

MYRON P. GUTMANN

War and Rural Life in the Early Modern Low Countries



PRINCETON LEGACY LIBRARY

WAR AND RURAL LIFE IN THE EARLY
MODERN LOW COUNTRIES

WAR AND RURAL LIFE
IN THE EARLY
MODERN LOW COUNTRIES

Myron P. Gutmann

Princeton University Press
Princeton, New Jersey

Copyright © 1980 by Princeton University Press.

Published by Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. In the United Kingdom.
Princeton University Press, Guildford, Surrey

All Rights Reserved

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data will be found on the last printed page of
this book

ISBN 0 691 05291 3

This book has been composed in Garamond

Printed in The Netherlands by Van Gorcum, Assen

To My Parents and
To Roy

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations IX

List of Maps IX

List of Tables IX

List of Figures X

Abbreviations Used in Notes and Bibliography XI

A Note on Measures and Moneys XII

Acknowledgments XV

Part 1: The Background

Introduction: War and Other Crises in Early Modern Life 3

I Magnet for Armies: The Basse-Meuse Under the Ancien Régime 9

Part 2: The Burden of Military Presence

II "God Preserve us From Living Through Times of War" 31

III The Burden Lightens 54

Part 3: War and the Economy

IV The Farmers: Short-Circuiting Agricultural Production 75

V Prices and the Liégeois Food Supply in Time of War 111

Part 4: Victims and Survivors

VI The Specter of Depopulation 133

VII The Victims: Death and Military Action 151

VIII The Survivors: Childbearing and Marriage 174

IX The Impact of War in Perspective 196

Appendixes

A. A Chronology of Military and Political Events in the Basse-Meuse 211

- B. An Index of Extreme Behavior 231
- C. Index Values for Grain Prices 233
- D. Correlation Coefficients for Variables Describing Life in the Basse-Meuse 237
- E. Methods for Correcting Incomplete Parish Register Data 241

Notes 242

Bibliography 279

Index 304

List of Illustrations – Maps – Tables – Figures

Illustrations

1. *Pillage and Burning of a Village*, by Jacques Callot 21
Courtesy of The Art Museum, Princeton University. Junius S. Morgan Collection
2. *The Pillage*, by Jacques Callot 43
Courtesy of The Art Museum, Princeton University. Junius S. Morgan Collection
3. *Devastation of a Monastery*, by Jacques Callot 65
Courtesy of The Art Museum, Princeton University. Junius S. Morgan Collection
4. The Cruelties Committed by the French, No. 7, by Romeyn de Hooghe 83
Illustration from Lambert van den Bos, *Tooneel des Oorloogs, opgericht in de vereenigde Nederlanden . . .* (Amsterdam, 1675). These etchings appear to be copies from a book by de Hooghe which was published in 1673
5. The Cruelties Committed by the French, No. 6, by Romeyn de Hooghe 105
6. The Cruelties Committed by the French, No. 4, by Romeyn de Hooghe 129
7. The Cruelties Committed by the French, No. 5, by Romeyn de Hooghe 157
8. The Cruelties Committed by the French, No. 1, by Romeyn de Hooghe 179
9. The Cruelties Committed by the French, No. 3, by Romeyn de Hooghe 201

Maps

- 1.1 The Basse-Meuse and the Low Countries 10
- 1.2 Sovereignty in the Basse-Meuse 12
- 1.3 Communities in and near the Basse-Meuse 14

Tables

- 2.1 Eysden Taxes 48
- 4.1 Production Around Maastricht – Five Tithe Series – Net Receipts 86
- 4.2 Production Around Liège 90
- 4.3 Production on the Louwberg Farm, 1660-1749 94
- 4.4 Farming Income and Expenditures Under Changing Conditions 99

5.1	Correlations Between Rye Prices in Various Markets	119
6.1	Index of Communicants in the Basse-Meuse, 1624-1763	136
6.2	Herstal Bourgeois	139
6.3	Argenteau Landholders	143
6.4	Eysden Personal Taxpayers	145
7.1	Deaths in the Basse-Meuse, 1628-1660: Calendar Year Deaths	152
7.2	Deaths in the Basse-Meuse, 1661-1749: Calendar Year Deaths	154
7.3	Monthly Distribution of Deaths (Harvest Years)	160
8.1	Baptisms in the Basse-Meuse	175
8.2	Correlations Between Childbearing, Mortality and The Price of Rye in Liège	180
8.3	Monthly Distribution of Childbearing (Calendar Year Baptisms)	181
8.4	Two Examples of Delayed Births	184
8.5	Wandre Marriages (Calendar Years)	189
8.6	Ages at Marriage and Birth of First Child (By Decade)	190
9.1	War and Bad Weather. Relative Intensity of their Impact	198

Figures

4.1	Production Around Maastricht	85
4.2	Production on the Louwberg Farm	97
5.1	Long-Term Price Movements in Liège, Maastricht, and Amsterdam	117
5.2	The Price of Rye in Liège	118
5.3	Relative Intensity of Eight Crises	125
6.1	Population: Three Basse-Mosan Communities	140
6.2	Short-Term Changes in the Herstal Bourgeois: Two Crisis Decades	141
7.1	Deaths in the Basse-Meuse, 1628-1660	153
7.2	Deaths in the Basse-Meuse, 1661-1749	155
7.3	Monthly Distribution of Deaths	161
7.4	Proportion Surviving, Wandre Legitimate Births Men and Women Combined	171
8.1	Baptisms in the Basse-Meuse	177
8.2	Monthly Distribution of Childbearing	182
8.3	Ages at Marriage and Birth of First Child (By Decade)	191

