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The King and His People in the Discourse of the Ancien Capitaine.

Jerry A. Micelle
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THE KING AND HIS PEOPLE IN
THE DISCOURSE OF THE ANCIEN CAPITAINE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by

Jerry A. Micelle
B.A., Loyola University of New Orleans, 1964
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1967
August, 1995
To my children, Regina and Jerry

Born during the Renaissance
   Period of my life;
Survived the struggles of
Reformation and Enlightenment;
Matriculated in the school of
   Religion and Science;
Equipped with the courage and capability
To live in the twentieth century;
Prepared to learn from the Past
   To face the challenges of
The present and the future
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many scholars and friends contributed their time and talent to assist me in the research and writing of this dissertation. Glenn Conrad and Carl Brasseaux unlocked the resources of the Center for Louisiana Studies and counseled and guided me through the maze of archival material.

My colleagues at McNeese State University gave me advice and encouragement. The late Joe Gray Taylor expressed a continuing interest in my research activities. He and Michael Enright read and criticized the original drafts of my paper on French Captains. Thomas Watson taught me about Indians, traders, and Spanish institutions. Thomas Fox opened the door to his vast treasure of information about villages and family structure. Carolyn Delatte asked questions and suggested alternative interpretations. Ray Miles spent hours talking with me about Indians. He defended the values of native American culture and helped me to see beyond the European prejudices expressed in the Jesuit Relations. Robert Forrest and Rotham Indurthy provided inspiration and motivation both during times of
triumph and on days when the weight of criticism took its toll.

The first three volumes of the Mississippi Provincial Archives provided a wealth of material for my article on the Superior Council. Patricia K. Galloway’s edition of volumes 4 and 5 yielded another gold mine of information. Her notes and annotations often contain the only information available about some important colonial personalities. Professor Galloway’s articles on the Choctaw Indians prompted me to take advantage of the work of archaeologists and anthropologists and learn their methodology.

In Canada, Sister Louise Godin, O.S.U. not only shared her artwork in which she depicted the historical origin of the Ursuline convent, but she helped me to locate valuable material during my stay in Quebec. In California, Leona Schonfeld and Mary Wright aided me in my searches in the Huntington Manuscript Collection. In Paris, Edna Lemay and Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret took time to listen as I described my interest in the noblesse commercante.

One can pursue knowledge as an end in itself, but students should work together in a community of discussion and discourse to achieve the balance between intense selfishness and self-sacrifice required to produce creative ideas and new methods. Every individual and every generation
has its own way of doing history. We all live it; some record it, some teach it, and some write it. Professor Dena Goodman has developed a meticulous method of writing history that I can only attempt to describe as rigid textual empiricism. Invented history may be examined as an artifact, but any attempt of the writer to build a new myth on the old one opens the way for incisive criticism. Five years of writing under the direction of Professor Goodman leaves me in awe of those scholars who have the tenacity to write and rewrite until the confusion and distortion of historical events give way to a pattern of human development that can be grasped by the human mind. We all live, but everything we do cannot be recorded.

Is writing history a method of examining the record left by others and never being satisfied with what we do? Living it produces more deeds to record. Writing it is painful. Teaching what others have written and encouraging students to do more is rewarding, but writing and teaching combine to produce effective scholarship. It is difficult indeed to be both a good writer and a good teacher. It is much easier to be a good student, forever learning and striving to come to the knowledge of truth.

The task of presenting history to this generation is more difficult than ever. Those who write and those who
teach it bear a heavy burden. Students of colonial Louisiana have responded to the challenge of Jo Ann Carrigan's commentary on Alcée Fortier's interpretation of Louisiana History. Marcel Giraud and Charles O'Neill effectively demonstrated how to use the wealth of archival material to construct a more objective history of Louisiana as a part of the wider world. Today the work of Glenn Conrad, Carl Brasseaux, and Mathé Allain on French and Acadian culture along with Richard White's analysis of the village world of the Illinois country and Donald Usner's discussion of the frontier exchange economy open the way for a new synthesis of Louisiana history.

The small thread that I have traced through many years is indeed only a minute part of a huge tapestry. The length of the road is long, but many hands have helped to build it. My journey has been fascinating and I stand amazed at how much I have travelled on a path provided by those who have devoted their time and talent to the study and writing of colonial Louisiana history.

I must point out that my work still falls short of the high standards set by those who inspired and directed it. Without their help my task would never have been completed, but I must bear the responsibility for the shortcomings that
remain after all the valiant efforts of those who offered advice and criticism.

Jo Anne Durand and Leslye Quinn helped me locate material and provided countless books and articles through the Interlibrary Loan department of McNeese. Arleen Cutrera and Linda West helped me to master the Word Perfect program and rendered invaluable assistance in typing the manuscript.

Last, but certainly not least, I must thank Shirley, my wife, for her encouragement and help.

Jerry A. Micelle

McNeese State University
Lake Charles, Louisiana
At the annual meeting of the Louisiana Historical Association on March 14, 1986 in Shreveport, Glenn Conrad and Carl Ekberg presented papers which stirred my interest in the commandants and captains who exercised authority over local communities during the French and Spanish periods. Ekberg's study of colonial Ste. Genevieve suggested that the extraordinary power and influence of the Vallé family might somehow be connected to the militia captain's office. I had noticed the many references to "captains" in the correspondence of French colonial administrators. While pursuing the idea that the title involved much more than a simple, military rank, I discovered that W.J. Eccles had suggested the need for a study of Canadian militia captains. The references to Choctaw Indian captains in

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the two volumes of the *Mississippi Provincial Archives* edited by Patricia Galloway beckoned for an explanation.

My archival investigation began at the Center for Louisiana Studies in Lafayette. While reading the correspondence written in the days following the Natchez Massacre, I discovered that colonial officials were so overwhelmed by fear of the Indians that they hesitated to venture out from the city of New Orleans. Governor Étienne de Périer insisted that the safety of the colony required "putting sufficient troops in it to cope with the Indians." His reference to "officers who state to the Court that they will manage the Indians by the devotion and friendship" that the Indians will have for them seemed to indicate that officers with deeper roots in the colony had a technique for dealing with Indians that did not rely completely on military force.3

From Lafayette, I traveled to Natchitoches and Austin. Impressed by the amazing career of Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, I found evidence to support my contention that the failure of the French crown to control colonial development

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was not rooted in the division of authority between commissary and governor. The establishment of financial controls was, in fact, the means used by the royal government in Versailles to control Canadian officers who needed the sovereign power of the French king to promote their economic enterprises. The career of St. Denis suggested the possibility that royal sovereignty and royal control were in some sense dependent on the voluntary service of colonial officers.

The old Canadian captains emerged at a time when they exercised a form of royal sovereignty that was undiluted by the effort to introduce financial controls. The efforts of the crown and the Company of the West to control the old captains failed, but the work of men such as St. Denis created a durable and effective organization of frontier territory that survived during the transfer of sovereignty from France to Spain and ultimately to the American Federal Republic.

St. Denis epitomized the ancien capitaine as an intermediary between Indians and Europeans and as an independent entrepreneur who presented himself as a servant of the crown. At the Natchitoches court house and the Eugene Watson Memorial Library, I learned that a militia captain could hold many different titles, that the captain’s
rank was almost always stated first and followed by the titles added to it by official appointments. My perusal of the Natchez Trace Collection in the Barker Archives at the University of Texas clearly revealed that the militia captain played an important role not only in Ste. Genevieve, but in all of the frontier posts during the period of Spanish Dominion.

I had been interested in maritime captains for a long time. Admiralty cases scattered through the Superior Council records prompted me to consult Nicolas Valin’s commentary on the Ordonnance de la marine. My search for the roots of the European captain’s office led me to Lyons, Aix-en-Provence, and Venice, but the relationship established between Samuel de Champlain and the Montagnais sagamores in Canada provided the key for understanding how the anciens capitaines functioned as masters and mediators who cleverly forged the links in the chain that connected the French king to his people in the New World.
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ABBREVIATIONS

AC  Archives Nationales (Paris), Archives des Colonies (followed by series/subseries indicators, volume and folio numbers)

HM LO  Vaudreuil Papers in the Huntington Manuscript Collection, San Marino, California. The papers fell into the hands of the Earl of Loudoun in 1756. Unbound documents of the Loudoun (LO) papers are numbered separately. The reference no. for the Letterbooks is LO 9.


ABSTRACT

The linkage between king and people in the discourse of the ancien capitaine is based on the dual roles of the captain as an intermediary representing the people to the king and as a royal officer commissioned by the king to exercise royal sovereignty. Maritime captains, Indian chiefs, and French missionaries participated in a discourse that advanced and nurtured the village leader and post captains as links between France and New France, between the king in the old world and his people in the new. Tracing the development of the diplomatic language in New France and observing the old Canadian captains as they extended French dominion into the Mississippi Valley, shows that the chain linking the king to his people was strained by the gap that developed between the interests of the king’s service and the welfare of the colony itself.

The city of Natchitoches planted by Louis Juchereau de Saint Denis on the border between two empires became the nucleus of a viable frontier community. The economic failure of the Company of the West created new opportunities for
those who were ready to learn and apply the techniques of
the *ancien capitaine*, and by demonstrating their ability to
control a vast territory with a handful of soldiers, the old
captains attempted to bridge the gap between the king's
interest and the survival of the colony.

The use of words and force by the *ancien capitaine*
forged the strong link of the chain that tied the people--
families, tribes, and traders--of the captain's post to the
kingdom, confederacy, or federal republic which was best
able to defend and protect his people and supply their
needs. The *ancien capitaine* presented himself as the royal
agent who could bring the benefits of protection and
material prosperity to the people who accepted him as their
spokesman.

The effective frontier commandant was a royal officer
who commanded the loyalty of the fictive kinship groups
surrounding his post. The key to Spanish control was the
enlistment of French captains in the service of the Spanish
king.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The discourse of the *ancien capitaine*, which was to become central to the administration of colonial Louisiana in the eighteenth century, had its roots in medieval Europe and developed along the banks of American river valleys. In Europe and America, the *ancien capitaine* was the head of an extended family and a fictive kinship group. He served as spokesman for his "people". When he entered the royal service he became the personal link in a hierarchy that reached from the king of France to the subjects he considered his "children". If royal service subordinated the local leader to a higher level of authority, it also elevated him in his own eyes and those of his people to a higher level of public service which enhanced his local prestige and power. By smoking the calumet with a French captain, the leader of a tribal band identified himself as a Frenchman and committed his people to embrace a new French identity which brought them into the French empire. There
they became children of the French king, the père de famille of the French nation.

The language of the ancien capitaine permits us to see Louisiana as a colony where real conflicting needs and interests had to be negotiated. Some historians, such as François-Xavier Martin and Alcée Fortier, have idealized Louisiana and failed to place it in the context of global imperialism. The publication of Marcel Giraud’s 1950 article "France and Louisiana in the Eighteenth Century" called attention to the minuscule importance of Louisiana on the scale of imperial priorities. The titles and chapter titles of Joe Gray Taylor and Mathé Allain, who (quite properly) treat the colony as a peripheral concern of the French crown suggest that the pendulum has moved too far in the opposite direction. These scholars inspired by the research of Marcel Giraud and Charles Edward O’Neill have focused on the failure of the French crown to promote and foster the economic development of Louisiana. Joe Gray Taylor subtitled chapter 1 of his bicentennial history of Louisiana "A Study in Failure." "Not Worth a Straw," the title of Mathé Allain’s recent book on French colonial policy, replays the same theme. Donald J. Lemieux’s 1978

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article stressed the marginal position of Louisiana in colonial politics.² My analysis of the discourse of the ancien capitaine will not restore Louisiana to its position in the center of Martin and Fortier's universe, but it has led me to the conclusion that Louisiana was more than a token in the struggle between European states. It was a world of its own with a unique political culture that emerged from the creative interactions of Europeans, native Americans, and their captains. Central to this political culture was the ancien capitaine.

By focusing on cultural development influenced by -- but not dependent upon -- national and imperial power, Richard White and Daniel Usner have recently explored the role played by native Americans and African slaves in the Mississippi Valley. White's Middle Ground is a village world of "republicans" and "rebels" who were active players and not mere "pawns" in the struggle between France and

England. Indians also played an active role in the culture characterized by Usner as the "frontier exchange economy" of the Lower Mississippi Valley.

In White's terminology, the ancien capitaine was a "cultural hybrid" who played an active role in the creative process of institutional and social development that began before the arrival of the French and extended far beyond the waning of the English, French, and Spanish empires in America. The present study begins by tracing the medieval and early modern roots of the ancien capitaine. It then takes up the story of the ancien capitaine in the village world of the pays d’en haut: the Great Lakes region where the French made their portage from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi River. The village world of the pays d’en haut gave the French captain-traders and their missionary allies the opportunity to establish their authority over Indian refugees who needed a means to protect themselves from stronger, hostile tribes. At the same time, Indian leaders

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5White Middle Ground, 283-284.
who accepted French sovereignty increased their power over their followers.

Chapter 4 describes how Pierre Lemoyne, Sieur d’Iberville and his captains used the techniques of the Indian and maritime captains to create the ancien capitaine and establish French territorial control in the Lower Mississippi Valley. The establishment of the Natchitoches Post on the border between two empires is the focal point of the following chapter. Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, who managed to make Natchitoches a viable community, is the model ancien capitaine. St. Denis was able to manage the Indians by commanding their devotion and respect -- but only by presenting himself as the local agent of the wealthy and powerful French king.

The ultimate economic failure of the Louisiana colony demonstrates the crucial relationship between local political authority and financial investment by the state in colonial administration. The ups and downs of this relationship are explored further in chapters 6 through 8 which focus on the ongoing struggles between the sword and the purse in colonial Louisiana between 1723 and 1763. Whereas the recall of Commandant General Jean Baptiste Lemoyne, Sieur de Bienville in 1724 after an audit of his accounts was a victory of the purse over the sword, the Natchez Massacre of 1729, the death of Commissary-General
Jacques de La Chaise, and the continuing need to control the Indians, opened the way for Bienville's return only four years later. The Louisiana colony, however, only witnessed further episodes in the conflict between commissaries who were responsible for distributing supplies to meet the needs of soldiers and colonists and trade goods for the Indians, and commandants who tried to mediate between the two communities as ancien capitaine. When Governor Pierre François de Rigaud, marquis de Vaudreuil, protested the directive of his superior, Minister of Marine Maurepas, to restrict the trading activities of the commandants, his valiant effort to reconcile royal and colonial interests was couched in the language of the ancien capitaine. Vaudreuil's correspondence reveals his self-image to be that of an ancien capitaine: the crucial link between the king and his people.

In the end, of course, French colonialism failed in North America, but to talk only about French failure and to disparage the efforts of the crown to control the colony by dividing administrative functions, is to place too much emphasis on the control exercised over Louisiana by royal officials in Versailles. The real defect was a lack of economic and financial resources that produced a reliance on the old captains to ensure the loyalty of the Indian tribes.
After the return of Bienville in 1733, the governor was always in control if he had the loyalty of the old captains.

Vaudreuil was able to ignore the complaints of Michel de la Rouvilliere and he continued to promote the trading activities of the old captains. Commissary General Vincent de Rochemore gave Governor Louis Billouart, Chevalier de Kerlérec a difficult time because he had the support of old officers such as Pierre Henri D'Erneville. Kerlérec's appeal to popular assemblies and militia captains that set the stage for the leaders of colonial factions to organize the rebellion of 1768 needs to be understood in terms of the crucial role played by the ancien capitaine in the administration of colonial Louisiana.

My story ends with the Rebellion of 1768, but in a concluding chapter I analyze the persistence of the language used of the ancien capitaine at all levels of colonial administration to establish and maintain authority over Indians and colonists alike. When refugees came to Louisiana from Acadia in French Canada in 1765, French and Spanish officers charged with their relocation drew upon this rich discourse to integrate the new arrivals into the culture developed by generations of ancien capitaines. When Alexander O'Reilly arrived to retrieve the Louisiana colony for the Spanish in 1769, he looked to the Natchitoches Post as the training ground for his post commanders, appointing
Frenchmen steeped in the tradition of the *ancien capitaine* to command frontier posts in the territory of what was to become known as the Louisiana Purchase.

This study will reveal the crucial importance of the captain's office as a link between the king and his people. It seeks to explain the surprising power and influence of militia captains in the Mississippi Valley during a period when European sovereigns decided to forsake their "children" in the New World.
CHAPTER 2

The European Origins of the Discourse of the Anciens Capitaines

The term "ancien capitaine" was fashioned by French colonial administrators and will be used in this study to describe a leader who demonstrated the ability to use words and force to mobilize colonial soldiers and Indian allies to fight for the crowned European ruler in return for protection and European goods. The linkage between king and people in the discourse of the ancien capitaine is based on the dual roles of the captain as an intermediary representing the people to the king and as a royal officer commissioned by the king to exercise royal sovereignty. The cultural keys needed to unlock the written discourse are the theological model of the medieval French monarchy, the Italian tradition of the capitano del popolo, the historical experience of captains with cities in Spain, and the development of maritime ordinances in France.

Syndics (or capitouls, as they were called in Toulouse and several other cities) normally performed military service, but the close connection between municipal
civic duty and military functions can most clearly be seen in medieval Italy. It was the captain's office which developed in the cities and along the coasts of Europe that offered the best possibility of integrating the many villages, towns, or cities into the universal res publica. The process of integration ultimately failed, but the bond established between the captain and his people on the local level helped to pave the way for the incorporation of local areas into the national "cities" that were to become the territorial states of modern Europe. The captain as chief syndic linked himself and his city with the king as head of the corporate nation.

The relationship of a captain to a company as the head is related to the body was a legacy of the Middle Ages that had wide ramifications in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The quarrel over the appropriate distribution of functions within the Christian corpus climaxed on the battlefield between pope and emperor, while Roman law and Christian theology produced an administrative theory based on the analogy of the head controlling the members of a physical body.¹ Both Roman law and ecclesiastical doctrine originally supported the claims of pope and emperor to

exercise control over the persons of feudal lords and the legal corporate entities of towns and municipalities. The ideal of unity persisted, but the breakdown of imperial and papal authority in the later Middle Ages put a new emphasis on local autonomy. The transition from the medieval res publica christiana to a system of sovereign territorial nation-states overshadowed the dramatic role of maritime captains in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but urban and maritime captains played an important role in both the failure of pope and emperor and the success of the royal kingdoms in the struggle for control of European territory.

The high Middle Ages, 1000-1250, unfolded in the chaotic atmosphere of warfare between leagues of cities and the German emperor. During the ensuing conflict between imperial and anti-imperial factions within the cities themselves, a variety of offices burgeoned within the diverse systems of municipal administration. The podestàs and captains of the medieval communes performed military and judicial functions which brought them to the forefront of municipal politics, and both performed executive functions during times when they served as heads of the local community.²

²On the podestà see Lauro Martines, Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy (New York: Knopf, 1979; Johns Hopkins Paperback, 1988), 42.
An institutional structure was evolving which would eventually produce the territorial nation-state as an intermedicate form of political organization. A Jewish traveler, Benjamin of Tudela, and a German chronicler, Otto of Freising, noted the autonomy of the Italian cities\(^3\), but the reality of local government in the later Middle Ages must be examined within the context of a mentalité that cherished a hierarchical structure. The captain’s office served as the linchpin that could either connect the local community with the medieval hierarchy, defend the independence of the local unit, or serve as the connecting link between the local population and a larger political entity. An examination of the office and function of the captain in the Italian city-republics will clarify the connection between the later maritime captain’s office and the local community which are the subjects of this study.

The transformation of the urban captain from mediator and agent of the people to master of the local community can be seen in the evolution of Italian city-state government. In theory, every group or organization occupied a place in the corporate structure of the European civitas, but the

emperors were unable to establish their sovereign authority. The process of integrating clergy, nobles, and cities into the larger European commonwealth (societas republicae christianae) ultimately faltered. But while the attempt of popes and emperors to orchestrate the activities of the European commonwealth languished, strong families, guilds, and monasteries actually achieved a degree of success in their efforts to arrive at a position of harmony between head and members. The agents of these medieval corporate bodies exercised the authority of a pater familias over their members. In essence they were the captains and their "families" constituted their "companies."

The military captain was the leader of a company of soldiers, and whenever a diverse group gathered together to defend a local territory, the headman was often called a captain. Consequently, whenever a greater degree of unity was achieved either in the city or in the countryside, it was only natural for a larger, more heterogeneous group to come under the authority of a captain. In a culture where the breakdown of authority was endemic, the captain maintained order by wielding his sword against external

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5For example, the abbot of Cluny exercised paternal authority over the family of the monastery. See Marcel Pacaut, L'Ordre de Cluny (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 26.
enemies and performing police functions within the territory controlled by the corporation which commanded his loyalty and service. His "ministerium" on the local level had been to protect the bishop and the church. In Italy, the defense of the commune depended on militia captains responsible in succession to the Consulate, podestà, capitano del popolo, and finally to the signoria. In medieval Italy a confusing proliferation of titles often obscures the fact that vavasors, captains, podestàs, constables, and signore often performed similar functions. Historians of the Italian city-states have identified many important functional and chronological differences indicated by the variety of titles. Yet, in rural areas, and during the urban crisis in Italy as the communal form of government gave way to the signoria, the headman in the local community was quite likely to be officially titled "the captain."

Realizing the importance of the office and function of a captain during the later Middle Ages makes it easier to appreciate the connection between the captain and the local community. Prior to the rise of the independent communes in northern Italy, the captains served as great vassals of the

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7Martines, Power and Imagination, 34-110.
bishop, count, or marquis. As rural knights they held fiefs in return for military service, fidelity, and counsel. The commune produced its captains, but the authority of the communal captains was rooted in the urban community and its body of citizens. In Italy, a city asserted its independence when consuls selected as executives of the people began to govern the commune as a collegiate body, the consulate. When the consulate of the nascent communes began to displace the bishop as the supreme jurisdictional power in the cities, new opportunities opened up for men with military training to organize a defensive force for the cities. A man selected to represent a municipal corporation in the consulate may have functioned as a captain in the city's militia, or consuls without military experience may have brought effective military leaders into the city government.

The background of the consuls and urban captains is difficult to determine. The men who rose to prominence in city-government were literate laymen. Some might have emerged from the propertied, city-based cives described by Lauro Martines as the "thriving popular or plebeian element." Daniel Waley indicates that the judges came from the class of knightly maiores "who had received a

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8Ibid., 14.
training in secular book learning, as opposed to those whose upbringing had been primarily military or ecclesiastical."9 Otto of Freisung writes that consuls were chosen from among the captains, vavasors, and commoners.10 Whatever their origin, it was the military organization of the people (popolo) and the need to train citizens for defense of the city that gave a special prominence to the office of captain.

If captains were important in rural areas as protectors of bishops and counts, they were equally important as guardians of the popular commune. Initially, the popolo was only one corporation among many within the commune. Eventually, in some cities, the guilds developed an identity with the popolo. In Florence a practical distinction was made between the major guilds which represented the popolo grasso and the minor guilds symbolized as the popolo minuto. Originally, however, the popolo was a "societas uniting the bodies of regional infantry whose task was to check the power of the magnates in time of crisis."11 The popolo always had its captains, and when the capitano del popolo became the governing authority of a city, his functions were

9Waley, City-Republics, 14.
10Ibid., 35.
11Ibid., 131, 134.
similar to those of a podestà. Indeed they often came from the same class of judicially trained knights, and the same individual who served as podestà in one city might later be employed as capitano del popolo in another.\textsuperscript{12}

The independent commune consisted of many corporations, one of which came to be known as the popolani. Its interests frequently clashed with those of the powerful magnates. The leaders of the popolani were usually men of noble birth and only the wealthy members played an active role in the corporation. The guild masters suspected the poor masses (popolino) of cooperating with the powerful magnates against their corporate interests.\textsuperscript{13} Clashes between the communal corporations created a need for effective military and diplomatic leaders who achieved popularity by wielding words and force to form alliances and restore stability in the community.

In some cities formal alliances bound citizens together with an oath of loyalty. These mutual assistance pacts came to be known as consorzeria (consortiums). For example, in Bologna an oath of 1196 designated nine captains from among whom rectors were to be chosen. These captains along with other jurors undertook the construction of a tower to be

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 135.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 131.
used for their mutual defense. The sons of these men were required to "swear a similar oath"\textsuperscript{14} before their fifteenth birthday or at whatever age might be deemed appropriate by the rectors. A century and a half later the statute of a Florentine consorzeria stipulated that, "if it should so happen that one of us receives any outrage or offence at the hands of anyone, then each of us is bound to help defend and revenge him with his own property and person, treating the quarrel as though it involved himself..."\textsuperscript{15} In 1211 Bologna made an attempt to outlaw rival associations when it organized the compagnie delle armi. These consorzeria and compagnia usually included men recruited from the quartieri (neighborhoods) of the city, but occasionally references are made to Lombardi and Toschi who were not natives.\textsuperscript{16}

In Milan, military organization enabled the patarini to force archbishop Guido and the nobles to withdraw from the city in 1057. The Milanese Pataria was a congregation of laymen which was organized to reform the clergy. Two clerics, Arialdo and Landolfo, served as preachers and captains in the effort to wrest control of the city from the

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, 122.
\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid.}, 123.
\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}, 143-144.
archbishop. The predominance of the patarini proved temporary. Noble captains and vavasors used armed force to restore episcopal authority, but the organization continued to influence urban politics. The struggle of the patarini against the archbishop was an early attempt to establish a commune which can be defined as "a sworn association of free men collectively holding some public authority."\(^{17}\)

Later other northern Italian cities asserted their independence and established consulates. When the authority of the consulate disintegrated, warfare broke out among families within the city. Neighborhoods were then organized and towers for defense were constructed throughout the city. At this stage, the consular nobility agreed to vest a chief magistrate, the podestà, with powerful judicial and executive authority, expecting him to stand above the conflict and settle disputes among rival groups. Eventually, the conflict of interests within the ranks of the nobility as well as between the ruling factions and also the community as a whole caused discontented leaders to help organize the societas populi. At first the popolo developed as one corporation within the commune. Each city had different experiences, but a Genoese chronicler indicates that the authority of the podestà diminished with the rise

\(^{17}\)Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 16-18.
of the popolo. Perhaps it was dissatisfaction with the judicial decisions of the podestà that opened the way for the ascendancy of the capitano del popolo. More likely, it was the leader who could achieve popularity and win the respect and loyalty of the masses who became the primary spokesman for the people.

Many of the smaller groups resembled the popolo, and when a successful captain managed to gain the loyalty of the people, he could establish himself as capitano del popolo, podestà, or signore. These diverse offices with different names shared the common function of serving as head over the members of a corporate society. Another office held by the constables who commanded mercenary troops can also be included. Occasionally, individuals such as the marquis de Montferrat served as "captain and 'lord'" of one city (Alessandria in this case) before he captured several other cities. Each city agreed to give him the title of captain or podestà for varied periods of time.

To some Italians, such as Machiavelli, the triumph of the signori symbolized a disaster and the loss of liberty. The lack of popular virtue brought corruption and tyranny. Florence and the other communes had freed themselves from

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18 Waley, City-Republics, 43.

19 Ibid., 161-162.
the stranger appointed by the prince to rule, only to choose another foreigner to rule over them. This "captain," as they called him, could be corrupted by the powerful citizens. "And in the course of the mutations of their government that system was changed, and a council of eight citizens was appointed to perform the functions of the Captain; which only made matters worse." An ambitious citizen such as Cosimo de' Medici could be prevented from usurping power by a government which would "occupy in advance of him those ways by which he expects to attain the rank he aims at." This could be done by "adopting [Cosimo's] plan of favoring the people." 

Machiavelli was beginning to focus on the natural development of the state as a political community, but Aristotle had taught him that liberty and tranquillity depended on adopting a policy grounded in virtue. Marsilius of Padua had defined tranquillity as "the good disposition of the state for the functioning of its parts." In his effort to determine "what the state is in itself, and why; what and how many are its primary parts; what is the function appropriate to each part, their causes, and their

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21 Ibid., 244.
order in relation to one another," Marsilius made a crucial distinction between voluntary and involuntary subjects, which led to the question of whether government rests on the consent of the governed. Machiavelli as a political theorist and the later kings of France and Spain influenced by Italian legal and political doctrine were determined to establish tranquillity with the consent of the people if possible, or without it if necessary. Indeed, it was during the period of dynastic rivalry and civil strife that the office of captain became the linchpin connecting kings and provinces. Aristotle had enumerated five methods of establishing kingly monarchies. One was to appoint the ruler "for one determinate function ... such as the leadership of the army." Referring to the appointment of Agamemnon as leader of the Greek army, Marsilius recognized that in "modern communities this office is called the captaincy or constabulary."  

Castile: Kings and Cities

Outside of Italy, the "captain" was just as deeply embedded in the local administrative structures. The

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23 Ibid., 31.

24 Ibid., 30.
barbarians had their chiefs who established control over various parts of Europe. Some established sedentary dynasties which transformed their tribal organization of clans and families into feudal kingdoms. The "knights" who became the Carolingian counts and grands seigneurs of medieval civilization were originally heads of families functioning as military leaders.  

The revival of commerce and the advent of the medieval commune produced new, heterogeneous bodies of citizens who proceeded to elect their civic and military leaders. Meetings held in traditional places within the town produced a local "body politic", sometimes designated as "la Republica", or "la Comunidad." This corporate body of citizens represented the "community of town and land" that transcended social origin, political affiliation, and economic status.

Spanish historian Helen Nader refers to Castilian leaders of municipal corporations as "judge," "sheriff," and "councilmen." A town meeting could elect one man or a team to function as their agent in negotiations with the

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27 Ibid., 35-36.
king. In peninsular Spain this spokesman could potentially become a royal captain of the coast, as indicated in the maritime ordinances which reflect maritime practices developed along the Mediterranean coasts.

The important relationship between kings and medieval communal captains, so difficult to see from our modern perspective, becomes visible in the context of European territorial expansion and colonization. In the medieval corporate hierarchy the king and captain had protected the priest by exercising disciplinary terror. The "ministerium" of the king to rule the "populus Dei" extended to the local captain and his "people" as part of corporate "Europa."28

The elusive terminology, the problem of translation, and the fragmentary character of documentary evidence make it difficult to see how the theory and practical application of medieval corporatism fashioned the captain's office as the key for unlocking the door of territorial expansion and control. John Beeler makes virtually no mention of the captain's office in his Warfare in Feudal Europe, 730-1200. He refers to kings and counts, and he lists the levels of nobility as ricos hombres, hidalgos, and caballeros. Mounted commoners increased in number and importance with the establishment of new towns in conquered territories.

These non-noble knights who received land grants and "lived as nobles" were called caballeros villanos. Beeler notes that there is a serious lack of information about medieval military organization, but the noble commanders performed the functions of captains as did the men who commanded smaller contingents.

In the Middle Ages, the source of authority and control lay in the body, not the head. The local corporation was a real entity. It had to assemble and develop an executive structure. Beeler suggests as much when he concludes that in Léon and Castile, "the nobles and the free men of the towns exercised an influence that often overshadowed that of the monarchy." When the executive structure came under the control of the municipal corporation's agent, -- name, number, and title notwithstanding -- the king could negotiate an agreement with that agency which would then perform the function of a royal captain. Kings could, of course, use military force to subjugate the town and country and install their own captains, but the lack of royal military and financial resources usually produced alliances which were mutually advantageous to crown and town.

30 Ibid., 165.
31 Ibid., 166.
Helen Nader’s analysis of the municipal organization of Castile and its implantation in the Americas focuses on the importance of town meetings and municipal councils. Her study provides a clear indication of how the captain’s office operated as a bridge between Castilian kings and their cities.

A popular leader might refuse to obey the governor of a province, have himself elected as "captain" by the people, and present himself to the king as the man who could govern the territory in the name of the king. This was possible in Spain because the Castilian kings exercised political authority "through town and city councils in an administrative structure that linked towns directly to the monarchy but not with each other."32

While describing the Castilian municipality "as the basic territorial unit of the monarchy", in which "crown and town formed a single body that flourished or withered as one,"33 Nader suggests that the territory acquired by Spain in the New World should be viewed administratively as a "patchwork quilt of municipalities."34 In Castile the bond established between a Trastamara king and a village

32Nader, Liberty in Absolutist Spain, 4.
33Ibid., 6, 9.
34Ibid., 41.
often opened the door for the village to liberate itself from a city upon which it depended.\textsuperscript{35} In America, Hernando Cortés defied the royal governor’s instructions by establishing the new city of Veracruz and extending his authority over the Indian villages around the new town. He bypassed the authority of the governor by having himself elected as captain. With the support of the town council, Cortés then petitioned the king directly for recognition.\textsuperscript{36} The authority of a popular assembly, a town meeting, thus became the means, first, of defying the royal governor and then of establishing a bond between the new city, its dependencies, and the king.

\textbf{France: Captains and Crown}

In France the relationship between noble lords and local assemblies developed in a different manner. The French kings did not have to undertake a \textit{reconquista} to reclaim territory taken by Moslems, but they did have to subdue powerful vassals to convince them to accept royal authority and justice. Ecclesiastical organization and urban development played an important role in the establishment of French monarchical sovereignty, and in France, as in Italy and Spain, the captain’s office bridged

\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid.}, 71.

\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Ibid.}, 95–97.
the gap between noble and non-noble, rich and poor, country and town. The royal captain offered protection to the local church and linked the leaders of the local community to the state.

Medieval historian Joseph R. Strayer defined a kingdom as "people who recognized a certain royal family as their royal family, just as a kin-group was composed of people who recognized the founders of a certain family as their common ancestors." The kings of France transformed the local urban and ecclesiastical officials into servants of the crown by converting captains into provincial governors and then using intendants to impose royal financial controls. The historical development of the royal military office which produced the modern rank of captain was part of a broader institutional evolution. The conceptual framework associated with the "Christian assembly", enhanced by the categories of Roman Law, grew more sophisticated with the passage of time. Theologians and legal scholars, however, did not envision the development of the modern state as a means "of incorporating new territories and new populations" into an existing structure.37 They did, nevertheless, 

construct a theological model of the earthly and heavenly cities which spawned and defined the orders and offices associated with the genesis of the territorial state.

The captain's office mediated between orders and classes. Long before the captains (military leaders) became royal officers, they performed administrative functions as clan leaders. Just as clan and household headship served to organize and mobilize the people on a tribal level, so, too, did the captain as the head of his company or corps operate as an effective means of administrative and social control in developing the dynastic state of the Medieval period.

In the theological model, the family not only extended beyond the kinship group of husband, wife, and children, but the Greek and Roman principle of household administration in which a master-servant relationship existed between husband and wife was applied to all social and administrative relationships. Augustine's principle that the soul should rule over the body was drawn from scripture, but the translation of Aristotle's *Politics* in the thirteenth century reinforced it.38 The intellectually and morally

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38The impact of Aristotle's social theory on European political discourse has been examined by Otto Brunner, "Das 'Ganze Haus' und die alteuropäische 'Ökonomik'", in *Neue Wege der Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte*, 2d ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 103-27; In a recent article David Herlihy explains that authority, not
superior master had a natural duty to protect and rule over the servant who performed his or her duties of office as a member of a lower order of the same body. Both order and office must be interpreted as branches of a hierocratic system fashioned with bonds of personal fidelity. Each order comprised a segment of the universal Christian assembly, and each order had its "captain". To assemble and motivate the "captains" and give them their proper rank within the "republic" or "monarchy" was a task ultimately undertaken by the king of France.

