1 Introduction: Marseille and urban history

The nineteenth century was the heroic age of urban growth. There had, of course, been some great cities for millennia. But it was only with the spread of the industrial revolution over the continents of Europe and North America – and subsequently over South America, Australia, Asia, and Africa – that urbanization on a modern scale became possible. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were only four cities in Europe with a population of more than a quarter million – London, Paris, Naples, and Moscow. By the end of the century there were forty-nine.[1] This spectacular urban growth was part of a vast transformation of nineteenth-century European society – a transformation of cities and countryside alike, and of relatively backward as well as industrially advanced nations.

This book is a study of one city that experienced the prodigious urban transformation of the nineteenth century – Marseille, a great port on the Mediterranean coast of France. With a population of some 100,000 at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Marseille was already a very large city by contemporary standards, second only to Paris among French cities, and one of the twenty or so largest cities in the world. Yet its growth in the nineteenth century was on an entirely different scale from anything it had experienced in the two and one half millennia since it was founded by Greek colonists in the sixth century B.C. Figure 1.1 shows how the explosive growth that began in Marseille after 1820 contrasts with the slow rise of the prior century and a half. Only the two or three decades of repopulation that followed the terrible plague of 1720 showed anything like the growth rate of the period following 1820. Taking the period from 1660 to 1821 as a whole, the population of Marseille rose at a rate of about 0.4 percent per year; from 1821 to 1872, the period covered by this study, the annual rate of increase was nine times as high, or about 3.7 percent. Otherwise put, the population of Marseille grew nearly five times as much in the five decades from 1821 to 1872 as in the entire century and a half that preceded them. The statistics leave no doubt; in matters of elementary demography, Marseille in the middle of the nineteenth century was a very different city from Marseille under the Old Regime.

As a glance at Table 1.1 will demonstrate, Marseille's population growth was by no means exceptional for a European city in the nineteenth century. Marseille's population increased by 182 percent from 1801 to 1872, and by

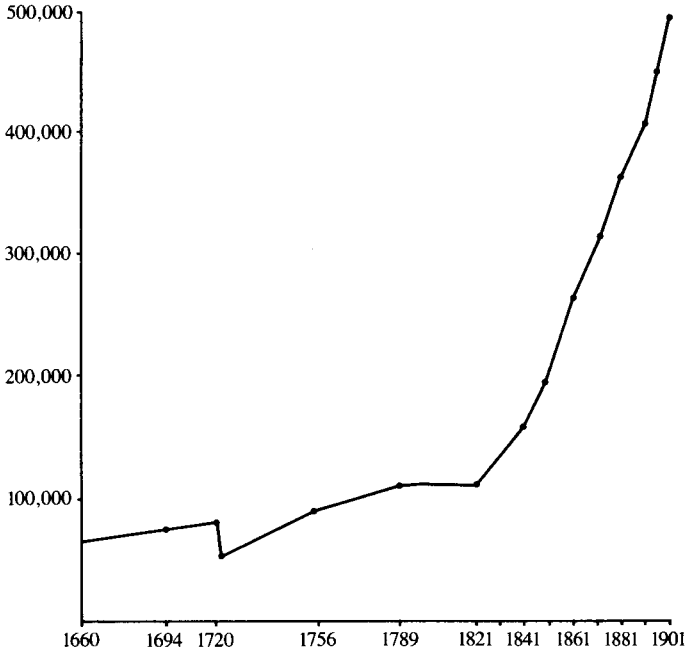

Figure 1.1. Population of Marseille, 1660–1901.

