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**Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte**

Herausgegeben vom Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris

(Institut historique allemand)

Band 9 (1981)

DOI: 10.11588/fr.1981.0.50900

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STEVEN L. KAPLAN

THE LUXURY GUILDS IN PARIS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY\*

*Le Luxe a pour cause première ce mécontentement de notre état; ce désir d'être mieux, qui est & doit être dans tous les hommes.*

Encyclopédie (Neufchâtel, 1765), IX, 763

Guilds were not excrescences or anachronisms in eighteenth-century French society. They were organic parts of a global, hierarchic corporate structure that embraced, or rather aspired to embrace, all of France. The guilds were communities (*communautés*) or corporations of artisans and merchants associated for the purpose of commercial advantage, social prestige, mutual assistance, and moral edification. Many of the Parisian corporations traced their origins, with more or less verisimilitude, to the early days of the monarchy. There were over a hundred corporations functioning in the capital at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The masters who composed them represented the *sanior pars* of the world of work. They exercised a babel of crafts and trades that dealt with every human need, the most pressing and the most vain. They covered a vast social distance, from masters – corporate *hobereaux* – who barely eked out their daily bread – to the grande noblesse of the Six Corps. They were custodians of a tradition and an ideology that were to remain very much alive well into the nineteenth century.

This is a study of the structures of a number of those corporations that specialized in what most Parisians – most Europeans – did not need and could not afford. Their relationship with the market and with their particular clientele and the image of themselves with which that relationship helped to endow them are more than anything else what distinguish the »luxury« guilds from their sister-corporations. Luxury is, of course, a protean and relative notion, especially in a society as restless as eighteenth-century France, a society that was at once changing rapidly and desperately trying to remain the same. Surely more and more expensive items of decoration became accessible to more and more buyers as the century generated more and more wealth. Luxury must be perceived in socially differential terms: for a substantial segment of the laboring poor, for example, mirrors were purchases of great self-indulgence (unlike, say, ivory crucifixes, which cost more); the fact that one finds more and more of them in after-death inventories suggests new conquests for a certain kind of luxury production. Without overlooking the makers of mirrors, I have focussed on the guilds that manufactured and/or procured merchandise aimed especially at an elite of

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\* This study was prepared for the symposium »Möbelkunst und Luxusmarkt im 18. Jahrhundert« organized by Professor M. Stürmer at Nürnberg, 23–25 April 1981.

affluence and influence, the socio-economic analogue in the (European) society at large to the luxury guilds themselves in the corporate world of the *arts et métiers*.

## I. The Corporate Power Elite

Most corporations were governed by a relatively small group of masters, who constituted a council of elders that sometimes had formal status and sometimes did not. Seniority was a necessary but not sufficient precondition for cooptation into this sanhedrin. One also had to entertain views that corresponded to the prevailing line of the leadership, one had to have a business solid enough to permit frequent absences for corporate activities, and it was helpful if one were related by blood or marriage to one or more of the guild fathers. One's place as an elder was not fully consecrated until one was elected to an administrative post, variously styled *garde*, *juré*, *sindic*, *directeur*, *principal*. The inner circle was dominated by former officers who in most cases were responsible for choosing their successors.

### *Recruitment and Self-Perpetuation*

One can obtain a sense of the oligarchical weight by looking at the composition of electoral and ordinary business assemblies. For the election of three *jurés*, the *menuisiers-ébénistes* convoked all the elders plus twenty-four others drawn from the pools of recent masters (*modernes* with up to ten or fifteen years of membership) and very recent masters (*jeunes*). Only the college of former *jurés*, however, chose the *principal*, who oversaw the entire administration. The *orfèvres'* assembly included all former and present officers, plus ten elders, ten *modernes* and ten *jeunes*. But a nominating committee composed of six ex-officers and six current officers proposed the candidates. The *brodeurs*, the *peigniers-tabletiers*, and the *peintres-sculpteurs* each summoned all the elders and a combined delegation of forty *modernes* and *jeunes* to their electoral assemblies. The *fabricants de draps d'or, d'argent et de soye* convened all former officers, thirty elders, twenty *modernes*, and ten *jeunes*. The *peintres-sculpteurs* clearly articulated the reasons for not mustering the entire membership: »in order to prevent plots and cabals that could influence the said elections.«<sup>1</sup>

»Since it is obvious«, according to an *orfèvre* publication, that the nominating committee »had in view only the names of those persons best equipped to fill the functions of *juré*, it is rare that its recommendations are not approved.«<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, in 1785 and again in 1789, there were several candidates for each *orfèvre* post. But in 1785 only one of eight losing candidates attracted any votes and in 1789 only the winners received votes from some sixty electors. In 1736 there was only one candidate for the post of *grand garde*, but the race for *accountant-garde* appears to have been hotly contested.<sup>3</sup> In 1770 the *drapiers* presented only one man for each position, and the electoral assembly of this large corporation seems to have consisted of only

<sup>1</sup> Article XXII, *Nouveaux règlements* (1738), Bibliothèque Nationale, F 22812.

<sup>2</sup> *Tableau général des marchands et maîtres orfèvres* (1776), Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 4615.

<sup>3</sup> Archives Nationales, Y 9396.

twenty-eight electors.<sup>4</sup> The merciers put up only one person for grand garde in 1772, yet six masters ran for the other two garde vacancies.<sup>5</sup> The winning candidate for first adjoint of the épiciers in 1789 garnered sixteen votes, as opposed to one each for his two unsuccessful rivals.<sup>6</sup> Surprisingly, absenteeism in the electoral assemblies seems to have been fairly common, though the statutes of a number of guilds threatened sanctions for this sort of civic abdication.

Business assemblies, in which general policy was established and accounts reviewed, were even more elitist.<sup>7</sup> The fabricants de draps d'or called only ex-officers. The menuisiers-ébénistes, miroitiers and tapissiers marshalled all the elders. An instruction guide drafted for the gardes orfèvres noted that assemblies of the whole corporation were »rarely« convoked and that most all business was conducted by the elders.<sup>8</sup> The plumassiers allowed two modernes to attend, the doreurs sur métaux fifteen modernes and jeunes combined, and the peintres-sculpteurs twenty modernes and jeunes. The latter corporation warned that any master who entered a business assembly without an authorization would face a fine of 100 livres; if he tried a second time to penetrate a meeting he would be banned forever from corporate deliberations. To pre-empt any sort of grassroots remonstrance or recall movement, the menuisiers-ébénistes explicitly forbade any master not in a leadership post to call an assembly or »to trouble that peace and union« of the guild in any other ways – language similar, it is interesting to note, to that used in reference to journeyman discipline. The lapidaires similarly restricted the right to rally assemblies to jurés; along with the peintres-sculpteurs, they insisted that all masters called to assemble had to behave with »decency«, use »moderation« in speech, avoid »exciting tumults«, speak only when recognized according to the order of seniority, and accept a decision by plurality vote.

Most of the guilds required that juré candidates have ten years' mastership and be of »probity, good conduct, and recognized capacity«; »solvent«, added the circumspect miroitiers; »of good morals«, demanded the exigent orfèvres. The number of jurés per corporation varied considerably: the menuisiers-ébénistes had six, plus a principal; the peintres had four directeurs; the plumassiers two jurés; the lapidaires had three jurés; the brodeurs and the gantiers four each; the orfèvres six gardes, seconded by four aydes; the tapissiers twelve petits jurés in addition to three garde-jurés. Generally the jurés or gardes served for a two-year term (three years for the fabricants de draps d'or), and half of them retired each year.

### *Protecting Corporate Interests*

The jurés were the stewards of the guild's interests. Their major preoccupation was the protection and the enhancement of the guild's privileges and prerogatives. They kept

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 11 December 1770.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 9 December 1772.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 8 October 1789. Cf. Y 9384 for the miroitiers (8 May 1752) and the fabricants de draps d'or (7 December 1755).

<sup>7</sup> The minutes of very few guild deliberations survive. The orfèvres, in their meetings, dealt with elections, audits and finances, upkeep of the bureau (permission to buy new chairs), charitable enterprises (a project submitted by the philanthropist-philosophe Chamousset), and jurisdictional problems (the claims of the Cour des Monnoyes). See Archives Nationales, K 1045.

<sup>8</sup> Journal pour servir à Msrs les Gardes de l'Orfèvrerie (1689), Archives Nationales, T 14902.

relentless watch on the guild's borders for signs of transgression and they probed propinquitous or »analagous« guilds for signs of weakness. Usually after consultation with the elders, they commissioned suits against other guilds or effected seizures of the tools and goods of members of other corporations. They constantly solicited police sentences and parliamentary and royal arrêts to bolster their claims and enhance their prestige and leverage. The jurés were zealous archivists: each title, each subpoena, each receipt, and each piece of legislation was (potentially) pregnant with significance in case of an investigation or of litigation.<sup>9</sup> It is especially worth mentioning in regard to the luxury guilds that the jurés also had to defend the corporate interests against the micro-corporations of merchant-artisans of their own profession who enjoyed direct monarchical protection as »privileged« dealers »following the royal court«. They were strategically placed to obtain important orders from Versailles and they aroused deep jealousies on the part of the Paris masters.<sup>10</sup>

### *Usurpers*

In order to protect the quasi-monopoly of their guild, the jurés had to check not only collective encroachments by other corporations – relatively easy to discern and challenge – but also clandestine infiltration by individuals. The jurés tirelessly hunted down the so-called *faux-ouvriers*, or *ouvriers sans qualité*, though it seems certain in global terms that they were drastically unsuccessful in removing them as a competitive force. Installed in rooms hidden in boarding houses or in apartment-dwellings (thus *chambrelans*), sometimes located in the juridically »privileged« enclaves or in colleges or in convents, and often operating with the encouragement or protection of various private or seigneurial jurisdictions in the capital (such as the abbot of St.-Germain-des-Prés) or of renegade masters or widow-masters of the corporation, these »false« workers were quite commonly skilled journeymen or *allowés* who had lost hope, or for lack of apprenticeship never could entertain any hope, of reaching mastership. The menuisiers-ébénistes denounced them as the »disturbers of the repose of the guild« and pursued them wherever they scented a lead. When they uncovered a *faux-ouvrier* they either sought a royal order to jail him in order to set a well-publicized example or they simply seized his tools and goods and had him arraigned by a police commissaire.<sup>11</sup> (The police evinced much more enthusiasm for collaborating with the jurés in tracking down clandestine workers with no ascribed place in the world of work and as such threats to the public order than in jousting with rival guilds over matters of privilege and status that affected the public order indirectly or marginally). The jurés of the lapidaires, the miroitiers, the doreurs, the éventailistes, and horlogers also

<sup>9</sup> See the Inventaire general des archives de la maison commune du corps des marchands orfèvres (1736), Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, the Mémoire pour Clair Baudry, menuisier privilégié (1704), Bibliothèque Nationale, F FM 953.

<sup>11</sup> See Archives Nationales, Y 15365, 11 June 1749 and 25 September 1758; Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 10321, 16 August 1728; Guide des corps des marchands et des communautés des arts et métiers, Paris 1766, p. 340; arrêt du parlement, 12 October 1748 and police sentences of 19 November 1762 and 12 January 1763 and article XII of the statutes, in Statuts des menuisiers-ébénistes, Paris 1751, pp. 14–15, 193, 306–16, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 4209; Alfred FRANKLIN, Dictionnaire historique des arts, métiers et professions, Paris 1906, p. 135.

conducted frequent inspections »of the rooms«. <sup>12</sup> The lieutenant general of police congratulated the tapissiers for reducing their mastership fees, for he saw this as a disincentive for journeymen to set up outside the guild. <sup>13</sup>

The orfèvres complained that an »infinity of false workers« menaced the well-being of many masters, especially the modest ones, by »diminishing the amount of available work« and »taking their clients away with lower prices«. The guild as an institution suffered because the ruined masters could not pay their portion of corporate and royal impositions. The false workers were inexorably cankered: »they live as libertines« precisely because they were free of the masters' tutelage and because they did not subscribe completely to »the statutes of the profession«, i.e., the guild. Yet these libertines were enterprising and skillful, for they sold their goods without difficulty and they kept rigorous account-books. They betrayed corporate-like signs of solidarity: they aided one another with loans of tools and money and they warned each other about impending visits by the jurés or the police. What scandalized the orfèvre jurés more than anything else was the fact that many weak-willed masters and widows »let themselves be seduced [into protecting the faux ouvriers] by a recompense as derisory as it is illegal«. Nor could the masters and widows »indirectly transfer the faculty of practicing orfèvrerie« by »associating« with journeymen or other workers. So crucial did the orfèvres consider this problem that they named four ayde-jurés specifically to devote all their duty time to exposing false workers. In December 1703 a sentence condemned master Molin to close his shop for a year »for having lent his name and stamp to journeymen«, while a few years earlier widow Robert suffered a fine of fifty livres for taking in journeyman Vaucourt as her partner. <sup>14</sup> The orfèvres also obtained legislation that threatened apartment owners with the loss of a year's rent for leasing to clandestine workers and administrators of colleges and convents with fines of 500 livres and the loss of temporal income for offering them refuge. <sup>15</sup>

The jurés identified another source of false workers as well as a cause of dilution of the standards of recruitment in the »privileged« training grounds of the Galleries du Louvre and the Gobelins where orfèvres and other craftsmen functioned under royal aegis. At the Louvre, according to the juré orfèvres, masters took in apprentices aged 20, 30 or 40 for the sole purpose of collecting the fees paid for their placement. These »so-called apprentices« set themselves up in shops protected by »cowardly« masters and widows. At the Gobelins, where there was no formal apprenticeship, journeymen obtained places in the hope of reaching mastership more readily than by the standard route. But instead of patiently perfecting their talents and »awaiting their time«, these

<sup>12</sup> Archives Nationales, Y 15364 (27 July 1747, 14 September 1741, 18 November 1746, 22 October 1746, 20 December 1749) and Y 15363 (20 September 1758, 30 October 1751).

<sup>13</sup> Avis, 22 May 1719, in *Nouveaux recueil des statuts et reglemens des Tapissiers*, Paris 1756, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 4 J 2361.

<sup>14</sup> Arrêt de la cour des monnoyes, 18 August 1698 and 10 December 1703 and arrêt du parlement, 8 June 1735, Archives Nationales T 1490<sup>10</sup>, fols. 63, 360, 364.

<sup>15</sup> Arrêt de la cour des monnoyes, 17 February 1734, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21797, fols. 292–95; arrêt du conseil, 10 September 1671, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21797, fols. 380–83; arrêt du conseil, 18 March 1684, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21797, fol. 387; arrêt du conseil, 7 March 1679, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21797, fol. 385; police sentences of 16 October 1722 and 8 January 1734, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 8089, fols. 117–20, 215–20; LE ROY, ed., *Statuts et privilèges des marchands et maîtres orfèvres*, Paris 1759, pp. 23–25, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 951.

journeymen became false workers by establishing shops in privileged areas and taking in their own journeymen.<sup>16</sup>

### *In-House Inspection*

The jurés were responsible for policing their own houses as well as inspecting rivals and enemies and ferreting out usurpers. The guild statutes generally required that they make a certain number of formal visits a year: two for the brodeurs and peintres-sculpteurs, four for the menuisiers-ébénistes, lapidaires, peigniers-tabletters and tapissiers, six for the fabricants de drap d'or. For these stipulated visits the jurés were remunerated by a small fee levied on each master (a livre for the tapissiers, 7 sous 6 deniers for the peigniers). In addition, the jurés could make surprise inspections at any time for any reason. The purpose of the visits was to check on standards of quality. Quality control was not merely a pretext for authoritarian officiousness or a rhetorical fetish; it was at the very heart of the corporate project. Till the very end of their existence, the insistence on maintaining rigorous standards remained perhaps the strongest argument in favor of the guild system. Inferior materials and flawed workmanship were simply not tolerated, as much because they tarnished corporate honor as because they harmed the public.<sup>17</sup> The menuisiers-ébénistes, who defined themselves in terms of the exactitude and elegance of their woodwork, had defective work burned, a ritual reaffirmation of their commitment to the highest quality production. The statutory visits of the orfèvres were orchestrated with great pomp: the gardes wore ceremonial robes and made a point of »keeping in marching line according to rank« in order to cast an impression of authority and avoid setting an example of disorder.<sup>18</sup> But they did not hesitate to seize improperly made or unstamped goods, even from masters in good order.<sup>19</sup> To emphasize that no one was exempt from impartial scrutiny, the fabricants de drap d'or elected two former jurés for the sole task of visiting the shops of the six current jurés. Though primarily geared to uncovering defective or fraudulent merchandise, these inspections also enabled the jurés to check on the validity of apprenticeship contracts, journeymen's papers, widows' status, etc.

