
PROBLEMS

The Anatomy of Inter-regional Markets in the Early Modern French Wine Trade

Thomas Brennan
US Naval Academy, Annapolis

The "geographic perspective" advocated by some historians of early modern France has taught us to look for differences between the societies of the periphery and the interior of the kingdom. Historians like Fernand Braudel emphasize the economic contrasts between the commercial, outward-looking regions around the edge of France and the agrarian, static society of the interior. The Atlantic ports in particular formed a world apart; dynamic, capitalist, attuned to an international world, their interests were not always in harmony with the central government. Some have even claimed that "their economic ties with the hinterland were inconsequential."¹ Other historians have disagreed, arguing that "it is practically impossible to dissociate interior commerce from the exterior. They are closely connected to each other; they form an organic whole, and the "classic" differentiations are more artificial than anywhere else."² Braudel himself offers the image of the outer France "colonizing" the interior but does not think that these contacts were sufficient to unite France's divided regional markets. The wine trade offers a particularly important example of a long-distance commercial system spanning and beginning to unite the different zones of the country. For with the wine trade, the world of international commerce with its own unique commercial structures and dynamics did penetrate into less sophisticated regions, stimulating and

¹ Edward W. Fox, *History in a Geographical Perspective*, p. 174; Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism 15th - 18th Century*, 3 vols. (New York, 1984), 3:339-51; Lionel Rothkrug, *Opposition to Louis XIV* (Princeton, 1965). I would like to thank the National Endowment for the Humanities and the U.S. Naval Academy Research Council for their support in making research for this article possible.

² Charles Carrière, "L'appel des marchés," in Fernand Braudel and Ernest Labrousse, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France* p. 162 adds "It is not at all a question of two juxtaposed domains, even less of individual specializations which ... exist practically not at all, but with a permanent interpenetration at every level".

integrating them into a larger network of overseas trade. But a national survey of the wine trade in the early eighteenth century reveals the relative immaturity of the commercial system in the interior and profound distinctions in the organization and function of the interior and exterior markets. Their relationship offered mutual benefits but, like any colonial system, was fundamentally asymmetrical.

Although wine played a much smaller role than bread in early modern French diets, the production and commerce of wine rivalled the grain trade's economic and social importance in many parts of France.³ Unlike grain, which was rarely exported, wine was one of the country's chief exports by volume and often by sale.⁴ It is no surprise that the export of wine has long drawn the attention of economic historians, for it was easily the most dynamic element in the overall wine trade and profoundly shaped the contours of wine production.⁵ In addition to the overseas demand for wine, the growth of wine consumption in the great cities had a large impact on wine production throughout France. The long-distance wine trade, through an elaborate network of intermediaries, linked rural France to a flourishing market economy of both port and metropolis. Little is known about this market; despite pioneering studies on the cultivation of vines, the sale and commerce of wine within France remains obscure.⁶ Using the findings of a national tax on the wine brokers of the early eighteenth century, this paper offers a preliminary overview of the structure of the domestic wine trade. Details about the location

³ Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry 1450-1660* (Berkeley, 1987), pp. 323-24, estimates the total national value of wine production as no more than one-quarter of the value of grain production in the 1660s but agrees that a higher proportion of wine was marketed. He does not mention that a variety of taxes more than doubled the ultimate price of wine to the consumer. He estimates, p. 322, that national consumption in the late seventeenth century reached 20 million hectolitres, with an additional 3 million hectolitres exported.

⁴ Between 1698-1701 wine made up just over two-thirds of the volume of exports shipped from Bordeaux, and even more in 1714-15. Wine accounted for just under two-thirds of the total value of exports from Bordeaux between 1717 and 1720; Christian Huetz de Lemp, *Géographie du commerce de Bordeaux à la fin du règne de Louis XIV* (Paris, 1974), pp. 42, 213. Elsewhere, the "wine trade at Nantes (and in France as a whole) in the early seventeenth century dominated the economy to an extent which is not yet fully appreciated"; James B. Collins, *The Role of Atlantic France in the Baltic Trade*, *Journal of European Economic History* (1984), p. 286. He notes, however, (p. 282) that by 1728 "wine was no longer the main Nantais export".

⁵ This argument was first made by Henri Enjalbert, "Comment naissent les grands crus, bordeaux, porto, cognac", *Annales, ESC* 8 (1953) pp. 315-28, 457-74, and again in Henri Enjalbert, *Histoire de la vigne et du vin l'avenement de la qualité* (Paris, 1975).

⁶ The classic treatise of the wine trade, Roger Dion, *Histoire de la vigne et du vin en France des origines au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1959), has recently been joined by Marcel Lachiver, *Vins, vignes et vignerons: histoire du vignoble français* (Paris, 1988). Neither gives more

and activity of wine brokers revealed by this tax, as well as their theoretical challenges to its imposition, elucidate the regional patterns of market networks and the growth and articulation of this commercial system. In the light of recent models of economic geography these patterns demonstrate a fundamental dichotomy between purely domestic trade networks and those connected to international trade. Regional patterns in the wine trade thus offer a particularly clear illustration of Braudel's division of France's economy into the margins and the interior. The markets around the country's outer edge do, indeed, exhibit the greater sophistication and vitality that came with links to international commerce, compared to the interior zone that was still in some ways inchoate and undeveloped.

The geography of brokers in the wine trade is one important measure of their sophistication and diversity; their contested definitions and conceptions of what they did as middlemen is another. Traditionally they had acted as middlemen in the trade networks linking the wine-producing regions of France to their markets, both domestic and foreign. Their role in the seventeenth century appears to have been largely subordinate to Parisian merchants but it would change fundamentally around the turn of the century. At this point the government investigation found considerable disagreement among brokers as to the exact nature of their job. Here again we will see the existence of a fundamental dichotomy between core and periphery.

Brokers became the key figures in the wine trade during the eighteenth century. Their emergence as independent agents was a major step in the development of the wine trade and the achievement of a more sophisticated division of commercial functions. They gradually gained control of much of the sale of local production and took over the contacts between local producers and the chief market, making them the critical nodes in the wine trade. This process involved the gradual transformation of a "public function" into a private enterprise and illustrates not only the dynamics of the wine trade, but also some of the changes in the national market.⁷ Previous historians have glimpsed the process, but only in very vague terms.⁸ Several investigations of the wine trade undertaken by the government in the early eighteenth century allow us to

than passing mention to brokers. For articles dealing more specifically with brokers, see below.

⁷ Michel Mollat, "Les Hôtes et les courtiers dans les ports normands à la fin du moyen âge", *Revue historique* XXIV (1944-45), pp. 49-64, describes the profession as a "public function".

⁸ Roger Price, *An Economic History of Modern France, 1730-1914* (New York, 1981), p. 29, notes that "intermediaries with a certain commercial expertise had an increasingly important part to play, and began to replace the face to face character of many transactions between farmer and merchant. The mass of small vine cultivators or workmen in rural industry, with limited knowledge of market conditions themselves, were especially dependent upon intermediaries".

analyze the evolution with much greater precision. After briefly examining the brokers' development up to the early eighteenth century, we will use the royal tax records first to consider how brokers had arrived at a basic divergence in the way they defined themselves and then to construct the geography and function of their market networks.

Traditional Brokers

The medieval wine brokers in France, known as *courtiers* or *gourmets*, had originally served in an official role as market regulators.⁹ They performed a policing function, in their role as guarantors of contracts and wine quality and generally as supervisors of markets. The brokers of Beaune and Reims, for example, were town agents, chosen yearly and carefully tested by the *échevins*. To promote the town's exports and protect its reputation, they helped visiting merchants find wine in the town and its *faubourgs* and tasted it to guarantee its quality. In Beaune, they certified acceptable wines with the town's mark on the barrel and, every two weeks, were expected to report the buyers, sellers, quantities sold, and prices to the *échevins*. Although the office of broker in Reims had been farmed out as early as the fifteenth century, both towns continued to treat brokers as an integral part of their control of the municipal economy.

Brokers also performed a more limited role as commercial intermediaries. Since their origin, they had assisted visiting wine merchants in locating local wines and helped them arrange credit. They smoothed the potentially awkward relations between a strictly local economy and the outside world by giving outsiders access to local information and, in turn, guaranteeing the buyer's solvency for the seller. In theory the brokers' economic activities in both Reims and Beaune were strictly circumscribed and subordinated to their public responsibilities. As late as the seventeenth century, they were allowed to receive a fee only from the local seller and not the visiting merchant, to avoid having their loyalties seduced away from the interests of the town and its inhabitants. They were obliged to wait for the merchants to come to them, and could not make purchases for an absent merchant without receiving special permission and could not make payments for him to the seller. Such statutes made it

⁹ J.-A. Van Houtte, *Les Courtiers au moyen âge: origine et caractéristiques d'une institution commerciale en Europe occidentale*, *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* XV (1936): 118-29, argues that courtiers in all medieval trades, throughout Europe shared this double function, though very few of his examples are French. He concludes that "le courtage apparaissait donc au moyen âge comme un système de surveillance plutôt que de médiation". See also Michel Mollat, *Les Hôtes et les courtiers dans les ports normands à la fin du moyen âge*, *Revue historique* XXIV (1944-45), pp. 49-64.

theoretically impossible for brokers to perform as commissioning agents, that is to say, filling orders for merchants who only corresponded with them, and forced merchants to come to the town themselves.¹⁰

Brokers elsewhere exercised rather less of a police function, though all sought to bring order to the market and promote the local economy. As late as the eighteenth century, regulations in Bordeaux enjoined brokers to "cut down frauds and abuses in the commerce."¹¹ The brokers of Auxerre served a more actively economic function of accompanying visiting merchants out into the towns and villages in the region of lower Burgundy. They were clearly sought by men from out of town for their knowledge of the intricacies of wines and wine makers in the region. Yet a study of Auxerre's brokers in the sixteenth century emphasizes the limited and largely passive nature of their office.¹² Brokers had to wait for the merchants to visit from Paris or elsewhere in northern France. The brokers of Bordeaux also took merchants through the surrounding countryside but, like those in Auxerre, their role was quite passive. Foreign merchants or their agents completely controlled the wine market of Bordeaux, and *courtiers* merely assisted them.¹³

The restrictions on the brokers' role began to break down by the end of the seventeenth century, as brokers gradually expanded the scope of their activities, and moved increasingly to buying on commission. The town council of Beaune complained for the first time in 1674 of individuals "calling themselves *courtiers* or *commissionnaires*" who were certifying and shipping wines with no official sanctions and later forced a courtier to choose whether he would continue as broker or commissioning agent.¹⁴ Reims was unable to restrain its brokers from

¹⁰ For Beaune, see the *statuts des courtiers* of 31 August 1607, reprinted along with other documents from the *registres de délibérations de la Chambre de la Ville de Beaune*, in J. Délissey and L. Perriaux, *Les Courtiers gourmets de la ville de Beaune: contribution à l'histoire du commerce du "vin de Beaune" du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle*, *Annales de Bourgogne* XXXIV (1962), pp. 46-57. See also P. Destray, *Le Commerce des vins en Bourgogne au XVIIIe siècle*, in J. Hayem, *Mémoires et documents pour servir à l'histoire du commerce et de l'industrie en France*, 2e series (Paris, 1912), pp. 51-53. For Reims, see *ordonnances* of 3 June and 4 September 1654, in Emile Roche, *Le Commerce des vins de Champagne sous l'Ancien Régime* (Châlons-s-Marne, 1908), p. 62. See also Jean-Pierre Devroey, *L'Eclair d'un bonheur: une histoire de la vigne en Champagne* (Paris, 1989), pp. 138-40. It should be noted that in most cases I use the term broker interchangeably for courtier and commissionnaire.

¹¹ Paul Butel, *Bordeaux et la Hollande au XVIIIe siècle: l'exemple du négociant Pellet*, *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* (1967), p. 72.

¹² Marcel Delafosse, *Le Commerce du vin d'Auxerre (XIVe - XVIe siècle)*, *Annales de Bourgogne* XIII (1941), pp. 205-27.

¹³ Francisque-Xavier Michel, *Histoire du commerce et de la navigation à Bordeaux* (1867), II, pp. 382-97.

