also shows the extent to which the dual system of land tenure had a raison d'être in the process of expansion of commercial farming sponsored by the State of Valais through the producers' associations. Competition with the tourist industry and hydropower companies for publicly owned land was therefore inevitable.

The negotiation of territory in Bagnes has also been a competition between agriculture, tourism and electricity production because the resources typical of the alpine environment have qualities that make them valuable to all these sectors of the local economy. Water is a good example of a resource having different uses in each of these sectors : irrigation of fields and meadows, providing drinking-water to the tourist resort and lastly, producing electricity. In this competitive context, cultural assertion has been an attempt by the local population to maintain or negotiate control over water, but also over private land used for agriculture and residential purposes, and over public property shared with the tourist sector and hydropower companies. This was accomplished while agricultural practices, technology and production were adapting to present-day conditions. Therefore, cultural assertion is a dynamic process rather than an effort to resist change in the name of preserving culture. That culture remains alive and relevant through the process of reinterpretation of its essential components by the Bagnards, as mentioned above.

Broadly speaking, cultural assertion by the Bagnards has been a successful strategy. The evidence is that after a century of net out-migration, this trend has been reversed in the last thirty years with an increase in total resident population on the order of 34%. The majority of young people born in the community have chosen to settle there. The rural environment has also been maintained in spite of severe construction pressures. More important still, some 40% of the population maintain a relationship to agriculture, with cattle raising as the preferred activity. This figure suggests that the growth of tourism and electricity production has not transformed the community to the extent that it has lost its basic social fabric. Finally, some control over the tourist industry has been achieved, first by making Bagnes a more expensive location for promoters to invest due to a royalty agreement that does not exist in other resorts, and second, when investments in fact were made, by having the commune becoming a shareholder and participant in profits and decision making.

There are several reasons for this success. Some are of a general character, while others are specific to the economics of hydroelectricity production and to the history of tourism in the region.

As has been seen, cultural assertion depends on the ability of the Bagnards to mobilize economic or political support in favor of a certain perception of both the past and the future. The highly decentralized system of government in Switzerland provides the commune with vast powers of intervention more likely to reflect the local preferences of the

population than do senior levels of government. The canton's and the confederation's efforts to promote popular involvement in public affairs beyond the commune since 1848, through the referendum and the right of initiative, have had poor results in Valais, as indicated by the low proportion of voters who participate in these exercises of democracy. This study has shown further that local solutions to local problems could be found. Such local solutions include the adoption of "Mountain regulations" that were different from those proposed by the canton; the enlargement of the alps to comprise lower mountain pastures; the step-by-step approach to the territorial expansion of tourism in the community which was adopted after a vote in 1960. Thus, cultural assertion can be seen as an extension into the 1980s of earlier attempts at maintaining some local control over outcomes of social change.

The hydropower industry can coexist with agriculture for two main reasons. The most important is that the agricultural sector of the economy could adapt fairly easily to the constraints brought by the construction of the dam. The negotiation of territory in this case concerned the middle portion of the pastureland used during the summer by the Chermotane cattle owners' association; the compensation paid by the company for the flooding of that area was used to buy additional private mayens to enlarge the existing alp. Most of the hydropower infrastructure was built underground and water was made available to peasants for irrigation purposes through a modern system of water mains and hydrants. After the construction, the availability of electricity did not generate investments in manufacturing in the valley. Rather,

electricity was exported to distant factories and urban areas, and the rural environment was preserved from further encroachments. The second reason for the support given to electricity production in Bagnes was the existence of a long-established tradition regarding water concessions in Valais. Referring to the law that recognized the communes' ownership of water in the canton in 1898, Bagnes was able to negotiate royalties and obtain free electricity from the producing companies. It is not so much the revenue itself that mattered from the perspective of cultural assertion, but the fact that the Communal Council was strengthened as a political body speaking on behalf of its constituents in that regard.

The conditions surrounding efforts to control the growth of tourism have been entirely different. Tourism began a century ago in the community and its development has been characterized by three consecutive changes in the location of the tourist areas in Bagnes -- from Mauvoisin to Fionnay and then to Verbier. The functions of mediating between the tourists and the Bagnards also changed from being the preserve of the hotel owners to that of the Communal Council. Moreover, a historical perspective on tourism shows that contemporary expectations on the part of the Bagnards are that respecting their acquired rights over the land of the commune should become typical of the relationship between the tourists and the local population. This perception is based on the precedent established by the peasants in Fionnay who successfully defended their acquired rights on the use of communal property by defining the terms under which tourism would expand there.

Cultural assertion became an instrument of power for the community to the extent that it served to define the acquired rights of all the bourgeois of Bagnes. Assertive politicians obtained popular support in favor of a new structure for decision making within the Communal Council in the early 1970s by justifying this change in reference to the need to protect the commune's autonomy to make decisions in the future that it had in the past. This reinterpretation of the cultural heritage in contemporary terms allowed the Council to impose land-use regulations over the tourist industry without sacrificing much of the material benefits brought to the commune by tourism. The Council was perceived as acting for all Bagnards.

Similarly, the peasants occupy a central position in the commune insofar as their acquired rights to use the land are the most clearly defined among all Bagnards. Their power in the negotiation of territory is further reinforced by their ability to mobilize support among non-peasants through the creation of prestige positions for them within the agricultural sector. Men as well as women who contribute time and labor to the family farm, or who rent properties to friends, can share in the pride and prestige of a peasant who "makes a Reine" in one of the commune's alps.

Finally, landowners who have abandoned agriculture in favor of increased involvement in the service sector of the tourist industry, have reinterpreted the cultural heritage by conserving their land and making it available to peasants, and thus encouraging the sociability surrounding

cattle raising. While they stand to lose the most from the expansion of tourism, especially as new markers for measuring status threaten their position in the local stratification system, their acknowledgement of cattle raising as a preferred activity in the commune makes them "real Bagnards" and thereby gives them a voice in the negotiation of territory.

Thus, a consensus emerged in Bagnes among these three segments of the local population to negotiate a form of coexistence with tourism. Cultural assertion allows the industry to grow, but only when and where it respects the acquired rights of all bourgeois over the territory.

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