342 percent from 1801 to 1901. Some nineteenth-century cities grew considerably faster than this, and others considerably slower. Although Liverpool and Odessa were the only major European port cities to grow significantly faster than Marseille in the first seven decades of the century, the North European ports of Rotterdam and Hamburg also grew faster over the century as a whole. On the other hand, major industrial cities generally grew considerably faster than Marseille, and so did many capital cities – not only Paris, London, Berlin, and Vienna, but Brussels, Budapest, Saint Petersburg, and Warsaw. Among cities with mixed functions, some grew faster than Marseille, some slower. All the most important British cities, whatever their function, grew more rapidly than Marseille, and German cities also grew more rapidly over the century as a whole – although this was mainly due to their very rapid post-1870 growth rates. By contrast, cities in Spain, Italy, the Low Countries, and Scandinavia generally grew somewhat more slowly than Marseille. All in all, Marseille's nineteenth-century population growth was not far from the norm for large European cities.

Marseille's growth was quite exceptional, however, for a French city. It is a well-known fact of demographic history that urbanization proceeded more slowly in France than in most other countries that industrialized in the nine-

Table 1.1. *Nineteenth-century population of major European cities, in thousands*

	Population, 1800	Population, 1870	Population, 1900	Increase, 1800–70 (%)	Increase, 1800–1900 (%)
Capital cities					
Berlin	172	826	1,889	380	998
Brussels	66	314	599	376	808
Budapest	54	202	732	274	1,255
Copenhagen	101	181	401	79	297
Dublin	165	246	373	49	126
Lisbon	180	242[a]	356	34	97
London	1,117	3,890	6,586	248	490
Madrid	160	332	540	108	238
Moscow	250	612	989	145	296
Paris	547	1,852	2,714	239	396
Rome	163	244	463	50	184
St. Petersburg	220	667	1,267	203	476
Stockholm	76	136	301	79	296
Vienna	247	834	1,675	238	578
Warsaw	100	252	638	152	538
Port cities					
Barcelona	115	346[b]	533	201	363
Bristol	64	183	339	186	430
Hamburg	130	240	706	85	443
Liverpool	80	493	704	516	780
Marseille	**111**	**313**	**491**	**182**	**342**
Naples	427	449	564	5	32
Odessa	6	121	405	1,900	6,750
Palermo	139	219	310	58	123
Rotterdam	53	116	319	119	502
Industrial cities					
Belfast	37	174	349	370	843
Birmingham	74	344	523	365	607
Glasgow	77	522	776	578	908
Leeds	53	259	429	387	709
Lodz	0.2	34	315	17,000	157,500
Manchester	90	351	645	250	617
Sheffield	31	240	409	674	1,219
Mixed cities					
Amsterdam	201	264	511	31	154
Breslau	60	208	423	247	605
Cologne	50	107	456	114	812
Dresden	60	177	396	195	560
Edinburgh	83	244	394	194	374
Leipzig	30	107	456	257	1,520
Lyon	110	323	459	194	317
Milan	135	262	493	94	265
Munich	40	169	500	322	1,250
Turin	78	208	336	167	331

[a]Figure is for 1878. [b]Figure is for 1880.
Source: Brian R. Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics, 1750–1975*, 2d ed. (London, 1981), pp. 86–9.

Table 1.2. *Growth of French cities with populations of 25,000 or more in 1801*

	1801	1872	Increase (%)
Marseille	111,130	312,864	182
Paris	547,736	1,851,792	238
Lyon	109,500	323,417	196
Bordeaux	90,992	194,055	114
Rouen	87,000	102,470	18
Nantes	73,879	118,517	60
Lille	54,756	158,117	189
Toulouse	50,171	124,852	149
Amiens	40,289	63,747	49
Nimes	38,800	62,394	61
Orleans	36,165	48,976	36
Montpellier	33,913	57,727	70
Angers	33,000	58,464	77
Caen	30,900	41,210	33
Besançon	30,000	49,401	65
Nancy	29,740	52,978	78
Brest	27,000	66,272	145
Rennes	25,904	52,044	101
Versailles	25,000	61,686	147

Sources: The figures for 1801 are from Charles H. Pouthas, *La Population française pendant la première moitié du XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1956), p. 98. The figures for 1872 are from Statistique de la France, *Résultats généraux du dénombrement de 1872* (Nancy, 1874), pp. 112–121.