¹⁴ *Deliberations of Conseil de Ville*, 8 October 1674 and 24 November 1684, cited in Délissey and Perriaux, "Courtiers gourmets de Beaune", pp. 56-57.

combining the two functions.¹⁵ Their emergence as independent agents was a major step in the development of the wine trade and the achievement of a more sophisticated division of commercial functions. They gradually gained control of much of the sale of local production and took over the contacts between local producers and the chief markets, making them the critical nodes in the wine trade. An eighteenth-century lawyer offered one version of the transformation of brokers from the passive police agents of the Middle Ages to monopolistic middlemen, as he thought it had probably occurred in the Beaujolais. Parisian wine merchants, who only began to visit this region late in the seventeenth century, originally sought help from "simple artisans" in Beaujeu and Mâcon to "guide them to the best caves" and to "arrange transport to the Loire." "They soon sought services of much greater importance: the affairs of a *négociant* are always infinitely hindered when he can only conduct business with cash; credit is the soul of all commerce." Brokers either provided the credit themselves or guaranteed the wine merchants' solvency to growers who offered credit. As brokers became more sophisticated, he charged, they persuaded wine merchants not to visit but to conduct business by correspondence; brokers were then free to defraud buyer and seller alike and to gain a monopoly over the wine trade.¹⁶ This version of events is probably close to the process in other provinces.

By the eighteenth century the big wine merchants usually relied completely on commissions by correspondence, according to a Dutch treatise in the middle of the century, although "some, and not the least instructed in commerce, come themselves to travel through the wine regions of France at harvest time ... Still it is rare that the presence of the wine merchant excludes that of the *négociant-commissionnaire*; it even happens often that the wine merchant limits himself to the choice of wines and leaves the *commissionnaire* to take care of the price."¹⁷ As commissioned agents for a distant buyer, brokers had sole responsibility for dealing with wine sellers and enough independence that charges of fraud and buying for their own account would begin to surface through the eighteenth century.¹⁸ Even when acting for merchants who came to visit, their legal obligation to guarantee the buyer's purchase had gradually transformed them into the principal source of credit on the local market, paying sellers up front and being paid at the buyers' convenience.¹⁹ The broker

¹⁵ Bidet, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire de Reims* (1749), IV, pp. 68-69.

¹⁶ Mollat, "Les Hôtes et les courtiers dans les ports normands", p. 24; Price, *An Economic History of Modern France*, p. 29. C. Brac, *Le Commerce des vins, réformé, rectifié et épuré, ou nouvelle méthode pour tirer un parti sûr, prompt et avantageux des récoltes en vins...* (Amsterdam & Lyon, 1769), pp. 12-15.

¹⁷ J. Accarias de Serionne, *Les intérêts des nations d'Europe développés relativement au commerce* (Leipsig, 1766), II, p. 252.

¹⁸ See my "Power in the Vines" (forthcoming).

¹⁹ Paul Butel, *Les Négociants bordelais, l'Europe et les Iles au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1974),

performed an extremely valuable service in a market that was still dominated by the mercantile power of a few major economic centres but needed increasing credit and cooperation from a supply zone growing larger and more complicated.

By the reign of Louis XIV, brokers constituted a unique and increasingly central part of the wine trade. Buying only in the name of other merchants and playing no role in local retail marketing, they were different from a local entrepreneur who wished to run the risks of buying and selling for himself. Their sole *raison d'être* was working with and for "foreigners," merchants from outside, whether the outsider visited in person or corresponded. Thus brokers tell us about the long-distance trade, and their presence points to the importance of external demand from merchants at a distant entrepôt who had taken the initiative in buying the wine and came themselves, in some cases, to oversee the acquisition. Such long-distance trade, whether linked to markets in major French cities or to overseas markets through maritime ports, was certainly the most important economic stimulus in the wine trade. As brokers became increasingly dominant in the long-distance trade they came to represent the most dynamic element in the wine trade.

This process of transformation from broker to commissioning agent, never completely sanctioned or clearly accomplished, turns out to have been more complicated than a few examples would suggest. Different markets required different kinds of agents and resulted in distinct combinations of the brokerage and commissioning functions. These distinctions, revealed by a government inquest reinforce the thesis of geographic zones argued by Braudel and others.

Contested identities

The broker's official status, combined with his pivotal role in an increasingly lucrative commercial activity, proved irresistible to the state's desire for revenues. Late in the sixteenth century the government turned the position of broker into a royal office that it sold, thus beginning a century of cynical manipulation and extortion. According to most customary law, operating in the northern half of France, the buyer could dispense with a broker's service if he wished, but in the 1570s the state began to create official brokers throughout the kingdom and to make their use mandatory. Through the seventeenth century the policy was regularly revised, coyly alternating between offers of "liberty" and the reimposition of the office. The creation of official brokers was both an expression of the state's growing desire to ensure order and "police" in society and its urgent need for money. As the king would assert: "We have, by

p. 134, notes for example, that "sur le plan financier le rôle du commissionnaire bordelais est très important, car il pratique des avances aux marchands du Haut Pays qui ne disposent que de moyens limités".

the present edict [of 1691] ... created ... the office of *courtiers et commissionnaires* to have them provided by Us with men of probity and good life and morals.”²⁰ While calling the position of broker an “office of police,” the state also turned them into tax collectors. The brokerage fee became another way for the state to tax the substantial revenues generated by the wine trade or, as an eighteenth-century memoir noted, “some Police functions [which were] voluntary both for those who performed them and those who sought them served as a pretext for [state] finance.”²¹

The creation of royal brokers threatened the ability of important municipal centres in the wine trade to exercise their power over regional commerce. To maintain local control over these crucial offices, many towns preferred to buy them outright from the king. Reims, for instance, was forced to buy off royally appointed courtiers on several occasions, paying 150,000 L. in 1691 to assure “the conservation of the wine trade ... which the royally appointed *courtiers* could diminish, and to conserve the jurisdiction that the [town council] has always exercised.”²² Auxerre paid 120,000 L. in 1627 to keep control over its brokers. It had to borrow the money and, when the king later suppressed the office, “this caused the beginning of the town’s misfortunes and its debts.” In 1692, the estates of Burgundy would pay 200,000 L., Nantes would pay 140,000 L. and Bordeaux offered 126,000 L. to free their regions from royal intervention.²³ It is easy to dismiss the government’s claim that these officials provided needed “policing” of the wine trade, for the state multiplied their numbers by the end of the seventeenth century with transparent greed. In the desperate scramble for revenues the Crown abolished and recreated positions, multiplied new ones and held old ones ransom to their owners.

The government faced resistance not only from towns but from individual brokers, and soon discovered that unofficial brokers obstinately ignored the official monopoly on brokering and continued their informal business arrangements in the face of royal bans. An edict of 1656 charged that “many people undertake to continue the functions of broker without title or our permission ... [and] they demand considerable fees of our subjects....” The government accused unofficial brokers of “using their artifice to keep merchants from buying wine from those [growers] who do not pay them the brokerage fee at their discretion.” Evidently these unofficial brokers continued to dominate the local wine markets. The government threatened to fine those

²⁰ Edict of November 1691, in Delamare, *Traité de la police*, p. 632.

²¹ BN, Coll. Joly de Fleury 1336, fol. 16.

²² AN, G⁷ 1508 arrêt du conseil d’état, 30 June 1692. See also Roche, *Le Commerce des vins en Champagne*, pp. 56-78, for an extensive discussion of the courtiers of Reims and part of the text of this arrêt.

²³ *Coutume du comté et baillage d’Auxerre avec notes et actes de notoriété ... par Edme Billon* (Paris, 1693), pp. 294-95, 301; AN G⁷ 1507, memoir of Nantes, no date; memoir of Bordeaux, no date.

who had practised brokerage unofficially but complained again in 1691 that it had “come to our attention that many people still continue ... the functions under the title of *commissionnaire*, *courtier gourmet* [and] demand considerable sums from buyers and sellers, and most of them being men without reputation or means, many problems arise [which are] harmful both to our subjects and to the foreigners [ie. those from out of town] who employ them.”²⁴ The Crown’s attempt to control this activity finally came to a head in 1704 with a massive effort to identify and punish the interlopers who had taken over the brokerage of wine. Although motivated by a desperate need for revenues to conduct war, this investigation is an early and striking example of the government’s growing desire and ability to identify and measure economic activity in its own kingdom. The results provide an unusual revelation of the state of the wine trade.

Claiming in an edict of November 1704 that unofficial brokers had once again been ruining the wine trade, the King abolished the official position in order to start over again. The edict chided official brokers for having “only taken up the office to acquire the taxes attributed to it,” which they levied “whether they were present at the sale or not” and having left the actual task of brokering to a “great number of former *commissionnaires*, *gourmets* and others without title [who] perform the functions.”²⁵ In many of the major wine regions the province had already paid to have the official position suppressed, in order to let anyone perform as a broker, but the edict insisted that the resulting “confusion was greater than before.” It then created the offices of *courtier-commissionnaire* again and offered to sell them to the highest bidder. As the *traitant*, who actually administered the new tax, argued, it would be “an advantage to the public and to commerce if the people who handle public wealth [*le bien public*], as the wine brokers do, were to have a title, which should take the place of a kind of security and pledge to those who entrust them with their wealth.” Official control of brokers was particularly necessary in some cases, such as the brokers of Nantes “because being foreigners for the most part, it is politic to secure them in France with offices.”²⁶ Turning brokers into public officials would guarantee their behaviour and so bring confidence to the market.

The plan caused enormous consternation in the very areas where the wine trade was most prosperous. The chief wine-producing regions, in particular, flooded the Controller General with petitions challenging various aspects of the edict. The estates of Burgundy objected bitterly that they had already paid

²⁴ Delamare, *Traité de la police*, II, pp. 630-31, edict of 27 March 1627; edict of June 1691 (which also refers to the edict of June 1656).

²⁵ Edict of November 1704, in AN G⁷ 1508.

²⁶ AN, G⁷ 1507, extrait de la lettre du Sr Stalpaert à M Chamillart, 21 April 1705, with the *traitant*’s response appended. Like a tax farmer, the *traitant* advanced money to the government for the right to sell the offices; see J. F. Bosher, *French Finances 1770-1795, from Business to Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 9, for the role of *traitants*.

200,000 L. to suppress the office of brokers created in 1691, fearing at the time that these new offices "would remove the liberty and confidence that merchants can take in their brokers." Now they complained of the disastrous impact the new offices of 1704 would have on the wine trade, "in which consists all the wealth of this province." Those who bought this office would be "only clerks who are not known [because of] not being from the region." As a consequence, these outsiders "had not established a reputation for their [financial] resources so no one would accept them as guarantors for merchants from other countries or provinces." The wine trade would be ruined since "the majority of wines are sold on credit." Officials in the Champagne agreed that the wine trade "would end suddenly if these offices were once possessed by men without experience," since it survived "only through the brokers' credit and by the confidence with which foreigners correspond with them."²⁷ The intendant at Bordeaux had already cautioned his superior in 1691 that the creation of official, mandatory brokers would only drive business away, since foreign merchants insisted upon choosing their own brokers. Now he warned that the "establishment of brokers would be the ruin of commerce," for it would give them "immense profits and crush commerce under a monopoly."²⁸ In each city's protest, the broker was identified as someone who had to have experience and be known and trusted by his clients. If the king could install unqualified people in the function, the wine trade would be ruined.

The *traitant* expressed suitable concern for the harmful possibilities of the new offices and graciously agreed to let the wine-producing regions buy him out, as of course he had planned to do all along. He blandly announced that "if the estates of Burgundy believed it should involve itself, it had only to acquire the offices, with the right to entrust them" to whomever they wished. That is exactly what Burgundy did, for 80,000 L. Other provinces reached the same conclusion and paid lesser sums to have the offices suppressed.²⁹ The government was going after bigger sums, however, with another feature of the edict.

²⁷ AN, G⁷ 1507, extrait des registres du conseil d'état, 22 April 1692; letter from the élus généraux des états de Bourgogne, 7 March 1705; extrait des registres du conseil d'état, 18 August 1705; placet of Sr Tassier, fermier des aides de Champagne, no date. See similar warnings from the intendant at Lyon about brokers in Roanne, in AN, G⁷ 360, letter of 25 November 1705. Unfortunately the brokers of Roanne do not appear on the rolls of fines.

²⁸ Letter of 18 September 1691 and summaries of letters from the intendant to the controller general, 23 February and 10 March 1705, in Arthur-Michel de Boislisle, ed., *Correspondance des contrôleurs généraux des finances avec les intendants des provinces*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1874-97), I, p. 259; II, pp. 234-35. See Butel, *Les Négociants bordelais*, pp. 180-87, for confirmation of this advice.