The conceptual framework of French political discourse was based on the ideal of gathering one people under one ruler, but the concept of sovereignty had to be developed and redefined before effective, centralized, bureaucratic control could be exercised.39 The king performed the duties of his office on behalf of the people of France. Strayer concludes that Philip the Fair relied more on persuasion and propaganda than the use of force in his exercise of sovereign power.40 J. Russell Major maintains that Renaissance monarchs "were obeyed when they could get

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the bulk of the population to support their cause." His careful examination of the procedures followed in selecting deputies to attend provincial and general assemblies was undertaken to support his contention" that there was an increase in popular participation in government" between 1484 and 1560. Yet the monarch did not receive his authority from the people, and his right to rule depended more on his claim to superior wisdom due to its divine origin.

A thread of continuity can be traced in the theological model of the monarchy. Starting with Augustine's concept of the res publica christiana, the principle that "God shall rule the man, and the soul shall rule the body" was extended to any master-servant relationship. The ranking of first, second, and third estates was based on this principle. During the seventeenth century, venal officials rationalized their resistance to the king's new agents and claimed that they were safeguarding royal authority at a time when the "true situation in a disordered state" had


been masked. In this instance, to defend the king's subjects from unjust exploitation was tantamount to serving the king. Yet these same venal officials recognized the need for governors and intendants who would exercise royal authority to protect and provide justice for the king's provincial subjects. One report noted that the "disorders" created a situation in which the "people begin to taste the need for intendants in the provinces, and that by comparing past times with the present, the wisest of them consider that a province is without a soul if it is deprived of a gouverneur or an intendant." At issue between the old and new agents of the king was not the acceptance or rejection of royal authority, but rather the protection of the king's people.

Different assemblies had different officers, but the king exercised his office by performing his functions on behalf of the various assemblies that together represented the French people. His duty was to serve God by protecting the people of France. In that capacity the king functioned both as captain-general and as père de famille of the French people.

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44 Quoted by Mousnier, Ibid., 220.

45 Strayer, Medieval Origins, 56.
The assertion of royal sovereignty and effective implementation of royal edicts in an expanding realm entailed the separation of military and administrative functions. The enlargement of the polis into the corporate organism of the French kingdom produced a distinction between civil "household" administration on the lower, material level and the sovereign crown on a higher intellectual plane. What Otto Brunner has called the "herrschaftliche Prinzip" provided for the "domination of the ruler ... in the polis" and the domination of the master in the household. The crown was the "organizing soul" of the estates.\footnote{Brunner, "Das 'Ganze Haus'," 112-114. See also Claude de Seyssel, The Monarchy of France, trans. J.H. Hexter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).} The function of the king was to provide justice and protection for the people gathered into his great household.

Originally vassals performed royal service and established their position in the social and political hierarchy by "fighting for the king", but the development of a money economy permitted magistrates and financiers to acquire honor in the king's service. The increasing importance of judicial and financial officers provided an alternative pathway to honor and glory, but the medieval
pattern of local independence was difficult to break. Captains and provincial governors resisted the efforts of intendants to dilute their power by taking over their functions.

Regional commercial development and the increasing importance of money revenue gave royal judicial and financial officials the opportunity to use their offices to build official fiefdoms. The triumph of monarchical absolutism in the seventeenth century has obscured the popular buttresses of the French monarchy that Strayer and Russell Major have labored to expose. These historians have focused on the transformation of a royal dynasty into a modern state, but the proliferation of venal offices in the sixteenth century converted public offices into private property. Under Louis XIII and Richelieu, the king’s council continued its centralizing activities but moved away from the doctrine of contractual government which was ultimately embraced by venal officials.


48Russell Major maintains that "the emergence of the bureaucracy did not take place until the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when it proved to be as much a hindrance as a help in creating a more absolute monarchy." Representative Government in Early Modern France (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 5. For the role of the king’s council in the process of centralization see James D. Hardy,
Royal, provincial, and municipal officials were the agents of their respective corporate bodies. The process of subjecting local pens, robes, and swords to the authority of the king is the story of political centralization. In a dynastic state the bonds of kinship, loyalty, and mutual interest supported the king's authority and enabled the crown to exercise a degree of control over the various corporate bodies which constituted the monarchy. A vassal's compensation for performing the duties of his office was his land or fief which produced revenues which would be shared with the crown only on a contractual basis. When the pen and the robe began to produce revenues, it was only natural that the holders of judicial and financial offices would begin to create bureaucratic fiefdoms. As one moves from duke or count to captain-general or governor in the historical development of the French royal bureaucracy, the basic function of the captain's office as the significant link between the king and his people, between the crown and local corporations, becomes visible. From this perspective it can be seen that the commissioners, later intendants, were royal agents who exercised the king's sovereign

authority by taking over judicial, financial, and police functions of recalcitrant officeholders without completely relieving them of their rights of office. The collection of money taxes and establishment of financial controls dramatically transformed the methods of royal service and the exercise of sovereignty, but the incentive of service as the pathway to honor and higher degrees of nobility continued to attract both nobles and commoners to offices.

The first important steps in this centuries-long process were taken by Philip Augustus. In 1204, when William du Hommet transferred his loyalty from the king-duke of Normandy to the king of France, the separation of financial and judicial functions had not yet begun to take

49. The hostility of the "traditional" royal fiscal agents, the trésoriers de France, toward the intendants they accused of being instruments of the traitants (tax farmers) during the years before the outbreak of the Fronde was symptomatic of the rivalry between royal agents who justified their actions in the provinces by reference to the interests of the crown and concern for the people they claimed to represent. See Roland Mousnier, "The Financial Officiers During the Fronde," 209. By the eighteenth century, the royal commissioners who had been accused of destroying the people by exercising extraordinary judicial authority had become, "within each généralité ... the personal embodiment of the monarch’s sovereignty and the supreme executor of the Crown’s will." (Ibid., 204) By then, according to Vivian Gruder, they fulfilled their responsibility for "governing the provinces in the interests of the Crown and with concern for the people who lived there." The Royal Provincial Intendants: A Governing Elite in Eighteenth-Century France (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 209.
place within either household. Only gradually after the reign of Philip Augustus did the constable become the commander of the king's feudal army.⁵⁰ During the centuries of state-formation in France, the captains-general, who became provincial governors, used their swords to protect the interest of local corporations. Royal judicial and financial officers administered justice and collected fees from those local bodies who agreed to accept royal justice and contribute monetary resources to the crown, initially on a contractual basis. Theoretically, the head of each corporate assembly was subject first to the "lord" of the local territory, and through the local lord to the king. The duties performed by royal officials within the local territory represented a division of functions which derived from the one monarchical office of the king at the head of la chose publique. The medieval society of orders consisted of many different "bodies" -- monasteries, towns, guilds, universities, confraternities, etc. -- each of which was led by a potential "captain." When any local company was recruited for military service, the company and its captain could be placed under the command of a captain-general or governor by means of royal letters of provision.

According to letters of provision issued by a municipal maritime administration in 1318, a council of barons and prelates exercised control over captains and fleets.\textsuperscript{60} In Aristotelian and Augustinian terminology, royal authority emanated from the soul in the person of the king.\textsuperscript{61} Consequently, maritime captains submitted to the authority of the provincial governor as captain-general carried out the duties of their office. Whether it was logical or not, the king's right to rule his kingdom was theoretically rooted in his ministerium to rule the "populus Dei" as head of the royal household administration. The cooperation of popular municipal bodies was secured for the king by captains who were able to lead their companies and guide their members in the performance of royal service. The leadership of the army belonged to men who could effectively wield a sword in the service of the king, but those who wore judicial robes, carried the purse, and wielded the pen in the service of the king were also royal agents who expected to acquire nobility and bask in the light of royal majesty as rewards for their work.


\textsuperscript{61}Aristotle, \textit{Politics} 1.5.1254; Augustine, \textit{City of God}, 705-708.
The captain's office became the primary link between the French king and his people during the late medieval and early modern centuries when cooperation and conflict produced the liaisons and alliances that shaped and established the relations between the king and his estates. The relationship between the king and his counts and dukes was based on the theological model which recognized the ultimate authority of the king while actually depending on the bond of fidelity. Official rank in the society of orders depended on the connection established with the king's council as well as meritorious service. As soul and head of la chose publique, the crown directed the lower members in the provinces. The office of captain-general or governor provided a greater degree of centralized control by giving royal authority to one man who would rule the province according to principles spelled out in his letters of provision. The captain-general was essentially the royal official who commanded all the particular captains exercising authority over all corporate bodies carrying on activities in his province. In effect, the letters gave the captain-general the duty of bringing all the provincial corporations under control of the king.

The theological model of the French monarchy acknowledged the right of the king to make final judgments, but provincial military commanders continued to assert their
prerogatives over administrative officials exercising civil jurisdiction. **Commissaires** directly responsible to the king's council could be used to report on the activities of the captain-generals just as the **missi dominici** had been dispatched by Charlemagne to superintend the affairs of his counts. Nevertheless, the captains-general belonged to a higher order than the civilian officers because military service was traditionally more meritorious than civil service. The governors and intendants did not represent two different social classes, but they did perform their functions as members of two different orders during the time when the medieval society of orders was being transformed by long-term economic development, and the absolute monarchy was attempting to bring the French provinces under centralized control. The institutional reality of overlapping jurisdictions and the inclination of royal officials toward the creation of bureaucratic fiefdoms meant that the establishment of effective centralized control based on payment of salaries through a bureaucratic system depended on the social, economic, and political changes that took place in the wakes of the Hundred Year's War, the Wars of Religion, and the Fronde.

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Gruder, *Provincial Intendants*, 208.
Richelieu's intendants served as agents of the crown, but royal sovereignty required a division of administrative functions. No matter how the division of authority was made, no matter whether the royal agency operating in a city or province was a single individual, a council, or an assembly of notables, the basic relationship between magistrate and people was the relationship between officer and corps. The officer performed his duties and received his benefit from the corps of which he was the executive agency. Each executive agency, single or collective -- duke, captain-general, or municipal or provincial council -- was a little king presiding over its people and exercising royal jurisdiction over its part of la chose publique.

The city of Toulouse provides an excellent example of the evolution of local institutions and the acceptance of royal authority. The magistrates (capitouls) of the medieval commune represented the various districts and corporate bodies, forming a consulate which exercised sovereign judicial and legislative authority. Originally there were twenty-four capitouls who functioned as the captains or syndics of administrative districts. Their number was reduced to eight at the beginning of the fifteenth century. During this crucial period of state-formation in France, the capitouls became the link between the populace of the city and the French monarchy. Service
to the king of France during the Hundred Years War opened the way for the city to be incorporated into the French state. Royal service by officials acting as agents for the municipality created a bond of loyalty between the king and the people and their captains. The process reached a climax in 1459 when the crown conferred nobility on the consulate of Toulouse.63

The king acknowledged the noble status of the capitouls of Toulouse because of their service just as earlier kings had recognized the nobility of counts and dukes and later kings would confer nobility on councillors serving as intendants. Length of service and noble birth determined an individual's status in the social hierarchy, but military service as a captain of a company opened the door to the higher orders.64 An appointment as captain-general could be given to any male regardless of his birth or status, but when that individual or his descendants became the governor of a province, the noble status of his family was assured.

As corporate bodies families, companies, and cities were linked to the crown when their agents recognized the authority of the king's agent. Each region of France had a


64La Roncière, Marine Française, 1:513-514.
different history, but according to Robert Harding, the men first recognized as governors of Languedoc, Dauphiné, Guyenne, Champagne, Lyonnais, Ile-de-France, Normandy, and Picardy between 1337 and 1504 were "successors to a long line of captains-general and lieutenants-general who had [previously] commanded the military forces and maintained the defenses in the province without the title of governor."
The connection between the captains-general and the people of a province represented an extension of the officers' leadership role as captains of the gendarmerie. As Harding writes the "men in the companies were . . . personally tied to their captain, who controlled recruitment and promotion."
The captains of various provincial towns received their commissions directly from the provincial governor.65

By the sixteenth century, the medieval captains-general had been given the new title of governor, and between 1515 and 1560, fifty-one out of fifty-two French provincial governors were former captains.66 Robert Harding argues that the provincial governors were intentionally chosen from the most prestigious provincial families "to coopt the


66Ibid., 9, 21.
Viewed from the other direction, however, powerful leaders of local communities agreed to become créatures of the king to enhance their status in their provinces. The governors appropriated the royal mystique to project what a contemporary author described as the "image of God and one of his ministers on earth." The greater the distance of his post from Paris, the rarer the visits of the king, the easier it was for a captain-governor to play the role of a surrogate king.68

In the early modern period the crown extended royal sovereignty by placing the captain-general within a hierarchy in which the governor represented the person of the king as commandant-general. The letters of provision for new governors stipulated that the governor was the king's personal representative "in all the affairs of the province." In that capacity the governor was responsible for the security, peace, and tranquillity of the subjects residing in the province. Each governor was surrounded by an entourage of fidèles, satellites, and compagnons. These members of his community were the chiefs of their respective companies or corporate bodies. Just as the captain’s name,

67 Ibid., 15.
68 Ibid., 11-13.
reputation, and colors had been the "focus of company pride and morale" in the Middle Ages, the governors served to mobilize and motivate the local community. Indeed they functioned as mediators between the local community and the royal court.  

It was the captain-general and then the governor of the province who was ultimately responsible for the order and tranquillity of his province. In addition to power, the office provided opportunities to gain wealth by means of brokerage and the distribution of offices, but many governors borrowed money and incurred tremendous debts in the royal service. Honor, prestige, and wealth were powerful motives. There were, of course, different conceptions of honor, but the monarchy used the distribution of offices to identify honor with royal service.

Honor required the governor above all to maintain his place, which meant the territory he held for the king. The worst thing that could happen to a governor was to lose his place. A governor could be rewarded for gaining or holding a place by being installed in a knightly order. For example, in 1469 the order of St. Michel was created to reward valor and promote loyalty to the king. In 1693, the

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69 Ibid., 14-15, 21-22.

70 Harding, Provincial Governors, 69-70.
order of St. Louis became part of what Harding has termed the inflation of honors.\textsuperscript{71}

The identification with the royal person and the need to maintain one’s \textit{place} provide the key for understanding the survival of local autonomy in an age of absolutism. On the one hand, nothing mattered except honor and service to the king. On the other hand, the interest of the king was not as important as holding one’s \textit{place} in the service of the king. In 1591, Hurault took note of the extreme localization of the governors’ concerns when he wrote that once a governor was installed in his office, the \textit{place} no longer belonged to the king.\textsuperscript{72}

\textbf{France: The Crown and the Sea}

Maritime organization was the key to French expansion overseas. Coastal cities and fleets had to be brought under royal control. During the period of state formation, local captains and constables came under the authority of the king and his constable, but coastal cities had their captains who often either controlled or were responsible to municipal councils.\textsuperscript{73} Royal service performed by port cities and their captains spanned the long period when royal justice

\textsuperscript{71}\textit{Ibid.}, 81. See also Mousnier, \textit{Institutions of France}, 232.

\textsuperscript{72}Harding, \textit{Provincial Governors}, 70-71.

\textsuperscript{73}La Roncière, \textit{Marine Française}, 2:160.
and the royal financial administration developed as instruments of political centralization. The coastal captains were brought together under non-royal captains-general who ultimately bound themselves to the king of France by an oath of loyalty to the admiral of the fleet who himself was ultimately linked to the king by an oath administered by the parlement of Paris.74

Port cities produced substantial revenues during the Crusades and later during the Hundred Years War. During these conflicts the Norman navy came under the control of the Admiral of France who functioned as a powerful vassal of the king. Yet the historical tradition of "Viking equality" was difficult to overcome. For a time Norman princes coveted the title of duc des pirates.75 The Norman kings and dukes had adopted the methods used by the Arabs to bring the fleet under one chief, but after the conquest of Normandy by Philip Augustus, the medieval French kings had difficulty establishing harmony between the constable and the admiral. Under Louis XI and Charles VIII, unity of command over the fleets broke down completely. Command and control continued to depend primarily on the bond of loyalty between the king and the admiralty. Yet at the dawn of the

74Ibid., 2:48.

75Ibid., 1:95,124.
sixteenth century, the French king had to reckon not with one but with four different admiralties.\textsuperscript{76}

Armed merchant fleets faced the perpetual threat of Mediterranean pirates. Royal funds were used to build fleets and ports during wartime. For example, Louis IX promoted the development of Aigues-Mortes in preparation for his famous crusades. The keenest example of the linkage between king and captain in France occurred when the "ancien capitaine du peuple de Gênes" agreed to enter French royal service to develop and govern the new port in return for half the revenue.\textsuperscript{77} The Levant continued to have its own admiral until Provence and Languedoc were joined to the French crown. The letters of provision issued to René of Savoie in February, 1515, specified that, as "governor and lieutenant general over land and sea in the county of Provence", he would exercise sovereign jurisdiction over the admiralty. François I suppressed the governor's sovereign rights in judicial matters and gave the Parlement of Provence the right to exercise judgment in the last resort.\textsuperscript{78}


\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., 1:191.

\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., 2:448-449.
The admiral of France was a commander in chief of the French navy in only the broadest sense of the term. At best he commanded a coalition of forces that broke up periodically even during wartime. He functioned as a powerful officer who exercised, in his jurisdiction, as much control over the administration of justice, the collection and disbursement of revenue as the king himself. All maritime officials appointed by the king were given the title of lieutenant to affirm their subordination to the admiral's authority. The powerful garde du clos des galées du roy, functioning as commissary-general of the marine, performed many of the same duties that would be assigned by Colbert to royal naval intendants.

**France: Louis XIII, Richelieu, and the Admiralties**

By the edict of October 1626, Richelieu combined in his person the office of admiral of France and Brittany held by Charles de Montmorency-Dampville, with the admiralty of Guyenne, and the vice-royalty of New France. He also proclaimed his authority over the fleets of Languedoc and Provence. In doing so, Richelieu attempted to establish
royal control by means of a system in which the admirals' agents expected to extract value from the sea and share the proceeds with their commanders just as tax-farmers collected revenue in the name of the king.83

Even so Richelieu continued to rely on traditional methods of command and control and on procedures established in the ordinances and edicts of 1373, 1517, 1544, and 1584 to exercise control over French naval resources. Local customs had to be respected to insure the cooperation of captains and municipalities who participated in royal activity more as a coalition of forces than as part of a national navy. Even Richelieu’s employment of naval intendants was not completely new. He formed commercial companies whose members included captains of ships and ports, secretaries of the king, treasurers, as well as échevins and syndics of port cities. Richelieu invited these entrepreneurs to subordinate their "individual interests to the general interests of the state",84 but the development of a naval bureaucracy with strict financial controls did not begin until the reign of Louis XIV.

Richelieu’s naval policy actually produced a new form of feudal structure for France’s army and navy, a personal

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83Ibid., 4:558.

84Ibid., 4:583-85, 503-04.
hierarchy of civil and military captains serving the king. As the self-proclaimed grand maitre de la navigation, Richelieu continued to depend on personal liaisons and alliances to marshal the naval resources of France against the enemies of the French state. In his Testament Politique, Richelieu employs an extended metaphor of head and body to articulate the relationship between the king and his people that reinforced the traditional role of the captain in European society.

For Richelieu command and control emanated from the head of the state whose will was translated into action via a complex nerve system. Maritime administration provided the king with a powerful arm, controlled by the nerves, which linked the maritime provinces to the head. In an age when the structure of the human body was becoming an important object of scientific interest and when knowledge of the human nervous system was practically non-existent, Richelieu developed a crude analogy to explain the relationship between the king and his people and the need to use land and sea power for the tranquillity and welfare of the state.

In chapter 7 of the Political Testament, Richelieu articulated the relationship between the state and the royal household by using the analogy of the human body. For Richelieu as for Aristotle, Isidore of Seville, and Claude
de Seyssel, the state was an enlarged household. Cities and provinces could not experience tranquillity until they submitted to royal captains obedient to the king as head. Each family or city was a microcosm of the universal res publica ruled by the king as père de famille.\textsuperscript{85}

As père de famille the king was responsible for revitalizing and reforming a corrupt and disintegrated society. The reform of the state had to begin with the reformation of the royal household. Reason dictated that the king receive service from and give sustenance to the estates which consisted of Church, Nobility, and officers who marched at the head of the people. In order to accomplish his task, an effective king needed three things: good counsel, the authority of Rome, and sea power.\textsuperscript{86} The king had to command the faithful service of his officers who, in turn, functioned as the nerves controlling the various families or companies which made up the body of the state.\textsuperscript{87}


\textsuperscript{86}Ibid., 401.

\textsuperscript{87}In his memoirs, Richelieu used the word "company" to refer to the estates of Languedoc. Major, Representative Government, 555.
A robust body would respond to the initiative and control of the head.\textsuperscript{88} In a parallel fashion, the power of the local prince was necessary for the greatness of kings and the welfare of their government.\textsuperscript{89} Richelieu insisted that the ultimate point of a prince's power was the possession of the heart of his subjects.\textsuperscript{90} This assertion runs parallel to the modern theory that the authority of the prince was derived from the community and that the people were subjects of the crown represented by their deputies.\textsuperscript{91} The difference lies in the intermediary role of the officier who had to respond to the rational authority of the head as opposed to the emotional impulses of the people. In the provinces and on the sea, the primary link between the king and his corps was the royal captain-general or governor.

Richelieu engaged in the process of bringing recalcitrant provincial officials to the point of responsive obedience to the king with the ultimate objective of transforming a disordered corps into a tranquil state under

\textsuperscript{88} Richelieu, \textit{Testament}, 396.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 372.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 430.

\textsuperscript{91} Major, \textit{Representative Government}, 183-184.
the authority and control of the rational king imbued with divine wisdom.

Loyalty, fidelity, and the determination to place the interest of the state above private interests were required of all the king's servants, but those officers motivated by reason served on a higher level. Richelieu made a distinction between nobles who served the king on the battlefield and the gens de guerre destined for administrative affairs. The king, who was ultimately accountable to God, had to seek the counsel and service of officers who performed their duties with reason, steadiness, and zeal. Passion and impatience may have been desirable in ordinary sailors and soldiers, but administrative officials had to guard against fickleness and channel the energy of lower members of the corps for the benefit of the king and his people.92

Richelieu endeavored to transform the material interests of companies and cities into the land and sea power of the kingdom of France. Administrative gens de guerre functioned as rational links of a hierocratic system fashioned with bonds of personal fidelity.93 As the

92Richelieu, Testament, 301, 374, 380-382, 396.

"head" of the state, the king governed and guided the well-ordered state. As his "arms" royal captains linked the orders to each other and to the head. Loyalty and obedience of captains to the king promoted and produced the rationality and nobility which were the gauge of a tranquil and healthy body politic. In his analysis of the power of the French king on land, Richelieu stressed the need for "chiefs worthy to command." The elimination of the intermediaries between the king and his people was not as important as rendering them and their companies responsive to the head of the body. The same reasoning informed Richelieu's maritime policy. Sea captains, their crews, and ultimately the colonial companies that emerged from the maritime expansion of the French state extended the power of the French king into overseas provinces as "arms" of the state. Richelieu's plan for challenging Dutch and English naval superiority was not to finance and build a national navy from scratch, but rather to bring the merchant fleets under royal authority and insure that maritime revenues and expenditures be channeled in the national interest.

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94 Richelieu, Testament, 395.
95 Ibid., 379-388; quotation, 388.
of the body politic. Concern with private interest on that level spawned corruption. Obedience and reasonable service would promote health. Yet bringing urban maritime enterprises under royal command and control was no easy task.

Richelieu's navy disintegrated during the Fronde. In 1669 Jean Baptiste Colbert, then Louis XIV's controller-general, created a new Ministry of Marine and established financial controls by submitting it to his own ministry. In so doing Colbert established a modern naval bureaucracy.

Maintaining control of sea captains was no easy task, however, as Kenneth Andrews has shown for England, where the navy developed in similar fashion. Dissension was a perennial problem, and there was a narrow line between privateering and piracy. Acts of insolence and factions abounded. Some captains saw their companies split in two, and it was not uncommon for seamen to set up another master or elect a new captain. While parliamentary sovereignty blossomed in London and bureaucratic absolutism bloomed in Paris, a new form of feudalism persisted at sea.

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98 Ibid., 63-64.
Maritime Administration

In an important book on the survival of feudalism in the age of Louis XIV, Eugene Asher has observed that the concept of duty and obedience to the state... was present in the minds of naval captains and admiralty lieutenants only insofar as it suited their personal interests, and then only in direct proportion to the ability of the central power and its agents to control their actions.\(^{99}\)

The naval captains and admiralty lieutenants continued to resist the efforts of Colbert and his successors in the Marine Ministry to establish centralized control.

When Colbert appointed the two-year old Count de Vermandois as Admiral of France in 1669, he assumed the functions previously performed by an old-style noble officer of the crown, presiding over the navy as an independent corps rooted, grounded, and funded by coastal cities and provinces.\(^{100}\) The predecessor of the young count was the Duke of Beaufort who had held Richelieu's title of Grand Maitre. Louis XIV had reprimanded Beaufort for his failure to cooperate with the intendants and other "civilian administrators", but Beaufort continued to resist the crown's agents. In June, 1669, the duke expelled a royal commissioner sent to inspect his ships and replaced him with


\(^{100}\)Ibid., 39. See also La Roncière, Marine Française, 5:359-360.
his own appointee. Less than a month later, Colbert took advantage of Beaufort's death in battle to suppress the position of Grand Master and recreate the office of Admiral. The appointment of a child as admiral was actually a subtle means of securing the control of the crown over the admiralty. Still, the problem of bringing the naval captains and admiralty lieutenants under state control remained to be solved.

The naval captains continued to resist the efforts of the marine minister to regulate the recruitment and payment of sailors as well as the provisioning of ships. When naval intendants attempted to prevent the profiteering practices of the commanders, the captains "contended that they were entitled to a share of the seamen's pay as 'compensation' for their efforts in the levy." In March 1670, Colbert convinced the king to transfer the provisioning duties of the captains to Sieur Jacquier as munitioner-general of the fleet, but captains continued to profit from the sale of provisions even if they had to intimidate and starve their crews to do so.

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103 *Ibid.*, 34.
Colbert made important changes in maritime administration, but his famous Ordonnance de la Marine of 1681 was essentially a codification of time-tested principles that had been used along the coasts of Europe since ancient times. The really significant change entailed transferring control of the French navy from the admiral, who was a powerful "vassal" commissioned as a royal officer by letters of provision, to the Ministry of the Marine controlled by the crown.

The Ordonnance de la Marine was based on the development of the legal theory and practical experience of Europe. It represented a codification of principles established in every port of the continent. Source material for drafting the Ordonnance included the Laws of Rhodes and Rome, the ordinances of Charles V and Philip II, the judgments of Oléron, the Venetian Consulate, ordinances of Wisby, and the Teutonic Hanse as well as edicts and regulations drafted by Cardinal Richelieu. Because France was now a colonial power, this European tradition was being applied to French America. The significance of the term ancien capitaine and the connection between the French provincial governors, the old medieval office of captain-

\[104\] René Josué Valin, Nouveau Commentaire sur l'Ordonnance de la Marine, du mois d'Août 1681 ... (La Rochelle, 1766), 1:iv-v.
general, and the capitaines de la côte of Canada emerges in the provisions of the maritime ordinances regulating the appointment and service of coast-guard officers. Coast-guard captains and other officers referred to in the Marine Ordinance were called captains-general, majors and aides-major, or coast guard lieutenants. These officers formed the general staff of each capitainerie.

The Ordinance of 1584 confirmed the admiral’s customary prerogative of nominating and installing coast-guard officers, but in 1669 the king reserved the right to fill these offices by royal commission. The Ordonnance de la Marine made it possible for a militia captain to be commissioned as a capitaine garde-côte, or capitaine de la côte, as he would be called in Canada. Thus he would enter the royal service and receive standardized compensation. The right to appoint all marine officers was exercised by the Minister of the Marine. According to title V, article 1 of the Ordinance of 1681 the capitaines garde-côtes, their lieutenants, and ensigns were obliged to take an oath in the presence of the admiral or his

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105 Ibid., 2:481.


107 Valin, Nouveau Commentaire, 2:496.
lieutenant at the headquarters where the captain would serve.  

These capitaines garde-côtes came under more specific rules in 1716. By the regulation of 28 January (title I, article 1) they were given the rank of capitaine d’infanterie. In case they were serving in a higher capacity, their commissions might give them the rank of major, but along with the higher grade, they would "have also the rank of capitaine d’infanterie." Service under this rank might open the way into the Order of Saint Louis. By title II, article 1, Capitaines gardes-côtes were required to accumulate pertinent data relating to their captaincies. This would include information about terrain, roads, and other information that would be essential in time of war. They also maintained a roll of all inhabitants aged eighteen to sixty. Article VII provided that the senior captain of the highest rank would take command when forces were combined.

Colbert’s Ordonnance and subsequent amendments fostered royal control of French maritime captains, but traditional practices persisted. The ordinances of 1734 and 1735

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108 Ibid., 2:481.
109 Ibid., 2:509.
110 Ibid., 2:510.
established rules for determining seniority and giving preference to noble officers. René Valin stated in his commentary on the Ordinance of 1681 that it was understood that the captain-general would function under the authority and with the approval of the commandant-general of the province and the general and particular officers that he commanded. Colbert’s naval reforms provided a financial lever for the French crown, but centralized control in France’s territorial and commercial empire still required the loyalty and obedience of maritime captains serving as intermediaries between the king and his subjects in the provinces and overseas.

French Sovereignty in New France

The men who developed the diplomatic language and established the tradition of the ancien capitaine in Canada were experienced frontiersmen who exercised effective control over villages in New France. Colbert’s maritime ordinance of 1681 placed them under the authority of the commandant-general of the province. The novelty of the new ordinance, however, rested not in the subordination of the captains to the commandant-general but rather in the financial controls of the new civilian administrators. These new administrators were royal commissioners who

111Ibid., 2:491.
replaced the municipal officials of the port cities which, during the period of state formation, made financial contributions to the admiral and to the crown.

The captain's office provided the original link between the crown and the provinces. Under Colbert's Ordonnance, the maritime captains were bound to resist financial controls implemented by naval intendants because the division of administrative functions diluted the traditional authority of ship captains. The old captains exercised the authority of pères de famille, but the new rules required them to conform to a higher, rational level of authority. In theory the naval intendants would protect the king's subjects from those who would take advantage of them, even when it was royal officials who abused their authority.  

In practice the captain exercised his traditional prerogative of reconciling loyalty and service to the king with the mutual obligation of protecting and providing for the king's people. As the primary link between the king and his people, the effective officer was the one who balanced the interest of his people with the interest of the king.  

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112 According to Russell Major, Henry IV "restrained his own demands and protected his earliest subjects from his own officials." Representative Government, 375.

113 In 1622, the duke of Ventadour called upon his people to eradicate every "passion and individual interest" and place foremost the public good. Then he called upon the king to extirpate "abuses if you wish to lighten the burden
Richelieu's description of the corporate structure of France represented the king as the head, the maritime administration as the powerful arm, and the officers as the nerves controlling the muscles of the body politic. Obedient and loyal officers were the key to a healthy body, but the crude analogy of extended families as miniature "republics" was not compatible with absolutist political ideology. In the New World, the maritime captains established themselves as pères de famille, symbolically adopted the Indians as members of their families, and became the primary link between the king and his colonies. Obedience to the king and responsibility to his people depended on an identity of interests between king and people. In the end, the old captain would be forced to lie to his people, deceive the king, or find another sovereign willing to accept a more substantial degree of local autonomy.

The discourse of the old Canadian captains reveals the stratifications of urban, national, and imperial institutional structures. Motivated by the domination principle French captains used words and force to forge a relationship between the king and his "children." Tracing the development of the diplomatic language in New France and on the people and establish the public good." Quoted by Major, Representative Government, 473.
observing the old Canadian captains as they extended French dominion into the Mississippi Valley, will show that the chain linking the king to his people was strained by the gap that developed between the interests of the king's service and the welfare of the colony itself.
CHAPTER 3

Mediation and Mastery in the Language of the Ancien Capitaine

French traders and missionaries used and developed a language in Canada that must be interpreted by reference to European social, religious, political, and intellectual culture. Functioning within the framework of their respective village and urban institutional structures, French captains, Indian chiefs, and French missionaries participated in a discourse that advanced and nurtured the village leader and post captains as links between France and New France. In the middle ground of the pays d’en haut where Frenchmen made contact with native Americans, village elders and European officers contributed to a written record that reveals the historical significance of the "captain" in the pyramid of power improvised in seventeenth-century Canada. The fragmented threads of the discourse have to be pieced together from the narratives of captain-traders and missionaries who took forgranted the existence of a corporate state composed of families linked to the royal head by commercial, military, and ecclesiastical officers.
Between the opposite poles of king and people, the fragmented thread included references to the masters (captains and chiefs) who struggled to bridge the gap between the head and members of a disordered commonwealth. The diplomatic language amalgamated disparate elements including the customs and tradition of native American tribal organizations, the procedures and protocol of village assemblies and regional councils, and the principles of French sovereignty. Village leaders and Great Captains came under the umbrella of the French crown by using the language to bridge the gap between popular leader and royal agent.

The strong desire of the Canadian Indians for stability during a period when villages were being uprooted by hostile invaders provided an opportunity for French maritime captains to establish imperial control while presenting themselves as mediators between the French king and those native American refugees or village leaders who were willing to be "adopted" into the royal household. The intermediary relationship between "rational" Frenchmen and "barbarian" refugees requiring sustenance and protection from their enemies was expressed in terms of a relationship between fathers and children, masters and servants, rational men and brute beasts.
French missionaries gradually became conscious of important differences between French officers and Indian tribal leaders, but maritime captains and Indian chiefs had one common characteristic from the moment of contact: the need to establish a personal relationship with someone who could supply equipment and provisions for the protection and sustenance of their followers. This need facilitated the French alliance with the Algonquian Indians and secured the primary personal bond between the French king and the Canadian colony. The royal captain represented the state on the local level prior to the development of bureaucratic institutions. In the pays d’en haut, the attempt to transform Indian chiefs into French officers produced a hybrid offspring in the person of the ancien capitaine.