teenth century. Over the seven decades from 1801 to 1872, only three of the nineteen French cities that began the period with a population of 25,000 or more grew by more than Marseille's 182 percent: Paris (238 percent), Lyon (196 percent), and Lille (189 percent) (see Table 1.2). This time span is actually unfavorable to Marseille, for its population was constant for the first two decades of the century – the era of the Napoleonic wars. Over the half-century from 1821 to 1872, Marseille's rate of increase was greater than that of either Paris or Lyon. Indeed, among the nine cities that had attained 100,000 or more by 1872, only Saint-Etienne, which had been a small industrial town of only 19,103 in 1821, had grown more rapidly than Marseille (see Table 1.3). If most French cities were spared some of the problems usually associated with explosive urbanization in the nineteenth century – impersonality and demoralization, overcrowding, bad housing, inadequate sanitation, and the like – this clearly must not have been the case for Marseille.

Faster growing than most French cities, near the average for European cities – from the strictly demographic point of view, Marseille was reasonably representative of the wider experience of nineteenth-century urban growth. But this

Table 1.3. *Growth of French cities with populations of 100,000 or more in 1872*

	1821	1872	Increase (%)
Marseille	109,482	312,868	186
Paris	663,846	1,851,792	179
Lyon	118,265	323,417	173
Bordeaux	89,202	194,055	118
Lille	63,373	158,117	150
Toulouse	52,310	124,852	140
Nantes	68,327	118,517	73
Saint-Etienne	19,103	110,814	479
Rouen	86,736	102,470	18

Sources: The figures for 1821 are from Charles H. Pouthas, *La Population française pendant la première moitié du XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1956), pp. 101–19. The 1872 figures are from the Statistique de la France, *Résultats généraux du dénombrement de 1872* (Nancy, 1874), pp. 112–121.

is not a strictly demographic study, even though demographic data play an important role in the research. It is, rather, a study of urban social structures and social processes and of how these changed or, in some cases, remained stable during a period of massive demographic expansion. On these matters, the whole question of representativeness becomes far more problematic. Data on nineteenth-century population growth are readily available for cities in all European nations; the data for Marseille can easily be compared with those for other cities. But on such complex questions as economic and occupational structures, neighborhood patterns, migration, and social mobility, very little of a comparative nature is known. There are studies that deal with some of these matters for nineteenth-century French cities, and others that do so for English, German, and North American cities, but none ask quite the same set of questions asked here or use the same range of data.[2] Even after some twenty years of pathbreaking work in the so-called new urban history, much research is still at an exploratory stage. Whether Marseille's experiences of urban social transformation are representative or not can only be answered by future research. For the present, the important thing is to identify, delineate, and analyze the various transformations that occurred and to trace the interrelations between them. Given constraints of time and money, this is only possible at the level of a local study, where detailed information allows an examination of the fine structures of urban social life.

This book is a detailed description and analysis of the changing patterns of Marseille's social life in the half-century of rapid growth from 1820 to 1870. Like many other works in the now thriving genre of urban social history, it attempts to reconstruct the experiences of ordinary urban dwellers, rather than chronicling the affairs of the city's most prominent citizens. The problems of documentation posed by this approach are by now quite familiar to profes-

sional historians. Prominent people – this is true by definition – left their mark in the documents traditionally utilized by historians: memoirs, government records, newspapers, and the like. But the information such documents provide about other groups or classes of the urban population is normally scattered, biased, and unsystematic, clearly insufficient for a serious history of the general citizenry. However, even the most obscure citizens – at least in the modern world – come into contact with the apparatus of the state at some points in their lives, and the state keeps records of the contacts. They are counted by the census taker; they are born, married, and buried, and these events are certified and recorded by state officials; they pay taxes, and the state assesses their property and notes the amount of the payment; occasionally they get into trouble with the law, and the state records the nature of their offense and the court's judgment. Of course, these sources give only a very limited description of the individuals who compose the population; but what they lack in detail they more than make up in the comprehensiveness of their coverage. By subjecting these "bureaucratic" sources to quantitative analysis, it is possible to reconstruct important life experiences of a representative cross-section of the urban population.