²⁹ AN, G⁷ 1508, an état du traité des courtiers de vin ainsy qu'il avoit été arrêté par Mgr Desmarets, 21 May 1706, gives a list of sums to be paid by each province to buy out the new offices. Most owed less than 30,000 L., except for Bordeaux, Châlons, and Orléans.

The edict announced that those who had practised brokerage without an official title were guilty of cheating the public and were liable to prosecution. It even threatened to make them turn over all of the commissions they had earned. But the *traitant* offered to let them pay a fine that would absolve them from prosecution. Provincial intendants were responsible for drawing up a list bearing the names of all those who were guilty of brokering "without title" and assigning a sum to be paid. The list of trespassing brokers was valuable to the tax farmer for a second reason. These interlopers were expected to be the primary purchasers of the new offices, and the fine they faced was an incentive to buy. Buying the office has one way of absolving themselves of the fine, for "this clause [the fine] was put in the edict," according to one of the memoirs addressing the case, "with the design of making those who performed the functions without title acquire the offices of *courtiers commissionnaires*."³⁰ The whole point of the tax scheme, then, was to force the towns and individuals who controlled the wine trade to pay in order to maintain their control.

The fines levied on unofficial brokers prompted a howl of protest from the principal wine-producing regions that the threat of judicial action would disrupt the whole profession. The head of the tax farm in Champagne objected that the tax on brokers without titles would "suddenly stop the commerce of wines in this province which would be a considerable prejudice to the farm of the aides."³¹ Even worse, the government applied the fine aggressively to anyone involved in brokerage, with little regard for legitimate claims to the office. To the *courtiers* of Tonnerre who demonstrated that they had acquired the office in 1692, the *traitant* retorted that they were still culpable because they had charged more than the official tariff. The city of Reims complained that, when it had offered 150,000 L. to suppress the last batch of official *courtiers* in 1691, the arrangement was supposed to have made "all merchants, *courtiers*, and the public free to perform the trade and brokerage of wines." The *traitant* backed down in this case to the extent of agreeing to discharge all those on the roll of fines who had been officially recognized as brokers by the town of Reims.

At the same time, a few of the most international market centres challenged the government's fine on unofficial brokers as a fundamental misconception of the commercial system. Their protests obviously emanated both from self-interest and from the recognition of a profound gap in business culture, so

³⁰ *Ibid.* mémoire sur l'affaire des courtiers de vin de Bretagne [Nantes 1705], unsigned. The memoir is not sympathetic to the brokers' complaints, so its author probably worked for the *traitant*.

³¹ *Ibid.*, communication between *traitant* and the marquise de Louvois, as holding the comté de Tonnerre, no dates. G⁷ 1508, memoir of the maire et échevins de Reims, no date, with *traitant's* response. G⁷ 1507, placet of Sr Tassier, fermier des aides de Champagne, no date. In response the *traitant* accused him of "acting more in favour of and in concert with the *courtiers commissionnaires* than in the interests of his [tax] farm".

they also reveal some of the complexity of the broker's role in the wine trade. Many of the wine merchants of Nantes had appeared on the lists of unofficial brokers who owed fines. Joined by the procureur-general syndic of the estates of Brittany and the "wholesale wine merchants of the province," they complained that the traitant did not understand the nature of brokerage and had implicated them unreasonably in something that was not their affair. Although admitting that they acted as commissionnaires, they insisted that they were not courtiers and hence the edict did not apply to them.³² Their defence rested on a subtle distinction that reveals the sophistication of their commercial system.

In their appeal to the King's Council, these "négociants of Nantes" asserted that, despite the traitant's attempt to "confound the ambiguous term of commissionnaire with that of courtier", there was an "essential difference" between them. "In effect, the négociant's performing the function of commissionnaire" acted on the behalf of men who were absent, buying or selling for them when they could not come in person. This kind of commission was the "négociant's greatest and surest commerce, [and] to want to forbid its liberty would absolutely destroy commerce because it only subsists by [commissions]. In contrast, the courtier "does not work for absent people, [rather] he serves those in his own town." He bought wine for merchants who hired him, going out to the "countryside to taste [wines] and mark [barrels]." For this work he simply received a salary rather than a commission, which would be based on the value of the merchandise. The courtier was "a trade that the négociants do not perform, and is much beneath the commerce that they do."

The judge and consuls of the merchants' court of Nantes, appealing to the controller general because of the "attention they owe to commerce and in the interest of numerous wholesale négociants, of retail wine merchants and of coopers," made the same arguments and distinctions between "the négociants commissionnaires and the courtiers." They agreed that "these mutual commissions are so necessary and so important that commerce cannot subsist without its help"³³. Elsewhere, the intendant at Bordeaux had already warned the controller general, over a decade earlier, that "all the merchants [at Bordeaux] are commissionnaires, who work sometimes for the accounts of foreigners and sometimes for their own." But that was a very different activity from the courtier's, and the négociants of Bordeaux informed the traitant that they had "always regarded this profession [of courtier] as incompatible with theirs."³⁴ The government was conflating

³² *Ibid.*, memoir of the négociants de Nantes to the King et nos seigneurs de son conseil, undated.

³³ *Ibid.* mémoire sur l'affaire des courtiers de vin de Bretagne [Nantes 1705], unsigned; letter to controller general, dated 12 May 1705, signed by J. Descasaux, juge consul, and others.

³⁴ Letter of 18 September 1691, in Boislisle, *Correspondence des contrôleurs généraux*, I, p. 259. AN, G⁷ 1508, letter of négociants de Bordeaux, no date.

two commercial activities that were considered to be quite distinct by merchants in the large Atlantic ports.

In several letters to the King's Council, négociants in Nantes joined the judge and consuls in emphasizing an even more important distinction between the négociant and the courtier. Whereas the négociant's profession was "the most distinguished in commerce" that of courtier was "the most vile, since he can be considered in some ways as servile". The consuls added that the courtiers in Nantes were "all men without fortunes, nearly incapable of [paying the tax]". An appeal from several of the most heavily taxed brokers concluded: "being wholesale merchants-négociants it would be demeaning [un déclin] to act as a courtier, who are only men of low extraction whom we use and treat in matters of commerce as our valets". The intendant at Marseille made the same point in a memorandum to the controller general: "the function of courtiers gourmets is completely mechanical [meaning also unskilled], and has never been filled except by wretches and men in debt from whom one would have trouble getting anything"³⁵. These expressions of contempt for courtiers may have been rather exaggerated, for courtiers obviously needed experience at tasting wines as well as contacts among vigneron. Yet they were sincerely scorned, apparently because they could not act independently.

These protests reveal important differences in the development of brokerage between the interior of France and its peripheries. Evolving from their medieval origins as purely local middlemen, as courtiers, who had little scope for independent action, the brokers of the interior had only recently added the role of commissioning agent in many of the centres of the wine trade. The government's treatment of the two functions interchangeably clearly aimed at this hybrid, for it described the joint office largely in terms suitable to courtiers. The edict said nothing about working for merchants on commission or by correspondence. Instead, brokers would have an "office in each town ... to receive the individuals, merchants, négociants and others who will have need of their ministry."³⁶ The official description cast them in a very passive and, above all local light, and sounds nearly identical to the Nantais' description of a courtier, as someone who worked for a merchant present in the same town. The edict evidently corresponded to the way the internal provinces understood the terms of the edict for no other wine-producing regions protested the conflation of courtier and

³⁵ AN, G⁷ 1507, undated letter from Jacques Stalpaert, Jean VanBerchem, etc. followed by the traitant's response. See also a letter to Chamillart by Stalpaert on 21 April 1705, and an unsigned letter to Darmenonville of 30 April 1705. Letter from DeMontmy to Chamillart, dated 18 January 1705 at Marseilles.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, traitant's response to letter by Stalpaert, et. al.; G⁷ 1508, response of the fermiers généraux de droits des courtiers-commissionnaires de la province de Bretagne aux mémoires données par le procureur général syndic des Etats de Bretagne, no date, but à propos their legal pursuit of the case into 1709.

commissionnaire in the way that merchants and officials at Nantes, Bordeaux and Marseille did.

In the port cities, however, the functions had evolved altogether differently. The commissioning agent in the major ports overlapped with merchants rather than with courtiers, and courtiers remained a subordinate, even subservient, position. The difference appears to be due to the existence of foreign wholesale merchants in the major ports, who took it upon themselves to provide the important service of commissioning agents and kept the local brokers in their place. These merchants were also much more in tune with the international practice of commissioning.

The merchants in the port cities conceived of brokers in much the same way as did the commercial treatises of the day. A generation before the Nantais' appeal Jacques Savary verified the fundamental distinctions between courtiers and commissionnaires. Savary treated commissionnaires as "négociants ... who buy merchandise for the account of négociants living elsewhere," and are "all forbidden to sell, buy or exchange for foreigners without the mediation and the company of an approved courtier."³⁷ His description had the international commerce of the major ports very clearly in mind. "There is nothing that maintains commerce so much as commissionnaires or correspondents; for through them merchants and négociants can trade throughout the world without leaving their shops or counters."³⁸ A hundred years later, Condillac's treatise on *Commerce and Government* also equated commissionnaires with merchants and asserted that they were entitled to the same kind of profits accorded to a merchant. Like the merchant, the commissionnaire was "between the producer and the consumer," and any exchange involving merchants he termed commerce de commission, because the merchants "establish themselves as commissionnaires."³⁹ It is instructive to see how much closer these treatises came to describing behaviour in the peripheral economy than in the interior.

The problem with equating wine brokers with the normal definition of brokers was that wine brokers were closely limited by the overriding interests of the tax farm. Since a broker was exempted from paying the hefty sales tax (the *aides*) on wine when he bought in someone else's name, the farm was greatly concerned that a purchase by commission not be secretly a separate sale and so taxable. Hence courtiers and commissionnaires were jointly and expressly forbidden to buy and sell for their own account, and wine merchants were

³⁷ Jacques Savary, *Le Parfait négociant ou instruction général pour ce qui regarde le commerce...* (Paris, 1675), p. 191.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 143-45. The edition of Savary published a hundred years later (1777) gave essentially the same definitions of commissionnaire. The treatise written by his son, Jacques Savary des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire universel de commerce* (Paris, 1760), II, p. 126, was also very similar.

³⁹ Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Le Commerce et le gouvernement considéré relativement l'un à l'autre*, 2 vols. in one (Paris, 1776), I, pp. 34-38.

explicitly forbidden to act as “commissionnaires to have wine arrive under other names than their own, under pretext of a service to a friend or otherwise”. Thus the wine broker was deliberately excluded from normal practice.⁴⁰

The tax farm and its attempts to fight fraud had not been able to block the commercial imperatives of international trade, where merchants needed to help each other as brokers. The merchants of these port cities, who united the functions of négociant and broker, were precocious; nowhere else did merchants even admit to this. This suggests the greater sophistication of merchants involved in overseas trade, especially those connected to Holland.⁴¹ Indeed most of the brokers on the list of négociants who protested in Nantes in 1704 had foreign names, many of them Dutch. Although some of these had been naturalized, their presence in Nantes reflected the Dutch pre-eminence in the wine trade of the French west coast.⁴² One list of brokers in Bordeaux identified twenty of them as citizens of England, Holland, and several German ports.⁴³ As a consequence, the major ports were very different markets, and differently organized, than the rest of France. The brokers in the domestic market supplying Paris did not make use of the Nantais' distinctions and may not have even understood them.

Geography

Despite the protests and the confusion over terms, intendants throughout the country moved with remarkable speed, in early 1705, to draw up lists of brokers in most of the major — and many minor — market centres, along with the amount each would be fined. These rolls of fines are an invaluable source of

⁴⁰ Lefebvre de Bellande, *Traité général des droits d'aides* (Paris, 1760), 1:332-33.

⁴¹ Almost sixty years earlier, Mathias de Saint Jean [Jean Eon], *Le Commerce honorable ou considérations politiques* (Nantes, 1646), pp. 87-90, had described the domination achieved by Dutch merchants over the wine trade of the western Loire region. For Dutch business sophistication, see Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford, 1989), though there is little about contacts with Nantes. For Dutch involvement in the wine trade of the lower Loire, see also Dion, *Histoire de la vigne*, pp. 423-29, 449-60.