Illicit competition from the outside was regarded as a grave infringement on corporate privilege. But illicit competition from within was perceived as an even more shameful act precisely because it was committed by brother-masters. The jurés were supposed to make sure that no master lorded it over the others as a result of unfair trade practices. The jurés of the pelletiers spoke up in defense of the small masters against the aggressive and unscrupulous masters. Millon, a wealthy pelletier, opened several shops in the names of »notoriously indigent« masters who no longer enjoyed real corporate existence because they paid neither dues nor taxes and served only as ciphers for Millon's expansionism. On two different occasions, the jurés seized the fur

<sup>16</sup> Gardes to procurator general, circa 1750, Archives Nationales, K 1040, no. 60<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Public security and hygiene were obviously of greater preoccupation to tradesmen such as bakers and butchers than to luxury craftsmen. Still, the jurés of the gantiers-parfumeurs confiscated a powder that caused hair to fall out and engendered other illnesses. Archives Nationales, Y 15364, 20 February 1750.

<sup>18</sup> Journal pour servir à Mrs les gardes de l'orfèvrerie, p. 35, Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Archives Nationales, K 1043, no. 70, 17 June 1754 (Gaillard) and 17 June 1755 (Vallayer).

in the shops and ordered Millon to shut them down. They argued their case on the somewhat inflated grounds that since the »common law of the realm« forbade a subject »to exercise two estates at once«, by analogy a merchant could not operate two shops at once. Such multiple points of commerce would invite all sorts of manipulation, including false bankruptcy. The more concrete reason for the jurés' action was that they were loathe to see »a small number of rich merchants« crush the less successful ones. If multiple shops were permitted, »it would be easy for a handful of wealthy and ambitious merchants to corner a given sort of merchandise and spread it out among different shops that they owned behind names borrowed from the poor merchants.«<sup>20</sup>

### *Financial Management/Mismanagement*

Another capital responsibility of the jurés was financial management. In part because of almost incessant royal fiscal pressure during the last part of the reign of Louis XIV, all the guilds were in debt. During the eighteenth century, the jurés had to meet the sporadic demands imposed by Louis XV and they had to satisfy ordinary needs including debt amortization. Wealthy guilds such as the orfèvres could bear the weight of »repurchasing« and »reuniting« scores of offices (auditors; controllers and visitors of weights and measures; controllers of registers; treasurer-receivers, etc.) created by the state to raise funds primarily to pay for wars.<sup>21</sup> Between 1740 and 1753, to take just one example, the orfèvres floated loans worth 576,950 livres in order to sustain a debt retirement fund and finance the construction of corporate headquarters as well as to purchase royal offices.<sup>22</sup> Less affluent guilds such as the doreurs had to increase mastership fees and sell masterships to aspirants »without quality« – lacking apprenticeship and journeyman probation – in order to repay the loans needed to buy royal offices in the 1740's<sup>23</sup>. The lapidaires were in a double bind: they almost went bankrupt as a result of losing a crucial territorial suit to the orfèvres in the forties. As a result of that defeat, which deprived them of the right to deal in mounted stones, the number of candidates for admission to mastership dropped sharply. In order to spur recruitment, the lapidaires were obliged to lower their entry fees and thus suffer a loss of income at the very moment when they were most pressed for funds.<sup>24</sup>

Financial management was both an external and an internal political matter. If the guild failed to keep its house in order, it would invite royal intervention and regulation. And if the jurés failed to account for income and expenditures in a satisfactory way, they risked provoking serious opposition from within the corporation, as we shall see.

<sup>20</sup> Arrêts du conseil, 16 February and 27 July 1733, Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 Fm 17527. The statutes of the gantiers explicitly prohibited masters from operating more than one shop. The fabricants de draps d'or could not work *à façon* for outsiders nor could the miroitiers hire themselves out to merciers.

<sup>21</sup> For the way in which the orfèvres handled the pressure, see Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>10</sup>, fol. 777 and T 1490<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>4</sup>. On the placing of the loans, see T 1490<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Arrêt du conseil, 21 September 1745, in Statuts et ordonnances des doreurs, ciseleurs, etc., Paris 1774, pp. 268–77, Bibliothèque Nationale, F 26435 and lettres patentes, 18 November 1745, in Statuts et réglemens des doreurs, Paris 1757, pp. 177–81, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 3886.

<sup>24</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 1 September 1760, Statuts et réglemens des lapidaires, pp. 13–26, Bibliothèque Nationale.



Partly in response to internal criticism from disenfranchised masters suspicious of oligarchical manipulation of funds, the royal government began to audit juré accounts more or less exhaustively from the beginning of the reign of Louis XV. The royal commissaires first compelled the jurés to produce their records, which, in the case of some guilds, was no small triumph. Then they forced the jurés to justify virtually every entry, item by item. This surveillance reduced the chances of juré corruption and concomitantly reduced the prospects of intracorporate strife which would probably have led to a democratization of guild politics, but only at the cost of further draining the power and will of the corporations to resist and survive.

The jurés offered as little cooperation as they dared. As a rule, they refused to acknowledge the validity of the initial royal audit. Instead of settling their accounts with the guild – since income was usually greater than expenditures, they were supposed to pay the difference into the treasury – they either laid low and waited or they overtly tried to bargain for a lower settlement. A number of years later – three, five, fifteen – a second audit almost invariably resulted in a considerably reduced gap between expenses and revenue, which meant that the jurés owed the guild a good deal less than the government initially contended. This two-phase procedure was so common that one is tempted to surmise that the first audit – often a devastating critique of the jurés, many of whose claims were brutally deflated and whose carelessness, if not bad faith, was patently exposed – was meant for internal corporate consumption, in order to assuage the mass of *modernes* and *jeunes*, whereas the second audit was a realistic appraisal of what the royal commissaires felt could be recovered from the jurés, or perhaps even the fruit of a straightforward compromise.

According to the audit conducted in January 1753, the *menuisiers-ébénistes* had income of 30,520 livres and expenses of 27,126 livres during the year 1744–45. Thus the outgoing jurés should have remitted the difference, 3,394 livres, to the corporate treasury. Admissions fees of various kinds represented almost 22% of total revenue: 2,933 livres for the reception of seven apprentices to mastership, 585 livres for the reception of two sons of masters born before the mastership of their fathers, 360 livres for the reception of two sons of masters born after their fathers' admission, 1,716 livres for the reception of three »foreign« journeymen, 180 livres for the reception of an apprentice from the Trinity Hospital, and 672 livres for fifty-six apprenticeship contracts. On the expenditures side, the auditors reduced claims for general office expenses from 1,529 to 1,389 livres. The entry for the distribution of *jettons* worth 758 livres to the elders for attendance at guild assemblies was disallowed on the grounds that it was not precisely documented and justified. Expenses of 400 livres allegedly incurred as part of the search for *faux ouvriers* were disallowed for similar reasons. The auditors struck out 1,618 livres for *confrérie* costs because the corporation was not permitted to finance the *confrérie* from its general expense account. Various lawyers' and *huissiers*' fees were pruned. The jurés did not settle their accounts as the auditors demanded, for a second audit occurred seventeen years later and it was predictably more favorable to the corporate fathers: revenue fell to 30,336 livres and expenses increased to 28,889 livres, leaving a balance of 1,447 livres to be paid.

The audit for 1750–51, undertaken in 1763, enumerated income of 38,974 livres and expenses of 28,347 livres. Since the jurés had paid in only 6,938 livres, they still owed the guild 3,689 livres, according to the royal commissaires. Among the revisions

imposed by the auditors, 102 livres for »taxi-carriages taken to surprise suspect journeymen at night« was disallowed; 711 livres for *jettons* for the elders was excised for lack of justification, along with 700 livres for tracking down faux ouvriers; lawyers once again were too lavishly remunerated; office expense claims were reduced from 2,364 to 2,106 livres; a repair bill was two livres more than it should have been. In the second audit that took place in 1770, expenses were raised to 30,353 and revenue slightly diminished so that the jurés were asked to pay only 1,410 livres.

Menuisier-ébéniste income continued to rise, more than keeping up with inflation: 40,096 livres in 1760–61 (with 22,524 livres in expenses) and 71,877 livres in 1770–71 (with 50,618 livres in expenses). The restructuring of the guilds in 1776, however, drastically changed the budgetary configuration. The state assumed all corporate debts and compelled the guilds to give up most of their real property to help defray those expenses. In addition, the new mastership fee schedule reduced revenue substantially and the amalgamation of analogous guilds (the tourneurs and the layetiers, for example, joined the menuisiers-ébénistes) cut down on income from seizures. In 1778, the menuisiers-ébénistes boasted only 13,253 livres in income, broken down as follows:

balance from previous year . . . . .	3,861 livres
seizures . . . . .	257 livres
law suits . . . . .	112 livres
reception of 62 masters . . . . .	6,200 livres
other reception fees . . . . .	500 livres
»for poor masters and widows« (alms?) . . . . .	2,280 livres
miscellaneous . . . . .	42 livres

Expenses amounted to 9,206 livres:

office rental and expenses, wages of clerks, printing, wood, candles . . .	3,650 livres
distribution of alms to poor masters and widows . . . . .	2,280 livres
maintenance of militia . . . . .	381 livres
<i>jettons</i> for assemblies . . . . .	768 livres
(no longer limited to elders)	
legal fees, visits, etc. . . . .	1,507 livres
miscellaneous . . . . .	590 livres

By 1785–86, income had climbed to 20,690 livres (receptions remained the largest rubric) and expenses still hovered around the 9,000 to 10,000 livres mark.<sup>25</sup>

The orfèvres operated on a slightly larger budget, though the disparity is less great than one would have imagined given their reputation for opulence. The March 1759 audit for the year 1750–51 set income at 49,036 livres and expenses at 41,518 livres. Since the jurés had paid only 172 livres, they were debited for 7,346 livres. Reception to mastership alone accounted for over 29% of revenue, while property income (mostly rent) represented another 13%. The auditors chopped down office expenses

<sup>25</sup> Archives Nationales, V<sup>7</sup> 436 and H 2118.

from 8,649 to 4,800 livres, the maximum amount that had been fixed in advance by royal regulation. The jurés came out much better in the second audit conducted seventeen years later. Revenue was adjusted down to 45,864 livres and expenses up to 44,770 livres, leaving a deficit of only 1,094 livres to be covered by the jurés.<sup>26</sup>

The orfèvre jurés, led by the juré-accountant, always sought support from the assembly of elders in order to strengthen their hand against the royal commissaires – a practice that was followed in the other guilds as well. In September 1766, for instance, the assembly voted a motion demanding the restoration of the expenses that the auditors had quashed. The jurés insisted that the ceiling for office expenses, fixed in 1730, was no longer realistic. The cost of meals alone, served to the gardes while at work, amounted to 4,000 livres. They asked for general expenses (including the cost of gold and silver quality testing) to be increased to 13,200 livres, the allowance for religious services and chapel upkeep from 2,200 to 2,800 livres, and the honoraria of the gardes from 1,300 to 2,400 livres.<sup>27</sup>

The magnitude of the merciers' budget matched the extravagance of their corporate pretensions. For 1771, according to the audit of 1777, income amounted to 300,541 livres and expenditures to 206,557 livres. The jurés owed 48,997 livres because they had remitted upon retirement only 44,987 livres. The commissaires reduced a claim for 19,936 livres in charitable distribution to 4,800 livres; 13,010 livres in legal fees were disallowed for lack of documentation; 2,080 livres in expenses at the halle aux toiles was eliminated as unauthorized; 10,120 livres in »honoraria for the secretaries of magistrates in the different tribunals« – bribes and *pourboires*? – was rejected for »lack of details.« The second audit was infinitely less painful to the jurés. Expenses swelled to 252,791 livres and income eroded a bit to 298,041 livres. Suddenly the jurés owed the pittance of 262 livres.<sup>28</sup> It is a shame that we do not know how they managed this feat: new evidence in their favor? Intervention by highly-placed patrons? Courtship and transactions? Battle-fatigue on the part of the royal commissaires?

The following table invites comparison with the finances of several other guilds for the year 1770–71 (in the case of the lapidaires, 1770–72):<sup>29</sup>

guild	Income(livres)		Expenditures(livres)	
	first audit	second	first audit	second
chapeliers	20,601	20,301	7,589	7,710
doreurs	10,596	10,556	4,269	7,213
miroitiers	5,381	5,001	4,531	4,951
lapidaires	7,240	6,840	2,284	4,090

The jurés were also charged with the task of assessing the capitation and twentieth taxes, another subject of internal conflict. The juré doreurs convoked six modernes and six jeunes along with eight elders to draft the tax schedule with them and serve as a sort of moral guarantee of equity to the rest of the guild. Most guilds, however, felt no

<sup>26</sup> Archives Nationales, V<sup>7</sup> 436.

<sup>27</sup> Archives Nationales, K 1045, no. 31.

<sup>28</sup> Archives Nationales, V<sup>7</sup> 436.

<sup>29</sup> Archives Nationales, V<sup>7</sup> 225; V<sup>7</sup> 433; V<sup>7</sup> 436.

compunction about leaving it in the hands of the jurés, seconded by a handful of former jurés. The allocation of the capitation, a graduated tax of 20 »classes« according to the estimated size of one's fortune, gives us a rough idea of the distribution of wealth in the orfèvres' corporation (See graph on page 278).

The distributions are remarkably similar for both years. The merger with the tireurs d'or in 1776 and the lapidaires in 1781 does not appear to have made much difference.<sup>30</sup> Almost half the masters are clustered in the 5 to 25 livres category, which covers a considerable socio-economic expanse, from modest to well-off. A surprisingly large number, over a fifth, are rather poor, according to this criterion. Fewer than a tenth constitute the elite of the genuinely rich.

### *Ministering to the Spirit and the Body*

The jurés administered the religious activities and the social services through which the masters affirmed their identity as a moral and spiritual community. The corporation perceived itself as a brotherhood of piety as well as of skill; communion in the church was no less a guarantee of masterly character than success in business. A number of guilds explicitly required that their members be roman catholic. Virtually all the corporations participated in a cycle of annual religious observances, organized around their patron saints' festivals and the commemoration of deceased confrères. Worship usually took place in the chapel of the confrérie, or confraternity, the institutional extension of the guild in the spiritual realm. The confréries were supported by annual dues collected by the jurés from all the masters, by a share of reception and sometimes apprenticeship fees, by the fines levied by the jurés on masters for various infractions, and by pious foundations constituted by individuals. Confrérie finances were sometimes the subject of internal dispute, for they were not always rigorously managed and they were occasionally used by jurés to conceal dubious manipulations. Nor were masters always forthcoming in paying confraternal dues, either as a protest against putative juré mismanagement, or because they did not care, as the case of the juré menuisiers-ébénistes versus Berlivet testifies.<sup>31</sup> The royal government ordered the jurés to keep corporate and confraternal accounts perfectly separate, and certain guilds such as the lapidaires wrote this injunction into their statutes. One of the junior jurés was habitually in charge of the finances of the confrérie.

The orfèvres founded a chapel in the name of their patron St. Eloy.<sup>32</sup> This cult was supplemented by three »confrairies particuliers«: one named for St. Denis and his fellow martyrs; another in honor of the virgin in the church of Notre-Dame du Blancmesnil; and a third in commemoration of St. Anne and St. Marcel (which rejoined the »common chapel« of St. Eloy in 1712).<sup>33</sup> In 1771, the orfèvres spent 1,286 livres on salaries and expenses for a chaplain, a deacon and a subdeacon, and a choir-master and choir-boys.<sup>34</sup> During part of the century the chaplain was Mathias Gaudin, son of a master orfèvre and former garde of the guild.<sup>35</sup> Among the icons kept in the

<sup>30</sup> See Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Archives Nationales, Y 9390, 15 December 1767.

<sup>32</sup> See Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>1</sup>, fols. 82, 86, 89–91.

<sup>33</sup> Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>10</sup>, fols. 109–44.

<sup>34</sup> Archives Nationales, K 1043, no. 91.