Abbreviations Used in Notes and Bibliography

AEL	Archives de l'Etat à Liège
AEL CdeJ	Archives de l'Etat à Liège, Cours de Justice
AEL PdD	Archives de l'Etat à Liège, Cathédrale, Secrétariat, Protocoles des Directeurs.
AEL PR	Archives de l'Etat à Liège, Parish Register collection.
AEL CP	Archives de l'Etat à Liège, Conseil Privé.
BIAL	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut Archéologique Liégeois.</i>
BSAHL	<i>Bulletin de la Société d'Art et d'Histoire du Diocèse de Liège.</i>
BSSLL	<i>Bulletin de la Société Scientifique et Littéraire du Limbourg.</i>
CAPL	<i>Chronique Archéologique du Pays de Liège.</i>
Mém. Cour.	Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique. Mémoires Couronnés et Autres Mémoires. Collection in-8°. (Collection in-4° referred to as Mém. Cour. in-4°.)
NOTICES	Daris, Joseph. <i>Notices sur les églises du diocèse de Liège</i> , 17 vols. Liège, 1867-1899.
RAL LVO	Rijksarchief in Limburg. Land van Overmaas.
RBPH	<i>Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire.</i>
Vieux Liège	<i>Bulletin de la Société Royale "Le Vieux Liège".</i>

A Note on Measures and Moneys

Measures

The following measures were in use in the Basse-Meuse in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

Measures of Capacity¹

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Number per Muid</i>
Muid of Maastricht (560.16 liters)	1
Maldre	4
Setier, vat	24
Quarte, kop	96
Pognoux	384
Muid of Liège, Dalhem, Aachen (245.696 liters)	1
Setier, vat	8
Quarte, kop	32
Pognoux	128

Measures of Surface Area

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Number per Bonnier</i>
Bonnier (0.87178 hectare)	1
Journal	4
Grand Verge	20
Petite Verge	400

Moneys

The principal money of account in use in the early modern Basse-Meuse was the florin, but there were at least four different florins: those of Brabant, of Liège, of Brabant-Liège, and of Holland (also called guilders).² They are all related to subsidiary units of money as follows:

<i>Unit</i>	<i>Number per Florin</i>
Florin of Brabant (and Florin of Brabant-Liège)	1
Patard	20
Aidant, Liard	80

The value of these units of account varied tremendously, both in relation to one another and in relation to the common gold and silver coins of the era. Where money is represented in the text in terms of coins, I have also shown its value in Florins of Brabant-Liège (the predominant money of account in the *Liégeois Basse-Meuse*) in order to provide comparisons and according to this table of values.³

1 écu = 3 fl. (to 1660) or 4 fl. (1660-1750)

1 escalin = 7.5 patards (to 1660) or 10 patards (1660 to 1750)

1 patagon = 1 écu

1 daler = 1.625 florins (after 1660)

1 rixdaler = 3.25 florins (after 1660)

Acknowledgments

This book grew out of my Princeton University doctoral dissertation, written under the supervision of Professor Theodore K. Rabb. In the process of transforming it into its present form, I have been aided by several institutions and individuals, whom I would like to thank here. A number of colleagues have been kind enough to read all or part of the various drafts that went into this book, and to make helpful comments. They are Professor Rabb, Etienne Helin, J. W. Smit, Philip J. Benedict, Robert Darnton, Nancy Fitch, Christopher R. Friedrichs, Guy Fitch Lytle, Janet Meisel, M. Gwyn Morgan, Alberto Palloni, J. F. R. Philips, Richard Ryerson, William Sewell, R. Malcolm Smuts and J. M. Winter. I owe special thanks to Dr. J. C. G. M. Jansen of the Sociaal Historisch Centrum voor Limburg, because he not only read and commented upon several chapters, but also allowed me to make use of certain data that he had collected for his own work. Despite the invaluable contributions of these individuals, any errors of fact or judgment that remain are entirely my own.

This work could never have been completed without the kind assistance, on many occasions, of the staffs of three archives in Liège and Maastricht. The Archives de l'Etat à Liège, under the supervision of Dr. Georges Hansotte; the Stadsarchief en -bibliotheek te Maastricht, under H. H. E. Wouters; and the Rijksarchief in Limburg made this book possible. There is no way for an outsider to sufficiently thank these institutions and their staffs for their patience and dedication.

Several American institutions provided me with both moral and financial support along the way. The Princeton History Department was unfailing in its commitment to my work while I was a student. Their recommendation led me to Judith Rowe of the Social Science User Services office of the Princeton University Computer Center. The demographic and economic computations (and especially the family reconstitution of the parish of Wandre) which underlie this work could

never have been completed without the constant attention devoted to it by Mrs. Rowe. At Texas, the University Research Institute and the Population Research Center have helped me in additional ways, by supporting me, and this research, as it moved along. Jeannie Taylor and Donna Lynn Gotch, of the Center, typed this manuscript as it progressed. Finally, the American Council of Learned Societies, through its program of Grants-in-Aid to Recent Recipients of the Ph.D., financed a much-needed research trip to Europe in the summer of 1977.