⁴² One of them, named Stalpaert, complained that “I am always included with the foreign merchants even though I have been naturalized for thirty-six years and established here since 1660”. AN, G⁷ 1507, extrait de la lettre du Sr Stalpaert de Nantes à M Chamillart 12 April 1705. In response, the intendant of Brittany wrote shortly after to the controller general: “Jan Stalpaert, originally of Bruges, has been established at Nantes for thirty years and there has a large commerce in wines and brandy to foreign countries, with reputation...”, 30 April 1705, Boislisle, *Correspondance des contrôleurs généraux*, 3:245.

⁴³ AN, G⁷ 1508, roll of courtiers de vin, 31 January 1707.

information about the brokers in many parts of the country.⁴⁴ They give a rough overview, unique before the nineteenth century, of the wine trade and the geography of brokerage markets. Giving name, location, and the amount of the fine, the rolls allow us to map the density of brokers and indicate the scale of economic activity in different regions. In addition to the rough topography of markets, there is evidence for an initial typology of brokers. The contrasts of organization and scale in different regions suggests that brokers had achieved markedly different levels of economic power and control over their markets.

The tax on brokers allows us to survey an important aspect of the wine trade over a national area, but there are several important limits to its usefulness. The survey is not, unfortunately, comprehensive. The tax lists give no precise indication of the wine trade in Languedoc, Provence, or La Rochelle. Intendants in several areas, particularly in the south, failed to provide a list of brokers and seem, in some cases, to have actively engaged in subverting the whole process. But a more serious impediment lay in the fact that many areas appear to have had no brokers. The intendant in the Limousin had already warned the controller general that the region only had a dozen parishes with vines and that the wine was consumed locally.⁴⁵ About the generality of Bourges the traitants noted that "there are very few courtiers in this province ... and those on the roll are not very opulent." The province had been assessed 25,000 L., but "we do not expect to get more than 8,000 L." In the whole of the generalité of Poitiers there were only "some brokers of brandy in certain locations," and in the generalité of Lyon, "we do not presume that there are many brokers." They would hear nothing from Languedoc, and the intendant of Provence told them that "those who perform these functions are miserable men incapable of paying any tax."⁴⁶ Most of the northern regions did respond, however, along with the valuable Bordelais, and they represent the bulk of the wine trade, at least beyond local consumption.⁴⁷

The tax also shared a typical problem of the old regime in being apportioned from the top down. The traitants had assigned overall fines to each generalité, based no doubt upon information gleaned from the existing taxes on the wine trade. They then left it to the intendants to divide the fines locally as well as they and their local assistants could. On the whole they seem to have been quite thorough; their lists correspond well with the active brokers that can

⁴⁴ There are six rolls of fines, with 1,074 names, drawn up between February and April 1705, in AN, G⁷, 1507, 1508, 1509.

⁴⁵ Letter from intendant at Limoges, 10 January 1705, in Boislisle, *Correspondance des contrôleurs généraux*, 2:234.

⁴⁶ AN, G⁷, 1507, mémoire concernant l'état du traité des offices de courtiers-commissionnaires, 27 March 1705.

⁴⁷ As one measure of this long-distance trade, eighty-nine percent of the wine exported (by volume, and ninety-three percent by value) in the first half of the 1720s came from Bordeaux or the north; Chaptal, *Traité sur la culture de la vigne* (Paris, 1801), I, p. 136.

be identified in several regions.⁴⁸ If anything they seem to have been overly inclusive, for some individuals protested their assessment, usually denying that they were ever involved in brokering. An hotelier near Paris wrote to contest his fine of 2,000 L., blaming it all on the “pure imagination or supposition of his enemies.” He had “accompanied those who had asked him, carters among others, to buy wines and transport them on their return from Paris to the provinces of Brittany and Normandy ... [but] purely in the office of friendship without even the benefit of a sous.” He included certificates from local officials and the mayor of Nantes attesting to his statements, but they admitted that he accepted “some small tip [gratification] to reimburse him for carrying letters and the trouble he takes to load the wine.” The traitant pounced on the evidence about tips: “nothing more is needed to be convinced that [the hôtelier] falls under the [provisions of the] edict.”⁴⁹ He had merely acted informally, but the edict addressed both formal and informal brokering and essentially conflated them. If this procedure provoked complaints from its victims, it also offers us a more comprehensive picture of who was involved in the wine trade.

By and large, the protests suggest that the roll was fairly accurate, if a bit heavy-handed. The intendant was expected to determine not only who had engaged in brokering but how much they were liable for. Despite the complaint that “the taxes carried on the rolls are proportionate neither to the commerce nor the resources of those who are included”, it is clear that they were meant to be both.⁵⁰ Even if we must dismiss some brokers from the list as the victims of envy or excessive zeal the rolls contained over a thousand names and can certainly be trusted as indicative on a large scale. The sums that they owed were occasionally contested and could not have been precise measures of liability, yet they give us a sense of relative commercial activity, both between and within regions.

The brokers who were identified, then, delineate the major markets in the long-distance wine trade of France. A map (Map 1) showing the total fines owed by brokers in each city (but only those locations that had to pay at least 1,000 L.) indicates the general configuration of this trade. It omits information about individual brokers, their numbers and the size of their individual fines, which will be considered later, but it identifies regions or clusters of market networks. The city of Bordeaux and its hinterland was the region paying the largest fine, bearing almost a quarter of the kingdom's total tax, with Reims and Champagne close behind. If the whole Loire is taken as a single region, its cities paid more, but one can distinguish two fairly distinct regions in the upper and

⁴⁸ The brokers in Epernay and some of the surrounding villages can be identified quite exactly with the records of the *contrôle des actes*; AD Marne, C 4140, 4371. Those in lower Burgundy can be identified through *taille* and notarial records.

⁴⁹ AN, G⁷ 1509, undated letter of Jean Prevost.

⁵⁰ AN, G⁷ 1507, Placet of Sr Tassier, tax farmer in Champagne, no date.

lower Loire, divided roughly at Tours. The Loire from Tours down was taxed roughly one-fifth of the total, and above Tours owed about one-tenth. Then Burgundy, with fifteen percent, could also be divided between lower Burgundy around Auxerre paying two-thirds of the burden and an area from Dijon south paying the rest. The Ile de France had to pay another ten percent of the total tax.

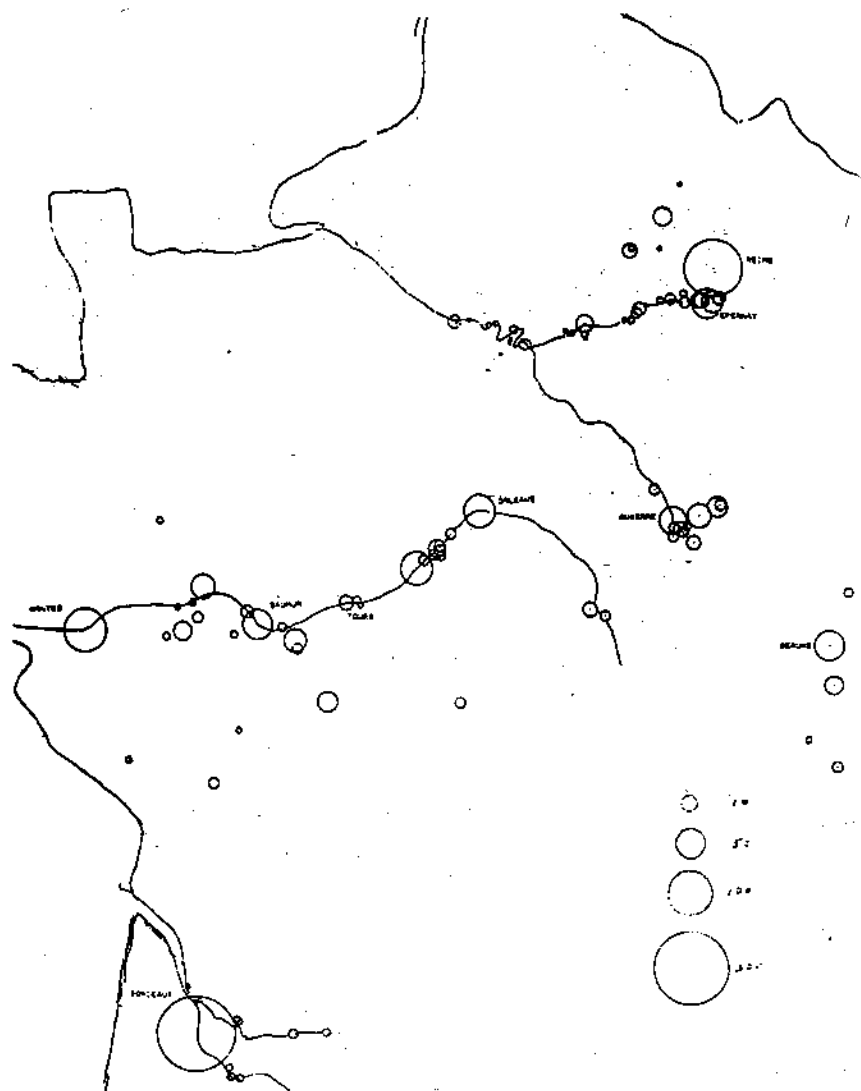
Not surprisingly these markets bore a close similarity to the principal wine-producing regions of the kingdom, though the correlation is not exact. As a map of brokers in the long-distance wine trade the broker tax gives little information about those regions that were not connected to interregional commerce. Many regions of France produced wine but were isolated from long distance trade; they denied having brokers and escaped the tax. Distance and lack of transportation hindered access to the Côte d'Or, and the wines of the Mâconnais were still consumed locally and did not circulate beyond a very narrow regional market at this point, as indeed was true of much of the wine produced in France.⁵¹ The tax levels of the brokers immediately around Paris were very low, but this reflects the law of 1577 that closed a region of roughly 2° leagues around the city to Parisian wine merchants; now these wines were sold purely locally. The main issues influencing the tax were the degree to which the wine of a region was actually sold wholesale in the market and the extent to which the brokers might be involved, acting as agents in long-distance trade alone. The existence of brokers tells us where local wine markets had been successfully connected to larger currents of national and international commerce.

As the map indicates, the bulk of brokerage activity lay on what Braudel has called the border zones of the kingdom. The two large cities along the west coast, Bordeaux and Nantes, are the most striking markets on the periphery. They had long been the chief centres of the export trade towards the Atlantic, each dominated by foreigners who connected them to the markets of northern Europe. They were joined by Reims in the northeast corner and, on a much smaller scale, by Beaune along France's eastern border. These four cities alone found employment for nearly one-third of all the brokers in France and were assessed at forty percent of the kingdom's total levy. If intendants in the south had co-operated, a fourth and possibly fifth entrepôt of substantial size might have been found in Montpellier and Marseilles.⁵² Clearly the tax came down

⁵¹ R. Gadille, *Le Vignoble de la côte bourguignonne* (Paris, 1967), pp. 370-72; Brac, *Le Commerce du vin*, pp. 9-10; Enjalbert, *Histoire de la vigne*, pp. 110-11.

⁵² The intendant offered no more information about brokering in Provence than a detailed list of the wine produced and sold in each locale, in an *Etat des lieux de vignobles*, AN G⁷ 1507, along with an "estimation" that the province could support 226 brokers, of which only six were assigned to Marseilles. Charles Carrière, *Négociants marseillais au XVIII^e siècle* (1973), p. 357, identifies an average of 40,000 hectolitres of wine exported from Marseille between 1725-27, which is only one quarter the exports

Map 1. total broker fines in France



hardest on the outer edges of the kingdom and on those commercial centres catering to the export trade. Here the government could find not only the most significant volume of wine sales, but also the most sophisticated, organized, and prosperous brokers in the kingdom. As we have seen, brokers in the major export towns were connected to the most advanced centres of foreign trade, where brokers were considered to be the equal of *négociants*, indeed often were *négociants*, and enjoyed substantial economic independence. The preponderance of this export trade is only properly measured if we add the brokers along the lower Loire to those on the periphery, for most of the long-distance trade in that region was aimed at Nantes and thence overseas. In contrast, the only markets that could be said to be connected to the domestic or national wine trade, as opposed to the international trade, were aimed at Paris. These markets included the upper Loire, lower Burgundy and much of Champagne, but they bore little more than a third of the tax burden. The dynamic element in France's wine trade, what lifted it above intra-regional commerce, was still largely the result of export overseas.⁵³

Function of Market Networks

The tax on brokers offers a fairly comprehensive survey of the long-distance wine trade and elucidates the ways in which this commercial system functioned. The map of brokers clearly indicates several separate market areas and suggests, more importantly, that brokerage was organized quite distinctly in different regions. The relative size of market share in different towns, the proximity of subordinate or competing market centres, the degree of concentration or dispersion among a region's towns, all reveal the dynamics of the regional wine trade. To this can be added information about the number and scale of individual brokers in each market. All these factors demonstrate the contrasts

from Nantes and one-twentieth from Bordeaux. Guillaume Geraud-Parracha, *Le Commerce des vins et des eaux-de-vie en Languedoc sous l'ancien régime* (Montpellier, 1955), pp. 121-22, 170-79, identifies Montpellier, Sète, and Beziers as the principal ports for wine exports from Languedoc, but Sète only exported 35,000 hl., and P. Boissonnade, *La Production et le commerce des céréales, des vins et des eaux-de-vie en Languedoc dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle, Annales du Midi XVII* (1905), p. 355, says that the majority of wine exported from Languedoc left by way of Bordeaux.