To date, the quantifiable sources exploited most intensively by historians have been tax records, censuses, and vital records. Examinations of the social structures of rural, preindustrial populations have been based above all on tax records. In part this is simply a matter of availability – national censuses were established in the major Western countries only around 1800, so studies of seventeenth- or eighteenth-century populations must do without systematic census enumerations. In France, where property ownership was very widespread before the rise of modern industry, tax records are particularly valuable for documenting the structure of preindustrial populations. In rural France, even people whose main source of income was labor on the fields of others were likely to cultivate a tiny morsel of land on their own account. An analysis of the tax rolls therefore yields information on virtually all strata of the rural population. In preindustrial cities, however, tax records yield a much less comprehensive profile of the social structure. The nobility, magistrates, the bourgeoisie, and shopkeepers are well represented, but the sizable population of journeymen, laborers, and urban poor slips through the historian's net.[3]

The establishment of regular census enumerations around 1800 created a new and valuable source for the history of social structure, a source that has been exploited most thoroughly in North America. The census recorded information about the entire population – or at least about everyone the census takers managed to reach. Because the summary tables constructed by census officials are not detailed enough to answer the most interesting historical questions, historians have generally utilized the original registers kept by the census takers – called the "manuscript census" in the United States, "enumerators' books" in Britain, and "*listes nominatives*" in France. These reg-

isters contain the name, age, sex, place of residence, and relationship to head of household for the entire population, and often include occupation, birthplace, property ownership, and perhaps other information as well. They can therefore be used to establish the age, sex, neighborhood, and occupational distribution of the city and to chart the relationships between, for example, occupation and age, occupation and sex, neighborhood and occupation, and so on.[4] In addition, historians have developed methods to answer more complicated questions with census data. One line of research has been the analysis and classification of family and household structures, which are then related to such other factors as occupation, age, migration, and residential patterns.[5] A second has been to trace individuals from one census to the next. This enables historians to determine how many and what sorts of people stayed in the community from decade to decade rather than moving elsewhere – a quantity historians have dubbed the ''persistence rate.'' It also enables them to trace the experiences of those who remained: their changes in family status, acquisition of property, intracity moves, and occupational mobility.[6] Studies based on one or another of these methodologies have become very common in recent years, especially in North America. As a consequence, our knowledge of household structures, persistence rates, and experiences of intragenerational occupational mobility has grown vastly since the pioneering work of Stephan Thernstrom two decades ago.[7]

Vital records – records of marriages, births, and deaths – have also been widely exploited by historians, but usually to answer strictly demographic questions. Historical demography has been transformed by the methods of ''family reconstitution'' pioneered by Louis Henry in the 1950s, methods that rely entirely on vital records.[8] But in many areas of nineteenth-century Europe, vital records can also be exploited in a very different fashion to yield detailed information on questions of social structure and social mobility. The richest of the vital records, at least in France, are marriage registers.[9] When a couple married, both spouses were required to provide the state with their names, ages, places of birth, addresses, occupations, and fathers' names and occupations. All this information was duly recorded on the official *acte de mariage* (marriage act), which was then signed by both spouses (if they could sign their names) and by four adult male witnesses, each of whom also gave his age, occupation, and address. (For a sample *acte de mariage*, see Figure 1.2). Although the marriage registers do not include the entire population, they constitute a very extensive sample of the young-adult population, and they allow the historian to describe this population in fascinating detail. They yield figures not only for a city's occupational distribution, but also for patterns of intermarriage, residence, migration, intergenerational occupational mobility, and literacy. They also contain the same information for women as for men, which means that women's social experiences – often slighted in urban histories – can be treated as fully as men's. Very few nineteenth-century