<sup>35</sup> Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>6</sup>, 19 August 1733.

guild office were two reliquaries of St. Eloy, two large silver images of the Saint, and chandeliers decorated with his image.<sup>36</sup> When a master died, the clerk offered the corporate pall and silver for the funeral and he alerted all the masters so that they could attend. In the orfèvres' guild the gardes as a group garbed in robes and carrying candles only joined the processions of former gardes and their widows, reflecting a narrow conception of hierarchical deference, while the gardes of the fabricants de draps d'or were expected to attend the funerals of all masters and their wives.<sup>37</sup>

Guild apologists in the old regime and more recently have made much over the charitable and »mutualist« vocation of the corporations.<sup>38</sup> Yet in fact very little is known about what actually was achieved and how it was done. The lapidaires buried their poor free of charge, but they do not appear to have done a great deal to help them stay alive.<sup>39</sup> The tapissiers pledged that after debts and current expenses were paid, all funds remaining in the pool of fines and fees would be distributed to poor masters, widows and orphans.<sup>40</sup> It is unlikely, however, given the debt burden of the guild and the demands of current accounts, that much was ever left for good works. The orfèvres fashioned an eleemosynary system that gave substance and continuity to their promises. The corporation reserved free lodging to masters and widows of acknowledged indigence – large rooms for families, small ones for individuals. In addition, the gardes granted modest cash allowances that varied in size with the needs of the petitioners. Extraordinary alms for sickness and winter cold supplemented these allowances. The gardes visited all the masters just before St. Eloy's feast and pressured them to donate an amount that the gardes deemed commensurate with the masters' fortune.<sup>41</sup> One might also include under the category of charity the civic donations that the guilds offered to the capital or to the king, either in anticipation of or in response to a prod from above. Thus the menuisiers-ébénistes contributed 7,200 livres toward the construction of four new hospitals in 1787 and 50,000 livres toward the construction of a naval vessel, the latter gesture requiring a loan.<sup>42</sup> In the fall of 1788 the orfèvres offered 6,000 livres to a relief fund for the »unfortunate cultivators struck by the hailstorm of 13 July 1788«.<sup>43</sup>

### *Other Juré Functions*

The jurés performed a number of other important services for the masters and for the guilds. They controlled the process of corporate reproduction, to which we shall devote attention presently. They attempted to control the placement process and more generally they organized the police of work, another theme to be treated shortly. The jurés handled relations with *le Pouvoir*, a problem we touched upon in our discussion of royal fiscality and corporate finances. On a day to day basis the jurés dealt with the

<sup>36</sup> Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>8</sup>, fols. 236–38.

<sup>37</sup> Journal pour servir à Mrs les gardes de l'orfèvrerie, pp. 98–102, Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>2</sup>; Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21794, fols. 301–31.

<sup>38</sup> See, inter alia, J.-P. MAZAROTZ, *Histoire de la corporation des orfèvres français*, Paris 1875.

<sup>39</sup> SAVARY DES BRUSLONS, *Dictionnaire universel de commerce*, Copenhagen 1761, III, 512.

<sup>40</sup> Nouveau Recueil des tapissiers, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 4 J 2361.

<sup>41</sup> Journal pour servir à Mrs les gardes de l'orfèvrerie, Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> Archives Nationales, H 2118, 5 February 1787 and 17 November 1784.

<sup>43</sup> Archives Nationales, K 1040, no. 126.

lieutenant general of police, the royal procurator at the Châtelet who acted as the judge of a special *chambre des métiers*, and the police commissaire(s) specializing in their profession. Certain guilds, such as the *orfèvres*, had to answer to other jurisdictions as well.<sup>44</sup> Underneath the robes of the *jurés* there lurked consummate businessmen: only rarely did corporate intoxication cause them to forget their first calling. As paragons of commercial success, they were expected to offer advice to the masters on how to handle specific orders or resolve business or legal problems. Because they were often in touch with merchants from other trades or other cities or with highly placed officials, they were privy to intelligence that they shared with more or less generosity. The *jurés* held court three to six times a week at the corporate bureau. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the *orfèvres'* headquarters consisted of a meeting room dominated by a portrait of Louis XIV and a framed copy of the guild statutes and containing, significantly, only sixty chairs: no question of a general assembly of all masters; a small office furnished with a desk, a buffet, a wardrobe, and wooden images of St. Eloy and St. Jean; and a large office with a capacious desk, an immense wardrobe, a clock, a shelf for books, equipment for stamping and testing merchandise, and a tableau listing the names of all the masters.<sup>45</sup>

## II. Corporate Dissidence

Almost by definition the corporate family was supposed to be harmonious as well as solidary. Even as the paternal master was to be respected in the shop, so the avuncular *jurés* were to be honored and supported in the guild. But in fact neither the master in the shop nor the *juré* in his bureau was spared criticism and disaffection. Two closely linked issues galvanized intracorporate dissidence: oligarchical rule and irresponsible and/or inept management, especially concerning money matters. These insurgents coveted a role for themselves in the decision-making process and they demanded constitutional changes that would constrain the *jurés* to be accountable to the entire membership. There is little doubt that they were present in every guild, though they were rarely successful in obtaining a hearing through formal corporate channels. Only a minority of the disenchanting masters became militant dissidents: this kind of engagement was too risky and demanding. I suspect that most of them merely opted out of guild life entirely. Given the nature of the corporate ethos, indifference was in many ways the supreme mark of revolt.

A defiant party of *horlogers* launched a campaign in the thirties against their leaders that lasted for at least two decades. Reproving their cavalier attitude and lack of evenhandedness, the *modernes* and *jeunes* demanded nothing less than new statutes that would accord them a fair representation in the electoral and business assemblies and in the council that assessed royal taxes, enable *modernes* to stand for election as *gardes*, and prevent the *gardes* from extorting fees beyond those specified in the

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, *«Mémoire contre la conduite des commissaires de la Monnoye»*, Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>21</sup>; Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>17</sup>, fols. 794 ff. and T 1490<sup>10</sup>, fols. 699–731; Lenoir to Miromesnil, 2 February 1779 and *«Mémoire sur la question . . .»*, Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>6</sup>; Archives Nationales, K 1040, pièce 18.

<sup>45</sup> Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>1</sup>, fols. 243–44.

constitution.<sup>46</sup> The jurés of the gantiers-parfumeurs drew heavy fire for a host of grave deficiencies: failure to convoke a business assembly for a period of a whole year; extraction of unjustified fees for visits; favoritism and arbitrariness in the assessment of the capitation and »industrie« taxes; misuse of fees collected for admission; and incomplete record-keeping. It appears that the police were called into this affair, a step that even insurgents preferred to avoid, for it threatened guild autonomy by setting a dangerous precedent for royal intervention.<sup>47</sup>

In the twenties a large group of modernes and jeunes in the doreurs' guild, seconded by some discontented elders (none of whom, however, was a former officer) remonstrated vehemently against the refusal of the outgoing jurés to render detailed accounts of their administration.<sup>48</sup> In 1762 two master doreurs named Vanier and Dubois sent a petition to the lieutenant general of police, co-signed by forty confrères, charging their jurés generally with failing to account properly for the disposition of funds and with fee-gouging and specifically with »fixing« the capitation rolls so that the jurés and their friends were taxed as »poor masters«, thus shifting a large part of the burden to the other masters. Upon investigation, a police commissaire found Vanier and Dubois guilty of mounting »a cabal against the jurés« and »spreading trouble in the guild«. Their charges were not wholly unfounded, allowed the commissaire; the jurés merited a discreet »mercuriale« for sloppy management. But he considered the negligence of the leaders to be much less serious than the actions of Vanier and Dubois, which »undermined the authority that the jurés needed to fulfill their functions«. Arrested, the two masters languished in jail for two weeks until the jurés »magnanimously« consented to their liberation.<sup>49</sup>

### *The Orfèvres*

The orfèvres appear to have had a more or less remote democratic past when all members participated in assemblies. Then, at some unspecified point, surely prior to 1600, the leadership decided that only experienced and respected masters – »prudhommes« – would have the right to deliberate upon corporate affairs. Numerous masters found this exclusion to be »odious« and »arbitrary« and continued to attend meetings until they were definitively excluded in 1648.<sup>50</sup> Orfèvre insurgency surely did not die of inanition, but the next episode for which we have evidence – a particularly acrimonious one – did not occur until the 1730s. A group of masters wanted to force the gardes and the coterie of elders from which they emerged to account for the management of funds and for policy decisions during the preceding thirty years. They denounced »the abuses that the gardes have committed and continue to commit against the public interest, the interest of His Majesty, and against each member of the corporation«. They alleged that 400,000 livres in revenue from

<sup>46</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 3 March 1736, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 8094, fols. 125–36; Extrait des principaux articles des statuts des maîtres horlogers, Paris 1752, pp. 17–19, Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 J 2380.

<sup>47</sup> Archives Nationales, Y 9530, March 1779.

<sup>48</sup> Délibérations, 28 November 1729, Statuts des doreurs sur métaux, Paris 1757, Bibliothèque Nationale, F 26435.

<sup>49</sup> Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 12166.

<sup>50</sup> LE ROY, ed., Statuts des orfèvres, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 951.

ordinary sources, foundations, receptions, and quality testing were unaccounted for. »We have asked for the proof of the [proper] use of this sum«, complained the critics, »but the gardes, who take the posture of Absolute Masters of the community, regard the other masters as being far beneath them, and totally dependent on their will, and thus reply to us with haughtiness and contempt.«

Nor was malversation the only count of indictment. Since the masters who comprised the ruling aristocracy had fallen out of touch with »l'ouvrage manuel«, they contracted their work out to faux ouvriers, violating one of the most sacred corporate taboos. The insurgents charged that the guild fathers tolerated 4,000 *ouvriers chambrelans* who »infected the kingdom and foreign lands« with their »bad work«. The jurés and the elders took apprentices beyond the legal age, released them before their time, and assisted them in getting established. One of their protégés named Soulève was received on a doctored apprenticeship certificate that belonged to a lad who had died twenty years earlier. Another aspirant who had completed only three years of apprenticeship was received because he married a garde's daughter. Though the statutes fixed the number of orfèvres at 300, the dissidents claimed that there were 800 shops, many of them »created« by the oligarchs. The gardes missed no chance to inflate ordinary fees in order to appropriate the increment for their private use. Master Jean Mauzie complained that a garde made him pay 1,000 livres above the already high price demanded of an aspirant »without quality« seeking membership. Laigneau, the garde in question, ingenuously replied that the 1,000 livres was a gift that Mauzie charitably offered for the chapel's poor fund!

The gardes made no effort to address the issues. Instead, they sought to discredit their adversaries. They were »agitators, turbulent troublemakers, factionists«, and, moreover, they were only twenty out of four hundred masters. Riposted the »agitators«: one master is sufficient to expose crimes, and in any event if we are only twenty, you who currently hold the title of garde are only six. How can one take you seriously, asked the gardes of their foes, since you have the lowest level of capitation, you are mediocrities in business, you incarnate »disorder, indolence, and drunkenness«. <sup>51</sup> It is not clear what dénouement, if any, this affair had, but it is hard to imagine that it left no scars.

One finds an echo of this rancor and some strikingly similar rhetoric in the broadside of a self-styled »member of the Third Estate of the Corps of the Orfèverie«. To be sure, it was 1789 and mutiny was rife. But the guild did not seem to have changed since the thirties, despite the theoretical widening of representation mandated by the royal government in the sweeping reorganization of 1776.<sup>52</sup> Just as the state had been despotic in its refusal to convoke the Estates-General for so long, wrote this orfèvre-revolutionary, so the gardes had been despotic in their refusal to convene a representative assembly to discuss affairs that concerned everyone and not just an

<sup>51</sup> Mémoire pour la communauté des marchands et maîtres orfèvres, Bibliothèque Nationale, F 12573.

<sup>52</sup> The oligarchs themselves worried deeply about the changes with which the new design threatened them. They would be displaced, they feared, and the old values of »family and fraternity« – read hierarchy and deference – would be rejected. But the old guard seems to have been able to *se refaire une virginité* and socialize the new leaders into the advantages of oligarchy. Mémoire pour le corps des orfèvres, Archives Nationales, K 1045, no. 14.



elite. »That is to say«, he wrote, »that those who have held the office of garde have looked upon their fellow masters as being beneath them.«<sup>53</sup>

### *The Burden of Being a Juré*

Still, it was no easy matter to be a juré. Jurés were obliged to perform »thankless« tasks such as inspections and collections that were bound to aggrrieve or enrage certain masters. »Though we sacrifice our own businesses in order to serve the general interest«, complained the gardes of the orfèvrerie in 1692, »we harvest from our disinterested and indefatigable efforts only the bitter fruits of the hatred, the vengefulness, and the resentment of those who are found in violation or who are asked to pay more than they would like.«<sup>54</sup> The masters avenged themselves by political insurgency, by publicly broadcast insults and innuendoes, and in some subtle and perhaps more decisive ways. A band of unhappy chapeliers, for instance, successfully conspired to deprive the head juré of the beaver-pelts that he needed in order to fill his orders.<sup>55</sup>

The other forms of dissidence that one encounters bear on less incandescent and more institutional issues. The fabricants de bas au métier, for example, were deeply disappointed with the fruits of their eight-year-old marriage to the bonnetiers and they sought a divorce.<sup>56</sup> The retail merciers resented the domination of the grossistes who ignored their interests. They asked for the election of six retail gardes who would vigorously parry the encroachment of house-to-house peddlars on their commerce.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, the contrepontiers in the tapissiers' guild led a revolt against the hegemony of the couverturiers. They settled this dispute through »friendly negotiations« that resulted in a promise to give the contrepontiers proper representation.<sup>58</sup>

### III. Foreign Policy

Like other polities, a corporation had to deal with foreign as well as internal affairs. Peace was the goal in both internal and external relations, and it was premised on similar ideals: mutual respect, a certain self-restraint, an ability to identify and a willingness to cede to the general or higher wellbeing of the universe (be it the individual corporation, the Six Corps, the entire corporate system, or all of France), and an (unequal) division of economic, moral and political space determined and sanctioned by tradition, current protection and influence, and the vicissitudes of the market. Peace was frequently threatened, however, both within and among the corporations, by lack of consensus on boundaries and definitions, by conflicts of interest, by jealousy. Since peace abroad was valued less dearly than internal harmony, and since the latter often depended on the successes of foreign policy, corporate

<sup>53</sup> Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> Requestes des maîtres et gardes de l'orfèvrerie, 1692, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21797, fol. 360.

<sup>55</sup> Leprévost to Orry de Fulvy, 3 March 1740, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 10321.

<sup>56</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1732, fols. 206–07 (11 September 1731).

<sup>57</sup> Remontrance faite à Mrs les maîtres et gardes des marchands merciers, October 1659, Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 Fm 25077.

<sup>58</sup> Nouveau recueil des tapissiers, pp. lxxviff., Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 10321.

leaders had strong incentives to defend their particular conception of peaceful coexistence aggressively. Internal dissidents, after all, were *frères* first and enemies second, while other guilds were enemies first and *frères* second.

### *Corporate Egotism and Imperialism: the Merciers*

The corporations fought over very precise and concrete material issues as well as over more diffuse matters of standing and dignity and symbolical jurisdiction: these two aspects of power were inseparable in corporate reckoning. The merciers embody the most stunning example of corporate egotism, irredentism, and imperialism. One of the oldest and richest guilds, the merciers perceived themselves as »the noblest and most excellent« because of their disdain for manual labor.<sup>59</sup> The *Encyclopédie* epitomized the mercier as »a merchant of everything and a maker of nothing«.<sup>60</sup> Divided into twenty different »classes«, each devoted to a different range of merchandise, there were few items that could not be subsumed under one rubric or another, given the rather casuistical criteria to which the merciers subscribed. To be sure, the merciers transformed goods as well as trading in them: they modified, adapted, and embellished their merchandise to meet the tastes and the needs of their clients, though it must be emphasized that they always farmed out this work to craftsmen.<sup>61</sup> But they were above all buyers and sellers across space and time. Once governed by a *roi des merciers* who had quasi-sovereign political pretensions, it was hard for the merciers to imagine any limits on their freedom of action.