Maritime Captains, Indian Chiefs, and French Missionaries

As a maritime captain, Samuel De Champlain was affiliated with many different companies as a trader and explorer before he established the city of Quebec in 1608 and developed a reputation as "Father of Canada" and the first "governor" of New France.\(^1\) Champlain began his

\(^1\)Samuel Eliot Morison notes that no one in authority referred to Champlain as "Father of New France" before the nineteenth century. *Samuel de Champlain: Father of New France* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972), 225-226. Moreover, the founder of Québec, was never officially appointed governor of the new colony, though many authors, including
exploration of the St. Lawrence Valley as a partner of a commercial enterprise, but he exercised royal authority because his partner, Pierre de Gua, sieur de Monts, held successive titles of vice-admiral and lieutenant-general of Acadia. De Monts was also given a 10-year monopoly over the fur trade, and Champlain became a partner in the company he formed to exploit this privilege. The company dissolved after Champlain negotiated alliances with the Indians and founded the city of Quebec. After the new colony had been established, Champlain was designated commandant of New France.²

In the early stages of the colony's development, Champlain's authority rested less upon recognition by the crown than upon his dynamic leadership. The city of Quebec was established as a French post. With no intendant it was


up to Champlain as commandant to establish the foundation for patriarchal authority and gain recognition by the Indian tribes as their friend and protector. When a crisis of authority enveloped the regency of Marie de Medici in 1616, Champlain's right to command had to be reaffirmed.³ In America, his prowess as a warrior protecting friendly Indians against the attacks of the Iroquois did more to cement his relationship with his Indian allies than did his credentials as a royal officer, though royal recognition became more and more important as the colony developed.

Actually, Champlain's authority in the New World rested on two pillars: service to the king and service to the Indians. On the basis of his service in navigation, which he called "the most useful and excellent" of all arts, Champlain established his connection to the crown through the admiralty. He reinforced that bond at court through a marriage alliance with the daughter of an official of the king's chamber.⁴ His letters addressed to the young Louis XIII and the regent mentioned the "sense of honor [he] received during the last ten years in commissions, not only, Sire, from your Majesty, but also from the late king, Henry

³Morison, Champlain, 176.

⁴Champlain to the Queen Regent (Marie de Médicis) in Voyages, 17; Morison, Champlain, 123.
the Great." His treatise and maps would "serve as an
texample in your kingdom for increasing the glory of your
Majesty, the welfare of your subjects, and for the honor of
the very humble service" owed by Champlain to the king. 5
Service to the king and provision for the welfare of the
king's people, including the native Americans, promoted the
health of a corporate structure which encompassed the king
as head and the Indians and colonists as members.

Champlain's military and civil authority derived from
the admiral of France, but as a gentleman entrepreneur, he
exercised the authority of a père de famille. The urban
foundation of French maritime institutions can be seen in
the parallels between the etiquette required of apprentices
and sailors. Four basic principles governing the behavior
of an apprentice in the home of his master were summarized
in the third quarter of the seventeenth century by Jacques
Savary: the love and fear of God; fidelity toward his
master; blind obedience in the performance of everything
commanded by the master, provided that he demands nothing
contrary to the service of God; and paternal respect. The
apprentice, or servant, was supposed to remove his hat when
speaking to his master, just as he would when addressing his

5Champlain to Louis XIII, Voyages, 16.
father. A master, whether he was a merchant or a captain, was expected to govern his servants in accord with the principles of a good *père de famille*. The maritime ordinances actually transformed the popular leader into a royal agent. The four principles governing the relationship between masters and apprentices were applied to the relationship between a captain and his crew and could be applied to the relationship between a village leader and his people.

Compare these four principles with Champlain’s description of the duties of a good seaman. A "good and finished navigator," he wrote,

> should above all be a good man, fearing God and not allowing on his ship His holy name to be blasphemed .... He should be pleasant and affable in his conversation, absolute in his orders, not communicating too readily with his shipmates, unless with those who share the command.

Savary, of course, described the appropriate behavior of an apprentice, while Champlain described the duties of a maritime officer. Both, however, outlined roughly similar principles of a master-servant relationship including the

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fear of God and absolute obedience which were to govern the relationships between pères de famille and their families, masters and apprentices, and captains and crews.

No doubt there was a great cultural chasm between the old world and the new, but the village world of the American Indians was not as distant from the urban base of the maritime captains as Richard White's recent work on native American culture would have us believe. Because nothing "resembling a state existed in the pays d'en haut,"\(^8\) the agents of the French monarchy acted less like modern bureaucrats and more like paternalistic masters of urban trade "families." As such they had much in common with their native American counterparts.

On both sides of the Atlantic there were big chiefs and little chiefs. The Jesuits adopted the term "Grand Capitaine" to describe any Indian chief who exercised authority over several villages, but they gradually came to realize that the native Americans gave more lip service than substance to the principle of hierarchical authority cherished by Europeans. Nevertheless, the knowledge and experience of governing the Indians can be traced back to the Indian captains who were the original "captains" of the

\(^8\)White, *Middle Ground*, 16.
"savages". As represented by European mediators, the Indian discourse reflects the importance of the captain's office in the bonding process by indicating that allegiance to a French captain brought with it a fictive kinship with the king.

Jesuit missionaries applied the domination principle and interpreted the fictive kinship established between the Canadian Indians and the French king according to the European principle of state sovereignty. The Jesuit priest who reported the conversion and baptism of the Grand Sagamos in June, 1610 explained that this grand capitaine, as the French rendered his title, was the chief and sovereign of New France before the arrival of the French.9 This great sagamore encountered by Champlain during his second voyage was an old man named Membertou who claimed to be over a hundred years old. After the voyage when Champlain related that Membertou promised to take care of the two Frenchmen who volunteered to remain in Canada, the "captain of the savages" had declared "that they should be treated as kindly as his own children."10 The kinship bond established

9Father Bertrand, "A Letter Missive in regard to the Conversion and Baptism of the Grand Sagamore of new France, who was before the arrival of the French, its chief and sovereign," JR 1:120-1.

10Champlain, Voyages, 85.
between the sagamore and Champlain involved a deeper relationship than a simple alliance with a technologically superior partner, but Canadian tradition had no concept of a chiefdom with supreme power over wives, children, and the village community. The wide gap between native American custom and the European concept of the pater familias would have to be bridged by the ancien capitaine.

Capitanal, Membertou’s successor, continued to maintain friendly relations with the French. In 1633, this chief of the Montagnais made an impressive speech, as Père Paul Le Jeune reported at the time and recalled two years later, had "delighted all his hearers." Capitanal’s speech, as recounted by the Jesuit priest, provides a sample of the discourse describing the relationship between Frenchmen and Indians.

I am ... only a poor little animal, crawling about on the ground; you Frenchmen are the great of the earth, who make all tremble. I do not know how I dare to talk before such great Captains .... Thou hast assisted us in our wars, we love thee all the more for it.

The Indian captain related that the Montagnais invited the French to make their home at Quebec and that the French settled there promising to defend and protect them from

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15 JR 5:205-207.
their enemies. The relationship established between the great French captains and the Indian sagamore implied the acceptance of French sovereignty, but the Jesuits gradually discerned that the Indian captains lacked the power to command and that the tribes were reluctant to submit to any yoke.

Marc Lescarbot, whose report on The Conversion of the Savages Who Were Baptized in New France was published in Paris in 1610 and included in the Jesuit Relations, compared the authority of the Great Sagamore over his subjects with that of the French king.

He has under him a number of families whom he rules, not with so much authority as does our King over his subjects, but with sufficient power to harangue, advise, and lead them to war, to render justice to one who has a grievance, and like matters.

More apt would be to compare the Great Sagamore with the governor or commandant-general who exercised the king’s authority, and the village sagamores with the post commandants. Lescarbot referred to each village as a company of savages. No taxes were imposed on the people, but Lescarbot reported that the village sagamores did share

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16Ibid., 5:207.

17Lescarbot, Conversion of the Savages, JR 1:75.
"any profits of the chase" with the Great Sagamore. Likewise French commandants profited from the trading activities carried on in their posts.

The baptism of the Great Sagamore provided an important cornerstone of the new structure established by Champlain in Canada. The anciens capitaines became the agents of "great chief" who lived in the "big village" across the water. After all, according to Charlevoix the French king derived his authority from the same God who, as père de famille sent missionaries into his vineyard. Baptist was important because, according to Père LeJeune, souls formed the materials of a new edifice designed to be inhabited by one people. LeJeune recognized, nevertheless, that the conversion and transformation of the "savages" was a long-term process. He pointed out that the needs of the body were the door to the soul of the Indian. From the French perspective the process of Christianization and

\[18\] Ibid.

\[19\] Charlevoix, New France, 2:95

\[20\] "This metamorphosis is not accomplished by a word nor in a moment." LeJeune's Relation, (1636), JR 9:91. Père LeJeune envisioned that the converted Indians and the French would become "little by little, only one and the same People." 9:265.

\[21\] Ibid., 9:107.
civilization required a radical change of behavior on the part of the native Americans. The starving Indians received food and supplies from the French, but the Jesuits exacted courtesy in exchange.22

As reported by optimistic Jesuits, the Indian discourse indicates that the idea of becoming one people was a mutually acceptable goal. Admittedly, the Jesuits made only slightly more progress than the Franciscans in their efforts to convert the Indians, but Père LeJeune had a plan. A hospital would draw adult Indians who would willingly seek nursing care for their bodies. Seminaries would be filled by the children of those who died in the hospital regardless of whether or not the souls of their parents were saved. A second approach involved supporting young girls and providing dowries to help them to marry. By these means, the Jesuits hoped to progress toward the goal of becoming one people.23

The major obstacle standing in the way of unity was the stubborn reluctance of the Indians to depart from their culture. The tactic employed by Père Lejeune was to

tell them that, if they are going to be stubborn about their customs, we will hold fast to ours;

22Ibid., 9:261.

23Ibid., 9:101, 103.
that, if they do not care enough for us to give up some of their acts of cruelty for our sake, we will certainly not do them any harm, but we will not cherish them to the extent of taking the morsel from our own mouths to assist them in their needs; that we will observe very carefully those who perpetrate any public indecency, or who take part in these outrages and insane acts, so that we may close our doors against them and open them to those among them who are good.24

LeJeune was referring here to the practice of Indian women receiving scalps as "great trophies." They were also said to torture prisoners by cutting off fingers and roasting them for their children.25 In view of Indian dependence on the French for food and supplies, LeJeune went on to suggest that more "civilized" behavior could be promoted "if we all should agree to exclude without doing them any harm, those who commit acts so at variance with reason and nature."26 He first chided an Indian leader who had taken an enemy prisoner and then explained to him that he ought to take all I had said to him as a mark of my affection for him that I was heartily sorry that he, who professed to love the French, should permit to [have] done in their presence deeds that they hated like death; that our soldiers, upon returning to France, would say to our countrymen that these

24Ibid., 9:263.
25Ibid., 9:253, 257.
26Ibid., 9:263.
People here are dogs; --and that I, who love them, would be annoyed at such statements.27

Père LeJeune reminded the Indian captain that Monsieur le General (the French commandant) had protected and aided him in quarrels among the Indians. By arranging for him to spend time in Quebec near "the great Captain of all the French Captains" who are in Canada, LeJeune hoped to convince the Indian captain that French leaders were gentle and humane men, "not fond of blood nor of carnage, unless in the fury of war."28 The Jesuit bargained for a radical behavioral change. "We sometimes grant you what you ask of us; grant us also what we ask of you, so that we may come to be, little by little, only one and the same People."29

Neither the Montagnais nor the Hurons had any problem with accepting the protection and benevolence of a great father, but the native American concept of fatherhood diverged from the French concept of the père de famille on the principle of absolute obedience. Authority among the Indians was based more on reciprocal giving than on rank in a hierarchical structure. For the Indians, the willingness to shed one's blood in defense against mutual enemies was

27Ibid., 9:263, 265.
28Ibid., 9:265.
29Ibid.
essential to the maintenance of the alliance.\textsuperscript{30} The great captain wielded powerful arms and inspired the loyalty of his warriors and allies. When "the Savages came in a body to see Monsieur the Commandant," the Indian leader who had captured a young Iroquois woman gave the following speech upon presenting her to the Commandant in compensation for three Frenchmen who had been killed.

Listen, Frenchmen, I am going to chide you, for what else could be done by a great beast like me, who has the boldness to speak in the presence of Captains? If I were Captain, I would have the right to speak; I am only a dog, yet I must speak, and have a friendly quarrel with you. Our Fathers and our old Captains loved each other; they are dead now; we love each other, both French and Savages; we love each other, yes, we love each other; therefore it would have been very fitting to see some of your young men with us in the war; but as that failed us, we have done as well as we could.\textsuperscript{31}

An Indian earned his right to speak and command by generosity and service to the village or tribe. The French Captains had more military resources, but by the Indian captain's standards, they should have been willing to do more. Even so, the Indian captain presented the young Iroquois woman.

Here is a young female prisoner whom we present to you, to take the place of one of the three


\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Ibid.}, 9:267.
Frenchmen who was killed quite near here, some time ago. I still see the deep red blood that accuses the cruelty of our enemies and of yours; this present will conceal a part of it; it is a little thing, but it is all we have, the rest having been killed; if we had been helped, we would have done more, but we were deserted on all sides.32

The young woman expressed gladness for being "given to so gallant a Captain." Arrangements were made to send her to France "accompanied by some girls of this country." Père LeJeune told her that she should inform the Captain or one of the Jesuits if anyone insulted her during the passage.

She replied that she was now of their Nation; that she did not fear they would do her any harm; that, if she were commanded to marry, she would obey; but that no one, except he to whom she had been given, should approach her.33

Male prisoners were customarily tortured and killed by their enemies. Women who were fortunate enough to be spared often married into the tribe of their protector. By accepting the national identity of their captors, women prisoners played a role in the process of merging different peoples.

The native Americans expressed a willingness to embrace the French nation. Père LeJeune placed emphasis on increasing French glory in the New World so that the

32Ibid.
33Ibid., 269.
barbarians "will respect them, and the more fear they will have of offending them."\textsuperscript{34} Yet he also fretted that the French might not measure up to the challenge. What if the French failed to live up to the image of "power, ingenuity, and morality" that great captains like Champlain had projected into the Canadian wilderness?

The goal of convincing the Canadian Indians to accept French standards of rationality and humanity constitutes an important strand of the discourse. Champlain had exhorted the Hurons to embrace the Christian religion as a means of cementing a very close alliance with the French.\textsuperscript{35} By listening "attentively in their assemblies," the great French captain had discovered that the Indians carefully evaluated the spiritual and rational standards promoted by the French. Champlain summarized what he heard them say:

\begin{quote}
You say things that pass our knowledge, and which we cannot understand by words, being beyond our comprehension; but if you would do us a service come and dwell in this country, bringing your wives and children, and when they are here we shall see how you serve the God you worship, and how you live with your wives and children, how you cultivate and plant the soil, how you obey your laws, how you take care of animals, and how you manufacture all that we see proceeding from your inventive skill. When we see all this, we shall learn more in a year than in twenty by
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., 97.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., 10:27.
simply hearing you discourse; and if we cannot then understand, you shall take our children, who shall be as your own. And thus being convinced that our life is a miserable one in comparison with yours, it is easy to believe that we shall adopt yours, abandoning our own.36

The Jesuits responded to the challenge of providing the Indians with the choice of adopting a comparatively better lifestyle, though they expressed concern about whether the French could measure up to the European spiritual and rational standards that were demanded by the native Americans. For example, when Père Jean de Brébeuf established his mission among the Hurons, he learned that "the French who had been here had never spoken to them of God, but had been as much addicted as they to run after and dally with ... women."37 Although Champlain and the Jesuits enunciated and promoted the acceptance of French standards, the cultural chasm that remained had to be bridged by mediators who used and developed the language of the ancien capitaine.

Barbarian Customs and French Discourse

The old captains used language to bridge the gap between popular leader and royal agent. Tribal leaders

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36Champlain, Voyages, 323.

37Ibid., 10:63. Volume 10 is a continuation of LeJeune's relation of 1636, which contains Brébeuf's report from the Huron mission.
bound by village customs were enticed by "rational" French captains to embrace a "superior" lifestyle based on loyalty and obedience to a European monarch committed to serving his "adopted" people. By acknowledging the fatherhood of the French king, the people were gaining a provider and protector, but the Indian leader and the French captain had to combine mediation with mastery to bridge the real gap between native American and European culture with a diplomatic language that permitted the captain to exercise sovereign power in the name of the king or resist imperial pressure by appealing to the needs and interests of his people.

Office and language were used by French and Indian captains to exercise authority and control over their local communities, but the cultural chasm described by Champlain and the Jesuits was too wide to cross. By accepting the "civilization" of the French, the Indians would emerge from barbarism. By civilizing native Americans, the Jesuits hoped to produce one people. In Augustinian terms, it would be a "superior people in proportion as it [was] bound together by higher interests, inferior in proportion as it [was] bound by lower."38 France was a country full of

38Augustine, City of God, 706.
comfort and politeness while Canada was to French eyes a country of rudeness and barbarism. Père Brébeuf noted that the Hurons spoke of "overturning the Country." In this way, he pointed out, the Indians styled "the change from their Pagan and Barbarous life to one that is civilized and Christian." The old captain as spokesman for his people developed a language to bridge an unbridgeable gap.

The captain secured his authority by professing to accept the higher rational standards of the French and by demanding that the French provide the iron and protection needed to retain the affection of his people. The Indian leader earned his privilege of "speaking" for his people by exhorting his followers to do what must be done "for the good of the village." Before the arrival of the French, the feeble authority of the Montagnais and Huron captains derived from the affection they could generate by advocating policies to promote the welfare of village and nation.

40Ibid., 10:27.
41Ibid., 10:231-235. In his Relation of 1633, Le Jeune wrote that "the Captain is elected for his eloquence alone, and is obeyed in proportion to his use of it, for they have no other law than his word." JR 5:195.
The language used to bridge the cultural chasm issued from the interaction between Jesuit priests and Canadian Indians. The Jesuits resolved to "overturn the country" by putting a flea in the ear of Indian leaders who desired to exercise authority over their own people. The simple process of learning to communicate with the Montagnais and Huron Indians created opportunities for Père Le Jeune and his fellow missionaries to demonstrate the power and knowledge available to those who would accept French standards.

Père Brébeuf had wintered among the Montagnais and spent three years with the Hurons before the English captured Acadia and Quebec in 1628. When Père Le Jeune, learned in Greek and Latin, arrived in Canada in 1632, he took up residence at Notre Dames des Anges the little Jesuit house just outside of Quebec which had been ransacked by the English. Greeted as brother, he was asked by curious Indians if he was "captain." "Ania Kir Capitana?" literally means "My brother, art thou Captain?" but they meant to find out if he was the "Chief of this house?" One of his visitors was Manitougache. His son and a little Negro left

behind by the English became the Jesuit's first pupils.\textsuperscript{43}

Not only did Père Le Jeune have to learn the language and customs of the Montagnais Indians among whom he had taken up residence, but he and his fellow missionaries had to compete with Indian sorcerers.

The language and authority of the old captain emerged as the bridge between French imperial and native American culture. The terminology developed in the competition between Huron shamans and Jesuits lengthened and strengthened the old maritime chain linking nation and city in Northern Europe. The discourse of the ancien capitaine emphasized the use of both words and force, but the ability of the old captains to straddle the wide crevice between European and native American culture depended heavily on the meaning of words that emerged from contact and conflict between the Jesuits and those who resisted their cultural imperialism.

When Père Brébeuf returned to Huronia in the summer of 1634, he and his fellow missionaries had to contend with sorcerers who were quick to point out the incompatibility and inconsistency of European ways. As far as Huron religious leaders were concerned, native American practices

\textsuperscript{43}Kenton, \textit{Hearts Courageous}, 38; JR 5:63.
were effective and the Jesuit way of living made no sense at all. The desire for trade goods and presents and the competition between Huron villages to attract a missionary who might open opportunities to bring prosperity to their people encouraged Huron leaders to journey to Quebec to invite Brébeuf back to their land.\(^44\) To overcome resistance of those villagers who opposed their peculiar activities, the Jesuits took advantage of the curiosity and material needs of any native who was receptive to their teaching.

The Jesuits charmed their students by bringing them into their cabin. Upon entering the dwelling which appeared much like a Huron cabin on the outside, the natives were intrigued by the small hall leading to different rooms.\(^45\) The new language developed as the curious guests tried to assimilate the marvelous things they saw into their world view and communicate with men whose goal was to transform the native world by establishing a principle of hierarchical authority and structure.

Just as the reputation of Frenchmen as great captains stemmed from the deeds of Champlain, the fame of Frenchmen


\(^{45}\)Kenton, Hearts Courageous, 109-110.
as masters of iron can be traced to "wonders" performed by the Jesuits. The guests were astonished by mattresses, a little steel mill for grinding corn, a prism which multiplied single objects, and a magnifying glass. The missionaries astounded great "medicine men" by inviting them to hold the corners of a sheet of paper. Some needles were placed on the paper. One of the Jesuits would then use a magnet concealed in the palm of his hand to move the needles, making them stand up and lie down with a wave of his hand. The Jesuits did more than demonstrate that Frenchmen were masters of iron. They also painted speech on paper that other Frenchmen could "hear" with their eyes.\textsuperscript{46} Within the framework of their animistic religion, the natives interpreted all these things as manifestations of an animating spirit.

The best example of this animistic interpretation was the Huron appellation of the Jesuit clock. The Jesuits responded to the clock and expected their guests to obey its voice. When the clock "spoke" the priests would pray, eat, call the children to school, or send them home. Throughout the day, all were expected to obey its commands. No wonder,

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., 110-114.
the Hurons named it the "Captain of the Day." Quite often the leaders feigned the decision to embrace French culture and the Christian religion, agreeing to worship the spirit that taught the French because they hoped to "obtain all the knowledge that the French had." Brébeuf observed that the barbarians were content to approve the beauty of truth "without embracing it." They would justify the refusal to change their ways by saying that "Such is the custom of our country." According to the Jesuits, the Indians appealed to their customs and tradition to justify cruelty and torture. Champlain at one time attempted to convince his Indian allies that their treatment of women and children prisoners was "foreign to the kindness natural to man." An Island native responded by taking a nursing child by the foot and striking "its head against a rock or a tree." After


49LeJeune's Relation of 1636, JR 10:19.

50Ibid., 9:259, 261.

51Ibid., 261.
recalling the incident, LeJeune recommended that the French and their Indian converts should "agree to exclude ... those who commit acts so at variance with reason and nature."\textsuperscript{52} The distinction between "reasoning men" who eschewed such behavior and "brute beasts" committing inhumane acts became an important element in the discourse of the ancien capitaine.\textsuperscript{53}

The Jesuits and Governor Montmagny, Champlain's successor, encouraged the Indian leaders to abandon their traditional customs by granting favor and intimacy to those who showed an inclination to accept French instruction and authority.\textsuperscript{54} By becoming a "Frenchman" an Indian captain could enhance his authority and obtain French merchandise. By allying with the French an Indian captain stationed himself on the middle ground. Whether or not Indian leaders were willing to accept European standards of rationality, intelligence, and authority, the French captains who came to trade under the sovereign authority of their king produced a cultural legacy that owes more to the American natives than their common discourse would lead us to believe. To

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., 263.

\textsuperscript{53}Champlain, Voyages, 308.

\textsuperscript{54}LeJeune's Relation of 1637, JR 11:149.
move the muscle of Canada in the interest of the king French captains had to embrace Indian ways even as the Indians had to adopt French ones.

Speech, Office, and the Derivation of Authority

The Indian leader earned his right to speak by demonstrating his ability to do something for the village, tribe, or nation he wished to represent. The Jesuits used the word "Captain" to describe any one of a number of tribal leaders. Some captains were bigger than others, but every Indian leader had to obtain merchandise and protection to sustain and defend his band, company, village, or villages -- in short, his nation -- from enemy attack. Yet when any Indian captain embraced French culture he would face the consequence of having to abandon tribal rules and customs which might ultimately cost him the support of his "people" from whom his "office" was derived.55

In her description of Huron government, Elizabeth Tooker has observed that there "were as many kinds of chiefs

55LeJeune’s description of Makheabichtichiou, the Montagnais captain, who "gave the young Hiroquois woman whom Monsieur the General took to France," refers to his position in his tribe in terms of office and function: "he is strong and hardy, a good warrior, and has a very ready tongue. It is for this reason that, although he is not really the Captain of his Tribe, yet, as it divides into squads he is generally taken as the chief of his band. From this he derives his title of "Captain," since he often performs the office of one." LeJeune’s Relation of 1637, JR 11:149.
as there were 'affairs'. The language developed by the Jesuits and their native American guests effectively promoted the development of a hierarchical structure designed to house one people. There was a multiplicity of captains, all of whom could potentially function in a hierarchical structure under the authority of one great chief or "grand capitaine." The language of the ancien capitaine bridged the gap between the two cultures by permitting the spokesman of each band or tribe to enhance his position by accepting the authority of and beginning to speak in the name of the French king.

The peace and prosperity of a village or company depended upon the ability of its leader to speak and obtain gifts and merchandise. The leader derived his power to exercise authority over men and nature from the spirit that enabled him to speak. The Hurons spread the news about the return of E-chom (Père Brébeuf) to Huronia by explaining his deeds by reference to O-Ki, the "Great Spirit." E-


chom's cabin is built! He is O-ki!" they said. "He lives with the Captain of the Day which speaks and tells him when to put on the kettle! He paints speech! He hears with his eyes! He is O-ki!" The association of the concept of captain (okima) with the idea of a wealthy and powerful father who was "Captain of all captains" opened the door for Indian leaders to become powerful spokesmen for their people while professing obedience to the French king and placing themselves under the umbrella of his protection. 58

An ongoing discussion between Père Lejeune and Makheabichtichiou, the Montagnais captain who presented the Iroquois woman prisoner as a gift to take the place of three dead Frenchmen, helps us to understand the references to obedience in the speech of the old captains. As part of the captain's instruction concerning the articles of the Christian faith, Lejeune explained "how the animals would have been obedient to man if man had been obedient to God." 59 Although he seemed inclined to accept the basic teaching, Makheabichtichiou found it difficult to adapt his


59 LeJeune's Relation of 1637, JR 11:151.
behavior to the French standard of rationality. He promised "in the presence of his compatriots ... that he would never give eat-all feasts, that he would not summon the Sorcerers to treat him in his sicknesses, that he would no longer believe in dreams, and that he desired to be baptized and to believe what the French believe." LeJeune observed that after "all that he still crawls upon the ground; his understanding acknowledges what his will, accustomed to evil, cannot or will not wholly embrace." The professed desire of Makheabichtichiou to embrace French values may or may not have been genuine, but the persistent practice of equating savagery and barbarism with the behavior of animals and children is a persistent theme of the written record.

Anger, insolence, and rebellion made breaches in the wall of authority. To defend his rationality after an emotional outburst, Makheabichtichiou assured Sieur Olivier "that anger had carried him away, that he was not a child." He expressed a desire to acknowledge his fault to the governor. "No, I am not a child, I will remain firm in the promise I have given you." 60

60Ibid., 179.

61Ibid., 173.
Later in the century, Nicolas Perot reported that Indian captains in the Western wilderness used strictness and severity "against those who failed to obey" village procedural rules for hunting buffalo. Indian captains acknowledged the value of steadfastness and obedience, but, according to Père Lejeune, they were often unable to discipline their followers.

Being kind to the Savages, helping them in their need, doing them no wrong or injury, exercising some kind of Justice toward those individuals who are insolent, especially if their Captains cannot make them listen to reason,—these are the means of holding these Barbarians a long time in the line of duty.

The Indians, he wrote, refer to all those who have authority as "captains." The Indians and the Jesuits associated captains with arms and the use of force. Indeed, the Jesuits purported to have only their voice to counteract insolence and cruelty whereas the natives were bold enough to insult a captain whose arms were within reach. Yet Père Brébeuf reported that Huron captains "do not govern by

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62Nicolas Perot, Memoir on the Manners, Customs, and Religion of the Savages of North America, in Blair, Indian Tribes, 1:120.


64Ibid., 9:201.

65Ibid., 9:261.
means of command and absolute power; they have no force at hand to compel them to their duty."

The principles of obedience and royal sovereignty were used by French captains and Jesuits as measures of rationality, but the Indian captains had to obtain gifts and protection for their companies to maintain their position and increase their stature in the village and tribal assemblies. To maintain the affection of his people, the Indian captain brought gifts and merchandise to distribute in his village. Speaking through gifts at regional councils was a means of motivating leaders and prompting their followers. The gifts restored the losses suffered by a village. The right to replace a dead captain could be earned by presenting gifts to the "Old Men" in a village assembly.66 The Indians recognized the ability to restore and replace dead warriors as a manifestation of O-Ki. The deeds of Champlain and the Jesuits established the reputation of the French as "masters of life" and their king as "the Great Captain." With the power of oratory and the use of rituals which reflected a knowledge of Indian languages and customs, French captain-traders and

missionaries developed the ability to advise and lead tribes and nations as units of a French imperial structure.

The ancien capitaine built a linguistic bridge between himself as a popular leader and the French crown by using words and gifts to secure obedience to the great French father who provided protection and iron for his "children." La Potherie quoted Tioskatin, the chief of the Sioux: "All nations have a father who gives protection and iron, but I am a bastard searching for a father."\(^{67}\) The use of iron in the form of knives, hatchets, and guns was associated with spirit, rule, and protection. The giving of gifts and smoking the calumet ritualized the transfer of spiritual power over nature and men.\(^{68}\) La Potherie, who tells us more about the deeds of Nicolas Perot than the trader's own Memoir does, relates that Perot worked to establish peace between two rival tribes by explaining that God gave iron to the French to distribute to those willing to live as men and not as beasts.\(^{69}\)


\(^{69}\)Ibid., 1:312.
I have come to embrace all the men whom Onontio ..., the chief of all the French who have settled in this country, has told me to join together, in order to take them under his protection.70

In another place, La Potherie quotes a chief who approached the Comte de Frontenac, governor of New France from 1672 to 1682. He expressed his joy for the Count's protection and referred to him as the "the great captain, the one who is the master of iron."71 Among the many different and diverse tribes of American Indians, there were leaders who could be described as great "chiefs" or "captains,"72 but

70Here La Potherie uses the more general term—le chef—to refer to the Canadian governor, who at the time was de Coursel. La Potherie, History of the Savage Peoples, 1:312; Histoire 2:93. Many times the governor is referred to as the great captain of all the French in America. Here he is called Onontio and described as le chef, the "chief of all the French who are established in this country." Richard White explains that Onontio "was an Iroquois word meaning great mountain. It was the Mohawk rendering of the name of Charles Jacques de Huault de Montmagny, an early French governor. Both the Iroquois and the Algonquins applied the name to all later French governors. Middle Ground, 36.

71La Potherie, Histoire 4:34.

72The Great Chief of the Miamis exercised more extensive authority than most Indian leaders in the pays d'en haut, but the changing leadership patterns are indicated by the decline of the power of these hereditary chiefs during the eighteenth century. White, Middle Ground, 217. In his study of European contact in the Southeast, Jerald T. Milanich refers to "one chief who ruled 90 vassal villages and another who could summon thousands of warriors." "The European Entrada into La Florida," in David Hurst Thomas, ed., Columbian Consequences, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989-1990), 2:17. But even
the Indian rulers of the pays d’en haut sought refuge in the arms of the French primarily to gain the mastery of iron and come under the umbrella of sovereign authority. The Indian leader needed to defend and supply his people to command the respect and obedience of his followers. A community leader who found a father to provide protection and iron automatically became a company commander who exercised effective control of his "people."

Assemblies and Councils

The native-American version of the head and members of a body politic is reflected in the Huron tradition which referred to a worthy captain as Enondecha, "the same name by which they call the Country, Nation, district, -- as if a good Chief and the Country were one and the same thing." Like the medieval European village the native-American village was a crucible of diverse tribal interests. The traditional authority of the elders was rooted in age and courage in the service of the community. Family structure,

the more powerful chiefdoms of the Southeast fluctuated in size and stability as individual chiefs competed "with varying success for status and power in the arenas of warfare and ritual." Janet E. Levy, J. Alan May, and David G. Moore, "From Ysa to Joara: Cultural Diversity in the Catawba Valley from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century," in Consequences 2:156.

LeJeune’s Relation of 1636, JR 10:231.
tribal custom, and rational authority shaped the choice of an agent to act in the best interest of the community. Smoking the calumet symbolized peace among brothers and unity against enemies. An irrevocable bond of loyalty was cemented by the ritual. The ability to reciprocate with gifts and produce a new tribal identity created a fictive kinship legitimized by the breath of ancestors inhaled through the calumet. The Indian leader acted as a spokesman before he could aspire to become a company commander.

James Clifton describes how a Potawatomi chief stood up and acted as a "speaker" for five tribes at a meeting in Montreal. The "chief" acknowledged that "he has little power over his own tribesmen himself, but wants to derive it from the Governor." Richard White writes that this same chief "identified so strongly with French chiefs" that he told Governor de Callières that "Perrot was his 'body,'

74 La Potherie, History of the Savage Peoples, 1:311, 313.
76 Clifton, "Potawatomi Leadership Roles," 68.
aiding him in all the lands of Algonquins to autoriser the parole of Onontio."77

Assemblies and Councils sanctioned the authority of the spokesman or captain who earned his right to speak by service to his tribe or confederation. General assemblies included people from distant regions. If the council involved the nation, it usually met in the village of the principal chief of the entire country and sometimes in the house of this chief.78 La Potherie informs us that the Saut de Sainte Marie became the place where the general assemblies of all the tribes were held.79

Decisions in the assemblies were made by a plurality of votes, but this was not necessarily a democratic process. Brébeuf relates that the "authority of the Captains draws over many to their views" and that "the usual way of coming to a decision is to say to the Old Men, Do you give advice; you are the Masters."80 According to Peter Farb, Iroquois council decisions had to be unanimous, so representation did

77White, Middle Ground, 40.
78Tooker, Ethnography of the Huron Indians, 48-49.
79La Potherie, History of the Savage Peoples, 1:343.
not matter. Whatever the mechanism for group decision making within the various tribes and councils, the function of the leader was to speak and act for the welfare of the village and service of the community.

**French Sovereignty and the Canadian Amalgam**

Among the Canadian Indians, effective, popular leaders became royal agents. The combination of tribal leadership and royal sovereignty produced a Canadian amalgam in the person of the old captain. Despite appearances of equality on the middle ground, however, French sovereignty in the New World was based on the potential of exercising overwhelming force. The Indians were told that the French would not tolerate quarrels among Indian allies. They would only go to war strong and powerful and not return until they had destroyed entire villages.

The exclusive right to use overwhelming force is an important characteristic of a modern nation exercising control over the territory of its state. As the French monarchy was expanding such control over its European...

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possessions in North America, it was forced to rely on the old Indian and maritime captains who in turn were dependent upon the affection of their people. The old captains were mediators who promoted themselves as masters performing services for both the king and the people they served. Onontio was the "Great Captain" of all the French and his chiefs exercised his authority over their local territories. The old captain was both mediator and master. By using language and ritual to establish a linkage between the people of his post and the king of France, he was able to exercise sovereignty over the territory of his post in a way that permitted him to escape the limitations on his authority rooted in local traditions and customary practices.

The Montagnais sagamores and the Huron captains presented themselves to French commandants and Jesuit missionaries as spokesmen for their people. Further west, Onanghissé, a Potawatomi leader, assumed that his adoption by the French governor would increase his power over his tribesmen. The Sioux chief, Tioskatin, presented himself to the French as a bastard searching for a father. With words and ritual they established mutual assistance pacts

with the French maritime captains who counted on the French crown to support their own commercial and missionary activities in Canada.