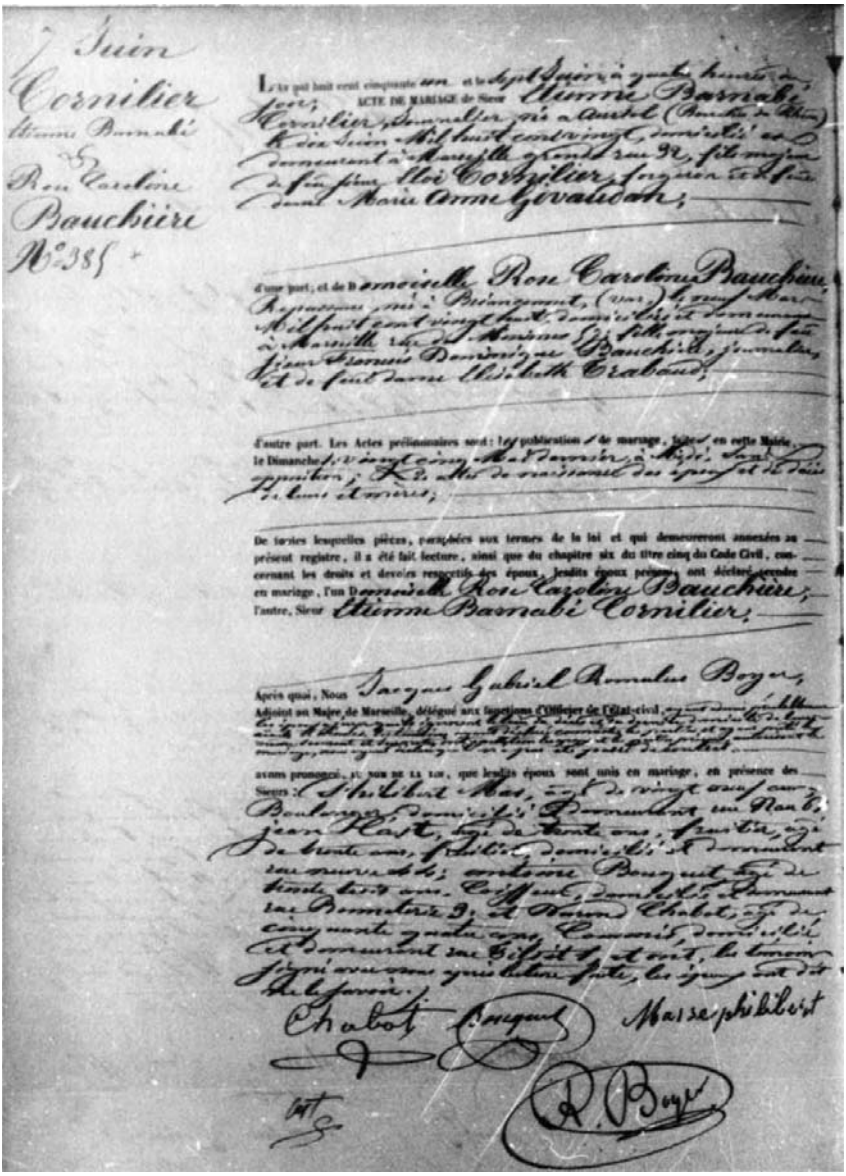

Figure 1.2. An *acte de mariage*. Courtesy Archives Départmentales des Bouches-du-Rhône.

censuses contain as much information about the individuals who compose the population, and none reveal as much about relations with people outside the immediate household. Marriage registers are a uniquely valuable historical source because they place persons in a larger nexus of relations – with their parents, with a native community, with their spouses and the spouses' families, and with witnesses.