Scores of other guilds found mercier hubris intolerable because it threatened their commerce as well as their self-esteem. It is perhaps less striking, however, that these corporations filed suit to protect their territorial imperatives than that the merciers frequently pre-empted them by seeking politico-judicial legitimation of their encroachments. It is hardly an exaggeration to aver that the merciers were at war, on one front or another, during the whole eighteenth century. They foiled the efforts of the *ébénistes* and the *tapissiers* – acting independently of one another, for they, too, quarreled over their respective privileges – to deprive them of the right to sell all sorts of furniture provided they purchased it from the *ébénistes*. The *tapissiers* were flatly rebuffed in their efforts to win a right of inspection or »visit« over the merciers, at once a form of psychopolitical subordination and a form of commercial regulation. After years of litigation, the *ébénistes* obtained the right to »visit« the merciers in case of »a notable violation« of the rules. But it was not made clear what constituted such a violation nor who had the authority to denounce it, and in any case the merciers were to be insulated from the defiling touch of the *ébénistes* by the mandatory presence not only of their own corporate chiefs but also of a police commissaire. Moreover, the merciers could import foreign furniture without having to solicit the mark of *ébéniste*

<sup>59</sup> SAVARY DES BRUSLONS, (See n. 39), III, 849. The certificate of mastership reminded the new mercier that he was not merely received to membership but »nobly admitted«. See André Basset's reception, 2 May 1767, Archives du département de la Seine et de la Ville de Paris, 2 AZ 82.

<sup>60</sup> *Encyclopédie*, Neufchâtel 1765, X, 369.

<sup>61</sup> For a list of articles that the merciers claimed the right to sell, see SAVARY DES BRUSLONS, (See n. 39), III, 844–48. See also P. VERLET, in: *Le Commerce des objets d'art et les marchands merciers de Paris au 18<sup>e</sup> siècle*, *Annales: E.S.C.*, 13 (1958), pp. 10–29.

approbation.<sup>62</sup> Nor were the *selliers-carossiers* able to prevent the *merciers* from dealing in both old and new carriages.<sup>63</sup>

Similarly, the *chapeliers* were frustrated in their efforts, first to prohibit the *merciers* from importing and selling hats and then to win a right of inspection.<sup>64</sup> The *chapeliers* complained bitterly that the *merciers* refused to play according to the rules of the game and thus jeopardized the whole pattern of division of labor and privilege. Avid to undertake everything, the *merciers* would »put an end to the order and the rule that make for the happiness of everyone and opt instead for the disorder that makes for the desolation of States that are not governed by [a good] police.«<sup>65</sup> The *bonnetiers* affirmed that all the guilds shared their resentment of the *merciers* who, »not content to embrace all types of wholesale commerce, usurp the retail side as well despite the prohibitions against this.« Armed with the authority to compel the *merciers* to bring all hosiery and analogous merchandise to the *bonnetiers'* guild office for inspection, the *bonnetiers* missed no opportunity to effect seizures on delinquent *merciers*.<sup>66</sup>

While the *merciers* reserved the right to provide materials and designs for the making of ribbons by *rubanniers-tissutiers* hired *à facon*, they took legal action to block the ribbonmakers from selling anything but what they themselves made, limiting them to the degradation of »work« and denying them the redemption of trade.<sup>67</sup> The *plombiers* failed to prevent the *merciers* from selling old and new lead goods.<sup>68</sup> The *eventaillistes* could not keep them from selling fans, only from assembling them.<sup>69</sup> *Tailleurs* did not obtain effective control over the clothing that the *merciers* marketed.<sup>70</sup> The *peaussiers* and the *pelletiers*, themselves rivals, could not prevent the *merciers* from dealing in certain kinds of skins and fur, while the resistance of the *gantiers-parfumeurs* to their commerce in powders, perfumes, and gloves was utterly feckless.<sup>71</sup> Unable to bar the *merciers* from the cloth business, the *drapiers* retaliated by doing *mercerie* – a bold stroke, but limited in incidence and only possible

<sup>62</sup> Arrêts du parlement, 29 January 1697, 12 August 1707, 20 January 1749, 29 April 1670, in *Recueil d'ordonnances et statuts et reglemens du corps de la mercerie*, Paris 1767, pp. 129–30, 189, 190–92, 220, Bibliothèque Nationale, F 1269 (Réserve).

<sup>63</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 14 August 1666, *ibid.*, p. 213\*.

<sup>64</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 11 August 1706, *ibid.*, p. 139; *Recueil d'ordonnances et statuts et reglemens concernant le corps de la mercerie*, Paris 1752, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 4 J 2303.

<sup>65</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21796, fols. 265–68.

<sup>66</sup> *Mémoire sur le commerce des marchands bonnetiers*, circa 1730, and police sentence, 13 December 1686, Archives Nationales, F<sup>12</sup> 781<sup>E</sup>; arrêt du conseil, 2 August 1740, *Recueil des principaux statuts du corps de la bonneterie*, 1739, p. 108. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 4 J 2369.

<sup>67</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 24 January 1711 in *Recueil d'ordonnances et statuts*, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 4 J 2303 and arrêt du parlement, 9 February 1759 in *Recueil d'ordonnances et statuts*, 1767, Bibliothèque Nationale, F 1269. Still, the *merciers* reserved the right to keep tools to *enjoliver, enrichir et parer* the results of the ribbonmakers' fabrication.

<sup>68</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 23 August 1745, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 8094, fols. 459–84.

<sup>69</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 4 February 1737, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 8094, fols. 47–82.

<sup>70</sup> Arrêt du conseil privé, 18 January 1683, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21799, fols. 190–204.

<sup>71</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 4 September 1747, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 8089, fols. 531–38; *Factum*, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21798, fol. 181; *Factum*, 1729, Bibliothèque Nationale, F Fm 12562; *Statuts et reglemens de la communauté des marchands gantiers-parfumeurs*, Paris 1772, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, 706 943.

because of the unusual financial strength of the drapiers.<sup>72</sup> Taking the initiative, the merciers managed to restrict the peigniers-tabletters to the manufacture of *cannes rapées et tournées* and the verriers-fayenciers to the fabrication of *verre cristal, fayance et porcelaine*, leaving the remainder of the cane and glass market in their own hands.<sup>73</sup>

### *The Riposte of the Orfèvres*

The orfèvres-joailliers mounted perhaps the stiffest and most highly charged ideological resistance to the onslaught of the merciers. The merciers regarded »jewelry« as one of their primary commercial sectors. It is likely that they were the largest sellers of gold and jewelled merchandise in Paris on the eve of the Revolution.<sup>74</sup> On the first level, the argument of the orfèvres rested squarely on matters of technical competence. Gold- and silver-smithing and jewelry-making required special skills that the merciers lacked:

The merciers are not able to say that they have experience nor any of the singular and penetrating knowledge that is necessary in order to practice this business . . . the merciers are admitted to their guild without the presentation of a masterpiece, without any examination . . . the orfèvres on the contrary are subject to very long apprenticeship and service to the masters; they are subject to the masterpiece, even sons of masters are not exempt; they are examined and interrogated at the Cour des monnoyes . . .<sup>75</sup>

As a consequence of their lack of training, the merciers could not distinguish good from defective work. And as a result of their cupidity – »the mercier believes that he can never increase his illicit profits sufficiently« – they were indifferent to the distinction. Without any scruples insofar as the practice sapped guilds other than their own, the merciers organized »clandestine associations« of »false workers« to make gold pieces and jewelry and to counterfeit the official stamp of the orfèvre guild. Nor did the public have recourse against »the crimes, felonies and abuses« the merciers committed or commissioned or condoned, for they took refuge in the slogan »let the buyer beware« and, unlike the orfèvres, they were not required to post a bond of surety. If such mischief were not curtailed, the international reputation of French orfèvrerie would be irretrievably compromised. The only way to assure a proper police, the orfèvres maintained, was to limit the business to a single, specialized, regulated guild.<sup>76</sup>

That was the argument addressed to the public and the authorities. On another level, however, the orfèvres articulated a conception of their role vis-à-vis that of the

<sup>72</sup> Arrêts du conseil, 16 August, 11 October, 28 November 1687, Statuts et reglemens des marchands drapiers, Paris 1743, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal.

<sup>73</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 8089, fols. 31–34 (26 August 1700) and ms. fr. 8084, fols. 389–97 (14 July 1742).

<sup>74</sup> See MATON DE VARENNE, *Dénonciation au public des fraudes qui se commettent dans l'orfèvrerie*, 1789, pp. 2–3, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Fm 3347. See also the *Livre-Journal de Lazare Duvaux*, ed. L. COURAJOL, Paris 1873, 2 vols.

<sup>75</sup> Factum, 1690, Archives Nationales, K 1047, no. 52.

<sup>76</sup> *Mémoire pour le corps des marchands et maîtres orfèvres joailliers*, circa 1734, Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 Fm 25098; *Factum pour les maîtres et gardes de l'orfèvrerie*, circa 1680, Archives Nationales, K 1047, no. 50; Maton de la Varenne, (See n. 74), pp. 4–5; *Mémoire instructif servant de réponse au mémoire des marchands merciers*, 1735, Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 Fm 25080.

merciers that was meant for their fellow guildsmen in all the corporations of the realm as well as for the arbiters of rank and esteem in French society. Not only did the merciers lack technical virtuosity, but they were proud of this shortcoming: »les merciers qui ne sont point Ouvrier, et qui même s'en picquent.« They scorned the vile, mechanical crafts, incompatible with »the nobility« of the commerce they exercised. The orfèvres were deeply galled by the disdain that the merciers lavished on them. The orfèvres were merchants as well as manufacturers, members of the Six Corps, and holders of distinguished civic and judicial positions. But »the orfèvres are just as proud of the title of Worker [Ouvrier] as of that of merchant«. In addition to knowing how to calculate the cost and the price of goods – »the sole talent of the merchant« – the orfèvres claimed »the genius« that inspired designers, painters, sculptors, engravers and other practitioners of »Art«. How could it be imagined for a moment that the creation and perfection of the finished product were less estimable than the materials from which it was made, that the product of Art could be »inferior to that of merchandise?« Nor did the orfèvres shy away from the inexorable conclusion: as artists and merchants combined they were »more useful to the state« than they could be as mere merchants and implicitly more useful than the merciers.<sup>77</sup> It was not quite the revolt of the bourgeoisie of talents against the otiose aristocracy of titles, but it constituted a partial rehabilitation of the notion of work.<sup>78</sup> For if the orfèvres identified on one plane with Art and Artists, on another they insisted on the dignity of *ouvrageant* and *fabriquant*, on the value of toil and application, and on the double linkage between work and beauty and between work and utility.

If this argument had a slightly subversive tone, another used by the orfèvres against the merciers was profoundly conservative in its sociology. Redolent of the chapelier jeremiad against disorder and »territorial« transgression and of the Advocate-General Seguier's eloquent apology for the corporate bonds of social coherence in his stinging critique of Turgot's liberalism, the orfèvres' thesis warned that social or corporate hubris could lead only to chaos:

Among the most indispensable rules is that each do his profession; that each make and sell exclusively the sort of product and merchandise that constitute his estate [*qui constitue son état*]; without this there would be no more order, everything would fall into confusion, and no one would fulfill his duties.<sup>79</sup>

#### *The Orfèvres Repel Other Soi-disant Trespassers*

According to this view, the merciers undermined the system by claiming what was not theirs. Yet they were not the only trespassers, merely the most egregious and most powerful. In a narrow professional sense, the orfèvres had as much trouble with the

<sup>77</sup> Mémoire instructif des orfèvres, Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 Fm 2508– and 2501 (1735); Mémoire pour le corps des orfèvres, circa 1735, Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 Fm 25098.

<sup>78</sup> In the larger corporate world of old regime society, the nobility was not yet persuaded that it could, like the merciers, engage in trade without »derogating«. In passing it is worth noting that the champion of the »noblesse commercante«, the abbé G. COYER, was also a virulent critic of the guilds and thus an adversary in many ways of the global corporate universe. See *La Noblesse commercante*, London 1756 and CHINKI, *histoire cochinchinoise qui peut servir à d'autres pays*, London 1768.

<sup>79</sup> Mémoire pour le corps des marchands et maîtres orfèvres-joailliers, circa 1734, Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 Fm 25098.

lapidaires – who also coveted the title of joaillier – as with the merciers and on some occasions they treated them with as little consideration as they had been treated by the merciers. The lapidaires were »pure artisans«, the reasoning now ran; they could not pretend to be merchants and thus be entitled to all the latitude that merchants enjoyed in defining their field of action. Naturally, in their defense of this prerogative, the orfèvres were joined in a parade of inner-corporate solidarity by the merciers and the other four guilds of the Six Corps. The lapidaires were denigrated as upstarts, *ambitieux*, at bottom no more than simple ouvriers tailleurs de pierre. They could not »pretend« to the »quality« of orfèvre or joaillier »without changing estate and profession«, that is, without upsetting and undermining the corporate system. Time and again the orfèvres succeeded in keeping the lapidaires out of the business of selling mounted and decorated stones.<sup>80</sup>

Nor did the orfèvres betray any sign of humility in their dealings with the nascent engravers' guild in the second half of the seventeenth century. Composed in part of men who had once worked in the orfèvrerie, the engravers' corporation sought to stake out its imperative at the expense of the orfèvres by barring them from executing any engraving on metals of any kind. Had the orfèvres merely rejoined that engraving was an intrinsic part of their art, their position would have been quite reasonable. But they went a step further, contending that these usurper-engravers were not up to the level required to succeed in a delicate craft:

These engravers are nothing more than *subalterns* vis-à-vis the orfèvres and had been in many instances their journeymen and *serviteurs*, and only made themselves into engravers because they could not become orfèvres for lack of the required proficiency.<sup>81</sup>

The horlogers were another infringing and rival guild: the orfèvres inspected the way in which they used gold and silver, and even suborned master horlogers into secretly denouncing their allegedly delinquent confrères.<sup>82</sup> The orfèvres also suspected the fondeurs, who did casting and founding for them, of fraudulent manipulation of gold and silver.<sup>83</sup> As the only possible »guarantors of fidelity«, the orfèvres also opposed the rights of brocanteurs to re-sell items containing precious metals on the grounds that these items would be of dubious authenticity.<sup>84</sup> The orfèvres also labored to deny unpoliced utilization of gold and silver to the fourbisseurs, the passementiers, the tabletiers, the coutelliers, and tireurs d'or.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Mémoire pour le corps des orfèvres, 1739, Bibliothèque Nationale, F Fm 12575; mémoire pour le Roy en faveur des orfèvres, Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>6</sup>; Factum pour les orfèvres, Bibliothèque Nationale, F Fm 12575; mémoire pour les orfèvres, Archives Nationales, K 1045, no. 13; arrêt du parlement, 9 February 1740, Archives Nationales, H 2119.