⁵³ Of course some of the wine that reached Paris was also destined for the international export market, and according to an *Etat des vins de la sénéchaussée de Bordeaux qui se chargent dans le port, année commune*, AN, F¹² 1500, over a quarter of the wine exported from Bordeaux in the middle of the eighteenth century returned to Brittany or northern France.

among different market systems, contrasts which illustrate profound differences in the development of the foreign and domestic wine trades and shed light on the mechanics of wine brokering.

Commercial organization in the border zones distinguished itself from the rest of France in several important ways. Brokerage activities were not only unusually intense in several of these markets, to judge both by the number of brokers and by their tax burden, but the brokerage was also unusually concentrated. In Bordeaux, Reims, and Nantes the tax discovered great numbers of brokers — over three hundred — who exercised their economic sway over an extensive hinterland. The tax also identified a pronounced hierarchy among these brokers, indicating a sophisticated division of labour. In contrast, the brokers in the French “interior” were more dispersed among a number of locations in a given region and tended to be far more homogeneous in the level of their tax burden.

Bordeaux offers a striking example of the concentration of the brokerage trade of a whole region in one location. The port city lay at the edge of a huge wine region, including the basins of the Dordogne and Garonne rivers. In large measure the dominance of the city’s brokers reflects the carefully constructed privileges that had long discriminated against “upstream wines” [vin du haut] that came from these basins, in favour of the “city’s wines” [vin de ville] from around Bordeaux. But the city had lost its monopoly in 1675 and was gradually reaching out to bring these upstream wines into its market.⁵⁴ Already in the early eighteenth century vin du haut accounted for nearly a quarter of wine exported from the region. By the late eighteenth century foreign merchants might simply bypass brokers in Bordeaux and deal directly with upstream producers.⁵⁵ Nor was Bordeaux the only port from which wine of the region was exported. Libourne and Blaye were gradually increasing their exports, embarking a third of the region’s wine shipments by 1716.⁵⁶ Yet for all the growth in economic activity taking place beyond the city, brokers in Bordeaux still, in 1704, maintained complete control over brokerage in the area. Three-quarters of the region’s 180 brokers were based in the city, and the city’s brokers owed nine-tenths of the 344,500 L. fine levied on the region, indicating their complete domination of the wine trade in the area. Brokers in the top quartile in the city were fined 4,000 L. each, and the average fine was 2,300 L., compared to brokers in the surrounding towns who were charged only 700 L.

The brokerage market in several other export entrepôts exhibited important similarities to Bordeaux. Like the brokers of Bordeaux, those of Reims were fined

⁵⁴ Enjalbert, “Comment naissent les grands crus”, pp. 318-21.

⁵⁵ Butel, *Les Négociants bordelais*, pp. 134-37. He distinguishes the “relative independence” of upstream producers from a map of courtiers created in a dozen upstream villages in 1761, but without knowing the size of their operations, they may have been no more impressive than the marginal upstream brokers identified in 1705.

⁵⁶ Huetz de Lemp, *Géographie du commerce de Bordeaux*, pp. 181-83.

at a very high level. Nearly all of the twenty-eight brokers identified in the first roll drawn up had to pay 4,000-6,000 L. each. A subsequent roll discovered a host of small brokers in the town — sixty-five of them — half of whom owed less than 500 L.⁵⁷ Even more hierarchical than Bordeaux, the upper quartile in Reims paid three-quarters of the tax, and those in the bottom third were clearly marginal.⁵⁸ Owing more than half of the 300,000 L. imposed on the generality of Châlons, the city of Reims dominated its hinterland but had not engulfed it like Bordeaux.

Reims had long exercised considerable control over the region's wine trade, but it was not without rivals. Instead, a strong market system lay 25 kilometres south over the montagne de Reims, along the Marne river and centred around Epernay. Like Bordeaux and Nantes, Reims was an ancient export centre, sending the wines of Champagne and Burgundy to the major markets of northern Europe since the Middle Ages and continuing to receive a host of foreign wine merchants through the seventeenth century.⁵⁹ The bankruptcy records of one of the brokers listed in the tax roll show 73,000 L. owed him for wine sent to individuals in Brussels, Mons, Douay, Valenciennes, as well as a few in London, Lille and elsewhere⁶⁰. Reims so controlled the brokerage business of the region that wines from Champagne were apparently originally known as vin de Reims, until well into the seventeenth century.⁶¹ Only then did Epernay and its immediate neighbours gain their independence from the control of merchants from Reims.⁶² By 1705 the brokers along the Marne had

⁵⁷ AN G⁷ 1507, the first roll was dated 10 February 1705; the second was dated 17 March.

⁵⁸ The government had already recognized the existence of a hierarchy of sorts among the brokers of Reims in 1691 when it had created official brokers throughout the country. It planned to sell three levels of offices in Reims: at 12,000, 8,000 and 4,000 L., to "famous commissionnaires, to the inferiors of the first, and to those who have little or no practice". BM Epernay, Ms 329, fol. 20 letter of Simon Bertin de la Bertiniere, 13 October 1691.

⁵⁹ René Gandillon, *Naissance du Champagne: Dom Pierre Pérignon* (Paris, 1968), pp. 160-61; Dion, *Histoire de la vigne et du vin*, pp. 618-19.

⁶⁰ AD Marne 17B 1579, banqueroute frauduleuse of François Drouin de la Vieville, 1693. A small amount was also owed by wine merchants in Paris. Vieville was fined 3,000 L. as a broker, in AN, G⁷ 1507, 10 February 1705.

⁶¹ Laurent, *Reims et la région rémoise*, p. CCXXXII. According to Dion, *Histoire de la vigne*, pp. 229-30, the wines of this region were known as "wine of [the Ile de] France" until the seventeenth century, but Devroey, *L'Eclair d'un bonheur*, p. 102, disagrees.

⁶² According to C. Moreau-Berillon, *Au Pays du Champagne*, (Reims, 1925), pp. 214-15, "the commerce of wine in Epernay was little developed until the edict of 1691 ... the wine that proprietors did not sell to friends or family was sent to merchants of Reims". See also R. Chandon de Briailles & H. Bertal, *Sources de l'histoire d'Epernay* (Paris, 1906), 1:xi Devroey, *L'Eclair d'un bonheur*, pp. 133-35, argues instead for lively competition among different towns in the Middle Ages, though he says little about the early modern period.

become substantial businessmen in their own right yet they did not compete with Reims' export trade, for the wines around Epernay went in a different direction: practically all to Paris or its environs where it was either consumed or re-exported. Of 12,000 barrels shipped from Epernay at the end of 1702, scarcely one percent went elsewhere (to Caen and Abbeville). Similarly the neighbouring town of Ay sent all on its wines to Paris. Thus Reims was an international market, with a flourishing trade to the important markets of the north, at the same time that Epernay and Ay, were still largely regional markets, entirely within the Parisian network. The brokers of Reims had lost some of their hegemony over the province, yet Reims could still boast in the middle of the eighteenth century that the town of Epernay "could not deny that the merchants of Reims buy the largest part of their wines ... not only in their city but in all the wine regions around them."⁶³

Nantes, like Reims and, to a lesser extent Bordeaux, Orléans, and Laon, seems to have had clearly bifurcated groups of brokers, with a majority only marginally involved in brokering.⁶⁴ The eighty-two brokers in Nantes were fined only 95,500 L. — a much lower average — but like brokers in the other two cities they formed a clear hierarchy. The top quartile owed between and 3,000 L., whereas the majority paid only 500 L. This hierarchy, found in few markets in the interior of France, suggests the unusually sophisticated division of labour in the export entrepôts. Like Bordeaux, though on a much smaller scale, Nantes and Beaune exercised control over their regional market systems. Beaune handled the vast majority of the brokerage in Burgundy, though its nine brokers formed no hierarchy and were all taxed at an equally astronomical level of 5,000 L. Nantes had gained domination of its immediate hinterland, a radius of some 75 kilometres, without challenge, and was also the focal point for all the trade from half a dozen substantial market centres along the lower Loire. These cities, from Tours down, assembled vast amounts of wine to be sent to Nantes and thence overseas.

The brokers in the Ile de France are unusual, but conform most coherently to the model of Bordeaux. Paris exerted the same complete domination of its immediate hinterland, though the merchants and brokers in Paris itself were not

⁶³ AD Marne, C 4371, contrôle des actes of Epernay, October 1702 - September 1703; C 4140, contrôle des actes, Ay, 1707. Legally, these registers recorded all lettres de voitures (bills of lading) written up in their towns and, in Epernay (quite unusually), they identify amounts of wine shipped and who sent it. See Pierre de Saint Jacob, "Une Source de l'histoire du commerce des vins: les lettres de voiture", *Annales de Bourgogne*, 28 (1956) pp. 124-126. Nearly all of the wine from Epernay was sent by the brokers listed on the roll of fines. In contrast, the 600 hl. of very expensive wine made at the abbey of Hautvillers by Dom Pérignon was sent largely to the north and east; AD Marne, H 1070, vins vendus, September 1691 - September 1692.

⁶⁴ AD Marne, C669, mémoire pour la ville de Reims, no date, but referring to a controversy taking place in 1752.

subject to the tax. The towns and villages around Paris contained a great quantity of very small brokers. Only ten of the brokers in Meaux and Mantes owed as much as 1,000 L. An additional 148 brokers, scattered in dozens of villages averaged barely 500 L. The generality of Soissons, to the northeast of Paris, produced relatively little wine but was convenient both to Flanders and Paris. Laon had long been an important market for merchants from Cambrai, and Soissons had become a source of cheap wine for Paris.⁶⁵ There were some large brokers in Laon, but twelve of the nineteen owed less than 1,000 L. Similarly, only four of eleven brokers in Soissons owed as much as a thousand livres. Another 145 brokers in the villages around Laon and Soissons owed an average of 250 L. These regions are in complete contrast to the rest of France. With almost a third of all the country's brokers they bore only ten percent of the fines. There were no brokers of any real stature and the vast majority were on such a small scale as to be trivial. The markets in the vicinity of Paris were completely dependent on Parisian merchants and were left little scope for the development of local brokers beyond a very subordinate level.

The organization of brokers in the interior of France assumed a very different pattern from the concentration and hierarchies found in export centres. Unlike the brokers in export centres, who dominated their hinterlands, brokers in the interior represented the links in an elaborate long-distance trade that connected port and metropolis to the heartland of wine production. The brokers around Epernay, in lower Burgundy, and in cities on the Loire river were dispersed among many towns and villages in their regions, each a nerve end of a larger commercial system. Unlike the hierarchies found among brokers in the big ports, brokers in the interior were quite homogeneous and most were subjected to major fines. Although relatively few in number — barely a third of the brokers in the survey — they owed nearly half the money demanded by the government. These brokers in the French heartland connected the dynamic, outward-facing France to the less commercialized interior and provided wine-producing regions with the stimulus of national and international demand. With contacts in both worlds they had the potential to act both as economic and cultural intermediaries, yet they seem in the early eighteenth century to have been largely dissimilar to the world of international trade. We have seen already that they differed to their colleagues in the port cities in their self-definitions; they differed also in their functions.