Part of Table 4.2 appeared in "War, the Tithe and Agricultural Production: the Meuse Basin North of Liège, 1661-1740," in Herman van der Wee and Eddy van Cauwenberghe, eds., *Productivity of Land and Agricultural Innovation in the Low Countries (1250-1800)* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1978), pp. 65-76. I reprint the table here with the permission of the editors and publisher. Portions of Chapters VI, VII and VIII appeared in a preliminary form as "Putting Crises in Perspective: The Impact of War on Civilian Populations in the Seventeenth Century," *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1977), 101-128. That material, plus much of Chapter IX, also appeared as "Why They Stayed: The Problem of Wartime Population Loss," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 91 (1978), 407-428. I would like to thank the editors of these journals for permission to reprint portions of that material here.

To my wife, Barbara, goes the greatest thanks. Her faith in me and in this project over the past six years has been unfailing, and her contribution to its present form monumental. I could not work without her.

M.P.G.

Austin and Houston
January 1979

Part 1

The Background

Introduction:

War and Other Crises in Early Modern Life

In 1946 Jean Meuvret published a groundbreaking article titled “Les Crises de subsistance et la démographie de la France d’Ancien Régime.”¹ In his article Meuvret pointed out that ancien régime France had been periodically and viciously hit by severe crises, and argued that these crises pushed a large portion of the population – people who were in any event only barely surviving – below the line of subsistence. In Meuvret’s view, these crises were the cause of the stagnant French economy and population of the seventeenth century. It was a century characterized by repeated, severe, subsistence crises, which eliminated the potential for continued growth in French society. Finally, Meuvret delineated three varieties of crises: extreme food shortages, epidemic diseases, and war, which exhibited the characteristics of the other two in combination.

Young French historians eagerly took up Meuvret’s construct. Subsistence crises became one of the ways to look at the seventeenth century. The single most important work to derive from it was Pierre Goubert’s *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730*.² Goubert outlined for his readers the complexity of French provincial society, and described the various social groups which felt subsistence crises acutely. In this and other works Goubert demonstrated that there was a fundamental dichotomy in the population of ancien régime France.³ A minority of the population was “independent,” i.e., they were able to support themselves by their own economic resources and were sufficiently resilient economically to weather most crises. But the majority of the population was economically “dependent.” They worked as laborers for their more prosperous neighbors. Even if they had a farm, they had to borrow a plow-team from their wealthier neighbor, or depend on part-time farm or industrial jobs to supplement their income. This dependent majority lived very near the subsistence line; when a subsistence crisis struck, they might slip below the surface of survival, very likely never to reappear.

In addition to Goubert, a number of other scholars were at work on this group of subjects. By 1970, Goubert could call on sufficient other works to publish a "reappraisal" of the demographic significance of Meuvret's early work.⁴ Even at that time, however, war had hardly been considered, because, while Meuvret regarded war as an important aspect of subsistence crises, he considered it a complex and not easily studied subject. Thus, while we have had numerous studies of famine and dearth, and even disease, war remained relatively unstudied. Very recent works continue to disregard or minimize it.⁵ Although we know a great deal about the economic, social, and demographic consequences of the first two of Meuvret's crises, we know all too little about the consequences of the third – war – particularly in western Europe.

This is regrettable, because only when we understand war will we understand the other two causes of early modern hardship. Subsistence crises were not all alike, but rather a combination of a varying number of elements molded by internal structures like the local economy and population, and external forces like war, European markets, weather, and epidemic disease. Their impact was not always the same, but depended in intensity, frequency, and duration on both the internal structures and the external forces. I will add a refinement to Goubert's reinterpretation of the original hypothesis. He found that Meuvret's subsistence crises caused few deaths; they acted only in concert with epidemic disease. But Goubert underestimated: we will see that the only great periods of economic hardship and population loss occurred when more devastating combinations occurred. The great catastrophes of early modern Europe took place when war, harvest failure, and epidemic disease all came at once.

War is an important subject in the social, economic, and demographic history of early modern Europe, even without its role as one leg of the subsistence crisis tripod. For generations of European men, women, and children, war was an element of almost everyday experience. Surely it was frequent enough. George Clark wrote that there were "only seven complete calendar years [in the seventeenth century] in which there was no war between European states . . ."⁶ For those who survived its strains, war left an indelible mark on their lives. For those who perished of its rigors, we need now say very little. In early modern Europe, as today, war was one of the main shapers of men's lives. In spite of its importance, most early modern social historians have ignored its impact, probably because they have been concerned with the unchanging elemental structure of life. War's unpredictability

and repeated changes made it unsatisfactory for such an analysis. The only body of literature about war's social and economic impact is devoted to Germany in the Thirty Years' War; but that literature is for the most part dated and precedes the methodological revolution that has overtaken the study of European history in the last thirty years.⁷

Like the social historians, the military historians have ignored civilians in wartime. Although we know how armies fought battles in early modern Europe, we have only recently learned who provided those armies with money and supplies and how they functioned between battles, and we know very little about how civilians (outside the bureaucracies) participated in the process of supply, camp, and preparation.⁸ Yet this subject is important. Without an understanding of war's impact on civilians, we will never understand European society, how people lived, or even war itself before the industrial revolution.

This book is about the wartime experiences of people who lived in the western European countryside in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It will go beyond war's contribution to the debate on subsistence crises and look at two much broader questions in the history of early modern wars and warfare, and their relations with civilian life: first, how did war's impact change between 1620 and 1750? And, second, why did some regions suffer less than others from comparable military action?