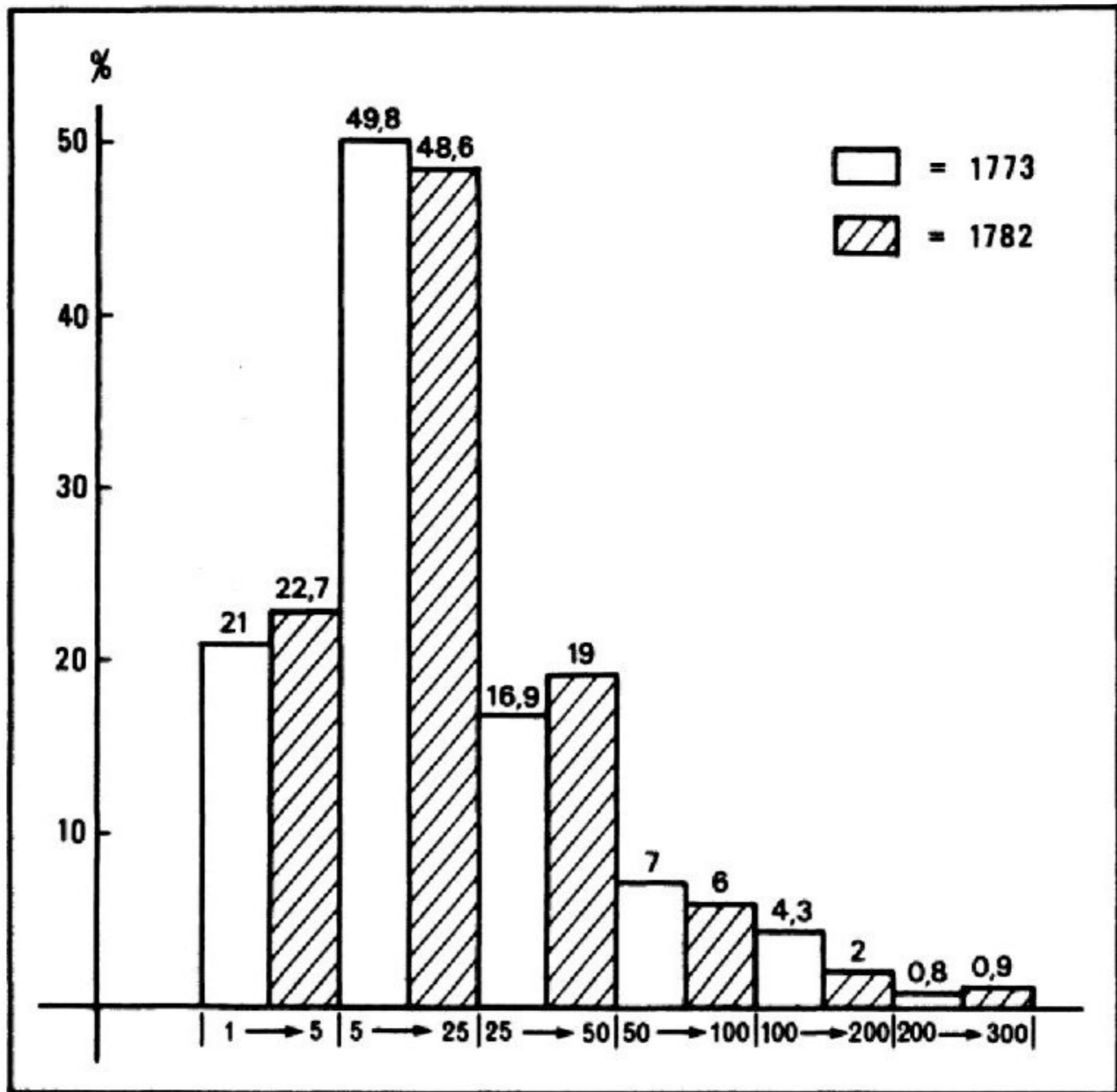
<sup>81</sup> Mémoire pour le corps des marchands orfèvres contre les jurez graveurs, Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 Fm 25096.

<sup>82</sup> Arrêt de la cour des monnoyes, 24 January 1739, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 8089, fols. 518–19; mémoire pour les maîtres et gardes de l'orfèvrerie, circa 1738, Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 Fm 25097.

<sup>83</sup> Observations sur la manière d'exécuter les arrêts en règlement relatifs aux fondeurs, Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> Unknown to Lenoir, 6 March 1778, Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>85</sup> Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>6</sup>, fols. 154–68 and T 1490<sup>13</sup>.



Percent Distribution of Capitation Assessment in Orfèvres' Guild (in livres).

### *Other Rivalries: Relentless Skirmishing and Occasional Warfare*

More laconic than the orfèvres, the menuisiers-ébénistes made no less zealous an investment in the defense and assertion of guild pretensions. No fewer than thirteen different guilds opposed the parliamentary approval of the menuisiers-ébénistes' statutes and regulations of 1743 because one clause or another did violence to their rights.<sup>86</sup> This outburst of particularism was especially ironic in this instance, for cabinet-making required the collaboration of members of many different guilds. The fondeurs cast the bronze and conditioned it; the doreurs did the gilding; the sculptors undertook some of the wood ornamentation; the tabletiers provided silk and leather trimming; the tapissiers upholstered; the tourneurs worked the lathe; etc.<sup>87</sup> The juré

<sup>86</sup> Statuts et reglemens des menuisiers-ébénistes, Paris 1751, p. 192, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 4209. Tabletiers, peintres-sculpteurs, selliers, merciers, miroitiers, fondeurs, horlogers, serruriers, charons, tourneurs, fripiers, tapissiers, charpentiers.

<sup>87</sup> SAVARY DES BRUSLONS, (See n. 39), II, 226; J. MEUVRET, et al., *Les Ebénistes du 18e siècle français*, Paris 1963, p. 16; P. VERLET, *l'Art du meuble à Paris au 18e siècle*, Paris 1968, pp. 83-99. See also Guillaume JANNEAU, *Les Ateliers parisiens d'ébénistes et menuisiers aux 17e et 18e siècles*, Paris 1975 and F. de SALVERTE, *Les Ebénistes du 18e siècle*, Paris 1934.

menuisiers-ébénistes tormented the tapissiers with ambushes and unexpected visits to check for unmarked or defective furniture, or furniture of illicit provenance. According to L.-S. Mercier, the tapissiers may have merited it, for they sold secrétaires that came unglued in three weeks and other »phantom« pieces that withered away under one's very eyes: »it is not a small science to learn not to be duped by a tapissier who sells furniture«. <sup>88</sup> Like the tapissiers, the tourneurs had no right to make tables or cabinets or other furniture, but only to buy marked items from Paris ébénistes for the purpose of »perfecting« them, and like the tapissiers they suffered frequent confiscations by the menuisier-ébéniste jurés. <sup>89</sup> Similarly, the peintres-sculpteurs and the doreurs were confined to embellishing furniture purchased from menuisiers-ébénistes. <sup>90</sup>

Nor were the menuisiers-ébénistes the only bogeymen of the tapissiers. The miroitiers taxed them for emulating mercier arrogance by »turning their Shop into a General Store for all types of merchandise meant to beautify the Home«. If the tapissiers were allowed to sell mirrors, the miroitiers claimed they faced »inevitable ruin«. They appealed to the lieutenant general of police, in the manner of the chapeliers and the orfèvres, »to tighten the crafts and trades within the limits« prescribed by the statutes. <sup>91</sup> »It is manifest that the tapissiers«, protested the brodeurs, »have moved outside their sphere and metamorphosed themselves into brodeurs.« <sup>92</sup> The fripiers also complained that the tapissiers shamelessly »encroached« on their trade. <sup>93</sup>

The peintres-sculpteurs wrote nine articles into their statutes forbidding other guilds to infringe upon their domain. The graveurs responded by obtaining an arrêt that prohibited the peintres from engraving on any metals. The éventailistes won a ruling giving them the right to inspect fans that the peintres decorated. <sup>94</sup> The disorganizing consequences of inter-guild bickering need to be measured in human as well as commercial and institutional terms. Directly as a result of the clash between éventailistes and peintres-sculpteurs, a family had to sue to have its son released from apprenticeship to the peintres, with restitution of placement fees, because the peintres were no longer permitted to practice and teach the wood-engraving skills that the boy had set out to learn. <sup>95</sup> The peigniers-tabletters could not prevent the peintres-sculpteurs from competing with them in the fabrication of certain parlorgames and bas-relief tobacco boxes, but they forced them to keep their ivory crosses under a

<sup>88</sup> Archives Nationales, Y 15365, 19 September 1754 and 13 November 1758; L.-S. Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, Amsterdam 1789, IX, p. 146; arrêt du parlement, 3 August 1761, in *Statuts et reglemens des maîtres menuisiers-ébénistes*, Paris 1751, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 4209, p. 236.

<sup>89</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 1 September 1698, ms. fr. 21799, fols. 457-70.

<sup>90</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 22 June 1762 in *Statuts et reglemens des menuisiers-ébénistes*, pp. 248-84.

<sup>91</sup> Mémoire pour les jurez de la communauté des maîtres et marchands miroitiers, 1739, Bibliothèque Nationale, F Fm 12567.

<sup>92</sup> Mémoire pour les brodeurs, circa 1730, Archives Nationales, K 1030-1031, no. 40<sup>A</sup>; arrêt du parlement, 5 September 1735, in *Nouveau recueil des tapissiers*, pp. 396-404, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 4 J 2361.

<sup>93</sup> Police sentence, 2 August 1697, in *Nouveau recueil des tapissiers*, pp. 354-58.

<sup>94</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 20 June 1736, in *Nouveaux reglemens des peintres-sculpteurs*, Paris 1738, Bibliothèque Nationale, F 22812.

<sup>95</sup> Archives Nationales, Y 9388, 22 April 1763.



certain size.<sup>96</sup> The luthiers were not content with this reallocation of responsibility, for it seemed to prejudice their interests.<sup>97</sup>

In order to diminish their dependence on the *fondeurs*, the *peintres-sculpteurs* bestowed a mastership on a former journeyman *fondeur* without any training in their profession, a crude and isolated stab at vertical integration. He proceeded to do all their founding and smelting work, arousing the ire of the *fondeurs* who claimed the exclusive right to do these things.<sup>98</sup> The *fondeurs* also contested the rights of the *passemmentiers-boutonniers* to make copper buttons and of the *doreurs* to work with bronze ornamentation. The *doreurs* won a ruling prohibiting the *fondeurs* from selling any merchandise that was gilded or silver-plated and repelled the *entreprise* of the *passemmentiers-boutonniers* on their profession by conducting periodic legal seizures of gilded and silvered buttons and the tools used to make them.<sup>99</sup> The *passemmentiers-boutonniers* reeled again under the attack of the *tireurs d'or* who harried them for using gold and silver thread.<sup>100</sup> The *doreurs* successfully challenged the claims of the *fourbisseurs* to produce gilded and silvered scabbards.<sup>101</sup>

At odds with the *merciers* on the one side, the *peaussiers* found themselves assailed on the other by the *corroyeurs-baudroyeurs* who rejected their claims for a monopoly on certain techniques of treating and dyeing skins.<sup>102</sup> The *drapiers* had to worry about competition from the outside by such industrial establishments as the Van Robais cloth factory at Abbeville as well as corporate maneuvers.<sup>103</sup> The horlogers' guild alerted its members to present dangers by publishing a brochure pointing out the evil designs of other corporations that hoped to subjugate and humiliate the horlogers by forcing them to suffer visits.<sup>104</sup>

Each corporation could claim certain victories for its foreign policy. But the overall result of this relentless public brawling was to discredit radically the whole corporate system. The narrow-mindedness, narcissism, and lack of generosity of the guilds disgusted L.-S. Mercier. Their »stubborn debates« pleased only the lawyers because of the »excellent revenue« they generated. The »goal« of each corporation seemed to be its »conservation« and the »destruction of its adversary«.<sup>105</sup> Corporate comportment was in stark contradiction with corporate ethos. The guilds behaved like so many avid, atomized individuals in a Darwinian world. The vendettas and the litigations not only revealed that the system was badly organized in a technical sense, but that it was morally bankrupt as a whole. That is not to say that the guilds fought over petty

<sup>96</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 Fm 35112 (1740s).

<sup>97</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Fm 12524 (1742).

<sup>98</sup> Mémoire pour les jurez et la communauté des maîtres *fondeurs*, Bibliothèque Nationale, F Fm 12456.

<sup>99</sup> Arrêts du conseil, 28 February 1668 and 23 August 1759, and police sentences of 22 June 1753 and 30 August 1754, in Statuts et ordonnances de la communauté des *doreurs*, Paris 1774, pp. 73–79, 339–41, 351–54, 371–76, Bibliothèque Nationale, F 26435; police sentences, 3 August 1742 and 21 January 1746, in Statuts de la communauté des *doreurs*, Paris 1757, pp. 140–42, 191–93, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 2986; Archives Nationales, Y 9384, 5 May 1752.

<sup>100</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 10 January 1680, ms. fr. 21798, fols. 358–61.

<sup>101</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 11 August 1762, in Statuts des *doreurs*, 1774, pp. 388–90, Bibliothèque Nationale, F 26435.

<sup>102</sup> Factum des *peaussiers*, circa 1693, Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 Fm 25111.

<sup>103</sup> Archives Nationales, H 2120.

<sup>104</sup> Avis important à Mrs les horlogers, 1735, Archives Nationales, K 1030–1031, no. 101.

<sup>105</sup> MERCIER, *Tableau de Paris*, Amsterdam, 1783–89, IV, 115; III, 195; XI, 22, 223.

matters. On the contrary, most of the issues they joined had real significance for them. But they lost track of the extent to which the survival of each depended on the survival – the conservation rather than the destruction – of the other. They forgot that their real strength lay in their coherence and cohesion and in a global system of coordinated relations. Each paid lip-service to the fixed-space credo, but each wanted the constraints to apply to the others rather than to itself, much in the way that a business in a free enterprise economy today is tempted to insist that the restraint-of-trade rules be applied rigorously to its competitors rather than to itself. Now this impatience with confinement may in fact bespeak a real economic dynamism rather than the myopic greed and the retrograde character that Mercier and certain other philosophes ascribed to the corporations. Yet it helped to erode the solidarity that the corporations needed in order to resist the truly grave threats to their collective existence: pressure from the state; the sweeping assault of the liberal critics; and the burgeoning incidence of worker insurgency.

#### IV. Corporate Reproduction

The most solemn mission of the jurés was to assure the continuity of the guild in its human capital as well as in the exercise of its privileges. Partly a matter of pride and honor, recruitment was also the key to the economic and political power of the corporation. The process of recruitment was inherently conservative, for as a rule the jurés instinctively sought masters fashioned in their own image. Consequently corporate reproduction was to a large extent an incestuous affair: the jurés looked inward to replenish the ranks from among the sons (and sons-in-law) of masters who were themselves often sons of masters. That strategy was safe and universally gratifying. In most instances, however, endogamous reproduction could not meet the demographic and economic needs of renewal. There is some evidence, too, that certain guilds valued fertilization from the outside. By the time an external aspirant became ready to accede to mastership, however, he was hardly any longer an outsider save in the strictest genetic sense. Apprenticeship and journeymanhood socialized the newcomers thoroughly – at least those aspirants who knew that they had a real chance of establishing themselves and who were not likely to languish in sempiternal journeymanhood. This reminds us that corporate reproduction was a two-class process. What counted most was the recruitment of masters, but in order to carry on its business the guild also had to recruit workers. In the preparatory stages, the two undertakings were conflated.

#### *Apprenticeship*

Apprenticeship was the first phase of reproduction. In most guilds sons of masters were not required formally to bind themselves as apprentices, for it was presumed that they would be »trained in the paternal household.«<sup>106</sup> Outsiders became apprentices by

<sup>106</sup> LE ROY, ed., *Statuts et privilèges des orfèvres*, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 951. »It is just«, this master orfèvre went on to say, »that the Fathers who served the Public through the exercise of the Crafts and Commerce should have an easy way to establish their sons [in the business].«

signing a notarized contract that was registered by the guild bureau and by the royal official in charge of corporate affairs. The content of the contracts varied little from corporation to corporation. Binding a 15 year old son of a wine merchant in 1751, a master menuisier-ébéniste named Claude Pierre LeBeque promised »to show him and teach him his craft . . . without hiding anything from him, to provide him with food, lodging, heat and light, and to wash his clothing . . . and to treat him gently and humanely.« The lad pledged to learn to the best of his ability, »to obey [the master] in all his legal and honest commands«, and to work to increase his profit and to avert his loss. The boy also swore not to abandon his master until he completed his time, and the apprentice's father or sponsor engaged himself to search for and return him if he ran away.<sup>107</sup>

The lapidaires' contract betrayed a much more effusively paternalistic conception of the proper relation of the master to the apprentice. The master would teach the trade not only with candor but with »patience and gentleness«. He would not employ the apprentice at »jobs other than those of the profession«, a common abuse in many guilds where the apprentice was reduced to the status of an errand- and clean-up-boy. If the apprentice committed any errors, »it was forbidden for the master to use any violent measures or bad treatment in order to chastise and correct him; they were authorized to do so only verbally, with the sentiments that virtue inspires for humanity«. In sum, the lapidaires would treat their apprentices »as virtuous fathers and mothers« would act »toward their children«.<sup>108</sup> The horlogers claimed that they would feed their apprentices at their own tables.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, a number of guilds authorized corporal punishment.<sup>110</sup> As a rule apprentices were not to receive any wage »directly or indirectly, on the pretext of good services«.<sup>111</sup> Yet pourboires – literally money for wine – appear to have been common instruments in a reinforcement system of rewards and punishments.

The age, duration, and cost of apprenticeship varied from corporation to corporation. None of them would permit apprenticeship to begin before the age of ten. The orfèvres raised the minimum age from ten to eleven because they decided that a younger boy lacked »the reasoning power and the requisite capacity« to aid the master and assimilate the training.<sup>112</sup> Some guilds, like the plumassiers, felt that youth were not ready until the age of fourteen (though the tapissiers allowed a master's son who had attained fifteen years of age himself to bind an apprentice – surely a ploy to enable the master's own father to dispose of a cheap worker since a young master was not allowed to set up his own shop until he reached twenty). Most corporations were hostile to »old« apprentices, beyond the age of seventeen or eighteen maximum, for they were less easy to shape and subordinate.<sup>113</sup> The average age of binding in twenty-five orfèvre contracts was thirteen; the oldest was sixteen and the youngest was ten.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Archives Nationales, Minutier Central, IV-575, 13 December 1751.