In contrast to the regional hegemony exercised by the export *entrepôts*, brokerage in the interior was dispersed among many small to medium market

⁶⁵ The top quartile in Nantes owed 58%, in Laon owed 52%, and in Bordeaux owed 43%. Of fifty-five brokers in Orléans, over half owed less than 1,000 L., and only six were fined more than 2,000 L.; the top quartile owed 44%. Orléans' situation was unusual. It did not appear on the original rolls because of delays by the local intendant, and the sums were low by the standards of the Loire, as if the *traitants* had already agreed to a diminution by the time this roll appeared.

centres, each connected directly to the large entrepôts. (See Map 2) Such a pattern suggests fundamental differences in the range and organization of their catchment areas or supply zones. The size of the supply area on which brokers could draw is an important indication of their power and economic strength. The classic method for determining catchment areas relies on account books for individual brokers, to chart the location and range of their suppliers, but this is possible only in isolated examples.⁶⁶ The map of brokers' fines offers an alternative method of estimating catchment areas: the number and density of other brokers in surrounding market centres suggests competition with and limits to a broker's catchment area. Where there is least competition — around Nantes and Bordeaux — their catchment area is clearly the greatest. But the cluster of brokers in many parts of the interior indicates a contested catchment area and more circumscribed supply zones.

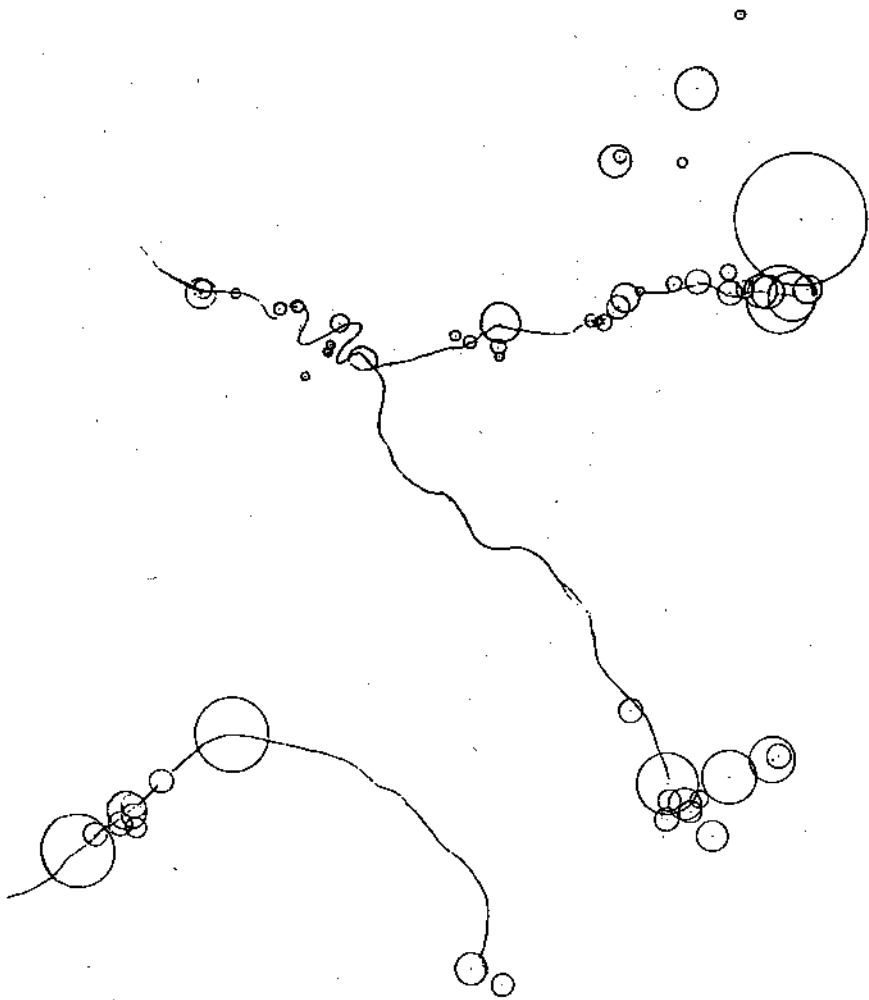
The towns in lower Burgundy, in the region around Auxerre, differed most strikingly from the concentrated market systems of Bordeaux or Reims; this area is the best example of a brokerage market dispersed throughout a contested catchment area. The city of Auxerre owed only a quarter of the total fine for the region, and competed with half a dozen important markets in close proximity. Less than thirty-five kilometres away, Chablis and Tonnerre owed between fifty and seventy-five percent of Auxerre. With the exception of those in the largest town, the brokers of this region were quite homogeneous and quite rich. The twelve brokers in Auxerre alone fit a clear hierarchy, with the five paying 5 or 6,000 L. accounting for nearly three-quarters of the tax.⁶⁷ Elsewhere, in villages within 15 kilometres of Auxerre, at Coulanges-la-vineuses, Saint Bris, Irancy, and Vermenton, another twenty brokers owed an average of 2,500 L. [See Table 1] And some of the six at Chablis owed the largest fines in France. The situation of these neighbouring towns, on navigable rivers and in good wine regions, made them important wine markets as early as the fifteenth century, and allowed them to compete with Auxerre into the eighteenth century.⁶⁸ Similarly, the part of Champagne supplying Paris, where a dozen small towns along the Marne river owed substantial fines, was a region of intense competition. The eleven brokers of Epernay each owed close to 4,000 L.; in other villages along the Marne, within fifteen kilometres of Epernay, over forty brokers owed an average of 1,900 L., not one fined less than a thousand. [See Table 2]

⁶⁶ Renée Doehaerd, "Un paradoxe géographique: Laon, capitale du vin au XIII^e siècle", *Annales ESC* 5 (1950), pp. 145-65; Dion, *Histoire de la vigne*, pp. 234, 544-45.

⁶⁷ This is the suggestion made by Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th - 18th Century: The Wheels of Commerce*, 2:184-85.

⁶⁸ Another five paid between 1,000 and 2,500 L., and two paid 5 and 600 L.

Map 2. Detailed map of total fines in the Parisian catchment area



Brokers along the Loire were more nucleated than in Champagne or lower Burgundy, concentrated into fewer cities and controlling larger hinterlands or catchment areas (See Map 3). Like others in the interior zone, however, they were homogeneous and heavily taxed. Most of the brokers in the cities owed three or four thousand livres and those in the surrounding villages owed at least two thousand. [See Table 3] Unlike the biggest, international markets, then, the brokers along the Loire were less concentrated and relatively homogeneous and they worked without the penumbra of marginal brokers that indicates a hierarchy and division of functions.

The brokerage systems in the interior zone were not all alike. The brokers along the Loire river actually reveal a more sophisticated organization than others in the interior. The major brokerage centres along the lower Loire, cities such as Angers and Saumur, controlled larger catchment areas, with noticeably less competition from small centres, than those in Burgundy and Champagne. For several reasons, including the sophistication of the transportation system along the river and the enduring influence of Dutch merchants organizing this region to their liking, the brokers in the principal cities of the Loire had developed a longer reach, an uncontested primacy in their local markets. Unlike Champagne, where one intermediary centre at Epernay was closely surrounded by brokers in a host of tertiary villages, the lower Loire was organized around half a dozen intermediate centres, each with a fairly large hinterland, and an equal number of tertiary centres interspersed among them. The dispersion of all of these centres along the Loire suggests that there were a large number of wine producing villages along the Loire that did not show up because they did not have a broker. Instead, these villages were connected to the long-distance wine trade hierarchically, through brokers in the larger centres.

Market hierarchies

The work of anthropologists on developing economies introduces another interpretive element into this geography. Their theories of economic geography identify the relationships and hierarchies among market centres as a key to understanding how market systems function. In particular they focus on the existence of a hierarchy of incremental markets between the producer and ultimate buyer. These intermediary markets help locate the relative power and control in market systems. The market network commonly associated with wholesale and export trade in this model is called a dendritic system. It connects producers to a gateway city or port, known as a primate centre, through a series of higher order bulking-up centres that exercise a monopoly over the smaller centres in their hinterland.⁶⁹ Such analysis has only rarely been applied to the

⁶⁹ Delafosse, "Le commerce du vin d'Auxerre", p. 204, based on the farm for aides. The