To approach the problem of describing the relations that rural civilians developed with armies that visited their communities, and the impact of those visits on their lives, we will examine in turn three structural elements of early modern life. They are, first, the community's relationship with armies, and especially the problems of housing and feeding troops and meeting their demands for money and supplies; second, the economic consequences of military presence, especially in terms of agricultural production and the price of food; and, finally, war's demographic consequences. The objective will be not only to measure the material costs and benefits of war for civilians, but also to get some idea of how people perceived war's impact on their lives.

The relationship between war and civilians is a broad subject. In the absence of earlier works on the same problem, this type of study demands that we focus on a relatively limited geographical area over a limited number of years in order to isolate questions and formulate hypotheses on a broad range of subjects. This is especially important when assembling quantitative material. We will consider war's impact by examining largely annual data describing community finances,

agricultural production, prices, population, and vital events, and then comparing them to the chronology of war and other crises in a small region. We will focus on an area in eastern Belgium and the Netherlands, between and around the cities of Liège and Maastricht. It was called the Basse-Meuse in the local French dialect.⁹ In its broadest frame, it can be said to have contained some forty or fifty administrative units, including small and large villages, and very small towns. In the mid-eighteenth century, it probably had a population of fewer than fifty thousand. Temporally, we will focus on the years 1620-1750 because they encompass the dramatic changes in warring and government that occurred between the beginning of the Thirty Years' War and the end of the War of the Austrian Succession in 1748. Perhaps unfortunately, the wars of the sixteenth century are not included here. Less military action took place in the Basse-Meuse then than later, and the documents necessary for the demographic, social, and economic study attempted below simply do not exist.

Because of the shortage of good series of quantitative data and of the time required to assemble them, we will rarely use all the farms, residents, villages, or parishes of the Basse-Meuse to measure population, production, and so on. Our data is a sample.¹⁰ We have used all the years in the period considered, but we must recall that the number of wartime years in any one place, even in the bellicose seventeenth century, is also small. Despite the small number of cases and years involved, the evidence presented constitutes a valid sample, representative of war's impact in the Basse-Meuse. In the context of forty to fifty communities, population trends for twenty-two parishes, the tithe for fourteen villages, births and deaths in seven and six parishes, respectively, and price series for the two major markets constitute samples greater than the necessary minimum. They are significant proportions of such a small region. In a few instances I use a single case, such as the production of a single farm or the detailed demographic experiences of a single parish (obtained through family reconstitution), to illuminate very detailed points. Given the quality of quantitative information available, such a single-place approach is the one to use.

There are a number of reasons for studying the Basse-Meuse to understand the impact of war. The region has a long tradition of local historical study which has produced many useful monographs. Its archives are large and full of both public and private documents relatively undamaged by wars, despite the fact that the Basse-Meuse was

almost always involved in the thick of early modern wars. Finally, the Basse-Meuse offers an interesting perspective on the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, because it was a rather prosperous region.¹¹ As we shall see, the region was located on the border between two of the most fertile agricultural zones in the eastern Low Countries. Its farmers were able to produce enviable amounts of grain, dairy produce, and vegetables. Its location near a busy river and the city of Liège, one of the earliest industrialized places in continental Europe, led to a wide range of opportunities for its residents, no matter what their status. Yet, the people of the Basse-Meuse felt the wars of the era in spite of the region's prosperity (the fact that the region was economically strong does not mean that all of its residents were prosperous). By examining the impact of wars on a prosperous and growing region, we will see both the basic impact of war and the ways that economic conditions changed that impact. Whether our conclusions will be representative of the Low Countries as a whole, or even all of Europe, must wait for additional local studies along the same lines as this. But it is my impression that our conclusions will hold generally for the Low Countries and specifically for the eastern Low Countries and the Rhineland.

The nature of the region in part determines the sort of wartime experiences its residents had. In fact, we will see that the economic structure and prosperity of the Basse-Meuse in large part controlled the way that military presence affected it. But that is not the point here. The Basse-Meuse felt war directly, through the presence of soldiers involved in marches, sieges, and battles, and stationed in camps. In this it was different from most regions in France and Spain, whose residents often felt war only through taxes and recruitment. That impact of war will involve a different study, one which focuses on the problems of the modern European state, and the costs of the growth of that state for its residents. Here, we are interested in those regions that suffered early modern wars directly.

* * *

If we agree on what we mean by the word *crisis*, it will be easier to understand war's impact on rural civilians, and to compare that impact to those of other phenomena. Just what was a crisis? The notion of a short-term crisis – the sense we will use in this work – has become muddled. People use it without thinking about its meaning. We can extrapolate from the work of Meuvret, Goubert, and others, to form a

classic, narrow definition of crisis as they applied it to demographic history. Their idea was essentially malthusian in nature: they saw a relationship between food supply and population, and hence thought of *subsistence crises*. A crisis, they might have said, was a change in the balance of vital demographic events (births and deaths) that turned population growth to stability or decline. In this way they explained that a structural system of periodic crises existed in early modern France. Regular if slow growth resulted in a malthusian structure where population exceeded food supplies. This situation, they hypothesized, was periodically reversed by a change in the balance of births and deaths (usually a great upsurge in deaths) so that the population no longer exceeded its material resources. Although not a strict dictionary definition, this was and is a workable definition of the word *crisis*.