<sup>108</sup> Statuts et reglemens des lapidaires, Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>109</sup> Etat des principaux articles des statuts des maîtres horlogers, Paris 1752, pp. 97-99, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, BA 4 J 2380.

<sup>110</sup> FRANKLIN, (See n. 11) p. 25.

<sup>111</sup> LE ROY, ed., Statuts et privilèges des orfèvres, p. 54, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 951.

<sup>112</sup> Projet des nouveaux statuts pour le corps de l'orfèvrerie, 1776, Archives Nationale, T 1490<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>113</sup> LE ROY, ed., Statuts et privilèges des orfèvres, p. 48, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 951.

<sup>114</sup> Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>5</sup> and T 1490<sup>6</sup>.

The wine merchant's son obliged to menuisier-ébéniste LeBeque was fifteen, while LeBeque's colleague Jean Chevallie took a thirteen year old son of a shoemaker.<sup>115</sup> A peintre-doreur took a twenty-two year old, a bonnetier a twenty year old.<sup>116</sup>

It goes without saying that apprentices were rarely married. The peigniers and the miroitiers were among the few guilds that bothered specifically to prohibit apprentice marriage in their statutes so remote did the idea loom. The average duration of apprenticeship in seventeen metiers was 5.4 years (see the table on p. 286). It ranged from eight years in horlogerie and orfèvrerie – a length of time defended in the *Encyclopédie* as necessary in those difficult arts – to three years for the merciers, who required the sorts of skills that were likely to crystallize rapidly or not at all.<sup>117</sup>

Whereas it was quite common in the everyday trades to offer apprenticeship without cost since it yielded very cheap labor, in the luxury trade masters very often commanded a price. The guild itself does not appear to have set policy in these arrangements. Menuisiers-ébénistes LeBeque and Chevallie demanded 350 and 200 livres respectively; the peintre-doreur 200 livres; the bonnetier 500 livres. A peintre-sculpteur received 150 livres. In thirteen of twenty-four contracts that I have examined, the orfèvres bound apprentices without any remuneration. In the eleven remaining cases, the average fee was 650 livres, the median and mode 800 livres. Characteristically, the fees were paid in installments, one half or more immediately and the balance after the completion of the first four years. There is no apparent relationship between the apprenticeship fee and the socioprofessional origins of the apprentices. All of the orfèvres' apprentices came from solid artisanal, mercantile, rentier, or liberal-professional families. Three of the fathers were merciers, six were bourgeois de Paris, one was a wine merchant, one was a wholesale trader, one was a royal household officer, two were in the legal field, and nine were master artisans and tradesmen. In addition to payment to the master, the apprentice's sponsor had to compensate the guild for the contract, or *brevet*: 31 livres for the miroitiers, 26 livres for the tapissiers, 13½ livres for the lapidaires.

The corporations usually prohibited the masters from binding more than one apprentice at a time in order to control the flow of aspirants and the pulsations of the labor market. Most guilds allowed a master to take a second apprentice the year before the first indenture expired. The brodeurs for a long time proscribed apprenticeship unless the number of masters fell below 200. Once a master completed training an apprentice, he had to wait ten years before he could take another.<sup>118</sup> In 1724 the orfèvres put a ten-year moratorium on apprenticeships on the grounds that the guild had become far too large, replete with »supernumeraries« who had entered through »privileged« channels and whose sons could claim regular status as sons of masters. The corporation had imperceptibly grown far beyond its statutory limit of three hundred.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Archives Nationales, Minutier Central, LXXXII-313, 9 August 1751.

<sup>116</sup> Archives Nationales, Minutier Central, LXXXII-313, 16 August 1751 and XXVIII-321, 27 April 1753.

<sup>117</sup> *Encyclopédie*, Neufchâtel 1765, XI, pp. 628-29.

<sup>118</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21792, fols. 505 ff. (1719).

<sup>119</sup> Arrêt du conseil, August 1724, Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>10</sup>. Cf. arrêt du conseil, 25 May 1734, *ibid.* The orfèvres had sharp debates on how to determine the true size of the corporation and how much

Theoretically, apprentices could not be transferred save as a result of a master's death or retirement. Nevertheless a quasi-black market trade in apprentices seems to have developed. The peigniers-tabletters tried to regulate these transactions by authorizing them after the completion of the first year of indenture. The lapidaires and the menuisiers-ébénistes made provision for the dismissal of apprentices »for cause of indolence, insolence, libertinage, or thievery«. But no master could peremptorily make such a decision on his own. He had to seek approval from the jurés.

If an apprentice ran away, the master could demand the return of the fugitive or some compensation. Jacques Roblin, a master ébéniste, sued a laboureur from Beaumont whose nephew had fled his shop. Either he was to be returned or the sponsor was to pay the remaining half due on the binding fee.<sup>120</sup> The son of a master menuisier-ébéniste bound to a tapissier (O treacherous alliance!) had several years of accomplished time struck from the record because he had been absent for more than twelve months.<sup>121</sup> The plumassiers were even harsher: an apprentice absent for a month could never stand for mastership.<sup>122</sup>

The apprentice was not supposed to complain. Savary exhorted him to submit passively: to show »a perfect obedience without seeking to penetrate the reasons that he [the master] has to order him to do things«. <sup>123</sup> It took an audacious lad, vigorously supported by his family, to stand up to a master. The son of an orfèvre from Valenciennes who must have known exactly what his son's work life should have been like won a suit against his master, a Parisian orfèvre, who mistreated him and assigned him menial chores. He obtained his freedom, reimbursement of his fee, and a transfer to a more respectable shop.<sup>124</sup> An apprentice peintre-doreur achieved a similar victory against a master who failed to teach him to gild as promised in his contract.<sup>125</sup>

### *Journeymanship*

Almost always an apprentice who completed his time received his brevet automatically and became a journeyman (theoretically) »awaiting mastership«. The fabricants de draps d'or were an exception: they asked the finished apprentice to execute a mini-masterpiece in order to test whether he was worthy of advancement.<sup>126</sup> Journeymanship was the second phase in the process of corporate reproduction. The apprentice had now mastered the rudiments of the trade, but he needed experience in order to »perfect« his skill.<sup>127</sup> Most corporations made two to four years of journeymanship a precondition to mastership. (While the doreurs demanded five years' probation, the

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power to allow the gardes in fixing real and nominal sizes. *Mémoire pour le Sieur Germain, et al.*, Bibliothèque Nationale, 4 Fm 25099.

<sup>120</sup> Archives Nationales, Y 9384, 25 January, 1752.

<sup>121</sup> Archives Nationales, Y 9388, 13 November 1764.

<sup>122</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21798, fols. 226 ff.

<sup>123</sup> Cited by SAVARY DES BRUSLONS, (See n. 39) I, p. 174.

<sup>124</sup> Archives Nationales, Y 9384, 7 May 1751.

<sup>125</sup> Archives Nationales, Y 9384, 27 July 1751.

<sup>126</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21794, fols. 301 ff.

<sup>127</sup> See, for example, M. POSTLETHWAYT, ed., *Savary's Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, London 1751, I, p. 84.

lapidaires were willing to dispense entirely journeymen who revealed »superior capacity«.)

The journeyman *consommé* who completed his time was ready to declare his candidacy for mastership – if he had the wherewithal and the drive to pay the corporate fees and finance his independent establishment. To the majority of journeymen with brevets the title »aspirant« was a cruel taunt: they remained workers all their lives. Certain guilds made concessions to *allowés*, or journeymen who did not accomplish apprenticeship. The doreurs allowed five-year journeymen without brevets to stand for mastership, until a group of jealous masters tried to expel thirty non-apprenticed confrères in 1740. The jurés settled the dispute by henceforth requiring both five years of apprenticeship and five years of journeyman's probation.<sup>128</sup> An orfèvre tried to put through an *allowé* after six years of informal apprenticeship, but the elders demurred.<sup>129</sup> In the late sixties »a great number of journeymen« petitioned (collectively?) the orfèvres to request that their long experience be considered as ample proof of their worthiness to pass master. The assembly agreed to consider their individual applications sympathetically, but it is probable that the guild priced this mobility »by grace« beyond the reach of most of them.<sup>130</sup> Fiscal motives prompted most guilds to make provision for journeymen without quality to attain mastership.

### *Masterpiece*

The penultimate stage of corporate reproduction was the making of the *chef d'oeuvre*, or masterpiece. The horlogers defined it as »the most difficult piece of work in each art or métier that must be assigned to the mastership candidates in order to have them prove their capacity«.<sup>131</sup> Few of the guilds pretended to this rarefied standard, especially since the royal government placed pressure on them to limit the masterpiece to one month's preparation.<sup>132</sup> But most of the corporations took the masterpiece very seriously, in both technical and symbolical terms. To dilute the *chef d'oeuvre*, argued the orfèvres at the zenith of the liberal crusade against corporate constraints, was »to authorize ignorance and stimulate the growth of bad faith«, two vices baleful to any policed society.<sup>133</sup> The masterpiece, they contended, should not merely be a transaction between a candidate and his jury, but a guild-wide event in which all the masters reaffirmed their commitment to excellence. The masterpiece should be displayed in a special room at the guild headquarters where the masters would applaud deserving candidates for »contributing to the progress of the art«.<sup>134</sup>

Relatively few guilds, among them the menuisiers-ébénistes, the peintres-sculpteurs, the miroitiers, the horlogers and the orfèvres, obliged all candidates to »perform« the masterpiece. (Indeed, the menuisiers-ébénistes required of the journey-

<sup>128</sup> Deliberation of 17 January 1741 and police sentence of 14 April 1741, Statuts des doreurs, 1757, pp. 124–34, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 3886.

<sup>129</sup> Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>8</sup>, fol. 65 (2 January 1702).

<sup>130</sup> Archives Nationales, K 1045, no. 33 (January 1769).

<sup>131</sup> Extraits des principaux articles des statuts des horlogers, p. 117, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 4 J 2380.

<sup>132</sup> Guide des corps des marchands et communautés, Paris 1766, p. 19. And to return the *chef d'oeuvre* to the candidate for his own use!

<sup>133</sup> Projet des nouveaux statuts, 1776, Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

men without quality, in addition to six years' service, a »double« masterpiece.) The bulk of the corporations demanded an »experience« or a frankly »light experience« from the sons of masters. In many cases it was probably a purely formal gesture devoid of any rigor, but it would be wrong to presume that the jurés were avid to recruit incompetent masters merely because they were sons of confrères. Incompetent sons not only brought the guild little money in fees, but they also risked compromising its reputation. A number of guilds appended an oral examination to the masterpiece test. The orfèvres asked the candidate to prove that he could read and write and they interrogated him on the *poids de marc* and the price and the degree of fineness of precious metals.<sup>135</sup>

Corporation	Apprentice ship	Journey manship	Masterpiece	Base Mastership fees in livres		
				Master's son	apprentice	sans qualité
Peigniers – Tabletiers	6 Years	2 Years	App. only	22	400	
Menuisiers – Ébénistes	6 Years	3 Years	All	150	350	500
Peintres – Sculpteurs	5 Years		All	160	300	400
Miroitiers	5 Years	2 Years	All		400	
Lapidaires	7 Years	2 Years	App. only	100	200	400
Tapissiers	6 Years	3 Years	App. only	87	440	1000
Fabricants de drap d'or	5 Years	3 Years	App. only	150	400	560
Plumassiers	6 Years	4 Years	App. only			
Gantiers – Poudriers	4 Years	3 Years	App. only			
Horlogers	8 Years		All	100	500	1000
Doreurs (Métaux)	5 Years	5 Years	App. only	70	300	600
Orfèvres	8 Years	3 Years	All	546	1066	
Brodeurs	6 Years		App. only			
Pelletiers	4 Years	4 Years	App. only	496	866	1266
Merciers	3 Years	3 Years		300	600	1500
Chapeliers	5 Years	4 Years	App. only	140	600	800
Eventailistes	4 Years	2 Years	App. only	45	245	445

### *Reception of the New Master*

The final stage of reproduction was the reception of the aspirant as master. Led by his *meneur* or *conducteur*, a senior guildsman assigned by the jurés to guide him in his preparations, the candidate appeared before a special panel with representatives from

<sup>135</sup> Les Ordonnances et reglemens des marchands et maîtres orfèvres, pp. 45–46, Bibliothèque Nationale, F 41059; MACQUER, Dictionnaire portatif des arts et métiers, Paris 1766, II, p. 319.

the modernes as well as the elders, or before the jurés, or before both. The jurés were supposed to have looked closely into the moral character of the candidate; in fact, they appear to have presumed him to be of good standing if he were not denounced by a third party.<sup>136</sup> Once he paid the base fee and the additional sums due for confrérie, charity, *jettons* for the panel and meneur, etc., he was admitted to take the oath before the elders and again before a civil jurisdiction such as the royal procurator's chamber in the Châtelet or the Cour des Monnayeres.<sup>137</sup>

The fees were a very important matter for the corporations. Admissions policy in a number of guilds was powerfully influenced by the need for cash. On a symbolical plane the distinctions among fees levied on aspirants of different »qualities« reaffirmed the sense of corporate hierarchy. The table on page 286 illustrates some of the contrasts.<sup>138</sup> The sons of masters rarely paid more than half the fees of apprentice-aspirants, and very often a great deal less. Sons of jurés were granted further rebates: 300 livres for the orfèvres. Journeymen marrying daughters of masters and jurés generally obtained conditions analogous to those of the sons. With perfect consistency, the corporations discriminated against sons born before their fathers had reached mastership: sociogenetically they had no claims on corporate solicitude. Nevertheless they were usually given an intermediary regime between sons and apprentices. Journeymen without quality had to pay what amounted to penalty or redemption fees.

Royal ordonnances, often seconded by corporate statutes, strictly prohibited the jurés from demanding fees, gifts or banquets beyond the established entry schedule.<sup>139</sup> Yet there is evidence that certain leaders extorted supplemental sums not only from outsiders but also from sons of masters.<sup>140</sup> There were also cases in which the jurés promised masterships to journeymen who were not ready to stand in return for bribes. The juré orfèvres demanded 1,000 livres to administer a summary masterpiece to journeyman Adrien Tourotte, who had done his apprenticeship at the Trinity Hospital. Tourotte offered 600 livres, which the jurés accepted, but he died before he could undergo the test. The jurés promised his wife that she would be treated as a corporate widow and that her sons would be considered master's sons. As a pledge of their good faith, they lent her the orfèvres' pall and silver for Tourotte's funeral. Shortly afterward, however, the jurés abandoned her. They altered her husband's Trinity brevet and sold it, along with a promise of quick mastership, to another journeyman, allegedly for 3,000 livres. To appease the widow, the jurés returned the 600 livres and added an indemnity of 300 livres. Jailed for fraud, the widow denounced

<sup>136</sup> On the old moral rigor, see the sixteenth century statutes of the fondeurs, mouleurs, Bibliothèque Nationale, F 2961.

<sup>137</sup> For examples of admissions registered by the Châtelet, see Archives Nationales, Y 9324, 5 September 1737 (peintres-sculpteurs), 16 December 1737 (merciers), 14, 27 January 1738 (menuisiers-ébénistes), 9 December 1738 (tapissiers); Y 9388, 31 August 1764 (horlogers); Y 9390, 11 October 1768 (doreurs), 9 November 1767 (gantiers).

<sup>138</sup> Derived from a wide range of sources, the table confronts fees fixed at different dates and thus is not adequately homogeneous to sustain rigorous comparisons. For alternative fee schedules, see Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1733.

<sup>139</sup> Guide des corps et des communautés, 1766, p. 19.