Map 3. Detailed map of total fines in the Loire region

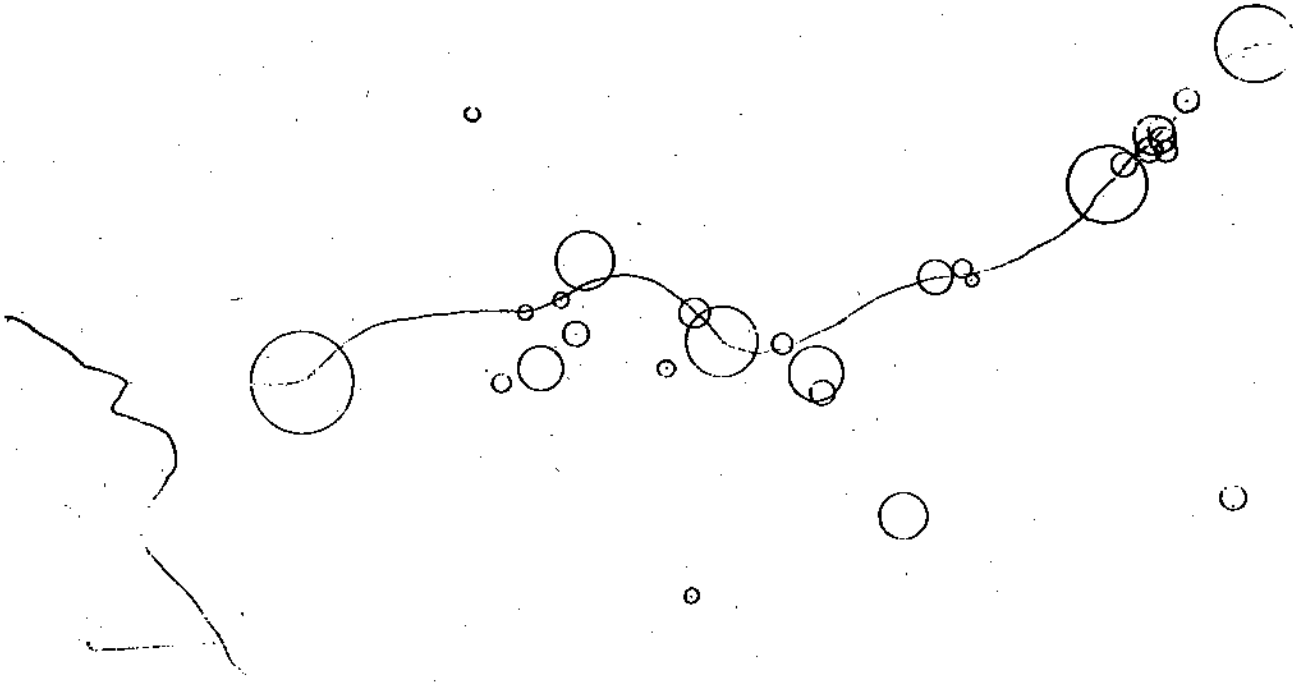


Table 1. Individual brokers along the Loire

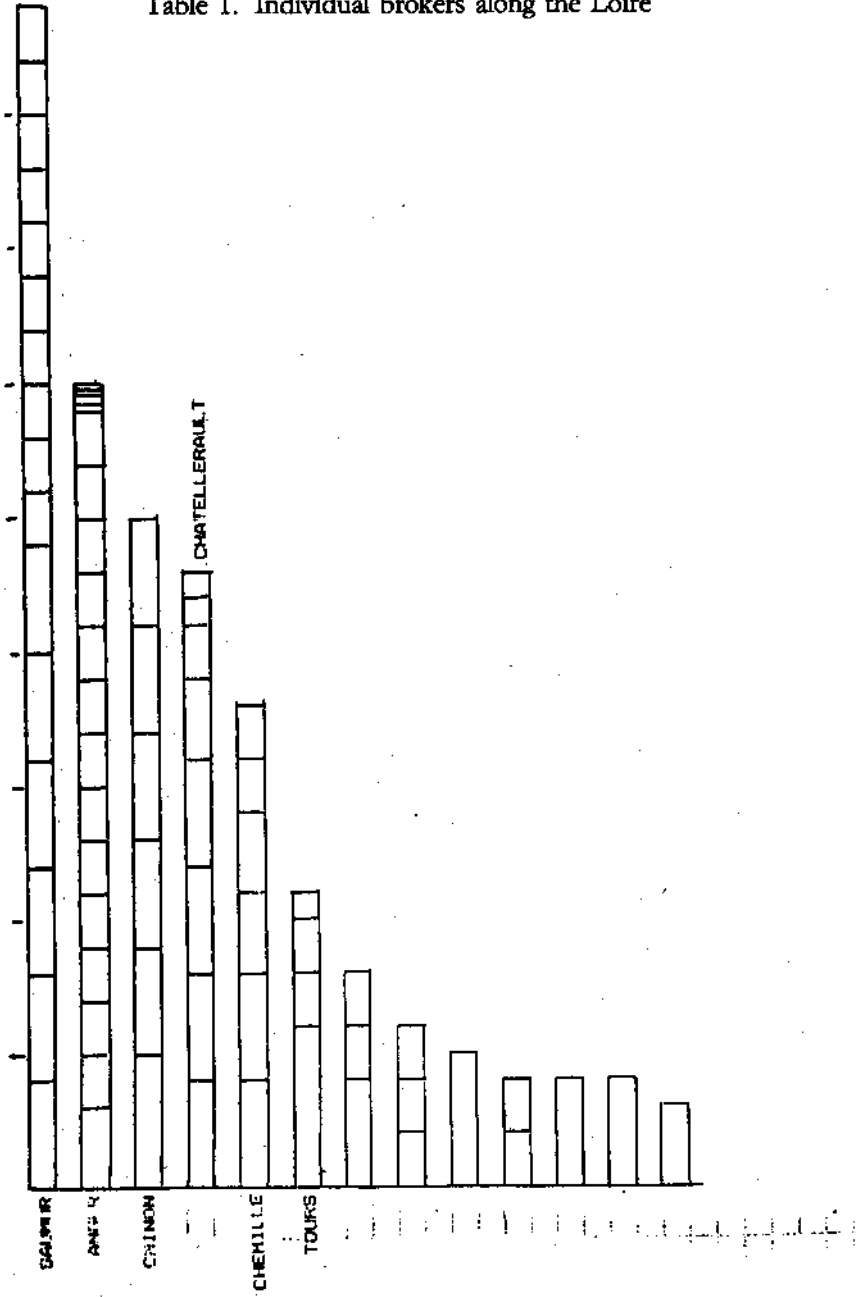


Table 2. Individual brokers along the Marne

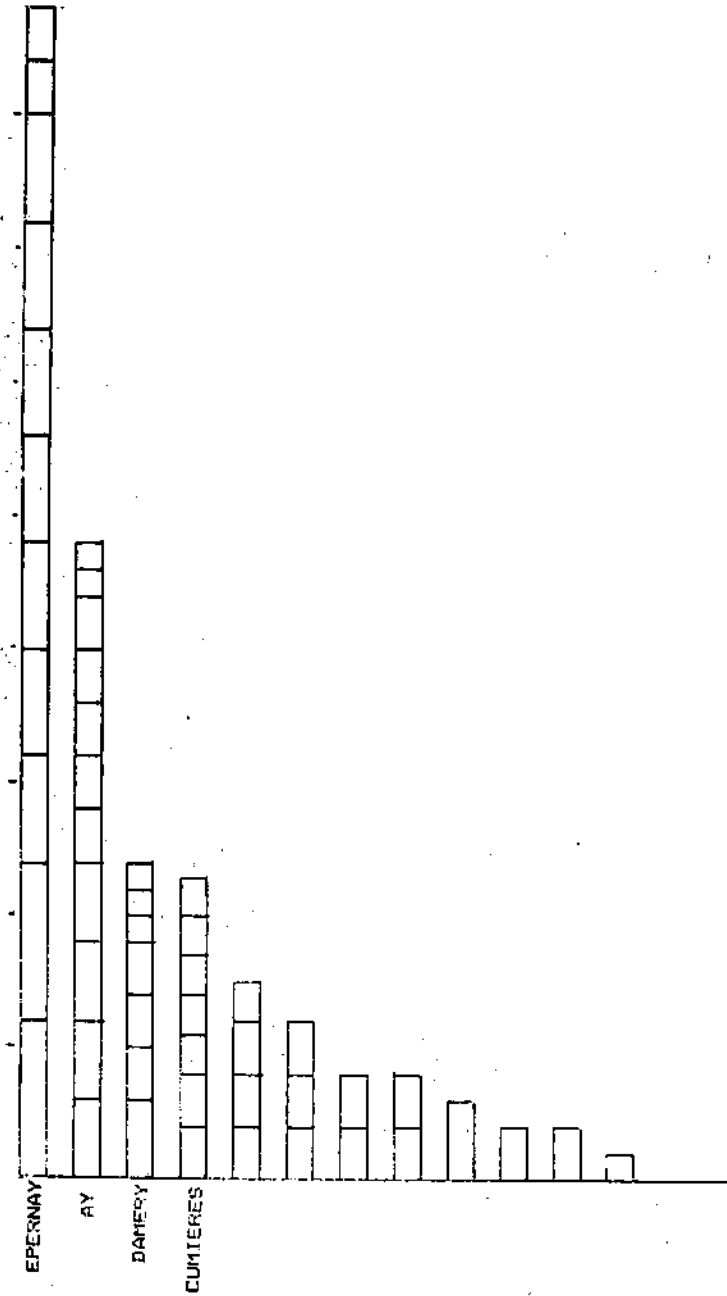
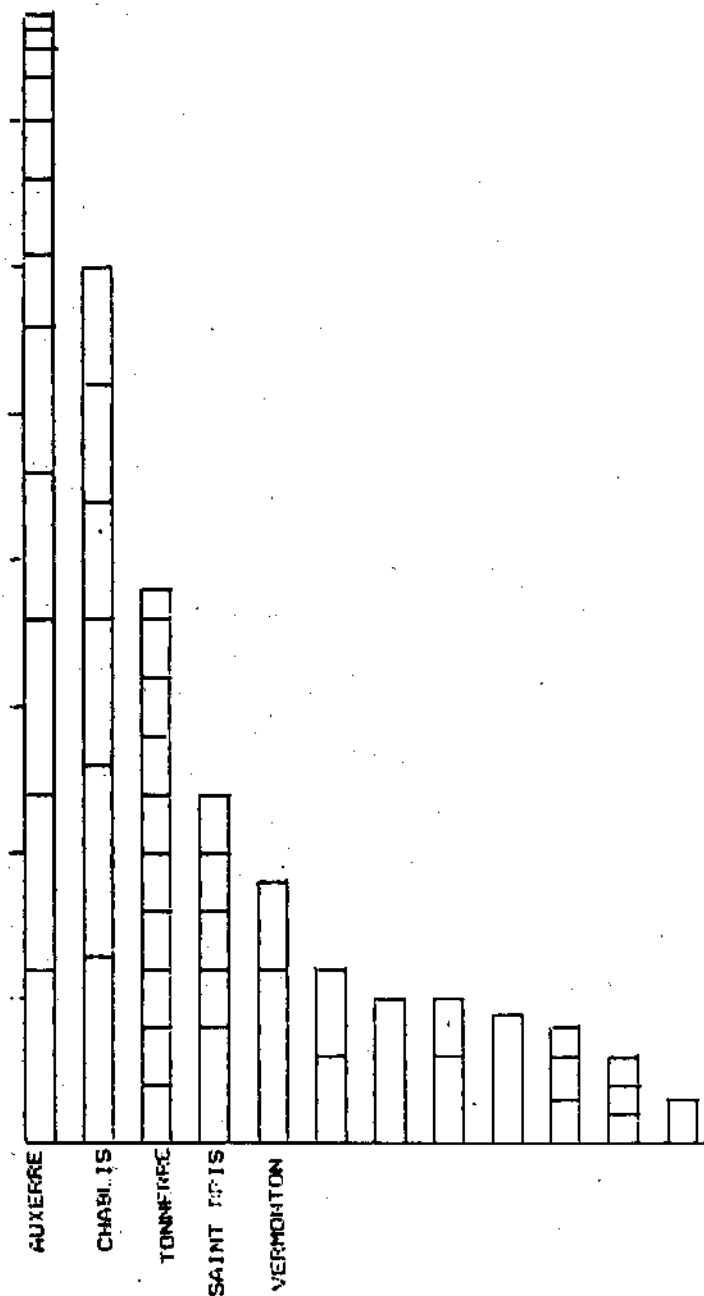


Table 3. Individual brokers in lower Burgundy



organization of a single-commodity market, for the theory has largely been developed in the context of general economic systems, that is, the location of complex markets that deal in a range of goods and services. Nevertheless, the model draws attention to important dynamics in the market.

The wine trade showed clear tendencies to conform to the shape of a dendritic system, though not in the zones immediately around primate centres. The primate centres in Paris and the three large export cities exercised such control over their immediate hinterlands that they were surrounded only by very small-scale brokers. No intermediate-size markets and no brokers of any real stature could be found linking the lowest level of broker to these huge markets. The work on dendritic systems suggests that such complete hegemony, lacking any intermediate brokers, indicates artificial restraints that had limited the normal articulation of a supply network.⁷⁰ Such restraints are not difficult to find in the case of France's export entrepôts: in the monopolies created by Bordeaux's privileges, by the 20-league rule around Paris, and by the tax barrier upstream from Nantes at Ingrandes. The primacy of Bordeaux had so distorted the region around it that it lacked any intermediate centres. No hierarchy had developed between the top and bottom layer because the supply region was easily accessible to Bordeaux and its merchants had little need for local expertise or credit assistance that might have stimulated a local brokerage with some power. Instead, local brokers were taxed, and apparently operated, at a trivial level. Paris' hinterland was essentially similar, though the city drew less of its supply from its immediate neighbourhood.

The interior market network was more complicated. On the one hand, the lower Loire looks much like the dendritic model, with important intermediate brokers in the regional centres who, in turn, exercised substantial control over their own hinterlands. In sharp contrast to the insignificant markets surrounding Bordeaux and Paris, the lower Loire had a number of important

size of the town had little to do with the size of the fine, though there is a modest correlation, $r = .3417$, between population and fine for towns in the interior. In the neighbourhood of Auxerre, St. Bris had only one-sixth the population of Auxerre yet was fined one-third the amount; Vermenton had 40% more people than St. Bris but paid 25% less tax. Chablis had less than a fifth the population of Auxerre but three-quarters of its fine. In Champagne, Ay had roughly the same population as Epernay but paid half as much; Cumieres had half the population of Mareuil but owed five times more.

⁷⁰ See Carol A. Smith, *Regional Economic Systems: linking geographical models and socioeconomic problems*, I, pp. 34-39, and Klara Bonsack Kelley, *Dendritic Central-Place Systems*, I, pp. 221-34, both in C. A. Smith, *Regional Analysis*, 2 vols (London, 1976). These authors treat the dendritic system as a tool for analyzing wholesale trade, whereas traditional central-place theory has theoretical application only to retail networks. For a study considering the trade networks of a single commodity that uses the dendritic model, see Gordon Appleby, "Export Monoculture and Regional Social Structure in Puno, Peru", in Smith, *Regional Analysis*, I, pp. 291 ff. The concept of primacy itself implies a certain degree of discontinuity between the size of the primate centre and its connected markets — the question is how much?

intermediate markets in Saumur, Angers, Chinon, and Chatellerault. Brokers in these markets handled brokering over a wide area, thus obviating the need for brokers in most of the small centres around them. The intermediate markets in this region had gained the balance of power, perhaps because of their distance from the ultimate port city. On the other hand, those regions connected to Paris were organized much less hierarchically. Between the primate centre (Paris) and the low-level villages producing wine, there were fewer intermediate centres than along the Loire. And unlike the Loire region, the intermediate centres had gained little control of their surrounding markets. The result was a system in between extreme primacy and a dendritic model.⁷¹

The wine trade in lower Burgundy had many small centres all connected by brokers directly to Paris. Only Auxerre clearly performed as an intermediate centre, handling wine from smaller centres throughout Burgundy. Although the size of Chablis' fine suggests it could have been an intermediate centre, its proximity to Auxerre apparently worked against it. Where brokers in Auxerre acquired wine from Beaune and Chablis for merchants in Paris, brokers in Chablis drew on a much smaller area immediately around them.⁷² Similarly Epernay, at twice the fine of Ay and four or five times the fine of other neighbours, was essentially the only intermediate centre in Champagne. Brokers in Epernay drew their wines from many of the smaller centres along the Marne, but these small centres also dealt directly with Paris. Such a pattern indicates that the ultimate primate centre, in this case Paris, still exercised the principal control over the whole system and that intermediate centres had gained relatively little independence from the centre ranked above or dominance over centres ranked below them.