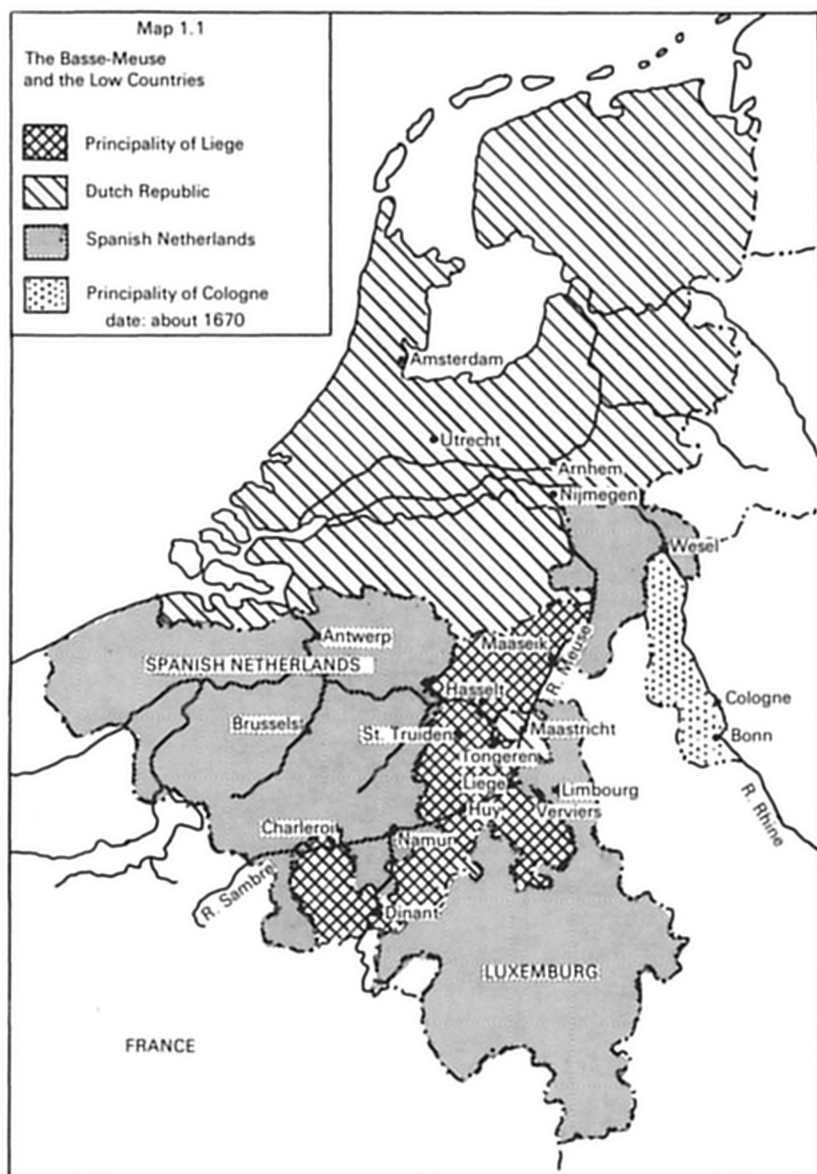
Unfortunately, the meaning of the word crisis has grown beyond this narrow definition to encompass any form of extreme hardship, whether or not it upset the demographic balance, and whether it had as its base some change in the available supply of food or some other material aspect of life. If we agree on this broader definition, then we must say that much of the population lived in a state of perpetual crisis, because a large proportion of the early modern European population can be shown to have lived on the very edge of subsistence and hardship. Even though their resources were severely limited, and many lived near hardship, this notion of perpetual crisis probably gives an unnecessarily negative view of their lives, as well as rendering impossible any use of the word crisis to describe short-term changes.

In this book we will make use of a modified form of the original narrow definition of crisis. A crisis, according to this definition, will be any short-term (and thus terminable) series of events that was capable of producing a rapid shift away from the normal pattern of demographic events, either by increasing the number of deaths or by decreasing the number of children born. It is no doubt true, in theory at least, that bad weather will create these effects. When we look at the direct and indirect impact of weather on human experience, we will see that it did affect harvests, which affected prices, which in turn produced the crises we have spoken about. But the impact was attenuated by the indirect route which weather followed to play its role. War (and high prices and short food supplies, as agents acting alone) acted more directly and may have produced more immediate difficulty for the regions they affected. Here, as we shall see, we have the most devastating element in early modern civilization.

Magnet for Armies: The Basse-Meuse Under the Ancien Régime

This study of the impact of early modern wars on rural life in the Low Countries has as its subject the region called the Basse-Meuse, which lies between and around the cities of Liège and Maastricht, near the Meuse River. Today, the Basse-Meuse is fully integrated into the modern Netherlands and Belgium, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that was not the case. The dominant characteristic of the Basse-Meuse in the ancien régime was its internal diversity. As late as 1789, political control was fragmented and still determined by the accidents and favors of medieval history. We will address questions of politics in greater detail later in this chapter, but this much is certain: the area was wholly a territory of borders, a series of frontiers between great states. In an era when borderlands were subject to the aggressions of ambitious statesmen, the Basse-Meuse became strategically central to the designs of Dutch *stadholders* and French kings.

Although the region was fragmented politically and divided linguistically (between speakers of Dutch and Walloon French),¹ it was quite uniform in the kind of life it offered its residents. Most of them were Roman Catholics, although Dutch Protestants appeared in Maastricht and some of the villages around it after the Dutch conquest in 1632.² And most of them were agricultural workers and farmers, engaged in the various farming tasks found in an area that divided two farming regions, the Hesbaye (large cereal farms) to the west, and the Pays de Herve (small dairy farms) to the east. Despite the emphasis on farming, the region's economy was, for its time, remarkably varied and relatively full of opportunities for work outside agriculture. The problem in defining the Basse-Meuse is not finding an area of sufficient uniformity to study, but rather in drawing the outside lines of such an area. I have chosen here to study the communities near the Meuse River; they are easy to identify and they should be fully representative of a larger region.