<sup>140</sup> See, for example, the interrogation of Bourgoïn of the ferailleurs, Archives Nationales, Y 9526, 5 November 1770.



the jurés for having deceived and manipulated her. »They make a big show of their quality of masters and gardes«, she observed acerbically, »they think that under this title they can do everything . . . with impunity.«<sup>141</sup>

### *The Arteries of Corporate Mobility: Open or Clogged?*

Were the corporations more or less hermetically closed reproduction systems, as the abbé Coyer, Clicquot de Blervache, Bigot de Sainte-Croix, and other eighteenth century critics of the guilds claimed? Surely the answer requires more nuance than the liberals allowed and more research than historians have so far devoted to it. Elsewhere I have shown that the baker guild had a remarkably open and fluid recruitment experience.<sup>142</sup> Among the luxury guilds, the orfèvres kept their promise to admit sons and apprentices in approximately equal numbers.<sup>143</sup> In 1757 the orfèvres admitted seven sons, seven apprentices, and seven aspirants by »other« means (privilege and royal arrêt); in 1758, twelve sons, thirteen apprentices, sixteen other; in 1759, ten, ten, and seven; in 1735, seven, seven, and one; in 1736, five, ten, and none; in 1737, nine, three, and two; in 1738, four, three, and none.<sup>144</sup> A survey of masters surviving in 1775 gives a rough indication of admissions policy from 1720 through 1775. Of the masters enrolled in 1775, 195 had been admitted as sons, 282 as apprentices, and 139 by privilege and arrêt. From 1760 through 1775, apprentices surpassed sons by more than two to one; 186 versus 92.<sup>145</sup> Nor does this take account of the impact of the 1776 reorganization on the stratification of recruitment.<sup>146</sup> On the other hand, admissions per se is only part of the story of mobility. It made no sense to seek mastership if one could not reasonably expect to be able to establish oneself in a shop. Independent establishment was considerably more difficult and more onerous than obtaining mastership. The problem of corporate sclerosis and servitude must be examined within the broader socioeconomic context and not just on the ideological terrain chosen by guild critics.

## V. The Spirit of Revolt

Throughout the eighteenth century corporate leaders complained of the growing »arrogance« of their journeymen, their »spirit of revolt«, their »insubordination«.<sup>147</sup> The jurés of the chapeliers pointed with alarm to »the taste for independence« of their workers.<sup>148</sup> »The extravagant pretension to absolute independence« of their journey-

<sup>141</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21979, fol. 375.

<sup>142</sup> See my forthcoming *The Bakers of Paris in the Eighteenth Century*.

<sup>143</sup> FRANKLIN (See n. 11) pp. 57–58; *Projet de nouveaux statuts des orfèvres, 1776*, Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>144</sup> Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>145</sup> *Tableau général des maîtres et marchands orfèvres, July 1776*, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 4615.

<sup>146</sup> See Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>147</sup> See KAPLAN, *Réflexions sur la police du monde du travail, 1700–1815*, in: *Revue Historique*, 261 (1979), p. 22.

<sup>148</sup> Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, ms. Bastille 12202 (December 1764).

men scandalized the gardes of the épicerie.<sup>149</sup> The tissutiers-rubaniers had no doubt that if journeyman indocility were tolerated, it would degenerate into »sedition or poular revolts.«<sup>150</sup>

The situation was preoccupying, but it was not really surprising, for it was generally agreed that workers were naturally turbulent, mutinous and dangerous. They had to be subjected to constant surveillance and control. The role of the corporation was not to integrate the worker into a genuine moral and socioeconomic community in which he would be a citizen *à part entière*, but to disarm him and contain him. It was not quixotically expected that relations would or could be mediated by bonds of mutual affection, respect or interest. Rather, the relation was to be one of *serviteur* to *maître*. In the best of circumstances this relationship could prove to be symbiotic: in return for his submission, the worker would be succored and guided. This was the idealized sense in which the parlement of Paris referred to the »douce police« of the *jurandes*.<sup>151</sup> On the other hand, the model of subordination could provoke tension, resistance, and disorder.

### *The Model of Subordination*

The gardes of the corporation of épiciers gave vigorous expression to this conception of the journeyman-domestic and to the theory of subordination which they believed governed not merely the corporate system but the entire social structure. The context for their exposition was an internal debate about the wisdom of an ordonnance requiring all the journeymen épiciers to register with the guild bureau in order to legitimate their status and to obtain work. Journeymen had always resented registration, for it seemed to be the institutional embodiment of the idea that identified the journeymen with the domestic servant and it deeply wounded their sense of self-esteem.<sup>152</sup> A host of masters – one hundred and fifty in a corporation of 1,100 – demanded that the ordonnance be rescinded, for in their view it needlessly hounded and degraded the journeyman and led to insurrection rather than good order. There was no reason, they alleged, to reduce the journeymen to »the lowest category of citizens«. They should not be confounded with »persons of no birth, no name, and no education«. <sup>153</sup> In a blistering riposte, the gardes of the épicerie articulated a starkly manichean world view. The »general principles« of law and nature prescribed that it is »the Master who orders and the inferior who must obey him«.

It is a moral heresy to suppose that there can exist persons who do not recognize the laws of Subordination. It is a negation of the constitutional principles of society and of a healthy political order. Man must command or he must obey. There is no middle point.

<sup>149</sup> *Reflections contre l'appel*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1782, fol. 260. Cf. fol. 262: »this tendency toward revolt.«

<sup>150</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 28 February 1763, Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Fonds Lamoignon, XL, fols. 402–26.

<sup>151</sup> Remontrances du 2 au 4 mars 1776, in J. FLAMMERMONT, *Remontrances du Parlement de Paris au 18e siècle*, Paris 1888–98, III, p. 310.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. the case of the journeymen locksmiths, supported by their masters, who refused to register on the grounds that »they were not lackeys«. Poussot to Marville, 11 October 1746, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 11596.

<sup>153</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1732, fols. 232–38.

How could the inferior pretend to command or to be at the level of the master? asked the gardes. The master was an established citizen, he had a »fixed estate« in life that invested him with his superiority. The journeyman, young and inexperienced, without a »decided vocation«, with no guarantee of succeeding, had no claim on society, neither the immediate micro-society in which he lived nor the larger universe. »Nothing is more uncertain than his estate, or rather, he has none.« He was not quite an *hors-la-loi*, but he was surely not a citizen with »a political character«.

The appellant masters insisted that they treated their workers »not like servants« but »as our friends«. In the eyes of the gardes this was a monstrous inanity:

Friendship is a reflective sentiment that is not accessible to men at the level [of the journeymen]. Generally speaking there can be none between beings so widely separated by age, estate, and status; equality is even less conceivable between a master, independent of his subalterns, and the subaltern, who is at bottom a domestic, because social conventions give the character of *domesticité* to all those who live on wages.<sup>154</sup>

The gardes manifested nothing but contempt for masters who »would elevate their journeymen to a level of familiarity or descend to their level«. <sup>155</sup> But at bottom their deviant penchant made no difference, for »it could not alter in any way the natural and political principles«. Those masters »can renounce their prerogative to command but they cannot break the chain of obligations that all men contract in coming into the world«.

»This chain«, the gardes reminded those who had not thought hard enough about the exigencies of social stability, »is formed by the graduated dependence of individuals upon each other, [and] it alone can guarantee equilibrium.« This was the same chain evoked by the Parlement of Paris in its remonstrances against the abolition of the guilds by Turgot, a minister as naive about the social structure as the dissident *épiciers*; the same image used by Lieutenant of Police Lenoir and the philosophe Mercier to criticize corrosive liberalism.<sup>156</sup> If we are to survive, the gardes concluded, we must »subordinate« our workers. Nor do they have any right of remonstrance, »for according to the principles of the common law of France the Superior owes no accounting to his inferior«. To think otherwise is to invite »an inversion of the social order«, a sort of institutionalized corporate carnival in which »the journeymen [garçons] become the masters«. <sup>157</sup>

### *The Police of Work*

The jurés of the other corporations may have put it more moderately, but there is little doubt that the vast majority of them subscribed to the *épiciers*' view. It was a matter of

<sup>154</sup> On the conception of journeymen as domestics, see KAPLAN, *Réflexions sur le monde du travail* (see n. 147), pp. 22–23. See also HURTAUT and MAGNY, *Dictionnaire historique de la ville de Paris, Paris 1779*, III, p. 337.

<sup>155</sup> One is tempted to believe that the word that the jurés used for journeyman, *garçon*, which also meant boy, i.e., someone who was not yet a man and who might remain a boy all his professional life, was not without at least subconscious significance.

<sup>156</sup> Remonstrances du 2–4 mars 1776, in FLAMMERMONT, (See note 151) III, p. 309; MERCIER, *Tableau de Paris* (see n. 105), X, p. 323; Lenoir papers, Bibliothèque municipale d'Orléans, ms. 1422.

<sup>157</sup> *Reflections contre l'appel*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1732, fols. 234–35, 263–64, 281–82, 287.

finding the best way to »domesticate« and subordinate the workers.<sup>158</sup> One method was prophylactic: eliminate the dubious or unhealthy elements from the very beginning. Thus the lapidaires refused to admit ex-convicts or authors of »infamous« acts, while the plumassiers excluded apprentices or journeymen who committed acts that were »shameful, cowardly, or unworthy of the honor they owe to their masters«.<sup>159</sup>

Another way was to keep them working more or less constantly, preferably in the same place. As Voltaire remarked, work itself formed »one of the first elements of [good] police«.<sup>160</sup> Work – legal work – identified and fixed the journeyman. To keep him working it was necessary to build into the system of control disincentives to movement. The journeyman had to give notice before he could leave – a month for the fabricants de draps d'or, two weeks for the menuisiers-ébénistes, the doreurs, the wine merchants and the printers. The plumassiers would not release a worker until he had finished his year. Most of the guilds also required that the journeyman complete the work that he had begun – a trap that could ensnare certain workers like the printers, who began many jobs simultaneously, for a long time.<sup>161</sup> Workers were also supposed to reimburse advances that they had received, another potentially litigious point that could obstruct their departure. Certain corporate statutes forbade journeymen to leave »without legitimate cause«, leaving it up to the master to decide what was legitimate. The fabricants de draps d'or were one of the few guilds that obliged the masters to give the same period of notice to their workers before discharging them as the journeymen had to give before quitting, except in cases of dismissal for incompetence, another criterion that favored the master.

In order to leave legally, the journeyman needed a written document or certificate in which the master was often enjoined »to declare succinctly whether he was satisfied or not with the assiduity and the conduct of the journeyman.« A negative commentary could stigmatize a journeyman and prevent him from finding work. Journeymen who quit without authorization were considered fugitives and faced the prospect of arrest, as a menuisier-ébéniste learned in 1746.<sup>162</sup> Jurés, accompanied by commissaires, regularly visited inns and taverns on the hunt for journeymen illegally *hors condition*. »Illegally« is at once ironic and gratuitous, for after a week even a journeyman who left with permission was considered to be a vagrant fallen out of the world of work and thus a menace to society.<sup>163</sup>

<sup>158</sup> Cf. police commissaire Lemaire's insistence on the need to give priority »to the maintenance of subordination«. La Police de Paris en 1770, mémoire inédit composé par ordre de G. de Sartine sur la demande de Marie Thérèse, ed. A. GAZIER, in: Mémoires de la Société de l'Histoire de Paris et de l'Ile de France, V (1878), pp. 27–28.

<sup>159</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21798, fols. 226 ff.

<sup>160</sup> Cited by M. FOUCAULT, Histoire de la folie, Paris 1972.

<sup>161</sup> The journeymen imprimeurs en taille douce were also required to redo defective work from the beginning and to pay for all necessary materials out of their own pockets. Règlements concernant les compagnons, 1776 and 1787, Archives Nationales, H 2120.

<sup>162</sup> Archives Nationales, Y 15612, July 1746 (Glou).

<sup>163</sup> See Sartine to Dudoigt, 11 September 1765, Archives Nationales, Y 14685; Lenoir papers, Bibliothèque municipale d'Orléans, ms. 1421; DES ESSARTS, Dictionnaire universel de police, Paris 1786–90, VII, p. 346.

### *Job Placement*

This whole procedure was called taking leave, or *congé*, which the »Dictionnaire universel de commerce« aptly defined as the permission that »a Superior« gave to »an inferior« to do something.<sup>164</sup> Meant in part to dissuade the worker from moving, the *congé* system was also contrived to enable the public authorities, including the jurés, to keep track of the shifting, partly-subterranean world of work. As the *épiciers* gardes put it, »it became important to place under surveillance a class of subjects who, by their number and the ease with which they can see and communicate with one another, could at certain times disturb the [social] order«.<sup>165</sup>

The *livret* gave the fullest expression to this policy of social control. Workers were told to join the individual certificates they received from masters for whom they worked in a small notebook, or *livret*, that had to be purchased from the guild bureau, where they were to register at the same time. The journeyman had to entrust his *livret* to his master during his stay in his shop, and he had to return to the bureau to have it verified each time he changed posts. The *livret* of the wine merchants even contained a physical description of the holder, to prevent one worker from borrowing another's papers.<sup>166</sup> Virtually all the guilds introduced the *livret* before the Revolution.

The *congé* and *livret* system theoretically assured the jurés of control of the labor market. In order to subordinate the journeymen, but also in order to discipline the masters and maintain a coherent corporate front vis-à-vis the workers, the jurés believed that it was urgent for them to govern job placement. Many guilds wrote into their statutes a clause forbidding journeymen »to plot amongst themselves in order to place each other in the shops« and insisting on the sovereign right of the master, counseled by the jurés, to hire as they pleased.<sup>167</sup> Most corporations also prohibited masters from receiving journeymen who lacked proper discharge papers and from »debauching or suborning« journeymen who worked for other masters. Some guilds enjoined masters to apply to the corporate clerk when they needed labor, while others offered a placement service but allowed the masters the option of hiring on their own initiative. To make it difficult for a journeyman to jeopardize a former master's business by taking his clients with him to his new employer, a number of guilds forbade him to enter a nearby shop – the wine merchants imposed a buffer of »fifteen shops' distance«, the *orfèvres* fixed it at »two streets' distance« – for a year's time.<sup>168</sup>

### *Domestication*

In a general way, the corporations sought to restrict radically the freedom of the journeymen – their freedom to take or leave a job, to ask for a reasonable wage, to demand decent working conditions, to amuse themselves after work as they desired,

<sup>164</sup> SAVARY DES BRUSLONS (See n. 39), II, pp. 1017, 1019. Cf. *Encyclopédie*, 1753, III, p. 1864.

<sup>165</sup> *Reflections contre l'appel*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1732, fol. 278.

<sup>166</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1732, fols. 328–31.

<sup>167</sup> In this regard, see the lettres patentes of 2 January 1749 and 12 September 1781, Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1732, fols. 332–36.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 328–31 and police sentence, 11 October 1738, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21797, fol. 401. The *épiciers* had a ten shop buffer zone. Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1732, fols. 340–41.

to sleep where they wished, even to dress as they pleased. The statutes defined a standard of behavior to which the guild wanted the journeymen to conform. They aimed at achieving a certain uniformity and conformity as well as docility in order to place any deviation in sharp relief. They threatened the worker with punishment if he failed to honor and respect his master: a chapelier was arrested for insulting his master.<sup>169</sup> Workers were urged to go to church rather than to the tavern. They were constantly reminded that they were not trusted by injunctions such as that of the menuisiers-ébénistes forbidding them to take their tools home and thus sparing them the temptation to moonlight or to work illicitly. To deter workers from protesting and especially from engaging in any form of collective action, most of the guilds explicitly prohibited journeymen from assembling (generally an »assembly« was considered a group of four or more; theoretically, a tavernkeeper did not have the right to serve more than four persons at the same table) and plotting (»cabaling«) against their masters for any purpose.<sup>170</sup> In a series of sentences, ordonnances and arrêts, the lieutenants of police and the parlement banned all worker meetings as a priori »tumultuous assemblies of persons who wish to oppose the legitimate authority.«<sup>171</sup> The jurist Denisart classed illicit assemblies as »capital crimes« because they could »cause popular uprisings«.<sup>172</sup>

### *Resistance*

Despite the cascade of prohibitions, the journeymen resisted and contested on countless occasions. Where there are workers, admonished the police theorist Le Cler du Brillet, there is »esprit de cabale«.<sup>173</sup> One of the most common and successful cabals aimed at breaking the placement and worker control system. In 1699 the juré chapeliers complained that numerous masters were victims of a plot to force them to accept certain workers. If they refused, the journeymen would »damn« their shops, that is, place a taboo on them, prohibiting workers from accepting jobs there and forcing those already employed to leave.<sup>174</sup> Lacroix, a journeyman doreur, was arrested in 1739 for having refused to enter the shop to which the corporate bureau assigned him and for having induced several other journeymen to leave work with him.<sup>175</sup> In the mid-fifties the journeymen menuisiers-ébénistes protested against the constraints of congé.<sup>176</sup> The journeymen imprimeurs denounced the »double standard« that required a journeyman to give his employer two months' notice but a master to give his employee only one month.<sup>177</sup>

A large number of journeymen épiciers – perhaps as many as five hundred – refused to be enmeshed in the registration and control system implemented in 1786.<sup>178</sup> They

<sup>169</sup> Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 12202 (17 November 1764).