Records from this period attest to the unsophistication, even incoherence, of the markets in the extended supply zone around Paris. In 1713 a Parisian wine merchant visited more than a dozen towns and villages in Burgundy and the upper Loire in search of wines. The bulk of his purchases came from the large regional markets, like Auxerre, Chablis, Blois and Orléans, where he dealt with

⁷¹ According to Smith, *Regional Economic Systems*, p. 32, "primacy reflects the political administration of an economy in which competitive forces are minimized". This extreme primacy is not clearly distinguished from what Kelly, *Dendritic Central-Place Systems*, p. 233, calls an "immature dendritic system."

⁷² The concept of log-linear or rank-size distribution, which is often used to identify relationships between cities and expresses forces that have little to do with single-commodity trading (see, for example Paul Hohenberg & Lynn Lees, *The Making of Urban Europe* [Cambridge, 1985]), is useful in this context to compare the existence of regularly incremented intermediate markets. Thus fines in markets along the Loire come close to a rank-size distribution in relation to Nantes. Saumur owed 46% of Nantes' fine, Angers 31%, Chinon 26%, Chatellerault 24%, Chemille 18%, and Tours 12%. In contrast, the markets along the Marne in relation to twice Epernay's fine would have a more concave sequence: 50%, 27%, 14%, 13%, 10%, 9%. Lower Burgundy in relation to twice Auxerre's fine would be less concave than Champagne: 50%, 38%, 24%, 15%, 11%, 8%.

brokers who had in turn acquired wines from the smaller centres in their areas. The broker in Auxerre, for example, acquired other wine in the neighbourhood, particularly from St. Bris and Coulanges. He also acted as a shipping agent for wines going from Beaune through Auxerre to Paris, but these were wines that the Parisian had acquired himself in trips to Beaune.⁷³ At the same time, however, the Parisian wine merchant visited and made purchases directly from brokers in several smaller centres, like Irancy and Beaugency. His purchases tended to be greatest in the biggest markets, but he either could not, or chose not to, dispense with visits to the smaller markets. Rather than having one contact to handle all his purchases, the Parisian merchant worked with several brokers in each region. His itinerary indicates that brokers in the intermediate markets had not yet taken over the markets of the smaller towns, that no entrepreneur in the regions he visited had emerged with sufficient initiative or power to handle the brokerage of a large area. The accounts of another broker in Auxerre at this period show him acquiring wines, which he sent uniquely to merchants in Paris, either directly from producers in the villages around him, like Coulanges and Cravant, or occasionally from brokers in Chablis, Beaune and Chalon.⁷⁴ But brokers in Chablis were also in direct contact with Paris. Thus the small centres in lower Burgundy and the upper Loire might deal directly with Paris, or send their wine through an intermediate centre; the two systems co-existed and competed.

The map of wine brokers reveals the existence of two fundamentally different types of brokers and market systems. Brokers on the periphery of the kingdom, those connected to international commerce, demonstrated a level of organization and economic power that resulted from centuries of contact with both the great sophistication and enormous wealth of foreign merchants. In contrast their colleagues in the kingdom's interior seem less developed in both structure and function. Bordeaux, Nantes, and to a lesser extent Reims and Beaune, fit the model of an export entrepôt, which became the hegemonic centre of regional markets. Paris indirectly appears to have exerted a similar control over its immediate hinterland. In contrast, brokers in the interior were the tap-roots extending deep into distant wine regions, far enough from the ultimate entrepôts that they acted independently. These long-distance brokers were dealing, in many cases, with substantial amounts of wine and becoming important business men, yet the map shows that this internal market was still fragmented and ill-organized compared to the export cities.

Many wine regions in the interior lacked a clear centre, leaving brokers in

⁷³ See inventories after death of Elizabeth Froment, 1 June 1719 in AD Yonne, 3E 24-2, and of Jean Soufflot, 25 May 1689, in 3E 66-29, for evidence that these brokers bought only from growers within ten kilometres.

⁷⁴ AD Seine, D⁷B⁶, journal of Paul Herbelin, marchand de vin en gros, 1713-14. Thus Herbelin paid Robinet for the "expenses" of wine shipped from Chalon and Beaune through Auxerre. Two Robinets, listed in the tax rolls for 5,000 and 6,000 L., were among the five biggest brokers in Auxerre.

several neighbouring towns, and even villages, to vie for the trade to distant markets. In lower Burgundy, a substantial core of the brokers resided in Auxerre, but any more operated at nearly the same scale in the surrounding villages. Much of the Champagne, especially the region around Epernay was similarly dispersed. Despite the massive fines levied on brokers in Epernay, there were many more brokers operating at a respectable, if somewhat less impressive, scale in the towns around Epernay. Blois also shared its control of the wine brokerage with numerous villages in its hinterland. This plethora of small markets involved in the brokerage trade suggests the underdevelopment of the market hierarchy linking the local wine-producing regions to the primary centre of demand.

To the extent that models developed for large-scale trading systems may be applied to a single commodity, the dendritic model has interesting implications for understanding how the wine trade operated. Anthropologists point out that the hierarchical aspects of a dendritic system give merchants at the primate centre the advantages of monopolistic control over price information and credit.⁷⁵ Intermediate centres, where they exist, can share some of these advantages over the lower levels in the system. Thus the dependence of many source sites on a single gateway centre, or on single intermediate centres in between, creates asymmetrical relationships between the different levels of the trade network. These relationships could change if the wine producers found independent access to larger markets. There was also room for a changing balance of power between the gateway and the intermediate centres if these last could monopolize contacts between both ends of the trade. There is evidence that suggest that these processes were at work in the eighteenth century.⁷⁶ But it is obvious that one survey at a single point in time can give little indication of how the system was changing. It can only alert us to structural potential.

Much work is obviously required to give life to a theoretical model and to turn a static map of brokers into a history of the wine trade; this is only the beginning. Yet a useful little reference book may give us a quick glimpse of how the brokerage system would change over the course of the century, becoming more like a classic dendritic system. A commercial almanac surveying merchants and brokers in France just before the Revolution shows that the brokerage system in Burgundy and Champagne had evolved substantially in the direction of the hierarchy along the Loire. Most of the smallest centres in Burgundy, like Irancy, Cravant, and Champs no longer had brokers, and Saint Bris and Tonnerre had drastically fewer.⁷⁷ Instead the almanac advised readers to contact brokers in the intermediate centres of Auxerre and Chablis to handle their purchases throughout the whole area. In Champagne, only Epernay and Reims continued to have

⁷⁵ AD Yonne, 3E-20, 9 September 1718.

⁷⁶ Carol A. Smith, Economics of Marketing Systems. Models from Economic Geography, *Annual Review of Anthropology* III (1974), pp. 177-78.

⁷⁷ See for example, Gadille, *Le Vignoble de la côte bourguignonne*, pp. 375-79.

brokers.⁷⁸ Long-distance trade now worked through an orderly hierarchy, and Parisian readers had no need to contact the lowest level of supply centres directly. This evolution represents both a tendency to agglomeration and an increasing efficiency in the supply network, but it also entailed greater control in the hands of intermediate brokers, many of whom were in the process of founding commercial houses that still flourish.

Triumph of the private

One of the most revealing aspects of the brokerage tax was its failure. Letters back to the traitants show that the attempt to organize and control this market met overwhelming resistance from every level of society: from the intendants down to the vigneron selling his wine. Those in a position of power criticized the tax assessments or simply refused to comply. They scrambled for ways to avoid royal control of brokers and to maintain existing brokers without disruption. Those without power resorted to fraud and violence to thwart any attempt to impose new middlemen on the wine trade. A memoir reviewing the situation shortly after the creation of the tax rolls shows us that the traitants knew they were in trouble.⁷⁹ Although they had “estimate[d] at least 150,000 L. from this generality [of Orléans] it being one of those where there is the biggest commerce in wine and spirits and where the brokers have the largest fortunes”, they had to admit that the city of Orléans had been recalcitrant and (initially) refused to turn in a roll of fines. The intendants of both Soissons and Tours were also causing problems, refusing to verify their rolls for various reasons, but “the excuses of the intendant [of Tours] do not appear truthful...” Here, the traitants were beginning to revise their goals: the roll for Tours had reached 182,500 L. in fines but they acknowledged that they could hope for no more than 100,000 L. The estates of Burgundy had sent a request “containing poor arguments” and there too the estimates were being lowered. The traitants had come up with a total of 344,500 L. in fines for Bordeaux, but the intendant had suggested they ask for only 126,000 L. “as in 1691”. Yet Bordeaux was the “best department for our affair and the place where the courtiers have made the largest fortunes” so the traitants hoped still for 200,000 L.

Perhaps the most common problem facing this whole system was the resistance

⁷⁸ René Durand, *Le Commerce en Bourgogne à la veille de la révolution française, Les Annales de Bourgogne* II (1930), pp. 221-34, 326-36, is based on information in the *Almanach général du commerce, des marchands négociants, armateurs de la France...* (Paris, 1788 and 1789-90).

⁷⁹ Gournay, *Tableau général des marchands* (1789-90). This later edition skipped some of the smaller towns mentioned in the 1788 edition, according to Durand, “Le Commerce en Bourgogne”, p. 222, though few without brokers in Burgundy. Most of the small towns in Champagne are not listed, but Ay and Mareuil-sur-Ay have an entry and no mention of brokers.

it faced from the private market. The controller general received numerous complaints from newly created official brokers about the private brokers who flouted the law, continuing to conduct business, and about the wine merchants who abetted them. The two men who had acquired the offices of broker in Villeneuve St George and Ablon (south of Paris) were writing in 1707 to protest the violations that had been going on since they took office in June of 1705. They named six men "and others" who were still interfering in their function of broker and "have not ceased taking commissions from wine merchants from Paris and abroad". All six of the interlopers had already been fined between one and two thousand livres for acting as brokers without title before 1705. The plaintiffs cited numerous reports of violations since then and claimed to be "without functions and frustrated from [gaining] their fees, which made it impossible to pay the traitant".⁸⁰ Eight official brokers of Meaux had to complain to the conseil d'etat that the "former courtiers who did not wish to acquire [the office] boast of selling and buying and shipping wines despite the supplicants".⁸¹ In the same way, former brokers had driven the new owner of six offices around Chablis and Irancy to appeal to the king for help. "They have threatened to destroy and burn the houses" of his clerk and procureurs "if they got involved in wine brokering". Of course this is exactly what the plaintiff had paid 17,050 L. to be able to do but he faced stiff resistance from the whole community. "All the inhabitants, wine merchants and vigneronns have treated his clerks with contempt saying that such an establishment [the official broker] was capable of ruining the wine trade and that they would only deal with the former brokers". Against such hostility "he has earned nothing useful since ... he had made this acquisition".⁸² A judicial memoir reviewing the situation later in the century suggests that the tax was simply abandoned: "This edict [of November 1704] appears not to have been entirely executed, except in Paris... It was not executed in the rest of the kingdom".⁸³

Brokers had escaped the realm of the public servant and had become indispensable to the civil realm of the increasingly private market. The offices would be officially suppressed by an *arret du conseil* in September 1706, for the last time, and brokers were on their own.⁸⁴ The government would try to police them on occasion in the future, but abandoned any attempt to turn them into officials.

⁸⁰ AN, G⁷ 1507, *mémoire* of 27 March 1705.

⁸¹ AN, G⁷ 1508, letter from Charles Huet et Edme Mathieu, no date.

⁸² AN, G⁷ 1507, request presented to the king in his council, no date. The brokers' complaints were incorporated into an *arrêt de conseil* of 28 July 1705 that forbade anyone without the office to involve themselves in the brokerage.

⁸³ AN, G⁷ 1508, *mémoire* of Merite, dated 4 June 1706. See also G⁷ 1507, for the undated contract by which Pierre Charles Dubois, bourgeois de Paris agreed to pay 15,500 L., plus a ten percent surcharge, to the traitant for these six offices. Merite says he acquired them "under the name of Dubois".

⁸⁴ BN, Collection Joly de Fleury, Ms 1336, fol. 12-15; the memoir is unsigned and undated but was clearly provoked by an incident in 1739 and may well have been written by Joly de Fleury.