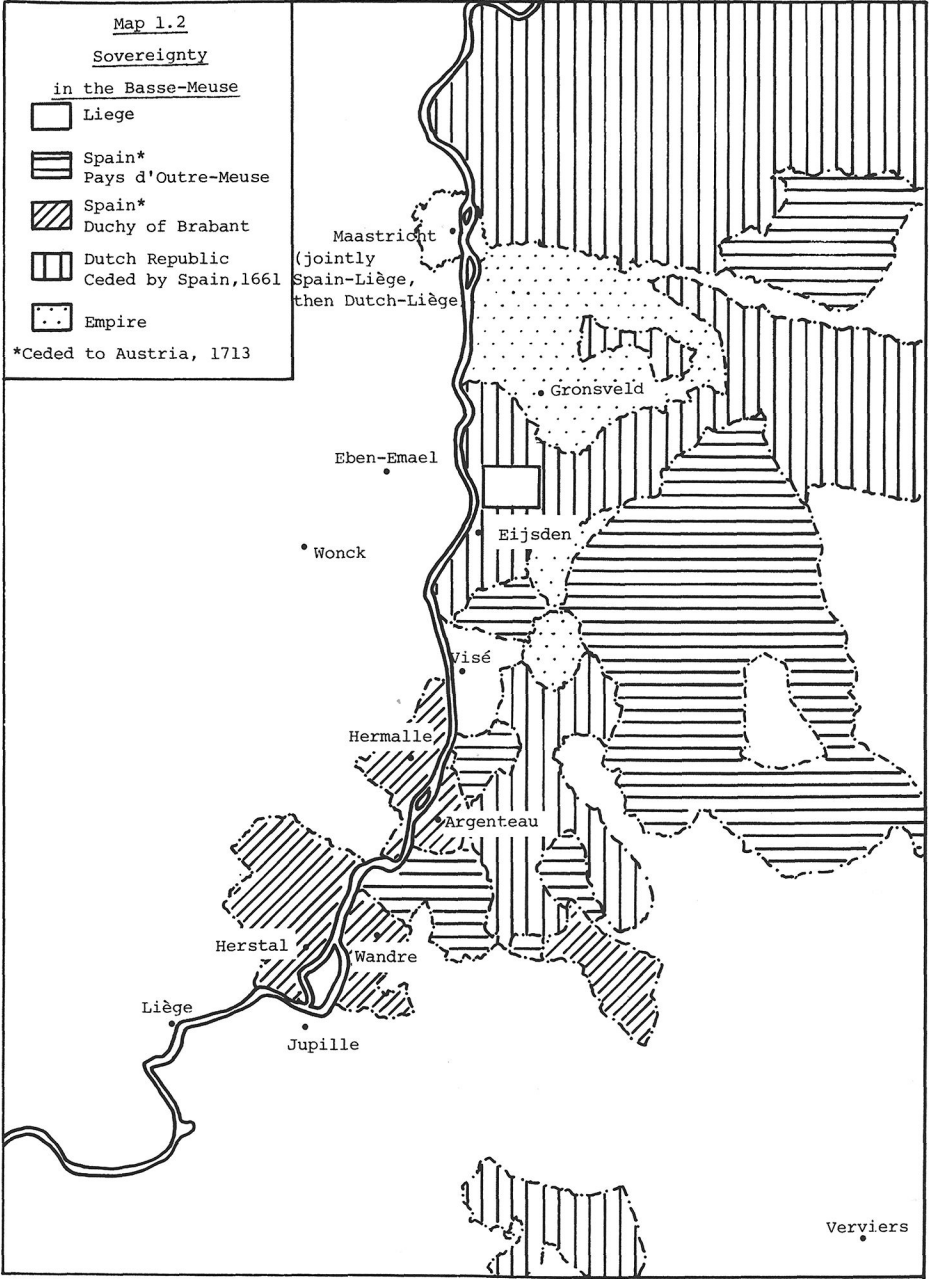
I. Background: Government in the Basse-Meuse

The variety which characterized the Basse-Meuse was nowhere more evident than in its political structure, and it is this political structure which caused it to be dragged repeatedly into war. We will first examine that governmental structure before turning to the specific events and conditions that forced the people of the Basse-Meuse to experience so many wars. The basic question we must answer is: who were the sovereigns that divided the responsibility for governing the Basse-Meuse at the beginning of the period we are studying, in 1620? Then we can turn to the meaning of that sovereignty and the reasons why the Basse-Meuse saw so many armies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the fact which makes it so appropriate for a study of war's impact.

The Principality of Liège, which controlled more than half the area, was the dominant sovereign and power in the Basse-Meuse under the ancien régime. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the principality had become something of an anomaly in the Low Countries. First, it was the only significant ecclesiastical principality remaining in the area. Also, within the borders of what are now Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxemburg, it was the only substantial governmental unit not incorporated into either the Dutch Republic or the Spanish Netherlands. Of those portions of the Low Countries which retained some allegiance to the Holy Roman Empire, Liège alone was a member of the administrative Circle of Westphalia; all of the others were members of the Circle of Burgundy.³ Furthermore, only Liège was formally neutral in international disputes.

