

THE CAUSES OF EMIGRATION

There were of course complex and multiple causes for these many departures; they cannot be reduced to any single factor.

Naturally, the poverty of large sections of the rural population in the Valais in the 19th century is a basic factor in understanding the phenomenon of emigration, but to concentrate on this single explanation would be too uncritical: it tends to present poverty as an ancestral, monolithic fact, a sort of fate that would result mechanically, as it were, in emigration, whereas it was a specific response to a particular historical context.

THE INTERNAL CAUSES

The harshness of the conditions of life that prevailed in the Valais in the first half of the 19th century has to be seen in the light of the major political, economic, demographic and ideological transformations that were underway at the same time.

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THE INTERNATIONAL CAUSES

To understand the phenomenon of emigration from the Valais, the causes must be looked for on both ends of this process: in the land of departure and in the land of destination.

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