The discourse of the ancien capitaine bridged the cultural chasm between the village world of the pays d’en haut and the urban base of European maritime captains. The diplomatic language permitted the captains to exercise sovereign power in the name of the king. At the same time the need to motivate and retain the loyalty of his followers allowed the old captain to resist imperial pressure by appealing to the needs and interests of his people.

The identification of French captains as animating spirits opened the way for them to mediate between hostile tribes and establish the domination of the French king who was represented as the fountain of life and the producer of iron. The authority of the old captain depended on the giving of gifts associated with the right to speak for his people. The language of mediation and mastery linked the king to his people in the New World, but the old Canadian captains would resist any attempt of the crown to introduce bureaucratic controls to regulate commerce and the distribution of gifts.
CHAPTER 4

Canadian Captains: Defense and Territorial Expansion

The contrast between the old decentralized Canadian system through which a handful of Frenchmen allied themselves with friendly Indians to defend the early settlements and the more centralized system of Louis XIV became apparent with the arrival of Alexander Prouville, Marquis de Tracy in 1664. While the French crown weathered the crisis that had led to the Fronde, New France experienced a time of troubles. War with the Iroquois disrupted commerce, and the Church, through its missionaries, became the mainstay of the colony. Meanwhile, the Company of New France worked to eliminate unprofitable ventures to stave off the bankruptcy which came anyway in 1645.¹

A Communauté des Habitants, largely supported by the Jesuits, shouldered the administrative costs of the colony

¹Eccles, France in America, 38, 52; Gustave Lanctot, L’Administration de la Nouvelle-France (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1929), 83.
during this time of troubles. Serious divisions within the Communauté became evident as the Jesuits and the Congregation of St. Suplice struggled over the right to nominate the first bishop of New France in 1657. The Jesuits prevailed with the appointment of François de Laval in 1659.

The new bishop of Petraea used his influence in France to secure a stronger royal commitment to support the colony of New France. The bishop recommended the appointment of Augustin de Saffray de Mézy as governor. When Mézy failed to live up to his expectations and began to exercise tyrannical authority, the bishop requested his recall. In the meantime de Tracy was sent with vice-regal authority. The arrival of Daniel de Rémi, seigneur de Courcelles as governor and Jean Talon as intendant ushered in a new era of centralized government.

Whereas the successors of Champlain had exercised judicial authority in what was termed by Charlevoix "quite a sovereign style," the Sieur Gaudais who had been sent as commissary along with de Mézy began the process of

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2Eccles, France in America, 52.
3Ibid., 54.
4Charlevoix, New France, 3:66.
establishing a Superior Council. This redistribution of authority was designed to place the military commander under financial and judicial controls. Both the governor and the intendant would serve on the Council, but the intendant was given primary responsibility for justice, police, finance, and commerce.\textsuperscript{5} The sovereign authority of the governor was diluted by the division of functions. The governors were bound to resist this diminution of their prerogative. Traditionally the governor exercised full royal power as head of the provincial community, but the appointment of an intendant responsible directly to the king represented a major step taken by the crown to restrain the governors from acting as miniature kings, to divide their jurisdiction, and to establish bureaucratic controls.\textsuperscript{6} Further removed from royal control, the commandants of the small frontier posts would continue to exercise effective sovereign authority by promoting themselves as mediators and the king as master of the people they served. Tradition and local customs did place real limits on the authority of post commanders, but these

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 67.

\textsuperscript{6}Lanctot describes the attempt of the crown to diminish the "civil" authority of the governor as a true "diminutio capitis." Administration, 21.
limitations could be overcome by coaxing the native Americans to accept the sovereign authority of Onontio, the great captain and master of iron.

The loyalty of the Indian captains who welcomed de Tracy was no doubt based more on self-interest than the chivalrous ideal of honor, but their willingness to render homage "to the greatest of all Onontios on earth" echoes in the discourse of the French captains who adopted Indian ways and offered their talent in the service of France and ultimately of Spain. The following narrative of the words and deeds of French and Indian captains participating in the defense and expansion of New France in the St. Lawrence and Mississippi river valleys of America reveals how leaders who presented themselves as mediators actually established themselves as masters in the territories where they established military outposts for the French king. The old Canadian captains expected their father to provide the things they needed, but they were not always willing to obey their sovereign’s wishes concerning when, where, and how they should conduct their trading activity.

**Defending Canada Against the Iroquois**

De Tracy reached Quebec in June 1664 with four companies of the Carignan-Salières regiment famous at that
time for its exploits in the war against the Turks.\footnote{7}{Jack Verney, \textit{The Good Regiment}: The Carignan-Salières Regiment in Canada, 1665-1668 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 80-81.} The settlers and the Indians at Three Rivers welcomed the regular troops commanded by de Tracy and the company of volunteers brought along as reinforcements from Quebec.\footnote{8}{\textit{JR} 49:235-239.} The king was making good his commitment to protect his children from their enemies, the Iroquois. The relationship between the Huron Indians and the crown described in the speech of the Huron captain is essentially the same as that developed between the crown and the posts in the lower Mississippi Valley. In French North America from the time of Champlain until the British conquest of Canada and the transfer of Louisiana to Spain, the post-commandants maintained the conviction that the contract established between the captain and the king was based on their mutual obligations to provide for the tranquillity and welfare of the local community.

The French crown took charge of New France during the interregnum between the Company of a Hundred Associates and the new West India Company. The \textit{Jesuit Relations} heralded the arrival of de Tracy as indicative of the monarch's
determination to restore the life of the colony and rescue New France from "the fires of the Iroquois." Jesuit reports of the excitement stirred by the arrival of such a large regiment of regular soldiers may well have sparked the development of a "golden haze" of legend about the "Good Regiment."

With the advantage of hindsight, Jack Verney has drawn a more realistic picture of the Carignan-Salières regiment as "a workaday seventeenth-century infantry unit sent to fight overseas." At full strength the regiment consisted of twenty captains commanding companies each of which included a lieutenant, an ensign, and fifty enlisted men recruited and paid by the captains with funds provided by the minister. Those who enlisted in the Carignan-Salières regiment were designated as volunteers in France but were considered regular soldiers in Canada by way of contrast with the Canadian volunteers led by the capitaines de milice.

The regiment was not well-equipped for warfare on the Canadian frontier, and the lack of snowshoes and blankets contributed as much as poor leadership to the fiasco of the

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9Ibid., 49:213.

10Verney, Good Regiment, ix.
first winter campaign. Courcelle’s expedition against the Mohawks, one of the five Iroquois nations, lost its way in the blinding snow and attacked a few Indian cabins on the outskirts of Schenectady, an Anglo-Dutch settlement. After a skirmish in which the Mohawks had the advantage, the burgomaster notified Courcelle that he had wandered into English territory and offered no resistance to the occupation of his village. Fearing diplomatic complications and not knowing that war had broken out between France and England, Courcelle returned to Canada. Fewer than one hundred soldiers survived the campaign. Possibly as many as four hundred had died, most of them casualties of the Canadian winter.\textsuperscript{11} The Canadian volunteers proved more effective in the wars against the Iroquois, and when the regular soldiers learned from them the techniques of warfare and survival in the Canadian wilderness, the campaign against the Iroquois made some headway.\textsuperscript{12}

Despite the limited success, the excitement about the arrival of the regiment is understandable. Champlain had won the respect of the Indians by his courage in the face

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}, 45-53.

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}, 55, 71.
of danger and by the fear he instilled in the enemies of his Indian allies by the use of firearms. One of the most effective techniques of the ancien capitaine was to convince a potential enemy that he could call upon the governor and the great chief of all the French to send a force so powerful that it would be impossible to resist. The arrival of six ships with over six hundred men encouraged the Canadians and their Indian allies and gave them good reason to celebrate.

The relation of 1664-1665 describes de Tracy's reception by the Hurons. When the Indians assembled at Quebec, ten or twelve of their chiefs constituted a welcoming delegation. One of these elders acted as spokesman. Using gestures and a symbolic presentation of gifts, the old Huron captain hailed the "arrival of so many soldiers" as evidence of the monarch's willingness to preserve and protect the Hurons from their enemies. His speech began as he dropped a moose-skin at the feet of de Tracy.

Great Onontio, thou seest at thy feet the wreck of a great country, and the pitiful remnant of a whole world, that was formerly peopled by countless inhabitants. But now thou art

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14 JR 49:229.
addressed by mere carcasses, only the bones of which have been left by the Iroquois, who have devoured the flesh after broiling it on their scaffolds. There was left in us nothing but the merest thread of life; and our limbs, most of which have passed through the boiling cauldrons of our foes, had no more strength, -- when, raising our eyes with extreme difficulty, we saw on the river the ships that were bringing thee, and, with thee, so many soldiers sent us by thy great Onontio and ours.\(^{15}\)

He continued to present a series of six gifts. The last gift was the mutual understanding to be used "to promote the continued firm union of the French and Algonquin nations." Upon presenting the last gift, the Indian captain signaled the Algonquin chiefs "to step forward, and offered them to M. de Tracy, to march with him and attend him on the expedition that he was about to undertake." The Huron "captain" stressed that the French and Algonquins were "both Christian peoples" united in a common cause with "one and the same end in view -- the destruction of the Iroquois and the publication of the Gospel."\(^{16}\)

\(^{15}\)Ibid., 49:227, 229.

Indians were allies bound by a profession of loyalty to march with their French brothers against a common enemy.

The arrival of the soldiers displayed the ability of Champlain's successors to deliver on their promise to defend their Indian allies based on their relationship to the king. With the very visible show of force that so many soldiers and ships furnished, the Canadian militiamen who represented forty per cent of the adult male population of New France, along with their Indian allies, proved to be very effective during the course of three campaigns. The French settlers and their Indian allies successfully employed a tactic which later anciens capitaines continued to use effectively. They convinced their Mohawk enemies to sue for peace by presenting them with a convincing demonstration of the vast and powerful military resources of their lord and master, the French king.

It is now known that the peace did not last because there were deep factional divisions within the Mohawk camp. Jack Verney has noted the failure of the French to pursue the enemy and eliminate the three or four hundred Mohawk warriors who survived, but the question of when to end

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17 Verney, Good Regiment, 43.
18 Ibid., 71-72.
a conflict is always a difficult decision, and the anciens capitaines were always quite conservative. In spite of their blustery rhetoric, they exhausted every possible alternative before they entered into a conflict, and they were always willing to halt a war when they were presented with tangible evidence of satisfaction for the insult or injury incurred. They needed only to maintain the respect of the Indians and habitants for the Great Chief who was responsible for the justice essential for the tranquillity of his vast territories.

The capitaines de milice were the pères de famille in their village communities. By starting families and engaging in trade, some of the soldiers of the Carignan-Salières Regiment built on the European tradition of village assemblies and perhaps adopted the practices of the Indian village assemblies. When they performed a military function they were under the authority of the governor. Civilian service was performed under the authority of the intendant who was given responsibility for police, justice, and finances. Yet on the Canadian frontier every subject of the king was a potential soldier, and the legal distinction between military and civilian

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19Ibid., 104-112.
duties gave way to the practical performance of whatever needed to be done by Canadian habitants and their Indian allies.\textsuperscript{20}

The anciens capitaines were volunteer officers -- experienced frontiersmen responsible for recruiting, mustering, and leading their militia companies. Under the old maritime system most of them made their living in the fur trade.

Members of the Carignan-Salières regiment remained on the Canadian frontier to become pères de famille. Not only did they adopt frontier tactics for fighting in the wilderness, but some remained in Canada, engaged in the fur trade, and established their families there.\textsuperscript{21} In the New World French soldiers were encouraged to become settlers to populate the colony and relieve the king of heavy military expenses.

With or without rank and salary under the Ordonnance de la Marine, the Canadian père de famille, responsible for the defence and protection of his family and constantly participating in frontier conflicts, performed functions

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 92.

\textsuperscript{21}Verney, Good Regiment, 104-112.
analogous to those of the medieval militia captains in the cities of northern Italy and the Sagamores of Canada.

The old Huron captain who brought his warriors to welcome de Tracy at Quebec conducted a ceremony designed to symbolize the bond of loyalty established between the French king and his people. The French captains would employ similar language and symbols. They became adept at performing civic rituals on the American frontier devised to symbolize and promote peace and tranquillity among the allies of the French monarch while instilling fear in the hearts of any enemy who would insult the French and their allies and disturb or threaten the welfare of the king's people.

The distribution of gifts became part of the bonding process that was designed to transform many different nations into one "obedient" city. The Indians expressed their willingness to sacrifice their persons and their goods in the service of the French king, but the acceptance of French sovereignty was always contingent upon the ability of the great French captains to insure the peace and tranquillity of their adopted people. As in the cities of northern Italy, peace was the ultimate goal of the mutual assistance pact. On the Canadian frontier peace required reparation rather than punishment. In the case of
murder, for example, French justice required the execution of the murderer, but the Indian tradition demanded that the dead be "covered" or "raised" by the gift of a slave or valuable goods. Père Brébeuf reported that among the Hurons

the relatives of the deceased pursue not only him who has committed the murder, but address themselves to the whole Village, which must give satisfaction for it, and furnish, as soon as possible, for this purpose as many as sixty presents, the least of which must be of the value of a new Beaver robe.

Local justice also required that the ancien capitaine be able to harangue, advise, and lead his people to war. Village and provincial liberty depended on the faithful performance of duty by members of each "obedient" company forming an "elect" nation under the "anointed" French king.

Expanding the French Frontier: Henri de Tonti

The language of the Canadian captains who claimed and possessed in the name of their sovereign king the lands drained by the Mississippi River stressed obedience and service. The relationship between the king and people was built on service, but the Canadian captains established new posts under royal sovereignty by mediating between

\[\text{White, Middle Ground, 77.}\]

\[\text{LeJeune's Relation of 1636, JR 10:215, 217.}\]
Indian tribes and administering royal justice to the provincial inhabitants. The identity of the "old" captain developed when the Canadian captains resisted bureaucratic controls by acting in accordance with their interpretation of colonial interests. The technique of using words and force to shape the development of new European posts on the American frontier was reflected in the activities and discourse of Henri de Tonti, Pierre Le Moyne, and Pierre-Charles Le Sueur.

When Governor Frontenac built Fort Frontenac on Lake Ontario in 1673 as part of a complex scheme for gaining control of the western fur trade, he was flouting the directives of the minister of marine. Colbert was not interested in new settlements which would be difficult and expensive to protect, and Louis XIV was preoccupied with foreign policy. When René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle undertook two missions to the French court -- the first in 1675 to gain the approval of Louis XIV for the new fort and the second after his famous journey to the mouth of the Mississippi in 1683 -- he used the standard arguments linking economic advantages and missionary activity to the service of God and king.\textsuperscript{24} Judging from the king's

\textsuperscript{24}Allain, \textit{French Colonial Policy}, 39-42.
response, La Salle quickly learned that the strategic argument highlighting the harassment of the king’s enemies proved most effective. How could Louis XIV pass up an opportunity to conquer New Biscaye at the cost of a few ships, two hundred men, and the enlistment of fifty freebooters from Saint-Domingue? After all, La Salle intended to recruit 15,000 Indian warriors to defeat the Spanish.25

After the disappearance of La Salle in 1686, Tonti tried to establish a post where the Arkansas river drains into the Mississippi. Tonti received his authority from La Salle who had himself advanced well beyond Colbert’s compact colony policy.26 Tonti chose an excellent location where later commandants would be able to supplement their meager salaries with profits from the Indian trade. Tonti’s early effort failed, however, because he needed soldiers to establish military control over the territory and his retainers deserted him. He then petitioned the king for a captain’s office to tide him over

25 _Ibid._, 40, 44.

until the volume of trade would begin to offset the heavy overhead costs of territorial control.

If he had successfully occupied the land, Tonti would have held it under the indirect authority of the French king who would not even impose taxes on the land. As a seigneur he would be expected to fight as a vassal to protect the land and could himself collect "feudal dues" from the concessions granted to his men.

La Salle and Tonti opened the way for French expansion into the lower Mississippi Valley, but Pierre Le Moyne, sieur d'Iberville, convinced Louis XIV and his minister of marine, Jérôme Phélypeaux, Comte de Pontchartrain, to support his project to establish a colony and develop the Mississippi River as an avenue of commerce. Iberville lived as a soldier of fortune before his appointment as a royal naval captain in 1691.27 As commander of the expedition to establish a military outpost near the mouth of the Mississippi in 1698, he exhibited the basic qualities of a man of action who could instill loyalty in a band of followers by engaging in exploits and developing a reputation for achieving success against overwhelming odds. A brief examination of his early career and a review

27 MPA:FD 2:10, n. 1.
of his relationship with his subordinates reveals that Iberville engaged in private enterprise and and performed royal service in the fashion of an old Canadian captain.

The purpose of Iberville's expedition was to thwart a possible English attempt to establish control of the river's mouth, but his ability to control his men depended as much on personal and familial loyalty as on the exercise of royal authority. Jack Holmes has recently described Iberville as a "French army officer and colonial explorer and administrator," the heir of a "remarkable Norman family whose exploits helped create permanent French Canadian settlements from the pristine wilderness."  

As a young adventurer in the American skirmishes of the Anglo-French conflict known as "King Williams' War" in 1686, Iberville used two canoes and eleven men to capture an English ship with twelve canons. Given command of the entire Hudson Bay in 1688, he defended his crude fort

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against an attack by three English vessels. He did not receive his appointment as captain of a frigate until he went to France in 1691.\textsuperscript{30} In the American wilderness royal recognition and royal authority often came after an aspiring adventurer performed exploits in the name of the king with his own limited resources.

In 1698 Iberville took advantage of an opportunity to follow the trail blazed by La Salle when he was given command of the expedition to establish a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi. He was able to accomplish his mission because he had the assistance of his brothers and kinsmen such as Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, as well as the ability to gain the loyalty of adventurers like Henri de Tonti and others. His success, according to Jack Holmes, lay in having "blocked both the English and the Spanish expansion into North America's heartland." Iberville, Holmes explains, "coordinated initial Indian policy and created the economic base on which later French governors and intendants could build and expand" while also setting the stage for an "international struggle for control over the Gulf of Mexico.\textsuperscript{31}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[30]MPA:FD, 2:10, n. 1.
\item[31]Holmes, "Iberville," 1-3.
\end{footnotes}
Iberville built his case for the establishment of a French colony at the mouth of the Mississippi River with essentially the same arguments used by La Salle to overcome the reluctance of Colbert to permit the expansion of French Canada.

Iberville profited from La Salle's experience. He stressed the reality of the English presence and the possibility of an English establishment on the Mississippi or at Mobile Bay, and gained command of the Mississippi expedition intended by the French crown to establish a post near the mouth of the river designed to prevent the British from occupying the area. Pontchartrain postponed the decision to support a "prolonged occupation" until after Iberville's second voyage in December 1699. Even then the crown's commitment to colonization was, according to Allain, "half-hearted, at best." It would maintain Louisiana only as a strategic outpost.

Iberville began his expedition in June 1698 with two ships armed and manned with funds provided by the marine ministry. Charles Le Vasseur, a Canadian officer who had served in Louisiana with La Salle was added to the crew of

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32 Giraud, History, 1:36.
33 Allain, French Colonial Policy, 54.
Iberville's ships along with other men with experience on the American frontier.\textsuperscript{34} To provide additional protection, two warships commanded by the Marquis de Châteaumorant also sailed from La Rochelle to Saint Domingue.

Iberville gingerly bypassed the best harbor at Pensacola when he discovered that it had been occupied by the Spanish. After making his initial contact with the Bayougoula Indians he chose a site for the first French post, named Fort Maurepas, on Biloxi Bay. Except for Ensign de Sauvole, who was placed in command by Iberville, the major officers of the small garrison were Canadians. The roll of the garrison, dated August 25, 1699, listed Iberville's brother, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, as Lieutenant of the King with a salary of 100 livres and Le Vasseur as major. The roll indicated expenditure of 326 livres for five petty officers, 63 livres for four sailors, 719 livres for eighteen Canadians, 425 for thirteen freebooters, 229 for ten laborers and 66

\textsuperscript{34}Giraud, \textit{History}, 1:23.
for six cabin boys. The twenty soldiers would not be paid until the end of the year.\textsuperscript{35}

The list of officers at Fort Maurepas on May 28, 1700 includes Mr. de Boisbriand, major, and Mr. de St. Denis, Canadian officer. Le Vasseur is listed this time as a Canadian officer along with St. Denis. Pierre Sidrac Dugué de Boisbriand and Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, described as "captains of the Canadians," by Intendant Bégon, were officers of a contingent of sixty Canadians who "arrived from Newfoundland with Séryigny." Pontchartrain ordered Bégon to keep them as reinforcements for Iberville who subsequently returned with the Canadians and their captains to Fort Maurepas in December 1699.\textsuperscript{36}

Iberville and his captains needed the king to supply the capital for the start-up costs of the colony. Royal funds were used not only to equip the ships and pay the recruits but also to supply the king's warehouse with gun powder and gifts for the Indians along with food supplies.

Despite the fact that Iberville and Bienville served the interest of the colony in a struggle against disease

\textsuperscript{35}"Roll of officers, petty officers, sailors and other persons, left in the garrison at Fort Maurepas, in the Bay of Biloxi," in Jay Higginbotham, \textit{Fort Maurepas: The Birth of Louisiana} (Mobile: Colonial Books, 1968), 81-82.

\textsuperscript{36}Giraud, \textit{History}, 1:34-36.
and hostile Indians, it suffered from the neglect of a mother country preoccupied with continental power politics and more often than not either unwilling or unable to sustain and protect the new colony. Iberville took advantage of the window of opportunity that opened between the Treaty of Ryswick, which ended the War of the League of Augsburg in 1697, and the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1701 to secure the royal resources required by a frontier captain to establish a post. For Iberville and his captains the harassment of the enemies of France was important but the ultimate goal was to establish a French peace that would provide an atmosphere conducive to their commercial activities. They followed the directives of the crown to concentrate on the search for mines, but when it became clear that mining in the Mississippi Valley would never support the colony, and that the Canadians could not be induced to develop agriculture, the question of the trading interests of the Canadian

officers and the poverty of the people became a central issue in the rivalry between the commissioners and the military commandants.

The Canadian officers were placed on the original payroll lists because of their ability to control the Canadians and their frontier experience. Tonti and Le Vasseur, however, died during the yellow fever epidemic. Bienville began his service in Louisiana as King’s Lieutenant, and later requested to be commissioned as captain of a ship with the added honor of the Cross of St. Louis. Louis Juchereau de St. Denis separated himself from the king’s service rather than obey Bienville’s order to abandon a fort and did not request another commission until 1720. St. Denis and Boisbriand were called captains of the Canadians because they knew how to muster a troop of *coureurs de bois* and place themselves at the head of Indian warriors to harass the king’s enemies.

St. Denis has achieved fame through his exploits described in detail by Pénicaud and since recounted by numerous Louisiana historians, but his memoirs have never been found, and his surviving correspondence is skimpy. Consequently, the best sources for an analysis of the

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discourse of the *anciens capitaines* are Iberville’s journal and especially the report of Pierre-Charles Le Sueur’s conversations with the Indians contained in the journal originally thought to have been written by J. B. Bernard de la Harpe. These experienced Canadian captains, their children, and the French officers who learned from them, exercised royal authority in the Mississippi Valley and established the French king as the great father of the Indian nations. The expenses of maintaining good relations with the Indians began with Iberville and proliferated later because it was important for an experienced captain to impress the Indians with the wealth and power of the king he represented.

*Iberville’s Journal*

No doubt there is a wide gap between the rhetoric of Iberville and the reality of the actual relations between the captains, the Indians, and the king. Nevertheless, his account suggests how the French made their initial contact with the Bayagoulas, the Houmas, and the Sioux and it illustrates how the experienced captain established his control over the Indians by distributing presents and promising trade while the king received loyal servants who expressed a willingness to harass the king’s enemies.
On February 12, 1699, as Iberville traveled in a small boat along the coastal islands searching for the mouth of the Mississippi, he saw a campfire. The next day he found fresh Indian tracks which he followed until nightfall. Knowing that the two Indians he was tracking had returned to observe him at daybreak, Iberville placed "two hatchets, four knives, two packages of porcelain beads, and a little vermillion" at the site where he and his men had camped. Later that day, when he sighted a canoe and the Indians fled into the woods, he crossed over to a place where the Indians had concealed their canoes. Not far from there he encountered an "ancient and very ill Indian." The explorers gave him something to eat and smoke. Communicating by sign language, the old Indian requested a campfire which they provided. Two days later Bienville captured an Indian woman in the woods a few miles away, and that night Iberville brought her to the sick Indian where he left her after giving her presents and tobacco to take to her people.39

The next day the old Indian died and five Indians (including two women) who had been captured by Iberville's Canadians began chanting. The Indians remained distrustful in spite of the gifts, but the next day Iberville coaxed three Indians to come on board one of his ships. There he "greatly impressed them" by firing several cannon loaded with solid shot.40 When Iberville arrived at Bienville's campsite on February 17, he found a Bayougoula "chief or captain" who greeted him at the seashore by rubbing his hands on Iberville's face and chest. After the greeting ceremony, the explorers and the Indians gathered near Bienville's tent where they all smoked an "iron peacepipe, made in the form of a ship with a white flag marked with a fleur de lys, and embellished with beads." While presenting the Indians with "hatchets, knives, blankets, shirts, beads, and other things valued by them," Iberville "made them understand that with this calumet I had rendered them united with the French and they were now one nation."41 When Iberville and his Bayagoula brothers arrived at the Houma village on March 20, the Houmas began

40Ibid., 33.

singing and the Bayagoulas sang on his behalf. They greeted the French in their customary manner and escorted them to a village assembly where they smoked the peace pipe and participated in festivities which lasted until midnight.\footnote{Journals, 53-54.}

Iberville thus began the process of establishing a French peace among the Indian tribes. Once again he was able to build on the work of La Salle and Tonti. He noted in his journal that the Houmas "spoke very highly of Tonti, who had spent five days at their village."\footnote{Ibid., 56.} His Indian allies provided guides to lead him further up the river. With information provided by a Taensa warrior, he was able to compose a chart of the various tribes and calculate the distance in leagues from one tribe to the next along the Mississippi. He traveled north from the Houma village until he was certain that a fork of the river reported in several accounts of the Mississippi explorations did not actually exist and that he was indeed on the great river.

Iberville departed the Houma village to return to his ships on March 23. On April 8 he began construction of
Fort Maurepas. He set sail for France on May 4 and reached Rochefort on July 2, 1699.\textsuperscript{44}

**Le Sueur's Account**

Pierre-Charles Le Sueur, born in Artois in 1659, made the voyage to Canada as a young man. Initially involved in the fur trade, he was commissioned by the Comte de Frontenac, the governor-general of Canada, to construct a fort on an island in the Mississippi in 1695. Le Sueur began immediately to bring the Indian tribes under royal control. He brought a Sioux chief to Montreal so that the Comte de Frontenac could receive his tribesmen "among the number of his children, as he had done to all the other nations." Things did not go smoothly, however. The chief died before he left Montreal, and Le Sueur feared that the Governor might interfere with his effort to exploit the lead and copper mines he had discovered. He traveled to France where the crown granted him permission to open the mines in 1697, but he was captured by the English on the return voyage and he destroyed his commission authorizing him to exploit the mines to prevent it from falling into the hands of the English. After securing his release Le Sueur returned to France where he was awarded a new

\textsuperscript{44}Higginbotham, *Fort Maurepas*, 24, 31-32; *Journals*, 72, 76.
commission in 1698. Another transatlantic crossing proved fruitless so the year 1699 found Le Sueur back in France where he learned of Iberville's Mississippi enterprise.45

Le Sueur sailed with Iberville on his second voyage. He arrived at Biloxi along with St. Denis and Boisbriant by January, 1700. Pontchartrain authorized Le Sueur to join the expedition to develop the mines he had previously discovered in the Illinois country.46 His name does not appear on the Biloxi officer lists, and there is no indication that he was paid a salary. Apparently it was after completing the Illinois expedition where Le Sueur established a post called Fort Huilier that Iberville gave him the rank of "lieutenant general of the jurisdiction of

45[Jean-Baptiste Bénard de La Harpe], Historical Journal of the Settlement of the French in Louisiana, ed. Glenn R. Conrad, trans. Virginia Koenig and Joan Cain (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1971), 28-29. The manuscript of the journal is signed by Bénard de La Harpe, but Marc de Villiers says in his Histoire de la Fondation de la Nouvelle Orléans [(Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1917), 24] that it was not written by La Harpe. His suggestion that it might have been written by the Chevalier de Beaurain is accepted as a fact by Marcel Giraud in Histoire de la Louisiane française, 3:399. Conrad notes, however, that "neither Villiers nor Giraud... offer documentary proof" on behalf of Beaurain's authorship. See the editorial note on p. 1 of his translation of the Historical Journal.

46Giraud, History, 1:36.
Mobile" in July 1702. Le Sueur was sixteen years older than St. Denis and Boisbriant, described as captains of the Canadians and listed on the officer roll of the garrison at Fort Maurepas. His age, experience, and extensive exercise of royal authority place him on the same level as Iberville and Tonti. Marcel Giraud characterizes Le Sueur and Tonti as examples of men who "contributed effectually to the diffusion of French influence by their loyalty and achievements."

Serious obstacles had delayed Le Sueur’s effort to open the mines in Illinois, but now he would be able to pursue his project under the umbrella of Iberville’s authority. He was related to Iberville and Bienville by his marriage to their aunt. His son, Jean Paul Le Sueur, would later mobilize the Choctaw against the Natchez in 1730 and play an important role in Bienville’s campaign against the Natchez and Chickasaws.

Through his experience in Canada Pierre-Charles Le Sueur learned how to control and maintain the loyalty of

47Ibid., 1:47.
48Ibid., 1:6.
men who had taken up "the ways of the Indians." According to Sauvole, there would be "no lack of French travelers" in Louisiana, but the men he termed "Canadians" were hard to manage and not very helpful. On August 4, 1701, Sauvole informed the Ministry of Marine that

Mr. Iberville will doubtless agree about their unruliness and their inconstancy on his arrival when his brother and the other Canadian officers will assure him of their disobedience and of the independent air that they would like to assume.

Sauvole felt that they had left Canada to wander around the Mississippi Valley "only in order not to work at all and not to be dependent on any one whomsoever." He was convinced that regular soldiers "are unquestionably more suitable to guard posts and ... would cost the King much less." Yet if the minister "thought that it was not possible to do without them," Sauvole indicated that the best of the Canadians might be selected for duty. After all, Le Sueur had demonstrated that they could be controlled. Sauvole went on to say:

There were bets here that the people whom he had brought from France for his journey to the Sioux would not take him to the Bayagoulas.

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51 Ibid., 2:12.
52 Ibid.
Nevertheless he went where he wished and returned with the same men. I would agree, however, that the Canadians are strong, quick and alert for journeys but it is necessary that the game please them. They take up the ways of the Indians, but the surest way among them is to have something to give them.\textsuperscript{53}

Sauvole equated Canadians with savages, characterizing them as motivated by greed, hate, and a strong desire for revenge. Noble Frenchmen, by contrast, were motivated by honor, justice, truth, and service of the king.

Tonti, Iberville, and Le Sueur not only demonstrated their ability to control the Canadians, but convinced the crown that Canadian militia units and loyal Indians could supplement the few regular troops sent over from France. Canadian officers constituted a separate classification during the early years of the colony. The king could depend on them to control the Canadians who were not classified as regular soldiers. Pontchartrain and his successors, however, remained suspicious of the Canadians. The minister would probably have preferred to depend on regular officers and troops, but neither Ponchartrain, nor Antoine Crozat, nor the Company of the West were willing to underwrite the cost of additional regular troops. Iberville, Bienville, Boisbriant, St. Denis, and a well-
connected relation by marriage like Le Sueur could use Canadian recruits and Indians to supplement the few regular troops.

Effective control over the territory of the Mississippi Valley was established by Iberville with the help of Tonti, St. Denis, Bienville, and Le Sueur. They all used similar methods in dealing with the Indians. Much later, these methods were described by Pierre François de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil as part of the knowledge and experience necessary to deal effectively with the Indians that he, as governor of Louisiana, attributed to the ancien capitaine. The effectiveness of these methods was recognized by George Rogers Clark who was able to adopt and use the same basic procedure to establish control over the Illinois country during the American Revolution.

The basic procedure used by Le Sueur during his expedition in 1700 is described in La Harpe's journal. La Harpe shows that Le Sueur was sensitive to the needs and desires of the Indians. For example, upon his arrival at

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a Sioux village on July 30, 1700, Le Sueur presented its chief with "some merchandise to persuade him to maintain the peace." He had previously promised the Illinois chief that he would establish a peace with the Sioux. After distributing the gifts, Le Sueur informed the chief "that the king of France did not wish anyone to bloody further this river, and that he had sent him to tell the chief that if the Indians were obedient to his message, the Frenchmen would give them everything they needed."56

La Harpe also records that on September 5, Le Sueur met five Canadians who had been attacked by Indians. When the Canadians recognized their attackers, Le Sueur had his men shout to them "not to approach nearer or they would shoot." When the Indians acted surprised by the hostility of the French, Le Sueur responded that after what they had done to the five [Canadians] who were present, there was reason to be distrustful of them. For the security of his commerce, however, it was absolutely necessary to be at peace with all nations, and so he did not insist that the Indians pay for the pillage they had committed. He added that the king, their master and his, wished all his subjects to be able to navigate this river without fear of being insulted.57

56Historical Journal, 45.
57Ibid., 47.
Another group of Indians threatened Le Sueur's expedition on September 15. He tricked them into thinking he had more men than he actually did. The Indians moved toward the Frenchmen with a calumet. They explained to Le Sueur that a member of their tribe had accidentally killed a Canadian deserter. The Indians then produced the companion of the accident victim as a witness. Le Sueur used a name recognized by the Indians as referring to the governor of Canada. He said to the Indians that Onontio, "being their father and his, they only needed to go to the governor as soon as possible" and the Frenchman's blood would be washed from their hands. Le Sueur explained to them that the king "had sent him to find the entrance of the river" and that he "wished the nations who were living along it, as well as anyone under his protection, to live in peace." 

Le Sueur was careful to respect the hierarchy that existed among the Indian tribes that he encountered. One tribe requested that he "settle on the Mississippi in the area around the mouth of the Saint Pierre River, where the Ayavois, the Otoctakas, and the Sioux, as well as the

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58Ibid., 50.

59Ibid.
French could come and go freely." These Indians made their speech and "began, as was their custom, to weep on the head of M. Le Sueur and said ... have pity on us." Le Sueur was aware that "his settlement on the Blue River would not please the eastern Sioux who are, so to speak, the masters of the other Sioux ... probably because they were the first provided guns by the French." Le Sueur carefully explained his situation. He "told the Indians that he was sorry not to have known their wishes sooner, since he had come expressly for them and had settled on their land." He explained why it would be difficult to change his plans, gave them gifts, and "invited them ... to the fort that he was going to build." He went on to say "that when all were assembled there, he would instruct them about the wishes of the king, their master and his."60

The French had introduced the concept of the king as père de famille to the Indians in Canada. Champlain and the Jesuits certainly instilled in the Canadian Indians the idea that they consider themselves children professing obedience to a powerful father. One finds in the Indian dialogue reported by the French a recurring reference by the Indians to themselves as obedient children.