This study is based on a wide range of quantitative sources, including the *listes nominatives* of the 1851 census, records of prosecutions for theft and other crimes, and assorted nineteenth-century statistical inquiries. But Marseille's marriage registers form the core of the documentation. Data from the marriage registers of 1821, 1822, 1846, 1851, and 1869 have been recorded, put into machine-readable form, and analyzed by computer. These data provide detailed pictures of urban society at three distinct periods spanning a half-century. The years 1821 and 1822 were chosen to fall after the disruptive effects of the Napoleonic wars but before the beginnings of rapid population growth. Because the French *état civil* is closed to researchers for 100 years, 1869 was the latest year available at the time recording and coding began. The years 1846 and 1851 were originally chosen to fall just before and after the great economic crisis that touched off, and then was intensified by, the Revolution of 1848. In the end, however, the two years were combined and analyzed as a single unit; the patterns they revealed differed only slightly. The marriage registers, supplemented by other sources of data, make possible an examination both of the changing *structure* of urban society and of *mobility* – movement of individuals into and within the social structure of Marseille.

This book is divided into two parts, the first on structure, the second on mobility. Part I describes five analytically distinct but empirically intertwined aspects of Marseille's social structure: a booming economy, a changing occupational structure, a surprisingly constant status ordering of occupations, a rapidly expanding framework of urban neighborhoods, and a demographic structure marked by a massive influx of migration. Part II analyzes two types of mobility: the migration of people into Marseille and the recruitment of people into various positions in the occupational structure.

It is in the analysis of mobility that the unique qualities of the marriage-register data can be exploited most fully. Because the marriage registers indicate the spouses' birthplaces, they can be used to estimate the volume of migration into Marseille and to determine where the immigrants came from. Moreover, because the marriage registers also indicate the occupations of the spouses' fathers, they can be used to determine the socio-occupational backgrounds of immigrants and to compare the backgrounds of men and women who migrated to Marseille from different areas. The marriage registers make possible a much more fine-grained analysis of migration than is usual in histories of nineteenth-century cities. The picture of migration that emerges from this analysis differs sharply from the lugubrious portrait Louis Chevalier

has painted of migration into Paris in the first half of the nineteenth century.[10] Chevalier's account, which depicts migration to Paris as an onslaught of impoverished and disoriented hordes that sank the city into the depths of social pathology, is a mid-twentieth-century variant of a very old conservative lament that glorified rural life and was hostile to cities. The evidence indicates that most migration to Marseille, like most of the twentieth-century migration studied by anthropologists and sociologists, was actually a rather orderly affair. Many of the immigrants came from relatively comfortable backgrounds, with skills, capital, and connections that gave them a good start in the city. And even when the proportion of peasants' sons and daughters among the immigrants swelled later in the century, the peasants who came were generally well qualified for the urban labor market. The levels of literacy of immigrant peasants' sons were surprisingly high, far above those of their village compatriots. There is also evidence that young immigrants maintained ties with their families and often formed community bonds with their immigrant countrymen and countrywomen once they arrived in the city. Although migration was a disorienting and painful experience for some, it was not – at least in Marseille – the potent source of misery, crime, and disorder that Chevalier would have us believe.

The marriage registers also make possible an unusually close look at social mobility. Historians have usually regarded social mobility from the angle of social justice or class formation. The absence of a strongly class-conscious workers' movement in the United States has long been attributed to American workers' unusually good opportunities for upward social mobility – which are said to induce individualism and competitive social attitudes and to inhibit the development of class solidarities.[11] This issue understandably has been particularly important in work on American social mobility, but it has had an influence on European mobility research as well.[12] This book approaches social mobility from a very different angle. It attempts to demonstrate that, at least in Marseille, variations in social-mobility patterns over time are largely determined by changes in the composition of, demand for, and supply of labor. In Marseille, the amount of upward mobility from peasant or working-class birth to nonmanual or bourgeois status at the time of marriage rose substantially between the early 1820s and the late 1860s. But most of this rise in upward mobility can be explained by two macrostructural changes: first, a massive increase in migration of rural and small-town men and women, which biased the occupational origins of the labor force downward, and, second, a change in the economy that increased opportunities for nonmanual jobs more rapidly than opportunities for manual jobs. The increase in upward mobility was not the result of any dramatic "opening" or "democratization" of the basic structure of society; it arose mainly from shifts in patterns of demand and supply in the labor market. Moreover, Marseille's workers do not seem to have experienced the rise in upward mobility as a sign of the