<sup>170</sup> Encyclopédie Méthodique, Jurisprudence, CXLVII, p. 576.

<sup>171</sup> DES ESSARTS (See note 163), I, pp. 454–55, 465.

<sup>172</sup> J.-B. DENISART, Collection de décisions nouvelles et notions relatives à la jurisprudence actuelle, Paris 1777, I, p. 135. Cf. Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21800, fols. 158–66 and Collection Joly de Fleury 1103.

<sup>173</sup> DELAMARE and LE CLER, Traité de la Police, Paris 1705–38, IV, p. 121.

<sup>174</sup> L. SMITH, Les Coalitions et les grèves d'après l'histoire et l'économie politique, Paris 1886, p. 109.

<sup>175</sup> Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 10072 (11, 14 July 1739).

<sup>176</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 4 August 1756, Archives Nationales, K 1030–1031, no. 121.

<sup>177</sup> Observations des garçons imprimeurs, ca. 1775, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fm 12466.

<sup>178</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1732, fols. 340–41.

held secret protest meetings, menaced individual masters with reprisals, and intimidated fellow journeymen who refused to join their boycott. One journeyman, addressed as »the number four« because he had been the fourth épicier worker to register with the guild, received an anonymous letter that threatened to punish him for »having always been a lacky and a jean foutre«. His master was also the victim of insults.<sup>179</sup> Pommery, one of the gardes, also received threats from journeymen for whom *le livret* evoked *la livrée*.<sup>180</sup> In an inspection of shops in mid-September, a police commissaire found approximately twenty-seven registered journeymen épiciers and twenty-four non-registered. Among the latter were numerous insolent journeymen like the one who claimed that »he did not know his baptismal name and had no need of registering or fear of police ordonnances«, or the one who replied that »he was a bastard and had no name«. Several journeymen asserted that they were »associated« with their employers and therefore exempt from registration – surely a plot concocted with and under the protection of their masters.<sup>181</sup> There is some evidence that individual masters who supported the guild policy began to strike back. Journeymen Desert, Vodecrene and Magnan complained that they were fired for no reason after faithful service and that they were unable to find work because their masters had blacklisted them by »defaming« their reputations.<sup>182</sup> Labor relations in the épicerie remained turbulent right up until the Revolution.<sup>183</sup>

Journeymen »caballed« to improve their wages and working conditions. The peintres-sculpteurs had trouble in the 1670's and again in the 1720's with collective efforts on the part of their workers »to fix the price of their days at their caprice and to reduce the masters . . . to dependence [on them]«. <sup>184</sup> Toward mid-century the same guild was buffeted by a movement to reduce the length of the work day. The guild quickly submitted a deliberation for parliamentary approbation that fixed the day at eleven and a half hours, from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. with a half hour for breakfast and an hour for lunch, and that required occasional night work.<sup>185</sup> The journeymen bonnetiers struck to resist a wage decrease in 1724. They held meetings in taverns and founded a mutual aid treasury alimented by voluntary contributions.<sup>186</sup> Twelve years later the stocking workers struck again, but this time to increase rather than defend their wage. They pressed recalcitrant journeymen to join them and they offered compensation for lost wages from a voluntary strike fund.<sup>187</sup> The journeymen fabricant de draps d'or stopped work in support of their wage demands. They were more violent than the bonnetiers, forcing workers who stayed on the job to indemnify those

<sup>179</sup> Picard to Patte, 1 May 1786, Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1732, fol. 355 and anonymous letter, fols. 353–54.

<sup>180</sup> Anon. letter, 29 July 1786, *ibid.*, fol. 365.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 373–74.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 369.

<sup>183</sup> See, for example, de Crosne to procurator general, 16 April 1788, *ibid.*, fols. 314–15.

<sup>184</sup> Nouveaux reglemens des peintres-sculpteurs, art. LXXI of statutes of 1738, Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>185</sup> The parlement added an extra half hour for lunch, reducing the work day to 11 hours. Arrêt, 12 March 1749, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris.

<sup>186</sup> Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 10846 (March–April 1724).

<sup>187</sup> Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 11321 (September 1736).

on strike.<sup>188</sup> In December 1738 a group of doreurs met in a tavern and pledged to work only for those masters who accepted their conditions.<sup>189</sup>

Another kind of cabal was provoked by moral, psychological and political indignation and a wounded sense of collective pride. It expressed the journeymen's unwillingness to be subjugated and domesticated. Though the issues were usually symbolical rather than material, they were considered crucial tests of will by both sides. »The spirit of revolt« incited a band of journeymen doreurs to mock their masters in irreverent song and verse. When the alleged »chiefs of the cabal« were arrested, their confrères raised money to aid them by soliciting from shop to shop.<sup>190</sup> Mesne, a menuisier-ébéniste, led a small party of journeymen from atelier to atelier to insult the masters and humiliate them in front of their employees.<sup>191</sup> In 1764 scores of journeymen chapeliers perceived a police sentence prohibiting them from carrying épées and other arms as a challenge to their autonomy and their manhood, an intolerable constraint. To teach the guild a lesson about the limits of domesticity, they held assemblies, bedecked in braided coats, lace sleeves and épées, and, as a mark of determination, set up a relief fund to aid those among them whom they fully expected would be arrested. In fact six of them spent about a month in jail.<sup>192</sup>

### *Counter – Corporations*

One can discern traces of planning and organization in many of these »cabals«. Some of the structures were primitive and ephemeral, while others were remarkably elaborate organizations that were deeply implanted in the daily existence of the workers. These were sorts of parallel corporations or counter-corporations, with goals analogous to those of the guilds: defense of the common interests of the members, mutual aid, spiritual communion, sociability. Because these organizations inspired and gave direction to »the spirit of revolt and insubordination«, they were regarded by the guilds (and the police authorities) as the gravest menace to the social order.<sup>193</sup>

The least badly known type of clandestine workers' organization is the *compagnonnage*.<sup>194</sup> Established throughout France, *compagnonnages* appear to have played a more significant role in the work worlds of the provincial cities of the *tour de France* than in the capital. One of the rare examples we have of *compagnonnage* militancy in Paris occurred on the eve of the Revolution in a factory-size atelier belonging to a fancy hatmaker named Dumesnil. Twenty-four of his journeymen calling themselves

<sup>188</sup> Police sentence, 26 March 1726, in *Statuts et reglemens des fabricants de draps d'or*, Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>189</sup> *Délibérations*, 18 December 1738, in *Statuts et reglemens des doreurs* (1757).

<sup>190</sup> Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 12127 (June 1761).

<sup>191</sup> Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 11062.

<sup>192</sup> Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 12202. Cf. the orfèvres' condemnation of épée-carrying journeymen, Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>10</sup>, fol. 254.

<sup>193</sup> On the legislative and police efforts to extirpate »the spirit of association«, see *arrêt du parlement*, 17 June 1765, Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1729, fol. 3; *arrêt du parlement*, 1768, Archives Nationales, X<sup>1a</sup> 8545; and the previously cited letters patent of 1749 and 1781.

<sup>194</sup> See E. MARTIN-ST.-LEON, *Le Compagnonnage*, Paris 1901; E. COORNAERT, *Les Compagnonnages en France*, Paris 1966; C. TRUANT, *Compagnonnage: Symbolic Action and the Defense of Workers' Rights in France, 1700–1848*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1978.



Bons-enfants, walked out because Dumesnil refused to accede to their ultimatum to fire twenty-two enemy confrères »of the Devoir«. Bons-enfants from other shops joined them, and a strike fund was established.<sup>195</sup>

A more common vehicle of permanent cabal in Paris was the confrérie. Modeled after the corporate confréries from which the journeymen had been excluded long ago, these confréries dealt with matters other than »the devotion and charity« that they were expected to practice. On a number of occasions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the authorities ordered these worker brotherhoods to disband on the grounds that they had degenerated into »conspiracies« and assemblies of libertinage, blasphemy and sedition. An edict of 1749 declared »all confréries« to be »illegal associations«. More nuanced was a parliamentary arrêt of 1760 that resuscitated the old distinction between good or true (that is, purely religious) confréries and evil or false ones (cabals of workers). All confréries that wished to continue to function would have to submit their titles and statutes to scrutiny. The parlement promised to decide their fate on a case by case basis.<sup>196</sup>

Among the journeymen confréries whose existence was known to the authorities in 1760 were the chapeliers, the couvreurs, the fripiers, the charpentiers, the cordonniers, the marbriers, the selliers, the tapissiers, the rotisseurs, the boureliers, the teinturiers, the corroyeurs, the frotteurs. The chapeliers appeared to have animated three different and perhaps competing confréries, the charpentiers and the couvreurs two each. Frequently several different confréries were installed in the same church, providing opportunities for contacts and common fronts.<sup>197</sup> The charpentiers of the confrérie of St. Joseph insisted on their devotion and on their venerability: they claimed to go back to 997!<sup>198</sup> The confrérie of the workers of the manufacture des glaces of the faubourg St.-Antoine stated its vocation as the maintenance of »order and union«. <sup>199</sup> The frotteurs described their brotherhood as »a society of mutual assistance under the invocation of St. Francis de Sales«. <sup>200</sup>

Despite the pious affirmations, it is clear that many journeymen confréries were primarily worker-interest organizations. At the heart of the bonnetier cabals was the confrérie, located in the church of St. Paul. Its chief, Michel, was the receiver of the confrérie.<sup>201</sup> The leader of the chapeliers in the fight over arms and honor brandished the title of syndic and trésorier of the corporation and confrérie of the journeymen.<sup>202</sup> Almost forty years earlier the lieutenant general of police had dissolved the chapelier confrérie and prohibited the journeymen to elect any syndics, treasurers or deacons, to act in the collective name of the workers, to collect any funds, and to hold any

<sup>195</sup> Archives Nationales, Y 13916, 12 June 1789. For other evidence of the Devoir, see controller-general to procurator general, 11 February 1783, Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1729, fols. 206-07.

<sup>196</sup> See KAPLAN (See n. 147), pp. 60-62.

<sup>197</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Joly de Fleury 1590, fols. 10-92, 231-45, 246-52.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., fols. 230-53.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., fols. 196-200.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., fol. 171. This brotherhood was rent by internal dissension over financial management, just like that in many corporations. See the appeal in behalf of »the best and purest part of the confraternity« against three allegedly plotting and corrupt leaders. Petition to procurator general, circa 1755, *ibid.*, fol. 154.

<sup>201</sup> Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 10846; police sentence, 24 March 1724, Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Fonds Lamoignon XXVIII, fols. 43-49.

<sup>202</sup> Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 12202.

meetings.<sup>203</sup> The doreur wage cabals began in a tavern that served as the secular seat of the confrérie established in the church of Ste.-Geneviève des Ardens.<sup>204</sup> The confrérie of the couteliers also met in a tavern as well as in the church of the Grands Cordeliers.<sup>205</sup> The journeymen orfèvres tried to set up a brotherhood more or less above ground in the church of St.-Denis du Pas in 1723. But the jurés learned, probably from journeymen informers, »that behind this pretended pious association . . . they met and plotted practices contrary to the good of the business of the Masters, namely to raise the price of their services.« In order to stifle »this sort of concerted Monopoly«, the guild obtained a decree from the ecclesiastical administration expelling the confrérie – which merely ended its legal or overt existence.<sup>206</sup>

### *Renegade Masters*

Occasionally, the masters were directly responsible for undermining the corporate police of work by encouraging and profiting from worker insubordination. Spurred by commercial competition, political rivalries, or personal animosities, certain masters defied the corporate regulations against hiring workers who lacked proper papers, against tampering with the employees of other masters, and against offering more than the current wage, which was sometimes established by the council of elders. The actions, in the words of the tapissier jurés, »eroded the union of the Masters and introduced disorder and confusion among them . . .«<sup>207</sup> The bonnetiers' guild was troubled by this sort of *fronde* in the thirties when masters stimulated »license and indiscipline« among the journeymen by competing for their services with wage increments.<sup>208</sup> The fabricants de draps d'or suffered similar disarray as a result of the efforts of certain masters »to attract the services of journeymen working for other masters by promising a wage increase«. <sup>209</sup> The juré pelletiers took legal action against widow mistress Camusat to compel her to dismiss within twenty-four hours a journeyman whom she had hired away from master de Bierre.<sup>210</sup> The jurés also supported suits initiated by aggrieved masters against abusive confrères. Masters Baillon of the horlogers and Leclair of the fondeurs filed actions against fellow masters for luring away their workers.<sup>211</sup>

<sup>203</sup> Police sentence, 6 September 1725 in Articles et statuts des marchands et maîtres chapeliers, Bibliothèque Nationale, F 26428.

<sup>204</sup> Délibérations, 18 December 1738 and police sentence, 10 March 1739 in Statuts des doreurs, 1757.

<sup>205</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 8090, fols. 385–87.

<sup>206</sup> LE ROY, ed., Statuts et privilèges des orfèvres, Bibliothèque Nationale 8 Z Le Senne 951 and Archives Nationales, T 1490<sup>10</sup>, fol. 253.

<sup>207</sup> Arrêt du parlement, 23 March 1723 in Nouveau recueil des tapissiers, pp. 189–95, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 4 J 2361.

<sup>208</sup> Ordonnance of police, 23 August 1736 in Recueil des principaux statuts de la bonneterie, pp. 95–96, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, J 2369.

<sup>209</sup> Police sentence, 15 March 1723 in Statuts et ordonnances des fabricants de draps d'or, Paris 1755, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 4 J 2322. Cf. Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 21794, fol. 311 (article XXXII, 1667).

<sup>210</sup> Police sentence, 23 February 1730 and arrêt du parlement, 1 July 1733 in Statuts et ordonnances des marchands pelletiers, Paris 1748, Bibliothèque Nationale, F 22602. Cf. Statuts des pelletiers, Paris 1734, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 4 J 2324.

<sup>211</sup> Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. Bastille 11081 (1729); Archives Nationales, Y 9388, 10 July 1764; arrêt du parlement, 19 July 1754, in Statuts des doreurs (1757), pp. 222 ff, Bibliothèque Nationale, 8 Z Le Senne 3886.

## VI. Afterthoughts

A compelling study of the »luxury« guilds in the eighteenth century must be something of an *histoire totale*. This is so in part because of the nature of the problem, but also in part because of the nature of the sources. Given the extreme paucity of extant corporate materials, one is virtually obliged to look at the guilds indirectly, metaphorically, stealthily. We will understand the luxury corporate structures better when we know more about the luxury market and the conjuncture across the century of *douceur de vivre*. We must look, too, at the ideological implications for the craftsmen and merchants, for the consumers and the non-consumers, and for the public authorities of the great debate on luxury. Long before the time of the *sans-culottes*, a philosophe-minister named Silhouette envisioned regenerating France by extirpating luxury. The orfèvres lived in constant dread of sumptuary restrictions.<sup>212</sup> Did constant contact with the very rich, with their mores and their discourse, and with the precious articles that they ordered have any effect on the journeymen who lived in a world of relative poverty and constriction and who were surrounded by misery on all sides? Did it help to accelerate a sort of sociopolitical *prise de conscience*? This is one of those fruitful points where the vectors of social, economic, political and intellectual history intersect.

One must reassess the whole question of corporate decadence. It is time to subject the liberal critique of the corporate system to searching scrutiny. What were the unarticulated ideological assumptions as well as the polemical-political goals of the liberals? Were the guilds narrowly concerned with the distribution of work rather than with production? Did they systematically impede innovation? Were they no longer economically competitive? What happened to them as a result of the terrible nightmare of February and the reorganization of August 1776? How did the corporations see their own problems and perspectives? How had the attitude of the corporations toward unincorporated work changed? Did the luxury guilds begin to take the measure of their common interests? Did the Six Corps provide more effective leadership than is generally supposed? Finally, we must look at the wealth and attitudes of the individual masters as revealed by their marriage contracts, investments, loans, after-death inventories, and bankruptcies [*faillites*].

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<sup>212</sup> See, for example, *Mémoire au roi*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fm 25090 and J. J. GUIFFREY, *Les Orfèvres de Paris en 1700*, Paris 1879.