Two other sovereigns controlled portions of the Basse-Meuse in 1620 (see Map 1.2). In reality, the King of Spain ruled through two administrative units: one a conglomerate which consisted of the Duchy of Limbourg and the three "Lands Beyond the Meuse," and the other the Duchy of Brabant.⁴ The Emperor stood as direct sovereign over several communities and remained in theory the ultimate suzerain over them all. The city of Maastricht was a special case, governed by a "condominium" of Liège and Brabant (Spain), which shared sovereignty and divided administrative and judicial responsibilities.⁵ Defense of the city was left in the hands of the Spanish, who maintained a garrison there in the early seventeenth century.

After the settlement of the Thirty Years' War, yet a fourth sovereign entered the picture. The Dutch conquered Maastricht in 1632 and



occupied a portion of the Spanish "Lands Beyond the Meuse." The settlement of the war ultimately transferred to them sovereignty over some of the formerly Spanish Basse-Meuse.

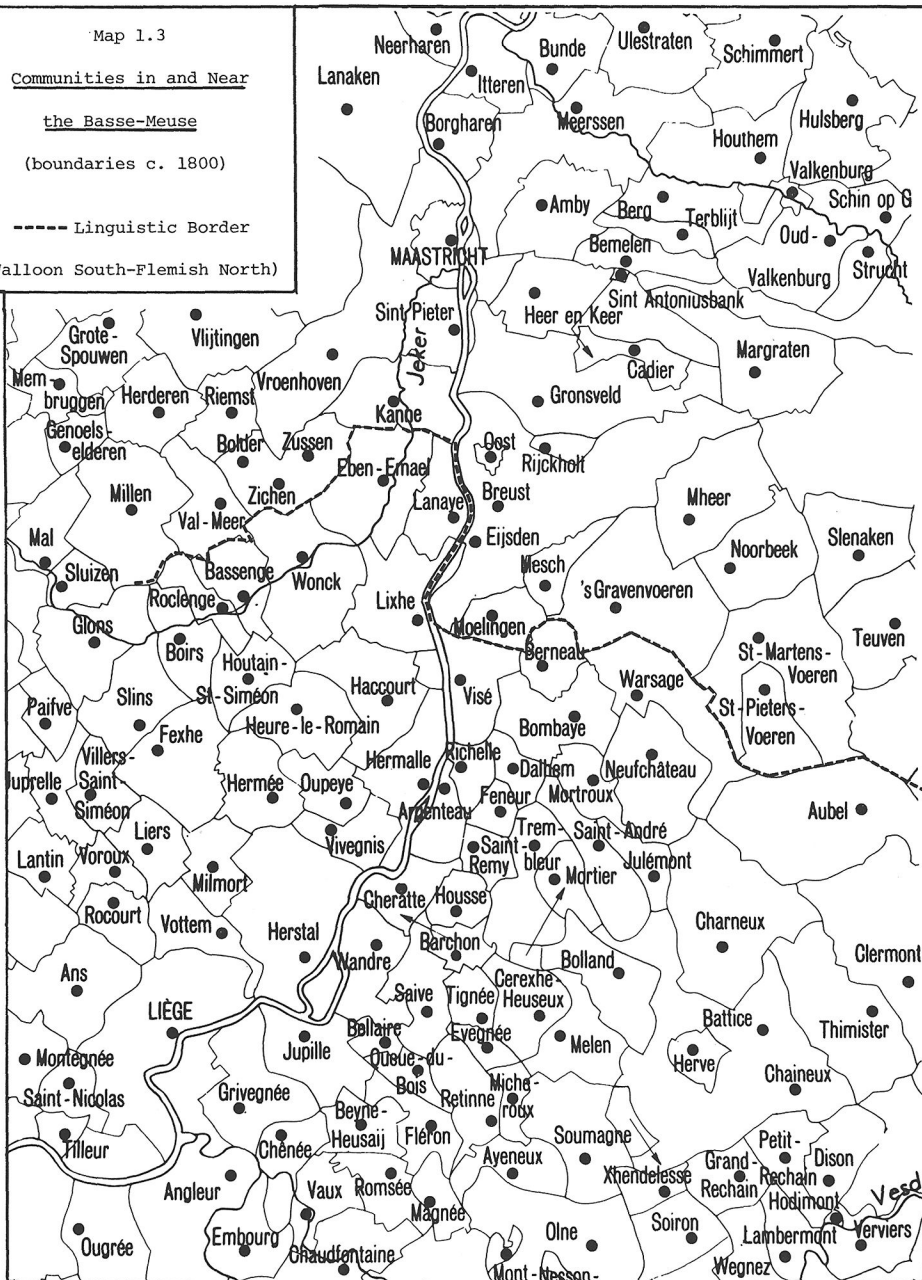
What did this sovereignty mean? The various states that controlled the Basse-Meuse were technically in command of the lives of the area's residents. The Princes of the princely states – the Prince of Liège and the King of Spain (usually acting through a governor in Brussels) – or, later, the Estates General of the Dutch Republic (for the new Province of Dutch Limburg) – made laws and administered the higher levels of justice. They consulted with their estates, one representing the Principality of Liège, and others the Spanish "province" of the "Lands Beyond the Meuse" and the Dutch "province" of Limburg, who together with the prince determined taxes. Moreover, the sovereign (Prince or Estates General) had the right to determine foreign policy and otherwise carry on the affairs of government. Since the Principality of Liège was the major sovereign of the Basse-Meuse, we will, to a certain extent, concentrate on the history and experience of that Principality. Still, except for their relations with foreign powers in time of war, there was very little to distinguish between the citizens of one state or another. And, as we will see in later chapters, even in wartime little separated the experience of Spanish subjects, for example, from that of Liège's subjects.