60Ibid., 51.
When the Mantantous and the Oujalespoitous reached Fort Huilier on November 26, 1700, Chief Quacantapai reported to Le Sueur that Tioseate, the chief who had died in Montreal in 1696, had asked Le Sueur "to forget the insult of the Mendeouacantous and to have pity on his brothers by giving them powder and bullets." Pointing out that powder and bullets were necessary both for defense against enemies and for hunting game to feed their families, Quacantapai said: "here are your children, your brothers and sisters. It is up to you whether they live or die. [They] will live if you give them powder and bullets and, on the contrary, they will die if you refuse them." 51

Le Sueur was adept at taking advantage of the Indians' respect for the patriarchal authority of the king as well as their need for European goods. Too weak to subdue the Sioux and recognizing their traditional propensity for war, Le Sueur gave them the task of cultivating the land. He promised them the king's protection if they would "abandon their wandering life and come form a village near his fort." Le Sueur was also able to find a way around a royal

61Ibid., 55.
order preventing Frenchmen from hunting for beaver. He explained to the Indians that the king, their chief and his, ... had forbidden him to traffic in beaver skins, knowing that hunting obliged the French to separate and expose themselves to being attacked by their enemies.62

As a result Le Sueur settled in an area where there was an abundance of animals. The Indians could bring the skins and exchange them for the supplies they needed. Le Sueur warned the Indians that "they could not get along without French merchandise, and that the only way to secure it was to cease waging war on the nations allied with the French."63

On December 1, the Mantantous entertained Le Sueur at a feast in their village. The speech of Quacantapai, chief of the Mantantous, recorded in La Harpe's journal makes it clear that since the Mantantous and the French were the children of the same father, his tribe and the Mendeouacantous whom he would invite to unite with the French, should no longer be viewed as Sioux but as Frenchmen. "The few men that you see in this tent accept the present that you gave them, and have decided to obey

62Ibid., 56.
63Ibid.
this great chief of all nations of whom you have spoken,"
Quacantapai said.

Thus, you no longer need look upon us as Sioux,
but as Frenchmen. Instead of saying that the
Sioux are unfortunate men who are not properly
disposed, and who are only suited to pillage and
stealing from the French, you will say, 'My
brothers who do not have the proper disposition
are unfortunate; we must try to change this.
They steal from us, but to prevent them from
doing so, I shall see that they do not lack
iron, that is to say, all kinds of merchandise.'
If you do that, I assure you that in a short
time the Mantantous will become French, and they
will no longer have the vices with which to
reproach them.64

The exchange between Le Sueur and the Sioux chiefs
focused on the need of the Indians for European merchandise
and the determination of the French to maintain peace among
the Indian tribes so that the Mississippi river could be
used as an avenue of commerce. As obedient children, the
Indians had to avoid "insulting" the French by injuring
Canadians and interfering with their commerce. Then the
king and their Canadian father would have pity on them and
provide the powder and bullets that meant the difference
between life and death. The purpose of the new French post
was not only to provide protection for the Indians whose
task was to cultivate the land. The Indians could also

64Ibid., 57.
bring skins to Le Sueur's fort to exchange for the things they needed.

The dialogue between Iberville and his captains and the Indians in the Mississippi Valley clearly reflects methods and procedures that originated in Canada with the social interaction of maritime captains, Indian leaders, and missionaries. The calumet ceremony was used to open the door for the trading of European merchandise in exchange for pelts and deerskins and set the stage for the experienced Canadian captains to establish frontier posts as part of a colonial infrastructure which would not only support, but also extend well beyond the immediate exigencies of a strategic military outpost. The career of Louis Juchereau de St. Denis provides more insight into the functions of the old captain as a link between the king and his people in the new Louisiana colony.
CHAPTER 5

Louis Juchereau De St. Denis, Ancien Capitaine

Louis Juchereau de St. Denis used the techniques of the ancien capitaine with amazing effectiveness. With the Natchitoches Post he created a frontier institutional structure that provided a means for controlling frontier territory under French, Spanish, and, eventually, American dominion. But although St. Denis has achieved fame in Louisiana as the founder of Natchitoches, the first French settlement west of the Mississippi, his true historical significance lies in the way he embodied the ideal of the ancien capitaine. In this chapter I will discuss St. Denis's position as a royal officer responsible for Indian relations and the connection between his trading activity and royal service which typified that of the ancien capitaine. It will then become clear why, by the time St. Denis died in 1744, the Natchitoches Post had developed special importance in Louisiana History. As its commandant, St. Denis had successfully defended his post during the Natchez revolt which had threatened the very
Louis Juchereau De St. Denis
1676-1744
Bust at the North End of Front Street
in the Natchitoches Historic District
survival of the colony from 1729 until 1732. He had also established a clandestine trade with Mexico against overwhelming odds, and under his leadership Natchitoches supplied New Orleans with cattle, horses, and other commodities.

St. Denis' career demonstrates first that in the eighteenth century a young man's opportunity to gain wealth and territory in Louisiana depended as much on his position in the Canadian kinship network as it did on his rank as an military officer of the crown. St. Denis was a cousin of Iberville and the eleventh child of a father who received letters of nobility for service in defense of Canada. Members of the Juchereau-Duchesnay family were prominent jurists near Chartres when Louis's grandfather emigrated to Canada. There Nicolas Juchereau, Louis's father, established a seigneurie at Beauport located across the river from Quebec.¹

As a young Canadian captain in 1700, St. Denis joined Iberville on his second voyage to Louisiana at the head of his own company. He presented himself to French and Indian refugees in Louisiana as the father who would supply the

things they lacked. He retained Canadians and Indians in his personal militia company because men were willing to follow a "master of iron" who mastered also their languages and symbolic rituals. He presented himself as a noble servant of the French king, but he earned the respect of friends and enemies as the "Great White Chief." St. Denis needed the support of the French crown to create his trading station which developed as a microcosm of the French kingdom. The king, in turn, needed the loyal service of St. Denis and his successors to maintain royal control of the frontier territory and its diverse population.

St. Denis gained the loyalty of a band of Indians and Frenchmen that eventually became the basis for a legend expressed vividly in the "Ballad of St. Denis," but his reputation for being a "valiant Frenchman" aspiring to "prove his monarch's claim,"\(^2\) must be critically assessed as a product of nationalistic thinking that places too much emphasis on the role of the modern state and has caused many historians to overlook the importance of local

\(^2\)Germaine Portre-Bobinski and Clara Mildred Smith, Natchitoches: The Up-to-Date Oldest Town in Louisiana (New Orleans: Dameron-Pierson, 1936), 57. See the Appendix for the complete text of Grace Tarleton Aaron's "Ballad of St. Denis."
autonomy in colonial Louisiana. St. Denis’s success as an ancien capitaine depended less on his loyalty to France than his ability to satisfy his people with the power, prestige, and material goods they demanded.

At the dawn of the new century, St. Denis explored the river valleys of Louisiana and with Bienville chose a site to build the first French fort on the Mississippi. He led several expeditions up the Red River after his first trip with Bienville. In 1702 he assisted Tonti in diplomatic negotiations with various Indian tribes which produced a temporary cessation of hostilities between the Chickasaws and Choctaws. Only after Bienville went to Biloxi in 1701 to take command of the colony at the death of Sauvolle was St. Denis placed in command of Fort St. John, the fort he helped Bienville build on the Mississippi.\(^3\)

When a decision was made to abandon the fort in 1707, St. Denis took up residence along the river. There he exercised control over the Indians under Bienville’s authority, but he refused to obey his commander’s order to rejoin his company at Mobile. He informed Bienville that

\(^3\)Phares, *Cavalier*, 27-33.
he did not wish to serve the king any longer. St. Denis's action was a response to the crown's failure to provide adequate funds for the salaries of officers and soldiers during the critical years of the War of the Spanish Succession, 1703-1712. Bienville had been advised to compensate the officers with goods from the king's warehouse, but supply ships were never on time and for several years not a single ship reached Louisiana from France. Apparently St. Denis felt that he stood to gain more by trading with the Indians than by living on an unpaid salary.

St. Denis thus went to live among the Indians. The Indians supplied food, and though there was little in the way of goods that could be exchanged, he somehow gained the loyalty of the Indians, perhaps by helping defend them from their enemies. St. Denis may well have established contact

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4Bienville to Pontchartrain, October 27, 1711, MPA:FD 3:166; Giraud, History, 1:216; Phares, Cavalier, 34; Jay Higginbotham, Old Mobile: Fort Louis de la Louisiane, 1702-1711 (Mobile, Ala.: Museum of the City of Mobile, 1977), 293.

with the Spanish in Pensacola, and it could have been in response to his initiative that Antoine de La Mothe Cadillac, appointed governor in 1712, ordered him to go to Natchitoches to find Father Francisco Hidalgo and establish trade with the Spanish.

The Natchitoches Post and The Western Trade

Father Hidalgo was a Franciscan missionary who had written a letter to the governor of Louisiana when Spain decided to abandon his mission in Texas in 1711. By seeking French help to support his work among the Tejas Indians, the Franciscan friar may have been motivated by the desire to take advantage of the competition between France and Spain to convince the Spanish government to maintain his mission. For whatever reason and from 

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7Abstracts of Letters from Cadillac, Dirigoin and Bienville to Crozat, October, 1713, MPA:FD 3:176.

whatever source it came, the letter was placed in the hands of the newly-appointed governor.

Cadillac had instructions from Antoine Crozat, the wealthy French financier who agreed to relieve the King's colonial financial burden in return for a trading monopoly. As head of the colony's proprietary government, Crozat ordered the new governor to search for mines and establish trade with Mexico.\(^9\) St. Denis was ready to assist the new governor at a time when Bienville nursed jealous feelings toward the man who had been placed in command of the colony.\(^{10}\) In supporting Bienville, St. Denis was acting

\(^9\)Ibid., 37-38; Lamothe Cadillac to Pontchartrain, October 26, 1713, MPA:FD 2:180-181; Historical Journal, 89-90.

\(^{10}\)Bienville had never actually been appointed governor of Louisiana. From the death of Sauvole to the appointment of Cadillac in 1710, he served in the capacity of commandant-general, but as late as 1711 his official rank was that of a naval guard. Bienville to Pontchartrain, October 27, 1711 in MPA:FD 3:169. Giraud, History 1:225. O'Neil, Church and State, 113, n. 42. By 1715 Bienville had been promoted to the rank of captain commanding the Mississippi river area. Technically he was no longer commandant-general, but he functioned as such and even presented himself to the Indians as governor while Cadillac was absent in Illinois. Bienville to Pontchartrain, September 1, 1715, MPA:FD, 184-189. Historical Journal, 89-90. At the time he was commissioned as Commandant General of Louisiana on September 20, 1717 Bienville was addressed as "our King's Lieutenant in our said province of Louisiana." Commission For Bienville As Commandant General of Louisiana, September 20, 1717 in MPA:FD 3:224-225. Bienville to the Regency Council, May 10, 1717 in Ibid., 219-220.
as an *ancien capitaine*, as more of an independent operator than his status as a soldier would suggest. And that is precisely what Governor Cadillac needed when he called on St. Denis to lead the expedition to Natchitoches: a frontier diplomat who could establish an economic enterprise in a hostile environment.

By the time Cadillac "contracted" with St. Denis to undertake the expedition up the Red River, a French effort to sell merchandise in both Havana and Vera Cruz had failed.\(^{11}\) According to Pénicaut, the Spanish governor, "would not even hear of any trade."\(^{12}\) The viceroy ordered the captain of the ship to "set sail immediately and go home," and the French were told to keep their goods out of Mexico. Bienville, now serving as commandant under the new governor, wrote in October 1713 that he did not think it "possible to carry on commerce in Louisiana large enough for a company." Trade with the Spaniards, he went on to say "is very uncertain both by way of the Red River and by St. Bernard’s Bay." He did not think that St. Denis would "succeed in his journey by the Red River because there are four hundred leagues to travel through several

\(^{11}\text{MPA:FD 3:177; Chipman, Spanish Texas, 103.}\)

\(^{12}\text{Pénicaut, Fleurs de Lys, 144.}\)
Indian nations [that are] always at war with each other." Moreover, a long distance lay between these Indians and the Spanish settlements, and St. Denis was likely to find only "half-breeds who have nothing but livestock and little money."¹³

Like Robert Cavelier de La Salle and Iberville, St. Denis would do the job now for Antoine Crozat, the new proprietor (indirectly for the crown) at a minimum cost -- always a primary consideration. St. Denis needed only a few soldiers because he recruited the Natchitoches Indians who had been forced to leave their ancestral home when floods destroyed their crops in 1705. At that time the Natchitoches had asked St. Denis for a place to settle, and he had sent them to live among the Colapissas.¹⁴ St. Denis must have used the words and rituals of the ancien capitaine to resettle the refugees and earn their trust because according to Pénicauc, they now followed him willingly.¹⁵

In 1713 St. Denis returned with the Natchitoches to their ancestral lands where traders, missionaries, and

¹³Abstract of a letter from Bienville to Crozat, October 1713, MPA:FD 3:178.

¹⁴Pénicauc, Fleur de Lys, 100-105.

¹⁵Ibid., 145.
soldiers would interact with the native Americans to create a fictive kinship network called the Natchitoches Post. When the War of the Spanish Succession disrupted supplies from France, it was a simple matter for St. Denis to send Pénicaud, who had lived among the Natchitoches and the Colapissas "to the Colapissa village to get the Nassitoches [sic] and bring them with their families to Biloxi, so that he could take them along with him to their old home on the Red River." The process of creating a "people" began when St. Denis instructed the Indians concerning their duties and obligations. His tedious and difficult task of opening avenues for intercolonial trade would strengthen his position with the Indians, while producing the happy side effect of a marriage alliance with the family of Diego Ramón, the Spanish commandant of the presidio protecting what would become the northern border of Mexico. Long before St. Denis married his Spanish bride, however, he used the techniques of the ancien capitaine to become the "father" of many "children."

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16Ibid. Pénicaud indicated that St. Denis brought the Natchitoches back to their ancestral lands during the year 1712. It is possible that the migration took place in stages, but the written passport issued to St. Denis is dated September 12, 1713. Chipman, Spanish Texas, 104.
Pénicaud describes St. Denis’s meeting with the Natchitoches and the Doustinony, who joined their brothers as clients of their French patron. The Doustiony had never left their ancestral lands. "When M. de St. Denis got there, writes Pénicaud,

he assembled the chiefs of the Doustiony and the Nassitoches and told them, in the presence of the Chief of the Tonicas, that they must sow seed in their fields, and that he was going to have grains distributed among them, which he had brought along for that very purpose; for henceforth there would always be Frenchmen living among them."

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St. Denis presented himself to the Indians as a père de famille responsible for the cultivation of the patriarchal domain. But he also established himself as master of the household and the Indians as the servants of their French master. In "the future theirs would be the responsibility of feeding the Frenchmen who stayed there" Pénicaud reports that he told them, and

therefore, he exhorted them to work at the task unceasingly and informed them that they would have nothing to fear from other savages as long as they all stood closely united.

Pénicaud went on to describe how St. Denis gave the Indians iron tools and instructed them to clear the forest and build a warehouse and living quarters for the French. The

17Pénicaud, Fleurs de Lys, 148-149.
two huts of the primitive trading station were built before St. Denis made his long trek into Mexico in search of Father Hidalgo. Fort St. Jean Baptiste was built later, possibly in 1716, after St. Denis helped the Spanish Franciscans to return to their abandoned missions.\textsuperscript{18}

Between 1714 and 1716 St. Denis proceeded with his very difficult task of establishing commercial relations with the Spaniards. First he made contact with the Assinaïs who promised to lead him to the Spaniards after he gave them presents. St. Denis persuaded the Assinaïs to give him four guides who then led him to the Spanish village identified as the Presidio del Norte.\textsuperscript{19} Here St. Denis made contact with the Spanish family responsible for protecting the border of the Spanish Empire and maintaining its restrictive trade regulations.

After waiting six weeks for the Spanish captain at the presidio to contact his superior about the possibility of trading with the French, St. Denis was escorted to the Spanish governor in Coahuila. St. Denis sent orders back to his men at Presidio de Norte to return to Natchitoches


\textsuperscript{19}Pénicaud, \textit{Fleurs de Lys}, 150-51.
because the governor had decided to send him to the viceroy of Mexico. St. Denis stayed in Coahuila almost a year before undertaking the journey to see the viceroy. It was during this time that he established his connections with the family of Captain Diego Ramón whose granddaughter he would later marry and then leave with her family, promising to return later to bring her to Mobile.20

St. Denis's relationship with the Ramón family, however, remained tenuous until after his journey to Mexico City. It was the duty of every official to enforce the trade laws which strictly prohibited importing French merchandise. St. Denis was imprisoned in Mexico City, and after his release, it became apparent that open trade was impossible. Before St. Denis began his journey back to Coahuila, the viceroy offered him a company of calvary in order to persuade him to serve the King of Spain. According to Pénicaud, the Louisiana cavalier "told him that he had taken an oath of fidelity to his King, whose service he would quit only at death."21

Ross Phares' account of St. Denis's adventures, based on an extensive study of Spanish documents, clearly reveals

20Ibid., 153, 193.

21Ibid., 183-84, 193.
that St. Denis did not have an easy time pursuing his goals in Texas and Mexico. He marched into hostile Spanish territory with a small force of twenty-four French Canadians. He returned twenty-one of them from the Assinais to Mobile. Then, finding himself a prisoner of the Spaniards, he "boasted that his imprisonment at the Rio Grande had been voluntary and enjoyable."22 Ultimately, St. Denis succeeded in captivating his captors.

Legal proceedings in Mexico City produced documents which demonstrate that the experienced Canadian captain was "a master at the art of choosing his topics and phrases" and "a past master at the art of omission."23 St. Denis was obviously guilty of bringing merchandise across a frontier that was closed to foreign trade.24 Hostile Spaniards had accused him of lying and cheating and would continue to do so. The old captain cleverly omitted any reference to the merchandise he brought with him or the storehouses he had built on the Red River. He concentrated on Father Hidalgo's invitation and the service he was rendering to God and king. He recommended the

22Phares, Cavalier, 66-69.
23Ibid., 70.
24Ibid., 51.
reestablishment of the Spanish missions in Texas, which of course implied the reoccupation of Texas by Spain. He may or may not have boldly proclaimed his perpetual allegiance to the French king as Pénicaud reported, but he did sidestep the question of becoming a Spanish subject.

After his release from prison in Mexico, St. Denis accepted a position as guide for a Spanish expedition to reoccupy the Texas missions. He would receive the same salary as the Spanish commanding officer. As an independent operator, St. Denis bargained for the best deal.

Upon his return to the presidio of San Juan Bautista, St. Denis took advantage of an opportunity to gain favor with his fiancée’s grandfather who, up to that point had envisioned another marriage alliance for his granddaughter. The Indians had deserted the presidio, and failure to control frontier Indians threatened a loss of revenue and prestige for the Ramón family. The task of restoring the loyalty and services of the Indians opened the way for St. Denis to demonstrate his expertise and prepare the

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25 Ibid., 70, 76-77.
26 Ibid., 79.
27 Ibid., 85. See also Pénicaud, Fleurs de Lys, 190-92.
ground for establishing trading activities with the Spaniards.

St. Denis caught up with the Indians who were traveling slowly. They gathered around him in a circle, and he addressed them in Spanish. He acknowledged their longstanding grievances, reminded them that the governor had "always been kind and upright" and was not personally guilty of having "wronged any one of you." He went on to say that "the old chief has been too weak with his own people—that is all you can say against him." St. Denis then explained that the governor

pledges his faith that no Spaniard shall be allowed to set his foot in your village without your express consent, and that every sort of protection which you may claim shall be extended over your tribe.

He then suggested the futility of leaving the land of their ancestors without knowing where they would go or what hostile tribes they would have to fight. St. Denis ended his speech with the observation that they could always undertake their "desperate enterprise of emigration" if the governor failed to abide by his promises.28

The Indians were persuaded to return to their homes, the Spaniards were greatly impressed, and the Spanish

28Quoted by Phares, Cavalier, 86-88.
empire in Texas received a new lease on life. Soon after his return to San Juan Battista, St. Denis's marriage to the granddaughter of Captain Ramón took place, no doubt as a result of the young captain's success. By April 17, 1716 the expedition had begun the long march back into Texas.

The occupation force that left San Juan Bautista in April consisted of Captain Domingo Ramón, Fathers Hidalgo and Espinosa, six other priests, two lay brothers, twenty-five soldiers including two Diego Ramóns (Domingo's son and the father-in-law of St. Denis both named Diego), three Frenchmen, a mixed group of Spanish civilians with their families, one black slave, and two Indian guides -- a total of some 75 or 80 persons. 29

St. Denis and the young Diego crossed the Brazos to assemble the Tejas Indians and prepare them to receive the Spaniards. The ceremonies included a procession, distribution of gifts, smoking the peace pipe, and firing salutes. Playing his part in this civic ritual on the Texas frontier, Captain Ramón, carrying a banner, marched in the center alongside the clergy. At one point in the ceremony, St. Denis fell on his knees before the standard "on which were painted the images of Christ Crucified and

29Ibid., 94-96.
Our Lady of Guadalupe."30 He then embraced the Commander and all the religious. St. Denis was "followed by all the captains and the other people."31

Father Espinosa’s diary relates that there was more than one occasion when the Indians assembled to celebrate the return of the Spanish friars. The ceremony described in detail by Espinosa took place on Sunday, June 28. On the previous Saturday he had recorded that 34 Indians, including five leaders, had arrived. On this occasion the soldiers lined up in double file with the captain and the religious in the center. "There was a general salute on our part, and in the meantime we went to the place prepared for the reception, which was a hut of boughs of trees, carpeted with blankets; the pack-saddles serving as stools."32 The Saturday assembly ended

with a very serious discourse by an Indian chief, in which he gave us to understand the pleasure with which all desired to receive us in their midst, as Don Luis de San Dionisio ... who understands and speaks much of their language, made known to us.33


31Quoted from Ramón’s diary by Phares, Cavalier, 108.


33Ibid.
The larger Sunday assembly attended by 96 Indians took place after the caravan had traveled nine leagues to the northeast.

In the process of reestablishing the Spanish missions in East Texas St. Denis served as translator and spokesman for the Indians. He also conveyed to the Indians the message of Captain Ramón that the "Spaniards had come to look after the welfare of their souls and to bring them to a recognition of the authority of King Philip V."34

The viceroy of Mexico had ordered the establishment of the missions and the presidio for the express purpose of preventing the commercial and military incursion of the French into territory claimed by Spain.35 While St. Denis helped the Spanish king to achieve his immediate goal, he undermined its purpose. He saw himself as an intermediary between Indians and Europeans and as an independent entrepreneur who to achieve his own ends presented himself as the servant of a sovereign king.

Derbanne, the Second Expedition, and Fort St. Jean Baptiste

After the Spaniards had been found and brought back to Texas, St. Denis returned to Mobile in the company of his

34Phares, Cavalier, 109.

35Ibid., 72.
father-in-law, Diego Ramón, whom he introduced to prospective business associates as a horse trader.36 One of these traders was François Dion Deprez Derbanne, a Canadian who served as storekeeper in charge of the warehouse on Dauphin Island in Mobile Bay as early as 1710.37 In January, 1716, a month before the departure of the Ramón expedition, Derbanne and Ensign Claude-Charles du Tisné departed from Dauphin Island to prepare supplies for Bienville's Natchez expedition.38 By October, Derbanne had returned to Mobile where he became a partner in a commercial company which included St. Denis, Graveline, Joseph Chauvin de Léry, Nicolas Chauvin de La Frenière, and the Beaulieu brothers. St. Denis and his partners arrived at Natchitoches on November 25.39

Fort St. Jean Baptiste no doubt enhanced St. Denis's clandestine trading network. The existence of the fort provided a cover for the commercial activities of the Ramón family as the clan continued the pretense of enforcing

36Phares, Cavalier, 111.


39Phares, Cavalier, 113.
Spanish trade regulations while profiting from the Louisiana trade. Apparently St. Denis had little to do with the actual establishment of the fort which, according to Giraud, grew out of Bienville's resolve to prevent the Spanish from advancing into the Red River Valley.\textsuperscript{40}

In 1716 Spanish missions did not present a military threat to the French. On the contrary, when St. Denis returned to Natchitoches, prepared to bring the merchandise purchased with capital supplied by Derbanne and his other partners, the Spanish missions needed his help to survive a crisis caused by a severe winter, flooding rain, malaria, desertion, shortage of supplies, and hostile Indians. Going to their aid, St. Denis not only pacified the Indians but put them to work building two additional missions. He made three trips back to Natchitoches to purchase maize for the Spanish missionaries.\textsuperscript{41}

While St. Denis promoted Spanish missionary activity and created a market for French merchandise, Cadillac and Bienville decided to send a detachment of French soldiers to Natchitoches. According to Giraud, a sergeant and six soldiers were dispatched during the summer of 1716, but du

\textsuperscript{40}Giraud, \textit{History}, 2:187.

\textsuperscript{41}\textit{Ibid.}, 113-114.
Tisné did not arrive in Natchitoches until later. Pénicaut relates that Cadillac sent "twenty-five soldiers off with one sergeant and three boats loaded with merchandise, munitions, and food supplies, with a letter to M. de Bienville who was at the Natchez." The letter instructed Bienville to

send M. de Tissenet--[an experienced] Canadian officer, who understood the savage languages very well --at the head of this detachment that was to go up the Rivière Rouge to build a fort at the Nassitoches.\textsuperscript{42}

In his "Memoir on Louisiana" dated 1725-26, Bienville states that "it was in 1716 when I was still at the Natchez to punish them for their first revolt that I sent a detachment to take possession of the Red River and establish the Natchitoches."\textsuperscript{43} He goes on to say that he "had received information that the Governor of Mexico was

\textsuperscript{42}Pénicaut, Fleurs de Lys, 193. Du Tisné had come to Louisiana from Canada where he had developed a reputation for being an amazingly active officer who had the knowledge and experience of governing the Indians. His rank in the French navy was that of an ensign, but his background and experience certainly indicate that he was an experienced Canadian officer. Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2:215. A good summary of du Tisné's exploits in Illinois and west of the Mississippi can be found in Gilbert C. Din and Abraham P. Nasatir, The Imperial Osages: Spanish-Indian Diplomacy in the Mississippi Valley (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 35-37.

\textsuperscript{43}"Memoir on Louisiana, the Indians and the Commerce that Can Be Carried On with Them," MPA:FD, 3:515.
having a large convoy march there" and that the Spanish did indeed establish themselves at Los Adaes when they discovered that the Red River had been occupied ten days before they arrived. Exactly when and by whom the fort was built cannot be determined from the available documents, but St. Denis did leave some of his goods at the little trading post when he headed for Mexico in March 1717.

During the years that preceded the death of Louis XIV, the financial crisis precipitated by the War of the Spanish Succession had opened the door for St. Denis to make his contract with Cadillac. The experienced captain took advantage of the opportunity to create a market for his goods and services that was large enough to support himself and his extended family but not capable of sustaining Crozat's monopoly. Crozat's decision to give up his proprietorship came at a time when the Duke of Orléans, now regent for the young Louis XV, had put royal finances in the hands of the Scottish banker and adventurer, John Law. Cadillac was recalled and Law's Mississippi Company

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44See Giraud, Histoire 2:181-182, n. 3.
45Phares, Cavalier, 114.
produced a capital transfusion which temporarily resuscitated the nascent colony.\textsuperscript{46}

Discord continued at the highest levels of colonial administration after Crozat surrendered his monopoly on August 23. Jean Michiele Lépinay briefly replaced Cadillac until Law's Company of the West gave command of the colony to Bienville.\textsuperscript{47} By the time St. Denis returned from his second expedition to Mexico, Philippe Blondel had been placed in command of Fort St. Jean Baptiste, but the real Spanish threat to French Louisiana occurred when the Spanish recaptured Pensacola which had been taken by Bienville shortly after he received word of the outbreak of the dynastic conflict between French and Spanish Bourbons in April, 1719.

\textbf{Defense of Mobile and the Siege of Pensacola}

From the very beginning of French penetration into the Mississippi Valley, the ability of the Canadian captains to carry on commerce and provide for the subsistence of their companies depended on control of the Indians. Iberville,

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{46}John G. Clark, \textit{New Orleans, 1718-1812: An Economic History} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 8-19.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{47}Mathé Allain, "Antoine de Lamothe, Sieur de Cadillac:" Brian E. Coutts, "Jean-Michiele Lépinay," \textit{Louisiana Governors}, 16, 19.}
Le Sueur, and Tonti had worked diligently to establish peace among the Indian tribes so that the rivers under French control could become avenues of trade. St. Denis proposed to use the Indians to counter any attempt to extend Spain's influence in the Louisiana territory. Bienville later expressed the doubts he had felt about St. Denis' ability to defend the western boundary and later boasted about sending French soldiers to Fort St. Jean Baptiste to counter the Spanish threat.48

The events of the Franco-Spanish War gave St. Denis the opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of the *ancien capitaine*'s alliance with the reliance on the Indians for defense.

In 1719 before St. Denis had returned from his second expedition to Mexico, Bienville convoked a council of war and a decision was made to expel the Spanish from Pensacola.49 The easy capture of Pensacola by the French was only the prelude to a more difficult war. The Spanish recaptured the Pensacola fortress with a force of 1,200 men before Bienville's brother, Joseph Le Moyne de Sérigny,


49Phares, *Cavalier*, 152.
and his nephew, could muster reinforcements. Another of Bienville's brothers, was captured and taken to Havana. Contemplating a Spanish attack on Mobile, the French colonists began to fear for the very survival of French Louisiana.  

With only sixty French soldiers, Bienville and his brothers had to depend on approximately 400 Indian allies. St. Denis was released from prison in Mexico in time to summon additional Indian allies to the defense of Mobile, but the minutes of the Louisiana Council of Commerce discuss what happened after the Spanish recaptured Pensacola and launched an attack on Mobile without even mentioning St. Denis. Phares, however, credits St. Denis with the victory. He maintains that the danger of an imminent attack on Mobile and the arrival of St. Denis with a contingent of Indians from Biloxi motivated French settlers to stream in from the concessions.  

The Spanish assault on Mobile was delayed by a single French ship positioned to defend the fort. By the time the Spaniards launched a frontal assault on land, St. Denis had arrived with a small force. The battle was engaged, and

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the Spaniards fought their way into a wooded area where the timely arrival of more Indian allies gave the French advantage in numbers and the cover of the forest. The decimated Spanish force retreated to their ships and sailed away. At that point the arrival of a French fleet of five ships commanded by Desnos de Champmeslin opened the way for a land and sea assault to retake Pensacola. The second siege of Pensacola by the French was much more difficult than the easy takeover that had marked the beginning of hostilities, but more Indians responded to the call of the Great White Chief and they were compensated with the booty of the campaign.52

Though Bienville failed to give St. Denis any special credit for the recapture of Pensacola by the French, Pénicaut described his role in the celebration that followed.

M. de St. Denis arranged to entertain M. de Chamelin and the captains and naval officers with a dance of the savages, who sang a calumet of peace to him. Next, in the name of M. de Chamelin, M. de St. Denis made them an oration in their own language, exhorting them to be friends of the French forever.53

After the festivities, Champmeslin distributed presents.

52Phares, Cavalier, 155-59.

53Pénicaut, Fleur de Lys, 232-34.
Bienville did not acknowledge the diplomatic and military skill of St. Denis. Pénicaud, on the other hand, may have idealized his deeds, but the old captain’s success was based on his ability to mobilize France’s Indian confederates. St. Denis no doubt had the advantage of arriving at just the right time, and his legendary invincibility enhanced the message of his ritualized communication with the Indian tribes. Whatever St. Denis’s actual role was in the defense of Mobile and the recapture of Pensacola by the French, he made sure that his Indian allies believed that he was the man who had, with their assistance, saved the day.

Whereas Bienville downplayed St. Denis’s role at Pensacola, he exaggerated the Spanish threat to Natchitoches. Disinformation may have been disseminated to convince the Company to repair the fort and send gifts and supplies to the French frontier post. When the Council was informed in October, 1719 "that the Spaniards were sending three hundred men to Texas," an order was issued to Derbanne and Blondel, to build a new fort and "give one hundred livres worth of presents to the Natchitoches nation, the same sum to the Dulchionis, sixty livres to the Adais, three hundred livres to the Cenis" In a letter dated June, 1720 Bienville informed the Navy Council that
"the viceroy of Mexico was sending by land one thousand men" to "attack the French on the Red River and the Mississippi. Yet when Philippe Blondel and his troops attacked San Miguel de los Adaes in the only engagement in the Western theater of the war, he sacked the fort and captured a lay brother, one ragged soldier and a flock of chickens. It seems clear that Bienville not only exaggerated the threat but refused to acknowledge St. Denis's ability to control any Spanish attempt to launch an attack on the Red River post.

St. Denis and the Natchitoches Post

The administrative record suggests that St. Denis took a giant step forward in his military career when he received his appointment as captain and commandant of the Natchitoches Post during the winter of 1721-1722. He had re-entered the King's service as a lieutenant on March 23, 1720. His appointment as Commandant of the Upper Cane River on July 1 of that year has been interpreted by Portré-Bobinski as a step in a series of rapid promotions which culminated in his appointment as commandant of the


Yet what really mattered on the frontier was control over the Indians and the ability to mediate between the French and the Spanish.\textsuperscript{57}

By 1722 Natchitoches was beginning to realize its potential as a trading post capable of supplying New Orleans with horses, corn, and bear grease.\textsuperscript{58} There was hope that it would provide a market for goods imported from France. The 1722 census listed fourteen men including the commandant and Derbanne, St. Denis’s business partner who now served as warehouse keeper. There were ten women, ten children, twenty black slaves and eight Indian slaves. Twelve horned cattle and 74 horses are also listed. By 1726 the Europeans numbered 94, and there were 35 slaves, 38 horned cattle and 72 horses.\textsuperscript{59} Evidently these figures do not include the military garrison which was

\textsuperscript{56}Portré-Bobinski and Smith, \textit{Natchitoches}, 44-48.

\textsuperscript{57}Phares, \textit{Cavalier}, 143.


reduced from 29 men to 20 in 1727 as a result of the company's effort to reduce expenditures.60

Although his debt to the company increased from 12,205 livres in 1723 to over 18,000 by 1742, St. Denis was able to build a house and accumulate a large herd of cattle. The inventory made after his death on June 11, 1744 included 24 black slaves and 100 cattle.61 Neither Natchitoches nor Louisiana as a whole thrived economically under the French regime, but Natchitoches was more self-sufficient than most other areas. Enough wealth could be derived from trade with the Indians and the Spanish to support St. Denis comfortably.

After 1722 St. Denis performed his duties in the service of the Company of the Indies which was under contract to the king. St. Denis now held a patent of nobility along with his commission as a royal officer. He was also a private individual with a contract to sell company merchandise for a commission of 5 per cent. His

60Giraud, History, 5:385.

relationship with the company was based on mutual interest and reciprocal obligations.62

St. Denis's authority in Natchitoches and the surrounding area was now unassailable. Charles Gayarré writes that Indians over a hundred miles away "submitted to his sway ... and ... acknowledged him as their great chief." His decisions in tribal disputes were readily accepted, and anywhere from five to six thousand warriors stood ready to fight at his command. And although Gayarré goes on to say that the "Natchez feared him more than anything else,"63 in 1731 St. Denis's reputation for invincibility was challenged by an attack on Natchitoches by the Natchez.

Two years had passed since the "entire white male population of Fort Rosalie"64 had been massacred. For two years the Natchez Indians and their allies had threatened the very existence of the French colony in Louisiana. When Saint Denis received word that the Natchez were headed toward Natchitoches, he immediately sent runners in all

62Phares, Cavalier, 182-183.


64Phares, Cavalier, 201.
directions. Relief troops from New Orleans never arrived. The Spanish commandant at Los Adais sent only sixteen men, but hundreds of loyal Indians responded immediately to St. Denis's call to arms. There were not enough weapons available and St. Denis had to supply the Indians with guns that belonged to him. The attack began on October 5, 1731 and the battle raged for two weeks. St. Denis used defensive tactics until the attackers burned a French woman in full view of the defenders. At the right moment, St. Denis led his army of Frenchmen, Spaniards, and Indians in an offensive charge. Stiff resistance was followed by a truce and then three or four more days of fighting before the Natchez broke and ran. With no help from the Governor, St. Denis had mobilized the "people" of his post to repel the Natchez invasion.65

In his letter of November 2, 1731 addressed to the commissaire-ordonnateur, Edme Gatien de Salmon, St. Denis simply stated that the Natchez had fled, that the company had failed to meet its obligations, and explained how he had to use his personal resources to sustain all the volunteers who responded to his call. He criticized the company for failing to maintain an adequate defense force.

65Ibid., 203-211.
If the company had performed its duties, he wrote, war could have been avoided. The old captain had done his duty to uphold the invincibility of the French king. The fault lay with the Company.66

Before the end of November St. Denis wrote a memoir in which he clearly stated the defense needs of the colony. He recommended a garrison of 500 troops at New Orleans, 400 at Mobile, and 250 for the Alabama Post. He also made it clear that a frontier post required more than a military garrison.

The company had failed in its task of promoting the settlement and economic development of the colony. "I will say that it is necessary to have honest family folk and not at all those useless people and vagabonds that are nearly always brought in by the company."67 The old captain knew how to manage the Indians and govern settlers, and he did not hesitate to inform the king that the company was responsible for the Indian uprising.

The successful defence of Natchitoches became a source of inspiration and encouragement for Commandant-General

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66 Extract of the letter from St. Denis to Salmon, November 2, 1731, AC C13, 13:162-164. Phares, Cavalier, 211.

Étienne de Périer and Commissary Salmon. Périer described St. Denis as a "brave man: le plus ancien des officiers de la colonie." Salmon informed the minister of marine that many had confidence only in him.  

The city planted by Louis Juchereau de Saint Denis on the border between two empires had become the nucleus of a viable frontier community. The failure of the Company created new opportunities for those who were ready to learn and apply the techniques of the ancien capitaine.

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Etat des Officiers entretenus à la Louisiane avec apostelles, 1733, AC C13, 13:169; Salmon to Maurepas, May 12, 1732. AC, C13, 15:100.
CHAPTER 6

Company, Captains, and Crown

From 1717 to 1731, the reorganized Company of the Indies administered Louisiana for the crown. The Company streamlined its operations in Louisiana, cut its expenses, and reduced the military garrison. The crown was unwilling to subsidize a colony which had originally been established for the strategic purpose of preventing the British from controlling the mouth of the Mississippi, and the Company ventured to promote economic development and produce a profit for its investors.¹ In keeping with this policy, the Company instituted stricter financial controls over the ancien capitaines who ran the frontier posts. The attempt of the Company to turn a profit on its investment in Louisiana stirred up the tension between the purse and the sword which was inherent in the system of centralized control installed by Colbert. In the end, however, commercial failure and the Natchez uprising ultimately

¹Clark, New Orleans, 10.
forced the crown to revert to reliance on the old captains when the company surrendered its monopoly in 1731. At that point the legendary adventures of St. Denis provided an example and a model of how to control a vast territory with minimal expense to the crown.

St. Denis's contract with the Company of the Indies did not sever his ties with the French crown or change the status of his oath of loyalty to the king. The king recognized the Company as a "moral person" to whom he as head of the body politic gave "regalian rights." As an arm of the state, the Company was subject directly to the king. The king was the seigneur of the Company which held Louisiana (and other territories) as a fief. In exchange for "fealty, counsel, and aid," the king owed the Company protection and supervision. The old captain who served the Company under contract would continue to serve the crown after the Company relinquished the colony.

Military Officers, Commissaries, and the Poverty of the People

Controlling supplies and expenditures was the persistent problem that fueled the conflict between commissioners and commandants throughout the period of French dominion in Louisiana. From the time of Iberville

the governors and captains could usually depend upon the support of the Jesuits, while first Père Henri Roulleaux de La Vente, the seminary priest appointed pastor of Mobile by the Bishop of Quebec, and then Père Raphaël de Luxembourg, the Capuchin superior, sided with the commissioners.

The appointment of Crassé as scrivener in 1700 to keep track of the king's accounts and the distribution of supplies marked the institution of an administrative apparatus designed to insure financial accountability. Nicolas La Salle replaced Crassé two years later. It was La Salle, acting as naval commissioner, who accused Iberville of fraudently manipulating the accounts and misappropriating the king's funds while outfitting ships for naval combat in 1705. At the beginning of what became a perennial conflict between the Louisiana governor and the commissaire-ordonnateur, Iberville and his Canadian officers were charged with serving their own personal interests at the expense of the king and his people. After a long inquest, Pontchartrain remained convinced that Iberville had been guilty of diverting funds and placing his personal interest above that of the king when he exercised his prerogative as commander to draw supplies.
from the storehouse.³ The accounts indicated that merchandise worth more than 47,000 livres was taken out between 1702 and 1706. Iberville and his brothers were accused of selling the goods (sometimes at a profit as high as 600 percent) without any return to the royal treasury.⁴

The issue of financial accountability centered on whether the governor distributed gifts and allocated supplies in the interest of the king and his people or whether he and his captains exploited the king and the colony by using the crown's resources for personal advantage that adversely affected the colony and disturbed the peace and tranquillity of the people. Bienville followed Iberville in his determination to control the consumption and distribution of supplies. La Salle continued to complain about Bienville's failure to follow strict accounting procedures. Bienville justified his actions by the need to "ease the public poverty."⁵ La Salle had the support of Père La Vente who was only too glad to blame the poor condition of the colony on Bienville and his officers, whom they accused of profiting from the

³Jay Higginbotham, Old Mobile, 59; Giraud, Histoire, 1:35, n. 1, 115-118.
⁴Surrey, Commerce of Louisiana, 155.
⁵Giraud, History, 1:226-227.
sale of the king's merchandise at the expense of the poor inhabitants who were forced to pay exorbitant prices. The implication was that the officers pilfered the warehouses and then sold the goods to the inhabitants. The conflict between Bienville and his officers on the one hand, and La Salle and La Vente on the other, divided the population because any discontented inhabitant was prone to side with the commissary.6

The response of Père La Vente, who arrived at Mobile on August 1, 1704, to the adverse conditions in the colony set the stage for the later criticism of Canadian officers by Père Raphaël functioning in the dual capacity of Capuchin superior and curé with jurisdiction over a territory which stretched from the Gulf Coast to the Ohio River. While arranging marriages for the young ladies placed in his care during the voyage of the Pélican, Père La Vente expressed suspicion about the moral character of Commandant Bienville, an eligible batchelor in his twenties who kept a female housekeeper while apparently showing no interest in marriage. The commandant reluctantly expended scarce resources to provide a house and church for an order of priests who lacked the determination, the endurance, and

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6Ibid., 1:229.
the manpower to serve as pastors and evangelists in a vast frontier territory. La Vente received gifts of money and property from those who died during the yellow fever epidemic which raged for two years after the arrival of the *Pélican* and profited from his personal trading activity while constantly complaining about the state of the colony and the poverty of the people. The young commandant who matured with the colony itself promoted the activities of the Jesuits who cleverly adapted themselves to the austere lifestyle of the frontier in Canada and the Illinois country. The mature Bienville would later carry for the Company of the Indies the burden of protecting and defending the colony established by his older brother increased by the weight of Père Raphaël’s criticism and a replay of the charges against the military officers leveled by Père La Vente.7

The special commission appointed to investigate complaints against Iberville and his brothers before the governor died in 1706 had produced evidence implicating Iberville and several others associated with the Le Moyne clan. Consequently, Ponchartrain bypassed Bienville and placed Daneau de Muy in command of the colony. Jean-

Baptiste-Martin Dartaguiette d'Iron, a young marine commissary accompanied de Muy across the Atlantic, but when de Muy died on January 25, 1708 enroute from Havana to Mobile, the full responsibility for investigating the Le Moyne brothers fell on the commissary.\(^8\)

Martin Dartaguiette developed a respectful regard for Bienville as an officer well-qualified to command the colony, and his investigation helped to exonerate Bienville. The younger Le Moyne was ultimately able to convince Dartaguiette that he had never exploited his office for personal benefit and justified what he had to do by the necessity of receiving Indians on a less than adequate salary that he did not even receive for seven years.\(^9\) Bienville was thus able to continue in command of the colony from the death of Sauvole in August 1701 until Antoine Lamothe Cadillac arrived in 1712.

During Cadillac's administration, Bienville allied himself with the commissary against the governor, but the conflict between the purse and the sword reignited when Jacques de La Chaise arrived in 1723. La Chaise had been commissioned by the Company as a special investigator, and

\(^8\)Higginbotham, *Old Mobile*, 314-323.

he began the process of determining why there was a gap between the value of merchandise distributed and the amount of notes received in exchange for it. As La Chaise searched for evidence of embezzlement by the Le Moyne family, Père Raphaël accused the military officers of exploiting the people by dividing scarce goods among themselves and selling them to the inhabitants after quadrupling the original price. La Chaise and Raphaël revived the old accusations of immorality and profiteering advanced by La Salle and La Vente while ignoring the problem of delayed salaries and the niggardly reimbursement for expenses which characterized royal administration in the early years of the colony. La Salle had accused Bienville of ignoring the correct accounting procedures, and though D’Artaguiette concluded that Bienville’s distribution of royal supplies had been justified by extenuating circumstances, Pontchartrain remained suspicious of him, and now the directors of the Company were prepared to back La Chaise as he began to accuse the commandant and his officers of profiteering from the distribution of supplies from the king’s warehouse.

10Giraud, History 5:20.

The reorganized Company of the Indies sent Jean-François Choplet Du Sauvoy to Louisiana along with La Chaise as its commissioners in addition to several newly appointed members of the Superior Council. When the commissioners and councillors arrived at Ship Island in 1723, they were met by Henry de Louboey, the commandant of the Biloxi post. Like most military officers in colonial Louisiana, Louboey supplemented his meager and often unpaid salary by engaging in commerce, a forbidden practice that had been tolerated by the crown during the crisis of the War of the Spanish Succession. Unaware that La Chaise had been appointed to investigate and eliminate such practices, Louboey rowed out to their ship, inquired about its cargo, and informed the Captain that he had Spanish piastres for commerce de pacotilles (private trading). When the ship’s captain reported this conversation to La Chaise, he was ordered to inform Louboey that all of the ship’s cargo must be unloaded at New Orleans.\textsuperscript{12}

Later, Louboey returned with orders from Bienville to ignore La Chaise’s instructions and unload the cargo

\textsuperscript{12}De La Chaise to the Directors of the Company of the Indies, N.O., September 6, 1723 in MPA:FD, 2:295-296; Giraud, History 5:17.
because Biloxi and Mobile were badly in need of supplies. Bienville had shown that he was still in command of the colony, but La Chaise, supported by Bienville's discontented opponents, would work to establish the dominance of the purse over the sword. From the time of his initial conflict with Bienville over unloading cargoes, La Chaise was determined to establish strict procedures for the distribution of the king's merchandise in order to prevent the military officers from profiteering by buying the goods on credit at low prices and reselling them for profit.

Meanwhile, La Chaise presented his warrant and letters to Bienville, who was surprised to learn that Sieur Delorme, a director of the Company, had been recalled. La Chaise asked Bienville if seals could be placed on all Delorme's property "because his Royal Highness was convinced that he had accumulated many piastres." The commissioners then accompanied Bienville to Delorme's house where they informed him of his recall. They then proceeded to place seals "on all the warehouses and the chest in which we found only ninety-one piastres almost all in small

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13MPA:FD 2:297.

14La Chaise to the Directors, September 6, 1723, MPA:FD, 2:299.
copper coins." La Chaise concluded that Delorme had been forewarned.\textsuperscript{15}

In his reports to the directors of the Company of the Indies, La Chaise (with the support of the Capuchin superior) accused the captains of serving their own interests. The officers not only neglected the interests of the king, but, in effect, they exploited the king's people by profiting from the sale of merchandise from the king's warehouse.\textsuperscript{16}

In his first report, La Chaise vividly described the poor condition of the warehouses and outlined numerous problems that needed to be addressed by the company. He blamed Bienville and concluded that the commandant should be replaced. Good workmen could not obtain the things they needed from the warehouse because Bienville gave the soldiers, sailors, and the Canadians preference in the distribution of supplies. The patients in the hospital were neglected by the surgeon, a "protegé of Mr. De Bienville." Bienville and Delorme failed to provide poultry-yards. Rations were given to women "who do nothing but cause disorder." The adjutant general rendered little

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 2:300.

\textsuperscript{16}La Chaise to the Directors, September 6 and October 18, 1723, \textbf{MPA:FD} 2:294-357, 358-391.
service to the colony. He "resides throughout the year on his farm which is on the other side of the river." Bienville had raised him up the ranks from a simple sergeant, and he was Bienville's "favorite and the confidant of his most secret business." This officer who bore arms against the King in the Cevennes, owes the Company nearly eight thousand livres by the private account that I have drawn up, without speaking of what he will possibly owe by two other accounts with which he is charged."\(^{17}\)

La Chaise insisted that Bienville and his relatives should be recalled and another commandant or governor appointed. He also expressed the need for an intendant with the authority to "restrain everybody." Pointing out that the "sword must not in any manner meddle with commerce," the commissioner warned the directors that "As long as the commandants meddle with the warehouses they will always be badly managed."\(^{18}\)

La Chaise accused Bienville of "seeking only to cause the downfall of the colony in order that the King might take control of it and that he might be able to do what he wished."\(^{19}\) He was clearly telling the directors that the

\(^{17}\text{Ibid.}, 2:308-17.\)

\(^{18}\text{Ibid.}, 2:323.\)

\(^{19}\text{Ibid.}, 2:306.\)
colony would never develop economically and the inhabitants would never be treated fairly until the stranglehold of Bienville and the Canadian officers on the resources of the colony was broken. Bienville had to go because the people were being mistreated. "There is not one who does not complain."20

After discoursing at length on the complaints about Bienville, the commissioner concentrated on the need for reliable bookkeepers who could maintain proper records and audit the warehouse accounts. In his effort to stop those who would take advantage of the Company and to insure the appointment of reliable officials, La Chaise returned again and again to the problems of appraising property, setting prices, and examining accounts.21 In his effort to institute financial controls, La Chaise attacked the very foundation of the Canadian kinship system by which a Canadian governor controlled the colony. The old captains and the linkage they maintained between their "companies" and the governor would be replaced by officials who would protect the "people" by insuring that the king's merchandise was fairly distributed.

20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., 2:326-30.
La Chaise soon discovered François Duval a deputy bookkeeper who impressed him while serving as assistant to the New Orleans storekeeper as a man "acquainted with the affairs of the colony," capable of managing the audit of accounts. Noting that Duval "has the misfortune of not being liked" by Bienville, La Chaise suggested to the directors that he deserved a "place in the Council with so much the more right because he would immediately be in a position to render an account of everything that might arise."\(^{23}\)

When complaints were made about Duval's price-setting policies, La Chaise ran into serious difficulties from the councillors who were unwilling to support the position of La Chaise and Duval against that of Bienville and his officers.\(^{24}\) The councillors also refused to accept La Chaise's appointment of Louis-Auguste de La Loire Flaucourt to replace Louis-Alexandre Durand as storekeeper in Mobile.\(^{25}\)

The commissioners had secret orders to stop abuses, audit accounts, and make full reports, but the question of

\(^{23}\)Ibid., 2:331. See also Giraud, History 5:21-23.

\(^{24}\)La Chaise to the Directors of the Company of the Indies, N.O., October 18, 1723, MPA:FD 2:361-62.

\(^{25}\)Ibid., 2:366.
whether they had the authority to appoint officials to replace those they removed created a wedge between La Chaise and the councillors. When Du Sauvoy died in August, 1723 some councillors began to go over to Bienville’s camp, and the council as a whole asserted its sovereign authority to resist a commissioner who refused to provide them with a copy of his secret orders. In his report of October 18, La Chaise made it very clear that someone with the authority of an intendant was necessary to restrain the commandant and the councillors. Otherwise, the warehouses would revert back to their former condition. With the strong recommendation of Père Raphaël, La Chaise secured the support of the Company’s directors.

Even though his intention was to reorganize the administration of the colony and leave it in capable hands, by the time La Chaise died in 1729, he was being accused by Commandant Périer of placing his private interest above


27La Chaise to the Directors, October 18, 1723, MPA:FD 2:379; see also 323.

28The council called into question the extent of La Chaise’s authority, and it was not until the appointment of Salmon in 1731 that the crown resolved the question by according to "Salmon the same honors as were due to an intendant, since the ordonnateur took the place of an intendant in Louisiana, the function of the intendant being confined to Canada." Giraud, History 5:313.
that of the colony. The Council could and did claim that its powers derived "from the King and not the Company," but the real issue was whether the inhabitants were being cared for by those engaged in royal service.

Père Raphaël added fuel to the fire of the complaints that caused La Chaise to demand constraints on the Canadian captains. His letters written to Abbé Gilles-Bernard Raguet, a Sulpicien priest who had been named to the reorganized Company's board of directors in 1724, helped to convince the directors to recall first Bienville, then Boisbriant. Raphaël managed to persuade the board to back the efforts of La Chaise to "restrain everybody." After the recall of Bienville, Raphaël reported to Raguet that Boisbriant had an "extreme weakness for the officers and ... lets himself be completely governed by them, and is unwilling to hear anything that condemns them." The soldiers, he asserted, walked away with anything they wanted, and then sold the goods for three or four times the original price. The Council was not "in a position to oppose anything because it has everything to fear from an

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29 Giraud, History, 5:46.
30 Giraud, Histoire, 4:32.
31 MPA:FD 2:323.
undisciplined soldiery and from a discontented populace."
Raphaël made it clear to Raguet that the weakness of the
government had to be remedied by a "chief of a totally
different character." Boisbriant could not handle the
task. He was a "good Canadian accustomed to the free life
of the Indians, an enemy of affairs and so slack that he
would never use his authority if he were not in some way
forced to it by others." Raphaël's charges against the
Bienvillists confirmed earlier accusations made against
Bienville and his brothers. The memoir of Charles Le Gac,
a company official in Louisiana from 1718 to 1721, referred
to decisions being made and measures "undertaken by Serigny
and Bienville without the participation of a single [local]
director."  

The correspondence of La Chaise and Père Raphaël
reveals that the issue of controlling supplies and
expenditures was the most visible part of the broader
question of how to govern the colony. La Chaise and Père

32Père Raphaël to the Abbé Raguet, New Orleans,
September 15, 1725, MPA:FD, 2:512. See also Pierre Hamer,
Raphaël de Luxembourg: une contribution Luxembourgeoise à
la colonisation de la Louisiane (Luxembourg: Section
 Historique de l'Institut Grand-Ducal, 1966), 87-89.

33Glenn R. Conrad, ed., Immigration and War,
Louisiana: 1718-1721 from the Memoir of Charles Le Gac
(Lafayette, La.: University of Southwestern Louisiana,
Raphaël recommended the appointment of a strong personality who would rule the council and the colony according to the public interest. Père Raphaël advised Abbé Raguet that La Chaise was a man of proven integrity who knew how to deal with "les murmures du peuple." He suggested that if La Chaise had been willing to exploit the people by profiting from the sale of merchandise he would not have as many enemies on the Council. La Chaise and Raphaël advanced the argument that Bienville, Boisbriant and the officers had violated the public trust and used the colony to advance their private interests. By backing La Chaise against the Council, the Company directors gave him control over expenditures that rendered the commissioner more powerful than the commandant-general. The murmuring of the people increased, La Chaise's exercise of authority made him more and more unpopular, and in 1729 the same charge of promoting his private interest at the expense of the people was leveled against him by Périer.

The Company's effort to restrain and restrict the activities of the Canadian captains by attacking the

34Quoted in Hamer, Raphaël de Luxembourg, 98.

35Ibid.

Canadian kinship system languished with its failure to expand and develop the economy of the colony. The real question at issue in the struggle between commandant and commissary was whether the French inhabitants and the native American population of the colony were being cared for by those engaged in royal service. La Salle, La Vente, La Chaise, and Raphaël criticized the Canadians and their Jesuit supporters for exploiting the people. Their challenge to the governor’s authority to control the distribution of goods from the king’s warehouse backfired because the old captains maintained their position in the frontier posts and villages by providing supplies and protection for their followers.

The retrocession of the colony to the crown and the return of Bienville revived the Canadian kinship system as a means of reducing expenditures, but the proclivity of the Chicasaws and Choctaws to take advantage of economic rivalry between the French and the English to demand more French goods at competitive prices made it difficult for Bienville and his successors to control royal expenditures.
CHAPTER 7

Needs and Service: Captains and Storekeepers

The governor of Louisiana commanded the officer corps which served the king of France by protecting his people and supplying them with the things they needed. The determination of the crown to curtail expenditures in a colony where commerce was threatened by the English and the Indians forced the governors to rely on post commandants who exercised patriarchal authority and used the techniques of the ancien capitaine. The attempt to introduce financial controls created a dilemma. The duty of the commissary-general and his storekeepers to serve the king by implementing measures designed to stem the flow of a financial hemorrhage clashed with the duty of the governor and his commandants to supply the needs of the colony.

After the Company surrendered its responsibility for the colony, the royal governors stressed the threat of English encroachment on Indian trade, the need to supply merchandise to Indian allies at a competitive price, and the difficulty of governing a vast territory with only a handful of French
soldiers. The conflict between commandants and commissaries in the Louisiana posts resulted when the Company of the Indies and later the crown attempted to dilute the authority of the commandant by giving the commissary general responsibility for financial, judicial, and police matters. As troubleshooter for the Company before the recall of Bienville, Jacques de La Chaise had advised the Directors in France to prevent the commandants from controlling the storekeepers and warehouses.¹

The death of La Chaise and the Natchez Massacre opened the way for restoring the commandants' control over storekeepers and warehouses, but the crown and the Ministry of Marine were not willing to abandon the effort to control the military officers by using commissaries and storekeepers to manipulate the purse strings of the colony.

Immediately after the Natchez disaster, Commandant-General Étienne de Périer, who followed Bienville and Boisbriand and performed the functions of governor in the service of the Company from 1726 to 1733, reported to the minister of marine that he did not have "sixty ... soldiers in condition to march from about four hundred men who are scattered about the posts of this colony." Moreover, there

¹De La Chaise to the Directors of the Company of the Indies, March 8, 1724 in MPA:FD 2:323.
were few officers who would be reliable "in an affair calling for vigorous action."² It was clear by then that Périer had to count more on the Choctaw nation than his own forces to preserve the colony, but the Bienvillists were able to cast enough doubt on his skill in Indian relations to convince the ministry of Marine to give the governorship to Bienville.³

Before that decision was made, Comptroller-General Philip Ory chided Périer for not reporting complaints about the administration of affairs which reached France "from all sides." Colonists bombarded Ory with their grievances.

There are complaints about the enormous usury that prevails in the colony, about the prices of the goods that are sold exorbitantly dearly when they come from the warehouses as well as at the shop, and in this latter place even more dearly under the pretext that these goods come from private stocks that have been sold very dearly; that this shop is in the hands of the Councilors and principal employees of the Company or of people protected by you such as the Abbé Berthelen or by them, who abuse the authority that their protector gives them; and that finally speculation has continued more than ever in copper money and notes in spite of the precise orders that the Company has given; all these facts are serious, and you do not say one word to me about them.⁴

²Périer to Maurepas, December 5, 1729, MPA:FD, 1:55.
³See Gayarre, Louisiana, 1:450-52.
⁴Ory to Périer, November 17, 1730, MPA:FD 4:50.
Thirteen months later Péricier and the commissary-general, Edmé Gatien de Salmon, recommended two ways of conducting trade to prevent abuses and drive off the English traders.

First by means of the merchandise that the King might send here and that would be delivered from the warehouse in small lots to inhabitants who would bring the skins for which they had traded to the warehouse in payment; the second to grant a firm of merchants permission to carry on trade in deerskins and to give them without charge both the freight of the merchandise on his Majesty's vessels and the return freight for their skins, in which case these merchants would be obliged to sell their merchandise to the Indians on the basis of the tariff that would be drawn up for this purpose, and recommendations would be given to the officers established in the different posts to act to prevent the traders from doing injustices to the Indians.5

Péricier and Salmon intended to establish harmony among the officers, but the question of the commandant's authority over the storekeeper had to be resolved again and again.

Governors and commandants demanded the right to issue orders during military emergencies, but the attempt to divide military and financial responsibility and establish guidelines fills page after page of correspondence between the crown and the colony and between the governor and the post commandants. The king had instructed Jean-Baptiste du Bois du Clos, the commissary who served with Cadillac, that

5Péricier and Salmon to Maurepas, December 5, 1731, Ibid., 89-90.
the "administration of the King's funds ... commerce and everything that may relate to it concern him exclusively." Exclusive responsibility for everything relating to the "dignity of command and the military" belonged to the governor.6 The triumph of the purse over the sword by La Chaise was followed by a relatively peaceful relationship between Bienville and Salmon until a big flare up occurred when Sébastien François-Ange Lenormant de Mézy interfered with the Governor Vaudreuil's orders to send supplies to Mobile and Tombecbé in 1745. Vaudreuil requested specific instructions for Lenormant's replacement because of the "extreme importance that the commissaries general keep themselves within the boundaries of their power." When Lenormant departed Louisiana in 1748, the minister of marine issued a detailed set of instructions delineating the separate jurisdiction of governor and commissary giving special attention to those areas where it overlapped.7

6 Royal Instructions for Duclos, Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 15 (October, 1932), 603-604.

The La Fontaine affair provides important insights into the relationship between commissaries and commandants. In the letter quoted above, Périer and Salmon had also discussed Sieur Fontaine who would later flee to Mexico to escape punishment for mismanaging the storehouse at Natchitoches. Possibly before Fontaine had assumed responsibility as storekeeper and certainly before Périer and Salmon had been informed of his involvement in trading abuses, Fontaine met a detachment of forty men commanded by Louboey on their way to relieve the siege of Natchitoches. Fontaine’s mission was to deliver to Périer St. Denis’s letter of November 2 describing the defense of Natchitoches. On April 1, 1734 Bienville and Salmon informed Maurepas that La Fontaine, the sergeant "who was performing the functions of keeper of the warehouse at the post of Natchitoches," had withdrawn to the Spaniards at the border post known as the Adais and from there to Mexico. They assumed that La Fontaine had disposed of the king’s merchandise and property before he left French territory. 

Administration" (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 1972), 103-106.

8 Périer and Salmon to Maurepas, December 5, 1731, MPA:FD 88-89.

9 Bienville and Salmon to Maurepas, April 1, 1734 in ibid., 3:640.
The correspondence relating to the La Fontaine case indicates that the storehouse at Natchitoches was in terrible condition. The accounts were in such a state of confusion that Duplessis, who replaced La Fontaine, asked to be relieved.10

Who was responsible for the mess is not clear, but Salmon had only good things to say about St. Denis. Périer and Salmon had not explained how they had learned about the problem at the warehouse, but they did credit St. Denis with notifying the governor and the commissary-general that La Fontaine had gone from the Adais to Mexico. Salmon reported to Maurepas that everyone in the colony considered St. Denis an excellent officer and that many had confidence only in him.11 In addition, Derbanne, St. Denis's old business associate was installed as subdelegate responsible to Salmon. Apparently, the company and not La Fontaine was blamed for the disorder. An amnesty was requested for the old storekeeper and a year later, Salmon requested a pardon for him.12

10 Duplessis to Salmon, April 14, 1732. Archives Nationales (Paris), Archives des Colonies, series C13, vol. 15, folio 91.

11 Salmon to Maurepas, May 12, 1732. AC, C13, 15:100.

12 Salmon to Maurepas, May 8, 1733. AC, C13 17:100.
One might conjecture that the St. Denis who was himself engaged in clandestine trade with Mexico could ignore the administrative practices at the local level. The fact that Salmon made a point of praising St. Denis suggests his desire to develop a good working relationship with the old, experienced officers of the colony both to further the interests of the crown and colonial interests of his own.

Guy Frégault has described Salmon as a conscientious administrator who always promoted the interests of the colony and the colonists. When the disaster of the Chicasaw Wars precipitated the fiscal crisis of 1740, Salmon became the scapegoat.13 When the crown ordered Bienville to destroy the Chicasaws, the pressure was put on the commissary-general. Michael J. Forêt tells us that Bienville was instructed to "practice all economy possible in planning the campaign." At the same time, however, he was encouraged to "make any expenditures necessary to ensure success."14

When the military failure and the financial crisis suggested that neither the king's business nor the colony's


14 Michael J. Forêt, "War or Peace? Louisiana, the Choctaws, and the Chickasaws, 1733-1735," *Louisiana History* 31 (Summer 1990): 288.
interests were being looked after, the crown sent another bureaucrat to investigate. Upon arrival in Louisiana, Lenormant de Mézy immediately began looking for evidence of embezzlement. Salmon was accused of negligence in all affairs of the colony. He was charged with selling merchandise from the king’s stores to the Spanish at a profit to himself and of profiteering by letters of exchange.  

Extending his investigation into the activities of the post commandants, Lenormant was able to uncover evidence of embezzlement by Taillefer, the commandant at Tombecbé, and Maurepas was inclined to place restraints on the commandants’ control over the distribution of goods from the storehouses. The Tombecbé Post had been established during Bienville’s first campaign against the Chickasaws, and the Taillefer case reached a critical point just as Governor Vaudreuil found it necessary to increase the flow

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15Vaudreuil to Maurepas, January 6, 1745, HM LO 9, I, 53.

16Maurepas to Vaudreuil and Lenormant, April 13, 1746, HM LO 58.
of trade goods and presents to contain the rebellion of the Choctaw faction led by Red Shoe in 1746.\textsuperscript{17}

During Vaudreuil's administration, 1743-1753, Lenormant and Michel de la Rouvillière his successor as commissary general, supported the storekeepers in the posts against the commandants. At one point, Vaudreuil asked Maurepas how the governor was to deal with the commissary general on occasions when these gentlemen interfered with his decision to "put a sufficient quantity of merchandise in this [Choctaw] nation so that there might be no reason for them to feel any needs, which was the only device that [Red Shoe] had for causing the commerce with the English to be desired there."\textsuperscript{18} The need to provide sustenance for Indian allies was an essential element in the military strategy of the \textit{ancien capitaine}. For this reason, Vaudreuil insisted that the commissary-general give no orders in the posts when they related to the service without communicating them to


\textsuperscript{18}Vaudreuil to Maurepas, November 20, 1746 in \textit{MPA:FD} 4:302.
the governor, and he declared to Maurepas that it was his responsibility to see that no abuses were committed.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{Warfare and Sustenance: Needs of the Colony}

The Natchez Massacre and the subsequent Chickasaw Wars made it apparent that the security of the colony depended upon the military force of France's Indian allies.\textsuperscript{20} There simply were not enough French soldiers to maintain the tranquillity of the colony. French officers and Indian allies stood on a "middle ground" where the king depended on the old captain to exercise his sovereign will. Warfare and the sustenance of the colony hinged on the ability and willingness of the king to provide for the needs of the colony.

The Chickasaw Wars and the Choctaw rebellion that followed in their wake tested the resolve of the crown and the king's ability to supply the needs of his Indian allies.

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\textsuperscript{19}Vaudreuil to Maurepas, October 30, 1745, \textit{ibid.}, 251-52.
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When Bienville returned to Louisiana in 1733, there was tremendous excitement and expectation among the Canadians and the Indians. He now had the backing of the king.\(^{21}\) In a 1732 memoir to Bienville and Commissary General Salmon from Louis XV and his minister, Maurepas, the new administration was informed that "His Majesty is making use of everything in order to induce the merchants to send vessels with merchandise and wares suitable for the colony."\(^{22}\) The memoir of 1732 reflects Maurepas's sophisticated knowledge of Indian relations in Louisiana. The king and his minister acknowledged that Bienville was aware of the English efforts to take over the Choctaw trade and that the preservation of the colony depended on preventing them from doing so. They instructed Bienville to "adopt the most fitting measures to frustrate [the English] and prevent their trade among the nations of Louisiana."\(^{23}\) Even so between 1732 and 1734 when Bienville took the helm, the colony was faced with a critical shortage of trade


\(^{22}\)Louis XV to Bienville and Salmon, February 2, 1732, MPA:FD 3:571.

\(^{23}\)Louis XV to Bienville, February 2, 1732, *ibid.*, 3:553.
supplies. Maurepas made every effort to keep the colony well-supplied, yet ships were lost at sea, goods were damaged because of collapsing storage facilities in Mobile, and disruptions were caused by natural disasters as well as wars between France and England.\(^{24}\)

As commandant-general of Louisiana, Bienville’s duty consisted in upholding the honor of the king and the interests of the colony. His tactics were those of an ancien capitaine. The economic progress of Louisiana and the tranquillity of the people required peace. Within the framework of the French frontier mentalité and prevailing Indian mores, Indians who killed Frenchmen broke the peace, and the insult to royal authority had to be remedied. The Natchez had massacred Frenchmen, and the Chickasaws had given them refuge. The Choctaw Indians had been fighting the Chickasaw for generations before the arrival of the French. They were more than willing to attack the Chickasaws to force them to surrender the Natchez refugees. Yet with the passage of time it became evident that the English masters of the Chickasaws were more successful than the French in supplying their Indian allies with the powder,

bullets, clothing, and iron pots necessary to protect and provide for their families.

Governor Périé had tackled the task of repairing the insult immediately after the Natchez massacre, but then it became a question of either negotiating an honorable peace or eliminating the Chickasaws who succored the Natchez and traded with the English. Peace could be granted only if the Chickasaws would surrender the Natchez remnant to the French and promise not to trade with the English. Bienville and Maurepas decided to organize a French force to fight with the Choctaws against the Chickasaws.

In July 1733 Bienville postponed any type of military action that might compromise the honor of French arms because of a critical shortage of supplies. Bienville, and Vaudreuil after him, continued to ask for more and more supplies. Maurepas did his best to meet their requirements, but there were always unexpected circumstances which prevented the arrival of supplies at a crucial moment.