One possible difference from sovereign to sovereign was law, but while distinct legal customs distinguished the areas of different sovereigns, they were not starkly dissimilar.⁶ Nor did laws or borders constitute solid barriers to movement or to interaction among the citizens of the area. Local notaries often practiced under the laws of two or more sovereigns. Residents of Liégeois villages owned or leased land in villages subject to the King of Spain or the Dutch Republic, and actively farmed them. Being all borders, the region became all the more homogenous because the fragmentation of the political process removed governmental actions still farther from the lives of the mass of the people.

While they might appreciate the relative privileges offered by one sovereign over another, at least in terms of low taxes, political neutrality, or an agreeable religion, most citizens of the Basse-Meuse had little to do with sovereigns and central governments. If any government concerned them, it was that of their village or town. Before the reorganization of the 1790's, at the time of the French regime (1794-1815), most of the residents of the Basse-Meuse lived in small-

(boundaries c. 1800)

(Walloon South-Flemish North)



to-medium-sized seigneurial villages. Only two communities, Dalhem and Visé, had their origins in ancien régime towns, with democratic constitutions, independent of a lord's control. Throughout the Basse-Meuse, however, local governments were remarkably uniform in their basic organization, no matter who their sovereign was, or whether they were a constituted town or merely a seigneurial village.⁷

The basic elements of local government in the ancien régime, as in the middle ages or today, were justice and taxes. Not all justice was administered at the local level. There were certain matters that were outside the jurisdiction of local courts, such as capital crimes and a variety of other criminal and civil matters. Such cases were handled by courts of appeal and higher instance, in accordance with the procedures of the larger judicial units established by each region's sovereign. In the seigneurial villages, justice was administered by a local court – usually consisting of seven members – appointed by the seigneur. Similar courts existed in the towns, but their prince appointed the members of the court.

Taxation was more important than justice. All the sovereigns except the Holy Roman Emperor raised taxes from their citizens. These taxes paid for the mechanisms of government administration, of defense and war, and of the princely entourage. Yet nowhere in the Basse-Meuse were taxes especially high, at least if compared with those levied by France and Spain in the seventeenth century. The Principality of Liège had no army and until the eighteenth century very little government. Even the Spanish Netherlands were not heavily taxed, since they could rely on their formal administrative independence from Spain to withstand such demands. Only the Dutch Republic – a sovereign in the Basse-Meuse after 1660 – was a major military power in the second half of the seventeenth century. That might have called for high taxes, but it seems that the Dutch consciously under-taxed their newly acquired territory to compensate for the devastation of the Thirty Years' War.⁸

Still, some tax revenue had to be raised. Local estates divided the needs of the central government among clergy, nobility, and commons; then each group divided its share among its members, roughly according to wealth.⁹ Finally, individual communities divided that burden, together with local needs, among their tax-paying citizens. They collected a variety of taxes, on property, on persons, and on consumption. In Chapter II, I will discuss some of the ways that more extensive taxes were raised to pay for the damage and demands of war.

This group of communities, with their variety of governments, saw

armies all too frequently in the turbulent years from 1620 to 1750. Too many things happened in those years to narrate here. Rather, important events, especially those of a military and political nature, are set out in a Chronological Table (Appendix A). To summarize, military action took place in the Basse-Meuse during every major war in the period – the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648, with important action in the Basse-Meuse during 1632-1638); the Dutch War (1672-1679); the War of the League of Augsburg (1688-1697); the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714); and the War of the Austrian Succession (1741-1748, in the Basse-Meuse, 1746-1748). Moreover, the region usually felt even minor wars, such as the Franco-Spanish continuation of the Thirty Years' War (1648-1659), the War of the Devolution (1667-1668), the War of the Reunions (1683-1684), and the War of the Polish Succession (1733-1735).

What brought armies to the Basse-Meuse in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? It was only infrequently to fight battles. The armies of the age met head-on only rarely.¹⁰ Only two battles were fought in the Basse-Meuse itself (Haccourt, 1746, and Laeffelt, 1747), and only three or four within fifty kilometers. Generals preferred sieges and the occupation of fortresses and cities. The City of Liège had two fortresses, and, while it was technically neutral, foreign troops often occupied them during wartime. Maastricht was, as we shall see, even more of a prize. There were four major sieges of Maastricht between 1620 and 1750, each bringing a substantial army into the region to surround the town and prepare the siege.

Far more important than battles or sieges for the people of the Basse-Meuse were the less strategically formal reasons why armies came to visit. First, armies had to travel and the Basse-Meuse was a speedy route for armies travelling both north-south and east-west. Second, while armies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not fight in the winter, they no longer disbanded. Rather, at the end of the campaigning season, they attempted to find a place to make a winter camp. Armies in transit and winter camps, rather than battles and sieges, were the real scourge of the people of the Basse-Meuse.

Still, two characteristics of the region distinguished the Basse-Mosan people from others who lived near the line of march. First, the region was rich in both grain and the industrial goods necessary to supply armies. An army that camped near the City of Liège could usually count on being well fed and well equipped for its next campaign. Second, the region had no way to keep armies out. Although the Principality of