The least expensive method of punishing the Chickasaws would be "to put the Indians alone into action," but it would take too long and would not work if hostilities broke

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out between France and England. Maurepas and Bienville had corresponded about all of these possibilities in the spring of 1735.

The French attempt to repair the damage done to French honor by the Natchez massacre had extended over a period of seven years. Now it would be necessary to undertake a more costly campaign, a campaign that would ultimately convince Bienville to retire from the king’s service and return to France. He feared a second failure, but after a few additional troops arrived from France in the spring of 1736, Bienville obeyed the crown’s orders to undertake the expedition against the Chickasaw.

Bienville’s effort to coordinate his attack in the first Chickasaw War with the Canadian troops of Pierre D’Artaguette failed miserably. D’Artaguette was killed and the Chickasaws, aided by the English, intercepted Bienville’s battle plan. The Chickasaws caught the French in a cross-fire as they approached the village of Ackia on

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26Bienville to Maurepas, April 23, 1735, ibid., 1:261.
27Gayarré, Louisiana, 1:460.
28Ibid., 470.
May 26, 1736. The French lost over a hundred soldiers. The ability of Bienville and the king to protect their "children" was called into question, and ultimately French control of the lower Mississippi Valley was placed in jeopardy.

The crown accepted responsibility for the disaster, and Bienville had gained and continued to hold Maurepas's confidence. Maurepas now offered to provide more men and bigger cannon, and anything else that Bienville might need. Bienville was apparently unable to shift gears. He knew how to make the best possible use of limited resources, but what would he do with an army that might succumb to disease before he was ready to use it? How could he transport big cannons in a wilderness where the roads were old Indian trails?

In Europe, colonial conflict had to take a back seat to balance of power considerations on the continent. As

29"Narrative of the War against the Chickasaws attacked by the army of New Orleans commanded by Mr. de Bienville, governor of this province," April 1, 1736, MPA:FD 1:316-319; Woods, Indian Relations, 126.

30Woods, Indian Relations, 132.

31Ibid., 142-43.

soon as Bienville was ready for men and supplies, Maurepas had to apologize for delays in sending them. In the meantime, France was losing ground in the commercial competition with England, and the Choctaw Indians, who needed merchandise more than French protection, began to visit Carolina and invite the English traders into their villages.

As early as 1734, Gilles Augustin Payen de Chavoy de Noyan, a nephew of Bienville, had reported to Maurepas from New Orleans that a Choctaw chief named Red Shoe had undertaken a journey to Carolina to discuss the trading propositions of some English traders. Père Baudouin, a Jesuit missionary resident in the Choctaw villages, had informed Noyan that Red Shoe "was very badly received on his return by the chiefs of his nation." Bienville had taken the precaution of sending extra merchandise to insure the loyalty of the Choctaws, but after the disaster at Ackia, Red Shoe secured a truce with the Chickasaw and made another trip to Charleston seeking English supplies. Fortunately for the French, Red Shoe came back from Charleston empty handed, his Choctaw followers began to defect, and he himself returned to the French camp in time.

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33 Noyan to Maurepas, November 8, 1734 in MPA:FD 4:139.
to support Bienville's second Chickasaw campaign in 1740.\textsuperscript{34}

Once again Bienville failed in his effort to eliminate the Chickasaws, but he did succeed in forcing them to sue for peace. The English, afraid that the French might attack Carolina, put brakes on their trading activity, and the Chickasaws offered to deliver the Natchez refugees to the French. Bienville insisted that the Chickasaws oust all the English traders from their lands and delayed the negotiation until it became clear that the French could no longer prevail upon the Choctaws to continue the campaign.\textsuperscript{35}

The peace with the Chickasaws would not last, and the failure of the French to supply their Choctaw allies with merchandise at a competitive price soon provoked a Choctaw rebellion in which Frenchmen were killed.\textsuperscript{36} Governor Vaudreuil who replaced Bienville in 1743 put a price on Red Shoe's head, but by the time the rebel Choctaw chief was assassinated in June 1747, a civil war had broken out among

\textsuperscript{34}Woods, \textit{Indian Relations}, 135-38.


\textsuperscript{36}Vaudreuil to Beauchamps, August 28, 1746 and Speech to the Choctaw Tribe Concerning the Assassination of Three Frenchmen by Red Shoe on August 14, HM LO 9, III, 213-215; Galloway, "Choctaw Factionalism and Civil War," 310.
the Choctaw tribes between the Eastern villages loyal to the French and the Western villages which continued to welcome English traders. Vaudreuil and his old captains worked to achieve the reunification of the Choctaw nation and the exclusion of English traders, but the costs of providing increased presents for the Choctaw chiefs and of subsidizing the trade in deerskins proved more than the king was willing to bear.

The objectives of restoring the honor of French arms and establishing Louisiana as a productive colony provided the justification for increasing royal expenditures. The crown had accepted financial responsibility for the colony, but Maurepas insisted on strict accountability for every dime expended. Bienville, Vaudreuil, and the Jesuit missionaries insisted that they could accomplish the task at the least possible cost by securing the friendship and

37 Vaudreuil to Maurepas, March 15 and May 10, 1747 and Louboey to Maurepas, February 16, 1748, MPA:FD 4:305, 310, 312; Vaudreuil to Maurepas, November 5, 1748, HM LO 147 contains a detailed review of Red Shoe's actions prior to his assassination and described the conflict between loyal Choctaws and the rebel villages; See also Galloway, "Choctaw Factionalism and Civil War," 310-23.

38 Vaudreuil to Rouillé, June 24, 1750 MPA:FD 5:47.

cooperation of allied Indian tribes. The disgrace of Maurepas in 1749 led to his successor's attempt to rely more on increased troops and less on Indian allies, but the financial drain on the king's treasury ultimately created the gigantic gap between the king's interest and the welfare of the colony that would eventually separate the king from his people. While continuing to insist that the gap did not exist, the governors and their old captains resorted to using any means necessary for the survival of the colony. They tried valiantly to bridge the gap, but the local autonomy of the frontier posts proved to be more durable in the long run than the patience of the French crown.

When Vaudreuil arrived in Louisiana to replace Bienville as governor, he was greeted warmly even by the Chickasaw chiefs who described the new governor's father, Philippe de Rigaud -- governor of Canada, 1703-1725 -- as the great chief of the northern Indians. That title, the chiefs maintained, belonged to the new Canadian governor of

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Louisiana. Vaudreuil made plans to use the distribution of merchandise and presents to undermine the authority of Red Shoe among the Choctaws. The key to controlling France's Indian allies lay in the proper distribution of merchandise, and the new governor faced a tremendous problem when Lenormant de Mézy arrived to begin his investigation of the financial practices of Salmon.

The man Maurepas chose to conduct the investigation had established his reputation in Canada as a "garçon de merit." He was ambitious and he had connections with the French court as a relative of the husband of the future marquise de Pompadour, the king's mistress. Lenormant arrived in Louisiana on October 15, 1744, and on January 6, Vaudreuil reported to Maurepas that no one could be found who was more qualified to establish order in the colony's finances. Even so, the governor cautioned that Lenormant needed knowledge and experience of colonial affairs that would take at least two or three years to develop. Guy Frégault believes that Lenormant had only one objective: to economize and

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41 Vaudreuil to Maurepas, February 12, 1744, HM LO 9, I, 17.
42 Frégault, Grand Marquis, 190.
43 Ibid., 191-92; Vaudreuil to Maurepas, January 6, 1745, HMLO 9, I, 53-56.
replenish the royal funds.\textsuperscript{44} To check the negative cash flow of royal funds he would raise prices and eliminate profiteering.

Lenormant's determination to achieve these objectives without concern for the effect that this policy would have on France's Indian allies brought him into direct and immediate conflict with the governor, who relied on his old captains to control and manage the tribes surrounding the French posts which had been strategically located for that purpose. Over and over, Vaudreuil and his old captains insisted that the security of the colony depended on the Indian nations. There were not enough French troops to maintain tranquillity, and adequate supplies and merchandise would be required to insure the loyalty of the Indian allies and encourage them to campaign actively against the English and their Indian allies. The crucial connection between supplies and the fidelity of Indian allies was graphically expressed by Vaudreuil in a letter to Maurepas on April 1, 1746 in which the governor described the effect of Lenormant's "mistaken economies."

As the security of this colony depends upon the [Indian] nations, I am omitting nothing to conciliate them with us, but also I must be supported by means of the merchandise that the

\textsuperscript{44} Frégault, \textit{Grand Marquis}, 197.
King sends for this purpose, rather than for it to be at the disposition of the commissaries general to favor with it whomsoever they see fit, claiming that they have a right to do so as M. Lenormant has done this year .... 45

Louboey, in command at Mobile, had already expressed his exasperation with Lenormant in a letter to Maurepas the previous fall. He reported the short speeches made by several different Choctaw chiefs to acquaint the minister with the grievances of Choctaw warriors and the efforts of France’s enemies to penetrate their country, a purpose that they do not lose sight of and the execution of which they will finally be able to accomplish if we allow the colony to lack the goods necessary to prevent them from doing so, since the Indians are not people to feed forever on promises, self-interest being the only motive that makes them act ....

Louboey’s message was clear. For France to occupy the vast territory of Louisiana with "a handful of men," a steady supply of goods was needed to preserve the loyalty of the Choctaw nation.46

45MPA:FD 4:268.

Vaudreuil had already explained to Maurepas how presents could be used effectively by distributing them to loyal chiefs to shore up their authority and by reducing and, ultimately, withholding them from a rebel chief such as Red Shoe. In February 1744, the governor assured Maurepas that peace was possible if a supply of merchandise would be made available at the same price charged by the English. He specified that the amount needed was 100,000 livres in excess of the normal supply.\(^47\) Two years later he reiterated his conviction that the Choctaws would keep their promises provided they did not lack merchandise.\(^48\) Before the arrival of Lenormant, Vaudreuil had complained to Maurepas that the Indians believed the French were poor and unable to produce as well as the English. In June 1744 the warehouses were empty; by October the lack of merchandise was an embarrassment.\(^49\) Repeated shortage of trade goods provoked statements such as the following by disaffected Choctaw chiefs reported by a French trader to Louboey and passed on to Maurepas.

\(^{47}\)Vaudreuil to Maurepas, February 12, 1744, MPA:FD 4:221-223.

\(^{48}\)Vaudreuil to Maurepas, April 1, 1746, MPA:FD 4:265.

\(^{49}\)HM LO 9, I, 17, 25, 37.
But for the English we would all be dead .... Those are our genuine Frenchmen. Neither the length of the road nor the difficulty in bringing us the things we need ever rebuffs them. They do not let us lack anything .... The red men ... who are [French] allies and at their door go without breeches, the women and the children have no blankets to protect themselves against the cold; how would they manage to give us merchandise, are we not far distant from them?50

When supply ships finally began to arrive, Lenormant not only doubled the price of goods but refused to release the presents and merchandise that Vaudreuil, Louboey, and the commandants of Tombecbé and Toulouse so badly needed.

The King’s Interest and the Welfare of the Service

While Vaudreuil was complaining about Lenormant’s action increasing the cost of merchandise to the posts, Maurepas received new evidence against Commandant Taillefer proving embezzlement at Tombecbé in 1743. On April 13, 1746, Maurepas addressed a letter to Vaudreuil and Lenormant instructing the commissary to cooperate with Vaudreuil because discontent among the Indians had to be prevented. The minister stressed, however, that post commanders served their own interests and were in the habit of justifying their actions as necessary for controlling the Indians. Taillefer had violated his authority by imprisoning the

50Louboey to Maurepas, November 6, 1745 in MPA:FD 4:254-55.
storekeeper and taking over his functions. According to Maurepas, this affair was neither reported nor punished.\textsuperscript{51} The king's interest required precautions against embezzlement, and Maurepas warned Vaudreuil that he had doubts about the governor's ability to control expenses and stop abuses.

Nevertheless, Vaudreuil continued to rely on the old captains. On January 2, 1744, he had given specific instructions to Pierre Annibal de Velle, who had replaced Taillefer at Tombecbé in 1743. In accordance with the king's intention, the storekeeper was ordered to make no advances and allow no trade in the post. He was required to record and report the source of peltries and act on behalf of the king as the sole trader in them. Both the commandant and the storekeeper were instructed to send detailed written reports directly to Vaudreuil and Louboey.\textsuperscript{52} In February the governor cautioned de Velle against private trading. He explained that the instructions for carrying on trade with the Indians were "good for the service" and that it was not his intention for de Velle to "lose any gratification due

\textsuperscript{51}Maurepas to Vaudreuil and Lenormant, April 13, 1746, HM LO 58.

\textsuperscript{52}Vaudreuil to De Velle, January 2, 1744, HM LO 9, III, 31-33
him." But de Velle pleaded continually to be relieved from his duties at a hardship post, and in 1744 he was replaced by Pierre Henri d'Erneville, who was allowed certain trading privileges for taking over as commandant. By November of that year, however, d'Erneville was ordered to transfer "all instructions" to François Marie Joseph Hazeur although the terms of Hazeur's "monopoly" were not spelled out. The problems at the post were such that Vaudreuil later insisted that Hazeur be compensated for his trading losses incurred for the welfare of the service.

On July 30, 1747, Vaudreuil instructed Louboey not to restrain Hazeur from trading. He authorized de Velle to direct the trading operation and "to name the destination of the agreed merchandise in keeping with the good of the service."

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53 Vaudreuil to de Velle, February 29, 1744 in ibid., III, 63.

54 Vaudreuil to de Velle, June 25, 1744; July 30, 1744, HM LO 9, III, 94, 101. Vaudreuil to D'Erneville, November 11, 1744 and November 29, 1745, HM LO 9, III, 144-45, 184. Vaudreuil to Père Baudouin, December 19, 1745, HM LO 9, III, 185-88.


56 Vaudreuil to Louboey, July 30, 1747, HM LO 9, III, 271-277.
Vaudreuil continued to promote the services of his old captains. Indeed, he defined and used the term ancien to describe the special qualifications of a post commandant. The term had been used by Pénicaud to describe a Canadian officer. Périer too had used the term after the Natchez massacre to describe St. Denis. In 1744, Vaudreuil described Sieur de Blanc as an "old captain" when he informed Maurepas that he had approved his request to replace St. Denis as commandant at Natchitoches. Vaudreuil’s letter of April 28, 1751 to Antoine Louis Rouillé, Maurepas’s successor as minister of marine, described the special qualifications for a commandant of the Alabama Post (Fort Toulouse). Aware of the need to protect the southeastern frontier against the incursions of the English, the governor based his job description for the prospective commandant on his objectives for the Alabama Post. The post required an officer experienced in Indian relations with the ability to oversee the settlement of the territory.

According to Vaudreuil, governing the Indians required "consumate experience and special study." An effective post commander had to have "knowledge of the Indian nations" as

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57 Vaudreuil to Maurepas, December 29, 1744, HM LO 9, I, 49.
well as "talents ... for organizing settlements." For example, Vaudreuil recommended one Chevalier d’Orgon for the job of Alabama Post commandant because he was "an old captain" with the knowledge and experience of governing the Indians. D’Orgon had the knowledge and experience to be an effective post commandant, and Vaudreuil expected that "like a good père de famille," he would have the ability to govern the "people who have settled there and who will settle there." Vaudreuil held up de Blanc, St. Denis’s successor at Natchitoches, as a model: "As this post deserves special attention, I think also that it would be advisable for his Majesty to appoint a commanding officer there as at the Natchitoches" capable of controlling both Indians and settlers.58

Vaudreuil’s reliance on old captains to command the frontier posts was threatened first by Lenormant’s refusal to release supplies from the king’s storehouse and later by the determination of Rouillé to close the Tombecbé Post. When Lenormant was replaced by Michel de la Rouvilliere, the governor exercised his right to order the distribution of supplies, but expenses incurred during the Choctaw rebellion ultimately led Rouillé to resort to increasing the number of

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regular troops to eliminate the expense of supplying gifts and trade goods to France's Choctaw allies.

Peace with the Chickasaws was at hand in January 1744, but more presents and trade goods were necessary to supply both the Choctaws and the Chickasaws. Vaudreuil cautioned Louboey that it was unwise to give presents to the English partisans, but he was confident that an ample supply of merchandise would insure French success. The governor instructed the commandant at Mobile that the presents expected with the arrival of the ship should be used only for negotiations and that they would be supplied by the storekeeper "on specific orders." Only loyal chiefs should receive presents. Louboey must refuse "with discretion, those who favor the English." 59 Vaudreuil could not give Louboey any news about the arrival of the king's ship. In June he wrote to de Velle that "no word had been received of the king's ship" and observed that it would be "very embarrassing if something happened to it." Not until October 20 did Vaudreuil inform Louboey that the ship had arrived. Louboey had already reported complaints of Indian chiefs who expressed doubts about the ability of the French to produce goods as well as the English. Now Vaudreuil

59Vaudreuil to Louboey, April 22, 1744, HM LO 9, III, 77-78.
proclaimed that the new shipment "should create a great change in the attitude of French allies who ought to be reproached for having shown such little confidence in the promises made to them."  

It was at this critical juncture that Lenormant arrived with a mandate to cut costs and increase revenues. To achieve these ends, he doubled the price of trade goods, delayed deliveries to the outlying posts, and retroactively reduced the value of the money with which the wages of soldiers and artisans were paid. In short, the commissary placed every conceivable obstacle in the way of Vaudreuil's policy of maintaining peace by enriching post commandants and their Indian allies.

Lenormant's measures gradually strangled the colonial economy. The complaints began in October 1745, a year after Lenormant's arrival, reached a shrill level in December 1745 and climaxed in 1746.

Louboey had filed his first formal complaint with Maurepas in October 1745. Lenormant's changes would not improve the colony, and they "might easily cause some

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60 Vaudreuil to de Velle, June 25, 1744, HM LO 9, III, 95. Vaudreuil to Louboey, October 20, 1744, 141.

61 Frégault, Grand Marquis, 198-201.
dangerous events if he continued to insist upon his system."\(^{62}\) Vaudreuil expressed his utter frustration to the minister on October 30. The governor stated that his only intention was to meet the expectations expressed by entrusting him with "the reins of this government." For this reason, it was imperative to render an account of the "economies that M. Lenormant has thought it advisable to make in the different posts of this colony without consulting me." Only the prudence of the post commandants prevented "deplorable results" that could lead to disaster.\(^ {63}\)

Vaudreuil politely described Lenormant as a "zealous servant of the King and a man capable of performing the duties of his office well, without considering anything but his Majesty's interests." However, his decision "to impose [a profit of] 100 percent on the merchandise intended for the subsistence of the posts" caused "dissatisfaction on the part of the Indians and of the garrisons, which have attempted to rise in revolt" or go over to the English or the Spaniards. Only the prompt action of the Tombecbé

\(^{62}\)Louboey to Maurepas, October 6, 1745, MPA:FD 4:240.

\(^{63}\)Vaudreuil to Maurepas, October 30, 1745, MPA:FD 4:249-251.
commandant prevented a mutiny "by sending to me the soldiers who were suspected of being the most seditious."  

The soldiers had always been able to purchase merchandise for a cost of fifty percent above the price prevailing in France. Trade with the Choctaws had been conducted without adding the surcharge to cover the additional costs of doing business in the colony. Lenormant's attempt to stop the financial drain on the royal treasury by raising prices to cover heavy transportation and other costs ignored the threat of English competitors and the bargaining power of the Indians. "This system," Vaudreuil protested to the minister, "disgusts them, and I do not see any posts where it is possible to introduce it without running the risk of incurring the hostility of all the nations of these places."  

Vaudreuil carefully explained that the commissary general had ordered the storekeepers to "refuse to issue from the King's warehouses the merchandise that the commandants of these posts are often obliged to give the Indians in cases in which the welfare of the service is

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64 Ibid., 4:249.

65 Ibid.
involved. The governor clearly described the disastrous effects of Lenormant's "good intentions."

I am not at all surprised, my lord, that M. Lenormant has not felt the difficulties that existed in changing the practices established in these different posts. He has never been near understanding the ways of the Indians and the manner in which one must conduct oneself with them, and in the time that he has been staying here he has been too much occupied with fulfilling his mission, which he is capable of performing well, to have been able to acquire a sufficiently perfect idea of the management of these nations, so I have no ill feeling against him for the savings that he has wished to make and I think that that is the only motive that has caused him to act in this way, so I do him this justice, but because people sometimes wish to conserve the interests of the King overmuch they often incur greater expense, as would be the result if the new practices continued longer.66

On November 29, 1745 Vaudreuil informed Beauchamps that supplies would be sent without delay to Alabama and Tombecbé. The trade concession for the Choctaws had been given to Hazeur and the prospects for peace in 1746 would be good "if the necessary quantity and quality" of merchandise was available.67 On December 19, Vaudreuil wrote to Père Baudouin that deliveries of larger quantities of trade goods would give France the advantage in the competition with England, "unless the obstacles Lenormant placed in the way

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66 Ibid., 251.

67 Vaudreuil to Beauchamps, November 29, 1745, HM LO 9, III, 184-85.
cannot be removed." 68 The next day Vaudreuil notified Louboey that supplies en route to Mobile for Tombecbé and Alabama had been delayed "due to the intransigence of Lenormant." Vaudreuil fumed that the delay was the cause of a new Choctaw revolt and grumbled that Lenormant was "an unmanageable man with whom I have little affinity today." 69

By January 6, the governor was insisting that Lenormant must be replaced. "Without his removal there can be no success in governing the colony." He, Vaudreuil, must be given "the authority to control the merchandise from the stores for the requirements of the Indians and the posts." 70 On January 28, Vaudreuil reported to the minister that Lenormant continued the "annoying and troublesome" practice of contacting the posts without consulting the governor. Lenormant was seeking Maurepas's approval by cutting expenses and saving the king money, but his actions were clearly "prejudicial to the good of the

68 Vaudreuil to Baudouin, December 19, 1745, HM LO 9, III, 185-86.

69 Vaudreuil to Louboey, December 20, 1745, HM LO 9, III, 188.

70 Vaudreuil to Maurepas, January 6, 1746, HM LO 9, I, 73.
service and peace of the colony. By February 6, Vaudreuil intimated that the commissary had expended for personal advantage supplies badly needed for trade to maintain the loyalty of the Choctaw nation.

According to Vaudreuil, Lenormant ignored "increased demands for more supplies and merchandise." The commandants probably suggested using force, but the governor informed Maurepas that force would not be used "to obtain powder from the stores for the posts" because of the "poor impression" violence would make on "the public." Vaudreuil motivated and secured the loyalty of his post commandants by allowing them to engage in closely supervised trading activities, but his ability to control the old captains was being questioned at the very moment when the governor depended on them to quell the Choctaw rebellion.

The year passed as Maurepas temporized and reminded Vaudreuil about past abuses in Canada as well as the Taillefer affair. The minister did advise Lenormant to

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71 January 28, 1746, HM LO 9, I, 74.
72 February 6, 1746, ibid., 76.
73 March 9, 1746, ibid., 78.
74 Vaudreuil to de Velle, February 29, 1744, HM LO 9, III, 63; Vaudreuil to d'Erneville, November 11, 1744, HM LO 9, III, 144-45.
cooperate with the governor to prevent discontent among the Indians, but he also declared that "post commanders serve their own interests," use the need for Indian control to justify their actions, while they are actually motivated by the desire to "control distribution in the stores." Maurepas stressed that an example should be made of Taillefer to discourage other officers from abusing their authority over the storekeepers. He reminded Vaudreuil that Lenormant had uncovered evidence of embezzlement by Taillefer at Tombecbé in 1743, and that it was clear that the post commandant should not have been allowed to imprison the storekeeper and take over his functions.

The conflict between the two servants of the king was clear. Lenormant aimed to prevent the old captains in command at Tombecbé from making a profit in the Indian trade at the expense of the king. The governor and his military officers, however, justified their right to order the distribution of merchandise as a means of preserving the colony by insuring the loyalty of France’s Indian allies.

In November 1746, Vaudreuil pleaded with Maurepas to send him instructions for dealing with the commissaries.

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75 Maurepas to Vaudreuil and Lenormant, April 13, 1746, HM LO 58.

76 Ibid.
After calling Maurepas' attention, once again, to the fact that Lenormant had been responsible for Red Shoe's success in organizing the Choctaw revolt, the governor wrote:

I cannot conceal from you in this matter what I think of it because of the pain that I feel over it, or refrain from [requesting you] to send me orders about the manner in which I must behave with the commissaries general on such occasions. Otherwise this colony will always be in a position to suffer from [these quarrelings] because of the small amount of progress that it will be possible to make there. Those gentlemen have no other intentions than to show you a spirit of economy and an order of finance to accomplish their ends, without troubling themselves about the administration of the government, with which they are not charged.77

Despite the fact that Maurepas had ignored his demand that Lenormant be replaced, the governor used every possible method to convince the minister that his own policy and methods promoted and advanced the colonial welfare and the king's interests.

In New Orleans on the night of March 14, 1747, Lenormant was assaulted by a man he and several other witnesses identified as "Sieur Taillefer." The commissary sent his manservant for help, then drew his sword and began to defend himself.78 It is possible that the young cadet

77November 20, 1746, MPA:FD 4:302.

officer was the younger brother of Lieutenant Taillefer who had been charged with embezzlement at Tombecbé. It is also possible that Vaudreuil was behind the assault. The absence of subsequent references to the case in the records of the Superior Council suggests that someone may have ransacked the files.79 Frégault maintains, however, that the cadet simply attacked Lenormant to avenge his brother.80 Whatever the reasons behind the attack, Lenormant took it as evidence that he needed to be removed from his post. Even before the attack he had been pleading with Maurepas to take him out of a country he did not love, but Maurepas insisted that he stay until a suitable replacement could be found. In March 1748 Lenormant finally received orders to go first to St. Domingue and then to return to France. At the same time the minister informed Vaudreuil that Vincent-Guillaume Sénéchal D'Auberville would serve as ordonnateur.81 Michel de la Rouvillière was appointed commissary general.

While struggling to retain the fidelity of the France’s Indian allies and coping with the fetters of Lenormant’s new system, the governor had requested instructions from the

79Ibid., 201.

80Frégault, Grand Marquis, 212.

81March 25, 1748, HM LO 123; Frégault, Grand Marquis, 212.
crown for occasions when the commissary-general interfered with his actions to govern the colony.\textsuperscript{82} In a memoir dated December 23, 1748 and addressed to the governor and Michel de la Rouvillière, Maurepas provided clear and detailed guidelines. Maurepas was determined to reaffirm Vaudreuil’s authority to govern the colony, but he also insisted on strict financial accountability and the elimination of abuses by post commandants who might use Indian policy to control the distribution of merchandise. The pressure of a tight budget weighed heavily upon the minister.

The royal instructions of 1748 clearly gave the governor the authority to override the commissary and his storekeepers when necessary for the security of the colony.

Difference of opinion must not cause any dispute between them. When they will not agree on a matter, His Majesty wants a report of their respective reasons. However, if the disputed matter is urgent and cannot wait for His Majesty’s orders, the governor’s will shall prevail.\textsuperscript{83}

The king’s memoir went on to delineate the different responsibilities of the two "chiefs of the colony." The governor had exclusive authority over the military and anything regarding the dignity of command.

\textsuperscript{82}Vaudreuil to Maurepas, November 20, 1746, MPA:FD 4:302.

\textsuperscript{83}"Mémoire du roi," in Lemieux, "Office of Commissaire Ordonnateur", 103-106.
The governor will order the troops and militia and see to their discipline and readiness when called upon to serve. For this effect, he must be kept informed by the officers of the condition of their troops and even enter into details with them over their responsibility in maintaining strict discipline. Furthermore, he must see to it that the officers commit no injustice, such as withholding flour and pay, against their soldiers; and if an officer is found guilty of such, the governor must punish that offender independently of the restitution ordered by the 'ordonnateur'.

Governing the Indians and building fortifications were the responsibility of the governor, but once construction was approved by His Majesty, "the execution will be the common endeavor of the governor and 'ordonnateur'."

The ordonnateur was responsible for everything having to do with supplies, but provision for the governor to order extraordinary expenditures during times of emergency was also included in Michel's instructions.

The administration of capital, supplies, ammunition, and generally all which pertains to the warehouses and treasury of the colony are the sole concern of the 'commissaire ordonnateur'. No payment, sale, nor consumption will be made without the consent of the ordonnateur. If, however, Vaudreuil decides on an extraordinary expense for the service of the colony, His Majesty commands Michel to order it; but he commands Vaudreuil to make such expense only in

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84Ibid., 103-104.
85Ibid., 104.
case of absolute necessity and to report on his motives.86

The administration of justice was also the responsibility of the ordonnateur, and Vaudreuil was warned not to interfere, except to enforce the judgments rendered. The governor and ordonnateur were jointly responsible for increasing the population of the colony, developing agriculture and promoting commerce.87

By the time Michel de la Rouvillière arrived in Louisiana in the summer of 1749,88 Louis XV had dismissed Maurepas and replaced him with Rouillé. Rouillé relied heavily on the advice of experienced naval intendants, reestablished administrative control, and began the process of rebuilding the navy.89 Rouillé was more able and willing than Maurepas to avoid excessive dependence on commandant traders and Indian allies by providing additional troops, but the expense ultimately proved more than the crown was willing to bear.

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86Ibid., 105.
87Ibid.
88MPA:FD 5:28, n. 3.
89Pritchard, Louis XV’s Navy, 7-9.
The Defense of Tombecbé

The Tombecbé Post was established by Bienville in 1736 during the Chickasaw Wars. It was not as far from New Orleans as Fort Toulouse, but goods could be transported in large boats only during certain times of the year. (see map p. 245) When ships arrived late or unexpected delays rendered it necessary to transport goods at other times, costs escalated. Tombecbé had to be maintained because it was strategically located near the western Choctaw villages. English traders had easy access to the area from the north, and they would no doubt establish a post nearby whenever the French pulled out. The reunification of the Choctaw nation after Red Shoe’s death in 1747 and the destruction of the
remaining rebel villages could be accomplished only by rewarding the Choctaw chiefs who had been unwavering in their loyalty to the French. In 1749, Vaudreuil reminded Rouillé that he and Louboey had committed the French to supply the Choctaw nation, and the reunited nation would require even more goods and presents.90

Vaudreuil persistently argued that posts such as Tombecbé could be maintained at little or no cost to the king by granting trading monopolies. The problem was to keep an adequate supply of goods so that there would be no need for the Choctaws to resort to the English. To prevent those holding the monopolies from abusing these privileges, Vaudreuil had insisted to Maurepas that he would closely supervise their trading activities. In 1744 the governor had demonstrated his willingness to grant trading privileges to an old captain when necessary. When de Velle, Taillefer’s replacement at Tombecbé, asked to be relieved of his "hardship post," in 1744, Vaudreuil sent d’Erneville to Tombecbé and permitted him to trade in peltries. Vaudreuil informed d’Erneville that sufficient merchandise would be sent to Tombecbé for the peltry trade he carried on with the

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Choctaws. Vaudreuil expected Hazeur, who relieved d’Erneville in December, 1745, to use his trading monopoly to support the garrison at Tombecbé and reward loyal Choctaw chiefs.

Hazeur had been sent to Tombecbé to engage in trade and provide an advantage for those chiefs who remained loyal to the French during Red Shoe’s rebellion. Vaudreuil notified Père Baudouin that Hazeur intended to serve traders recommended by the priest and others whom he would choose. Hazeur’s plan called for enlisting the cooperation of two gentlemen-cadets, Ensign Chambly de Rouville and Sieur Canelle, with everyone working together for the good of the service.

The need to promote rather than discourage trading activity at Tombecbé was stressed Vaudreuil in 1745 when he

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91 Vaudreuil to de Velle, June 25, 1744, HM LO 9, III, 95; Vaudreuil to D’Erneville, November 11, 1744, HM LO, III, 144.

92 Vaudreuil to Baudoin, December 19, 1745, HM LO 9, III, 185. On Canelle see "Canelle’s Journal of Campaign Against the Chickasaws," MPA:FD 4:199-201. Villiers du Terrage defined gentlemen-cadets as "young volunteers serving without pay, without being enlisted, carrying the insignia of the company and always remaining free to resign from the service. They carried out the duties of soldiers except for fatigue duties and passed through all the ranks of subalterns." MPA:FD 4:201, n. 2.
explained why Lenormant's system could not be implemented.

Tombecbé was a post among the Choctaws to which we send nothing but flour for the subsistence of the garrison and which most frequently is in the situation of lacking it so that this garrison must necessarily trade in order to get a living, and it is likewise important that it be in that situation in order that the Indians may find a market for their products. We cannot carry on trade there on [Lenormant's] basis without running the risk of disgusting this nation with the French, and it would ask for nothing better than to have such pretexts in order to resort to the English, as it has wished to do this year for the same reason.93

The arguments for and against abandoning Tombecbé in 1749 must be examined within the context of the mutual determination of the Rouillé and Vaudreuil to curtail expenditures and eliminate abuses. While serving as interim commandant at Tombecbé in 1747, de Velle had promised "a great quantity of merchandise to those who would rid us of that monster (Red Shoe), who was the cause of the troubles that have disturbed that nation."94 After the death of Red Shoe, Alibamon Mingo, the most loyal and constant ally of the French, petitioned Vaudreuil to restore the presents of villages whose loyalty had been in question. The Choctaw chiefs, their spokesman said, lacked sufficient authority

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93 Vaudreuil to Maurepas, October 30, 1745, MPA:FD 4:250.
94 Louboey to Maurepas, February 16, 1748, MPA:FD 4:312.
over their warriors to prevent the insubordination of those who unwisely resorted to the English. Vaudreuil had indicated that a prompt response to his demand for justice after the death of the three Frenchmen would have prevented the carnage of a civil war within the Choctaw nation. The governor informed Rouillé that he was moved by their sincerity and determination to enforce commitment to the French.

Since I was satisfied with the attitude in which I saw the Choctaws I decided to give presents to the twenty-five villages that came to see me, and as they gave us a most complete restitution, far beyond what could be expected of an anarchic nation whose rebels were supported by the English, in addition to the ordinary present I gave gratuities to those who brought me scalps, those who were wounded, and those whom I recognized as being the most distinguished by the good conduct that they have observed and the means that they have employed to cause us to succeed in this affair.95

The Choctaw chiefs were permitted to meet the governor at Mobile only rarely and at the governor's convenience, but they did not have to travel far to bring their wives and children to Tombecbé. The commandant of the fort was obliged to entertain them and provide presents.96

96Ibid., 23.
The governor admitted that closing the post would cut expenses, but the unity and commitment of the Choctaw nation were his top priorities. The promises of presents and merchandise by de Velle and Louboey had to be honored, and to vacate Tombecbé at the wrong time would be like pulling the rug out from under those Choctaw chiefs who had demonstrated their loyalty to the French by punishing those who had rebelled.

The question of abandoning Tombecbé reached a critical point after the arrival of Michel during the summer of 1749. A twenty-three page, joint report on the state of the colony dated August 1, 1749 reveals that there was a brief honeymoon period during which the governor and the new commissary professed "cooperation for the good of the service." The establishment of a firm basis for communication set the stage for a good interchange of ideas on matters relating to provisions, warehouses, and justice. The commissary recognized Vaudreuil's "wisdom and experience of the country," which prompted him to defer to the governor "concerning extraordinary expense."

97Ibid., 22.

98Michel and Vaudreuil to Louis XV, August 1, 1749, HM LO 177.
By January 1750, however, Michel requested specific orders recognizing his authority over civil police matters. He reminded Rouillé that protecting the residents from oppressive military officers was his official duty. In the same letter, he complained that he had not been summoned to several councils held at the governor's house when Antoine Chauvin Des Islets, a trader under Hazeur's monopoly at Tombecbé, arrived with fourteen Choctaw Indians from the western villages. On July 2, Michel suggested that the governor may have issued orders to the post commandants instructing them not to discuss Indian affairs with the commissary.

Vaudreuil and his old captains clearly were sidestepping any potential interference by the commissary. Michel asked Rouillé to intervene; otherwise, the governor and military officers would keep him uninformed even about matters pertaining to commercial activities because of the facility that the governor has of disposing of all the posts, in which the commandants, who are all devoted to him, render account to him alone of all that they learn and discover.

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99 Michel to Rouillé, January 17, 1750, MPA:FD 5:38
100 Michel to Rouillé, July 2, 1750, Ibid., 52-53.
101 Ibid., 53.
Michel's complaints escalated along with the financial expenditures of the colony, but Vaudreuil was in charge. The governor managed to keep Tombecbé afloat past Michel's death in 1752 and for the remainder of Rouillé's administration. Vaudreuil admitted that the isolated post created a heavy financial burden, but it could not be dismantled without undermining the alliance with the Choctaw nation. He expressed his willingness to comply with the crown's intentions "not to increase the number of posts." He would even eliminate unnecessary posts if it were possible, but the only practical solution in September 1750 was to reduce expenses by taking advantage of deep water and transporting supplies in large boats. It was not possible to abandon Tombecbé "until the Choctaw nation has entirely reunited and until the troubles, which have prevailed there for so long, have been quieted." The suppression of the last two rebel villages had to be postponed because of the lack of food supplies. Another obstacle to the fulfillment of Choctaw promises was the Chickasaws who, though few in number, did not "fail to provide the English with the means of going safely to the Choctaws."  

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102 Vaudreuil to Rouillé, September 24, 1750, Ibid., 55.
At the end of September, Rouillé wrote Vaudreuil that he would prefer to enforce the rule excluding officers from trading to avoid the type of abuse that had been common in Canada. Nevertheless, though he agreed to allow the governor to make other arrangements to stop the abuse of trade by officers and commandants, he would hold him responsible and require him to report on the conduct of each.¹⁰³ Four days later he wrote again, this time informing Vaudreuil that the king considered Tombecbé an expensive and unnecessary post. The expenses of Indian control were out of hand. It was imperative to prevent the attempts by officers to profit from their position in the posts. By increasing the number of troops in the colony, the crown was determined to "place the colony in a state of defense and security and procure more inhabitants for its development."¹⁰⁴

A memoir written for the king in 1751 stressed the importance of increasing troops. The king was given an outline of the provisions of the treaty negotiated with the Choctaws and informed that Vaudreuil expected the colony to "enjoy a tranquillity as regards the Indian nations that it

¹⁰³Rouillé to Vaudreuil, September 26, 1750, HM LO 228.
¹⁰⁴Rouillé to Vaudreuil, September 30, 1750, HM LO 234.
has not had the good fortune to savor since its establishment." The Chickasaws were now so few in number that their nation could be destroyed by the Choctaws.

As long as the Choctaws remain faithful to us they will overawe the other nations. They form forty-two villages, which occupy at least forty leagues of country and in which there are nearly four thousand men bearing arms. They have always been our allies. The efforts that the English have made at all times to corrupt this nation had always been in vain until these latter times when they had found the means of detaching from it the villages of which mention has been made, and, according to what M. de Vaudreuil writes, there is reason to hope that it will remain in the same attitude toward us. The increase that his Majesty has made in the troops of the colony will especially contribute to restraining it.105

The governor welcomed the increase in troop strength, but he needed to convince the minister and the king that the new recruits must be led by experienced officers who knew how to control the Indians.

It was in his letter of January 12, 1751, sent along with the news and provisions of the treaty with the Choctaws that Vaudreuil described how Sieur de Grandpré, a young French officer in command at Tombecbé, actually learned and applied the knowledge of governing the Indians. Grandpré fought "at the head" of the Choctaw warriors in raids on rebel villages to set the stage for the successful peace

negotiations.106 Using the methods of the old Canadian captains, Grandpré had promised presents and a steady, dependable supply of trade goods. The loyal Choctaws who raided the rebel villages expected to be rewarded with merchandise distributed at the Tombecbé Post. Rouillé, however, was determined to place more troops in fewer posts, thereby eliminating the need and expense of depending on Indian allies to defend the colony.107

Expecting to receive an order from the crown to close Tombecbé, Vaudreuil boldly explained why he intended to postpone the execution of the king’s command. The loyal Choctaw chiefs had "acted with ... firmness against their own blood only upon the assurances that were given them that we would support them against their enemies." The chiefs trusted Vaudreuil to "preserve for them the post of Tombecbé." A decision to close the post would be "contrary to the welfare of the service" and would place the colony in a worse predicament than the one from which it had just escaped. Vaudreuil begged Rouillé to entreat the king "not to be offended that I should suspend the execution of his orders" when the order to withdraw from Tombecbé reached

106Vaudreuil to Rouillé, Ibid., 60.

107Rouillé to Vaudreuil, September 30, 1750, HM LO 234.
Louisiana. The governor reiterated that there was no doubt "that such an unexpected change will have the effect of puzzling beyond all expression the Choctaws of the eastern faction." They "would think themselves ... abandoned and sacrificed to the resentment of those of the west." They would immediately "call back the English to their country" and become permanent enemies of the French.¹⁰⁸

Vaudreuil ended his letter defending the continued maintenance of Tombecbé by recommending Grandpré as the type of officer who would keep expenses under control while earnestly promoting the interests of the king.

In this command he incurs only the expenses that are absolutely necessary, keeps his garrison there in good order, and renders me the most exact account of what is happening among the different nations of this continent, with which he is perfectly acquainted and by which he is loved.¹⁰⁹

Grandpré knew how to function as an essential link between the king and his people living in and around the frontier post. This young Canadian officer had acquired and demonstrated the knowledge and experience of governing the Indians.

He is assuredly an officer [who is] capable and very zealous for the service. The action that he

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 63-64.

¹⁰⁹Vaudreuil to Rouillé, January 12, 1751, MPA:FD 5:64.
has just performed, of marching at the head of our allies against the rebels with so much prudence and firmness, proves this sufficiently. Moreover, I have had the satisfaction of hearing them say that it is to him that they are indebted for the peace that they have just received and for the advantages that they have won over their enemies.\textsuperscript{110}

The governor recommended that Grandpré be granted the Cross of St. Louis. Although by age he was not "one of the oldest captains," the reward and recognition would give incentive to other officers seeking "opportunities to distinguish themselves."\textsuperscript{111}

Like La Salle, Iberville, Bienville, and Vaudreuil, Grandpré spoke to the Indian leaders in the language of the old Canadian captains. Their common objective was to increase the glory of the king by controlling a vast territory by enlisting Indian allies in the royal service. The king, for his part, contracted to provide presents for the Indian captains and trade goods for their people. The potential of sending a fleet of ships with soldiers and weapons was the trump card in the game of intertribal diplomacy played by the ancien capitaine. The very real conflict of interest between the king and his people in the New World reached a critical point when Rouillé expressed

\textsuperscript{110}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{111}Ibid., 5:65.
his determination to increase the number of regular French troops as a means of eliminating the crown's dependence on the old captains and their Indian allies. The governor needed the resources of the king to maintain the loyalty and service of the French and Indian frontier captains. He needed their loyalty and service to maintain control of the colony. Vaudreuil had to resist the crown to save the colony.

The complaints of Michel during the winter of 1750 no doubt reinforced Rouillé’s determination to bypass the old captains and implement strict financial controls, but the commissary was not permitted to impede the flow of trade goods. In January 1750, Michel tried to intervene when the military commandant of New Orleans, attempted to force civilians to patronize his canteen by arresting and imprisoning those who were drinking and amusing themselves in private homes. When Vaudreuil refused to do anything, Michel informed Rouillé that the "public is vexed and complains with good reason."112 In June 1751, Michel protested that officers engaged in the Choctaw trade enjoyed excessive profits, causing the service to suffer.113


113 Michel to Vaudreuil, June 9 and 10, 1751, *HM LO* 291 and 292.
following month Vaudreuil reported that he was obliged to order Michel to release merchandise needed by the commandants for gifts and trade.\footnote{Vaudreuil to Rouillé, July 20, 1751, MPA:FD 5:96.} This time the governor was determined not to allow the commissary to interfere with his efforts to maintain the alliance of the reunited Choctaw nation.

Increasing the number of troops could enhance the exercise of royal sovereignty, but such action required a greater financial expenditure than the crown was willing to bear. While Rouillé pushed Vaudreuil to reduce expenses by closing a "useless" post, the governor continued to use the methods of the ancien capitaine for the good of the service. In his letter of February 1, 1750, Vaudreuil had recalled that during the Chickasaw Wars in 1736 and 1740, the French were obliged to depend on their Choctaw allies to "avenge us for the least insult." He suggested that these deplorable circumstances would persist "until it pleases you to persuade His Majesty to send to this colony sufficient forces to act with firmness.\footnote{Ibid., 5:44.} Still, the decision to increase troop strength for the purpose of curtailing expenditures required to maintain the Indian trade would
alienate the Choctaws, thereby requiring the military occupation of a vast territory.

In the long run, the most economical policy was to rely on the old captains who could insure the loyalty of the Choctaws by distributing merchandise supplied by the king. By September the governor responded to Rouillé’s demands to stop trading abuses and reduce the enormous expenses of Tombecbé by admitting that it does "cost the king something" to use loyal Choctaws to avenge insults, but there was no practical alternative.\textsuperscript{116}

Nothing could please the old captains more than an increase in troop strength, but Rouillé’s belief that it would eliminate the need for trading posts and reduce expenses was mere fantasy. Between the last year of Bienville’s administration in 1743 and the last stages of the Choctaw rebellion in 1748, annual royal expenditures for the Louisiana colony had increased from 348,528 livres to 539,265. For 1752, 1753, and 1754, the king’s expenses amounted to 930,767, 887,205, and 963,124 livres respectively.\textsuperscript{117} By August 1753, Governor Louis Billouart, Chevalier de Kerlérec was reiterating all of the

\textsuperscript{116}Vaudreuil to Rouillé, September 24, 1750, \textit{ibid.}, 5:56.

\textsuperscript{117}Gayarré, \textit{History of Louisiana}, 2:21, 47, 65, 73, 78.
old arguments. Supplies and trade goods would insure the loyalty of the Choctaws. When there was a shortage of goods or the prices were too high, the English were there to stir up trouble. It was less expensive in the long run to provide supplies in order to prevent expensive warfare.\textsuperscript{118}

The governor would not admit that there was any gap between the welfare of the service and that of the colony, but he defended his determination to resist the commissary’s interference. Vaudreuil insisted that he was motivated by nothing but the good of the service.\textsuperscript{119} He had made every effort to keep expenses down, but timing the arrival of supplies from France so that provisions could be dispatched to Tombecbé in a single boat was the key to reducing expenses.\textsuperscript{120} High costs resulted when a shortage of supplies in the posts created the burden of feeding and entertaining Indians who descended on Mobile. Michel erred

\textsuperscript{118}Kerlérec to Rouillé, August 20, 1753, \textit{MPA:FD} 5:129-130.

\textsuperscript{119}For example, when he petitioned the crown to approve his selection of Chevalier d’Orgon as commandant for the Alabama Post, Vaudreuil insisted that he was not "susceptible to partiality or to any influence that can be prejudicial to [the service].” Vaudreuil to Rouillé, April 28, 1751, \textit{MPA:FD} 5:72.

\textsuperscript{120}Vaudreuil to Rouillé, January 12, 1751, \textit{MPA:FD} 5:64.
in ascribing the increased expenses to officers who meddled with the warehouses.121

In July 1751, the commissary unleashed his verbal tirade against Vaudreuil and his "Canadian creatures and kinsmen," but as late as May of that year, he supported the governor's opinion that any withdrawal from Tombecbé must be gradual and carefully planned. The arrival of reinforcements would strengthen the hand of Vaudreuil in matters of alliance and defense, but the "Indians do not lose sight of the presents that we are accustomed to give them, which they regard as a charge that we have contracted with them."122 On the basis of this observation, one might have predicted that increasing the number of regular troops would not reduce royal expenditures.

On the same day in July that the commissary drafted his verbal attack against Vaudreuil and his kinsmen, the governor requested positive orders that would ensure the delivery of the merchandise needed for France's Indian allies.

Permit me, if you please, my lord to have the honor of remarking to you in this connection that

121Michel to Rouillé, June 27, 1750; Michel to Rouillé, July 2, 1750, MPA:FD 5:51, 53.

122Vaudreuil and Michel to Rouillé, May 21, 1751, ibid., 5:88.
a door must either be open or shut, that is to say that if we have no interest in keeping this nation it is advisable to abandon it to the English, who thirst only to get possession of it, and that on the contrary if we must show it consideration, for the reasons that I have had the honor of reporting to you in my letter of the twentieth of last April, to retain it in our interests we have only ... the single method of furnishing it its needs in order not to put it in the position of obtaining them from other sources, which is the surest [way] to alienate it from us.123

Vaudreuil suggested that Michel himself recognized the need to cultivate the good will of the Choctaw nation, but the commissary was so blinded by egotism that he asserted his authority "without considering the welfare of the service."124

As a provincial governor Vaudreuil commanded the colonial officer corps. He understood the connection between loyalty and generosity, the importance of managing needs and interests, and the determination of the crown to reduce colonial expenses. He refused to permit Michel to manipulate the royal purse strings to undermine his ability to control the colony. Michel’s complaints were testimony to the fact that Vaudreuil relied on the old captains to control military and financial activities in the posts.

123Vaudreuil to Rouillé, July 20, 1751, Ibid., 96.
124Ibid.
Bienville and Vaudreuil relied heavily on the "old captains" to control the frontier posts and repeatedly tried to convince the king that his interest and that of the colony were the same. The governors and their captains continued to coax the crown to finance the colonial enterprise in the tradition of Iberville and La Salle. The Canadian governors of Louisiana resisted the crown's attempt to stem the financial hemorrhage by permitting the commissary general to manipulate the royal purse strings.

My analysis of the correspondence relating to Lenormant and Michel shows that Vaudreuil managed to prevent Michel from interfering with his policy of providing gifts and merchandise for France's Indian allies. The fact that Lenormant's interference had led to the Choctaw revolt gave the governor leverage with the minister, and Michel's complaints can more accurately be interpreted as indicating the commissary's frustration than as evidence of effective interference with the governor's activities.125

Royal control of the colonial kinship network depended on a steady flow of provisions and supplies. The efforts of

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the crown to stem the financial hemorrhage exposed an unbridgeable gap between the king and his people.
CHAPTER 8
The Commercial Kinship Network and the
Conciliari Bridge to the People

The royal commissaries insisted on strict financial
controls, but Lenormant and Michel were not the harbingers
of a modern financial system. The transfer of Lenormant and
the death of Michel actually opened the way for their
successors to engage in factional family politics in
Louisiana, when the obsolete naval bureaucracy struggled
through the crisis precipitated by the poor performance of
the French navy in the Seven Years' War and the territorial
losses of European colonial warfare.¹ The Canadian family
network expanded to include the descendants of La Chaise,
and several men sent from France to serve on the Superior
Council married into Canadian families. The Louisiana
kinship system included heirs of councillors and financiers
as well as young military cadets who married into the old
Canadian family network.²

¹See Pritchard, Louis XV's Navy, 55-70, 206-211.
²Giraud, History 5:8, 181, 282-285; Carl A. Brasseaux,
Denis-Nicolas Foucault and the New Orleans Rebellion of 1768
Michel began asserting his authority against the military officers when he accused the commandant of New Orleans of harassing citizens who declined to patronize his canteen. Between January and July 1750, he struggled against the governor's restrictions on his efforts to communicate with post commandants and investigate their trading activities. For a long time, he had first-hand information only about what was happening in New Orleans. It was his duty to keep track of the merchandise distributed to the different posts, and Vaudreuil continually ordered him to send more supplies than he thought was necessary. He had, of course, agreed to defer to Vaudreuil on extraordinary expenses pertaining to Indian affairs as he had been instructed to do.

By July 20, 1751, Michel was able to provide Rouillé with detailed reports about the supplies requested for Tombecbé, but what really precipitated his vehement verbal attack against Vaudreuil and the old captains was the D'Erneville affair. In July 1750, Michel had reported to

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3"Memoire du roi," December 23, 1748 in Lemieux, "Office of Commissaire Ordonnateur," 105; Michel and Vaudreuil to Louis XV, August 1, 1749, HM LO 177; Michel to Rouillé, January 17 and June 2, 1750, MPA:FD 5:37-38, 53; Rouillé to Vaudreuil, September 26, 1750, HM LO 243; Vaudreuil to Michel, June 8, 1751, HM LO 290; Michel to Vaudreuil, June 10, 1751, HM LO 292; Michel to Rouillé, July 20, 1751, MPA:FD 5:98, 101-02.
Rouillé that the governor had neglected to inform him about a certain trading expedition to Santa Fé. Vaudreuil not only denied the charge, but rejoined that Michel had acknowledged the advantages of the enterprise. The governor was already irritated that Rouillé would question his good intentions when Michel took the side of the storekeeper in a quarrel with Duplessy, his newly appointed commandant at English Turn. Then, one night when Membrède (the New Orleans Commandant) D’Erneville, and other colonial officials were gathered at the governor’s house, D’Erneville insulted the commissary.4

A native of Basse-Normany, D’Erneville, came as a gentleman-cadet to the colony where he married the daughter of François Fleuriau, the attorney-general on the Superior Council. The elder Fleuriau had connections in the ministry of the marine and the king’s council as a kinsman of Fleuriau de Morville, a relative of the keeper of the seals, and de Morville’s son, Fleuriau d’Armenonville, who served briefly as marine minister. François and Antoine Bruslé, another member of the Superior Council, married into closely related families. Fleuriau had been the leader of the

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4Fregault, Grand Marquis, 294-299.
faction that developed in opposition to La Chaise. By marrying Pélagie Fleuriau, D’Erneville tapped into a kinship network with deep colonial roots.

On June 17 D’Erneville responded to Michel’s charges concerning the incident at the governor’s house. The next day Michel described the incident in detail in his own letter to Vaudreuil. D’Erneville, he said, had called him a "zero" in the presence of all the colonial officials. Michel demanded that the governor intervene and render him justice. The governor replied rather bluntly that he "never interferes in affairs between officers." A month after the climax of the D’Erneville affair, Michel exploded his powder keg. His letter of July 20 accused the governor of placing his private interest above the interest of the king. Moreover, Vaudreuil promoted and protected the financial and trading interests of his friends and kinsmen to the detriment of the colony. Michel’s invective against Vaudreuil and his Canadian "creatures" began with the Choctaw question. With the old captains enjoying the protection of Vaudreuil, "a single Choctaw

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5O’Neill, Church and State, 181; Giraud, History 5:274-75, 291; Frégault, Grand Marquis, 298.

6D’Erneville to Vaudreuil, June 17, 1751, HM LO 294.

7Michel to Vaudreuil, June 18, 1751, Ibid., 295; Frégault, Grand Marquis, 300-301.
Indian in the colony will always be a cause of considerable expense for the King." The "devious devices" used to keep the Choctaw nation in balance make it "necessary for us to treat it with consideration." Grandpré and Des Islets arrived in New Orleans after the peace treaty went into effect. They made excuses about surplus merchandise which they left in the hands of "the most imprudent and most reckless of all the officers of the colony, and several traders [who are] vagabonds and jailbirds." Not only did they leave this officer in command at Tombecbé, but they requested an advance of 25,000 livres in merchandise that they would be able to sell at a profit of 150 percent. To illustrate the devious devices, Michel enclosed letters to indicate that the governor sometimes doubled the amount of merchandise requested by the post commandant.8

Michel went on to explain that he simply had not been able to oppose the insatiable demands of the military officers. Mere remarks about the prodigal allocation of the king's resources brought "cabals and vexation" down on the commissary. Yet there was no doubt that the governor gained a profit of 30 percent of the merchandise distributed at Tombecbé and all the other posts as well. "M. Lenormant must have proved it to you by his memoirs and M. de

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8Michel to Rouillé, July 20, 1751, MPA:FD 5:97-98.
Vaudreuil’s sponsorship of the preceding commandants and holders of monopolies.” All the posts are occupied by "his Canadian creatures and his kinsmen and allies of himself or of his wife."9

Michel’s most serious charge was that eight soldiers had deserted the Tombecbé Post because the flour sent to Tombecbé was traded to the Indians, forcing the garrison to eat corn. The soldiers had taken advantage of Grandpré’s absence to desert. The situation at Tombecbé was considerably more complicated than Michel led Rouillé to believe, however. The commissary did say that the deserters had been apprehended by the Choctaws and that the Choctaw demand for their pardon created a diplomatic incident, but he did not explain why Imataha Mingo, Alibamon Mingo, and about fifty other Indians petitioned the governor to spare the lives of the deserters. Michel would have Rouillé believe that the soldiers escaped from a garrison where they had been forced to eat corn by the commandant and those who held the trading monopoly. In a speech reported by a trader stationed at Tombecbé, Alibamon Mingo admitted that these soldiers "had lost their senses."10 Speeches made in

9Ibid., 98-99.

10Dupumeux to [?Beauchamp], June 18, 1751, MPA:FD 5:89-91.
defense of the Frenchmen ignored the fact that the soldiers had stolen the king's merchandise, stressing rather that they had provided things needed by the Indians.

The soldiers deserved punishment for leaving their posts, Alibamon Mingo was reported as saying, but Vaudreuil should overlook the wrong that had been done out of consideration for his Choctaw "children." "He can easily imagine the infinite pain that it would give the Choctaws to see the blood of people who every day bring them the things they need, and that with great difficulty." Because these Frenchmen dwelt in the "same cabin" with their Indian brothers, the "great chief of the French" should not "refuse his children the favor they ask of him." The chief of the Chichatalayas sent a gift of deer skins to the great chief of the French along with the message that he had risked his life "often enough for the service of the French to deserve this pardon."11

In his explanation of the Tombecbé dessertions, Vaudreuil explained to Rouillé that the soldiers at Tombecbé had to trade for a living.12 What created the diplomatic

11Ibid., 5:90-91.

12Vaudreuil to Rouillé, July 20, 1751, MPA:FD 5:94; Vaudreuil's letters to Commandant de Blanc and the trader de la Ronde at Natchitoches clearly indicated that the governor routinely regulated and protected the trading privileges of certain individuals. The governor's correspondence also
incident was that their status as soldiers subjected them to the death penalty for desertion. Only the governor could grant them a pardon. According to the Indian "captains" he ought to do so for the sake of his "children." Michel, of course, did not see it this way. He would not concede that the military officers he criticized should be permitted to maintain their position as frontier post commandants by practicing techniques handed down as a legacy of the old Canadian Indian captains.\(^{13}\)

Vaudreuil had recommended that Hazeur be protected in his losses for the good of the service.\(^{14}\) Michel now suggested that the governor was willing to let the king bear the expense for the poor judgment of commandants who chose to leave their posts in charge of subordinates who might not resist the efforts of the garrison to empty the storehouse.

All these gentlemen imagine that it is the King who must bear the expense of their bad moves, and in fact he does bear them, since they put it all down in their accounts, which it is not possible to correct in opposition to M. de Vaudreuil, who

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Vaudreuil to de blanc, November 22, 1752, HM LO 406; Vaudreuil to de la Ronde, November 22, 1752, LO 408.

\(^{13}\) Michel to Rouillé, July 20, 1751, MPA:FD 5:99.

\(^{14}\) Vaudreuil to Maurepas, March 20, 1748, HM LO 116.
serves them all as advocate to the detriment of the King's interests.\textsuperscript{15}

Michel went on to comment about the lack of discipline in the colony in terms reminiscent of Père Raphaël's complaints about the Bienvillists twenty-five years before. No one knows discipline, wrote Michel, "neither officer nor soldier. Every thing is permitted to the soldier, provided that he drinks up his money at the canteen."\textsuperscript{16}

Michel's invective against the governor and his officers offers a glimpse at a protected economic enterprise operating in the camouflaged, colonial kinship network. Everyone in New Orleans knew that the soldiers violated police regulations by obtaining wine and rum from the canteen and reselling it to the blacks and Indians, but the governor refused to do anything about it. M. de Belisle farmed the canteen, and Michel suspected that he paid off the major of the New Orleans troops as well as the governor's wife for the privilege. He charged that Vaudreuil had advanced Belisle ten thousand livres to buy wine for the canteen.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15}Michel to Rouillé, July 20, 1751, MPA:FD 5:100.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 101, 104, n.7.
Michel further alleged that the governor’s wife also profited from trade in the capital city.

She has business with everybody here and she forces the merchants and individuals here to take charge of her merchandise to sell it at the price she fixes. She has a warehouse at her house of all sorts of stuff, which her butler sells, and when he is not there she takes up the measuring rods herself.

The commissary went on to say that Vaudreuil knew all about his wife’s trading activities and that he derived revenue from them.\(^{18}\)

Michel went on to report to the minister another example of how the governor and his old captains found support for their trading monopolies even in the Superior Council. Despite the fact that Michel held the position of First Judge on the Council and shared with the governor the responsibility for promoting commerce, he carried little weight when the two highest ranking military officers and the attorney-general were loyal supporters of Vaudreuil.

In the letter of July 20, Michel proposed to secure a steady, daily supply of fish for the poor people and troops of the city. He had found a "contractor who promised to do the fishing every day no matter what the weather and to sell the fish at half the price at which it was formerly sold." When word reached the New Orleans major about Michel’s plan,

\(^{18}\text{Ibid.}\)
he immediately conspired with Councillor Jean Baptiste Raguet and Attorney-General Fleuriau to protect his monopoly. Raguet, whose father had arrived in Louisiana as a clerk for the Superior Council in 1717, had even deeper roots in the kinship network than did Fleuriau.  

Even before he presented his proposal, Michel reported, the councillors told him on behalf of the governor that the king's orders "forbade anyone whomsoever to take possession of or to appropriate to himself any fishing or land, and that everybody had the right to fish in this colony." The commissary upbraided the councillors for making "representations to the governor" about a project that had not yet been formally introduced. Surprised that they knew about the matter, he asked who had informed them and protested that they had no right to discuss it with the governor without speaking to him first. Michel sent the councillors away and went immediately to Vaudreuil to determine whether the governor had "authorized all these procedures." He pleaded with Vaudreuil to prohibit commercial fishing activities of the soldiers and protested that it was his duty as commissary to confiscate their fish.  

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19Ibid., 102, 104, n. 8.

20Ibid., 102.
completely ignored the commissary. Nothing changed despite all he said and did.

The major still has his fish market for his profit, which he is promoting to the detriment of the other one by means of five or six soldiers exempt from service throughout the year. What am I saying? They have since attempted to force the true fishmongers whom I have established there to go every day and make a declaration of their fish at the guardhouse, and they have declared publicly that I was receiving a thousand piastres from the proceeds from the fish.\(^{21}\)

By the end of 1751, the crown had decided to inject more funds into maritime administration, but the integrity of the French navy still depended on the bond of personal loyalty that bolstered the unity of the officer corps and linked the king to his people. By the beginning of 1752, Vaudreuil had weathered the crisis of the Choctaw rebellion. He never lost the confidence of the king and his minister even after resisting the intention of Rouillé to close Tombecbé. The old captains continued to rally their companies at his command.

In a letter to Rouillé in January 1752, Vaudreuil expressed his bewilderment about the refusal of the commissaries to cooperate by releasing the merchandise needed to promote good relations with the Indian tribes.

I have never clearly understood what could be the reasons of the commissaries general in this

\(^{21}\)Ibid.
country for having raised so many objections up to the present about the delivery of this merchandise unless they prefer to sell it among the people, while the King's intention is that this merchandise be used for the trade with the Indians and that this is only an advance that he is obliged to make for six months or a year, which is, moreover, indispensable, since it is true that the traders can provide themselves with stocks only from the King's warehouses, where alone the merchandise can be found and the only place by way of which we could arrive at satisfying the Choctaw nation and thereby retain it for ourselves if it is true that it is important for this colony, as we shall find it as soon as we wish to fathom the reasons for it and to consider its advantages.  

The murder of Frenchmen by Red Shoe had been avenged. The Choctaw nation had demonstrated that it would meet its obligations to the French. Vaudreuil commanded the support and loyalty of the king's people. The real question was whether the king and his commissaries were willing and able to "satisfy [the Choctaw nation] in the matter of its needs."  

**Kerlérec, the Council, and the People**

The divergent interest of crown and colony may well have been at the root of Vaudreuil's troubles as governor of Canada. They only became apparent, however, during the

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administration of Vaudreuil's successor, Louis Billouart de Kerlérec, from 1753 to 1763. Vaudreuil had mastered the rhetoric of the old Canadian captains, but the determination of the crown to eliminate the "corruption" of private interest interfered with his ability to rally Indians and Canadians to the service of the king. The idea that increasing funds for regular troops might eliminate dependance on Indians and old captains certainly wreaked havoc in Louisiana under Kerlérec.

The new Louisiana governor lacked colonial roots, but he began to use Canadian rhetoric because as a naval captain, he knew how important it was to maintain the confidence of his crew. He began his term as governor with a plea for popular support. The neglect and indifference of the crown made it all the more necessary for the governor to do all he could to meet the needs of the people. Under Kerlérec, the good of the public began to overshadow the service of the king.

By the time Kerlérec arrived, Michel was dead, and D'Auberville, who had served as interim ordonnateur in 1748, once again took charge of the financial administration as ordonnateur from 1752 to 1757. In March 1753, the new

25Marc de Villiers du Terrage, The Last Years of French Louisiana, eds. Carl A. Brasseaux and Glenn R. Conrad, trans. Hosea Philips (Lafayette, La.: Center for Louisiana
governor reported to Rouillé that he had "spent an entire day" with new settlers at English Bend "hearing representations of every sort." The settlers complained about their flooded land and expressed doubts about their ability to cultivate it. They told him that Michel had refused to give them the assistance that had been promised to them. Kerlérec decided to give the settlers "some gratuities in provisions proportional to their urgent needs."\(^{26}\)

In his effort to do something for the merchants of New Orleans, Kerlérec also informed the minister of their grievances.

I also cannot refrain from adding to you on this subject that the late M. Michel, because of the little attention that he gave to this matter, is the sole cause of the bad faith that may prevail here among the merchants. Great partiality has always been the basis of his own judgment and very often that of the entire Council, which his haughty disposition had subjugated and which has almost always been browbeaten. At last his death postponed the decision to leave this country which a small number of good merchants had made.\(^{27}\)

The new governor worked hard to establish his position at the head of the colony by seeking conciliary support for

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\(^{26}\)Kerlérec to Rouillé, March 8, 1753, MPA:FD 5:121-22.

\(^{27}\)Ibid., 123.
his decisions and consulting with the old officers.28 Not until September 1754 did he report that he was forced to use the term "order" for the first time in his relations with the commissary.29 Kerlérec’s serious problems with the commissary began only in 1758 with the appointment of Vincent de Rochemore to replace D’Auberville as ordonnateur. Although the neglect of the colony by the crown would be Kerlérec’s biggest problem, Rochemore’s alliance with Simard de Bellisle and D’Erneville was the greatest threat to the governor’s authority in the colony.

By the time Rochemore arrived, Kerlérec had won the respect of the Indian chiefs by providing them with gifts and supplies in the tradition of the ancien capitaine. Kerlérec claimed to hear the voice of his people expressed by the "chiefs and honored men" who represented the diverse clans and companies of the lower Mississippi valley in general assemblies: gatherings of village chiefs or "principal men of the nation."30 He thus used the "just rage of the public of all classes" to justify his intervention against Rochemore and his associates when, in

28Kerlérec to Jean Baptiste de Machault d’Arnouville, September 15, 1754, Ibid., 147-49.

29Ibid., 148.

1759, petitions signed by "the most notable inhabitants and all the merchants" of New Orleans and Mobile asked him to use his authority" to ensure "a free sale" of merchandise confiscated by Rochemore and Bellisle.31

The association of Rochemore with "rascals" who promoted their private interests made it necessary for the governor to intervene on behalf of the public and dismiss with the king's approval those responsible for refusing to follow his orders. One of the "rascals" was Jean Baptiste Destréhan, a land speculator who had accumulated property worth 600,000 livres in a twelve-year period.32 Another was d'Erneville, the officer who had insulted Michel. While the governor was making his annual visit to distribute Indian presents at Mobile in the March 1759, Bellisle disobeyed Kerléréc's orders to receive any vessel carrying food for the colony. The refusal of the captain of a Dutch ship to sell the cargo at the low price insisted upon by Rochemore caused Bellisle to invoke a 1727 ordinance against trading with cartel ships. A similar incident occurred three

31Kerlérec to Nicolas René Berryer, April 24, 1759; to Simards de Bellisle, April 9, 1759; "Report to Louis XV on the Texel Affair; in Abraham Nasatir and James R. Mills, eds., Commerce and Contraband in New Orleans During the French and Indian War (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1968), 59, 39-40, 162.

32Villiers du Terrage, Last Years, 100.
months later with the arrival of the Three Brothers. It was during the Three Brothers’s affair that Kerlérec sparked a popular demonstration and supported his decision to release the ship by calling a convocation of the people. In the spring of 1760, the crown responded by giving Kerlérec "broad powers" which "placed the ordonnateur completely under his control."34

Kerlérec’s principal difficulty was therefore not with establishing his authority over the commissary in the eyes of the crown. Rather, it was the governor’s inability to dominate the Superior Council and the powerful colonial faction led by d’Erneville that proved to be his biggest obstacle. With the support of prominent military officers engaged in the commercial kinship network, Rochemore was able to defy Kerlérec not by virtue of his authority as ordonnateur, but through an alliance with "captains" who profited more by private trading carried on in opposition to a governor who had no royal patronage or goods to distribute. In March 1769, d’Erneville wrote to marine minister Nicolas René Berryer accusing the governor and his

33Ibid., 103-104; Nasatir and Mills, Commerce and Contraband, 20, 34.

34Villiers du Terrage, Last Years, 145.

35See, e.g., Berryer to Kerlérec. October 1, 1759 in Commerce and Contraband, 150.
secretary, Titon de Silègue, of establishing partnerships with the post commandants and enjoying the profits of their economic enterprises. Michel had made similar accusations against Vaudreuil, but d’Erneville suggested that whereas Vaudreuil had been "fond of this military corps," Kerlérec was a despot.36 The commissary and the councillors charged the governor with violating royal ordinances prohibiting trade with cartel ships. However, when Berryer learned that the commissary had decided to enforce those regulations only after the captain refused to sell the merchandise at the price set by the commissary, he concluded that Kerlérec had indeed acted in the interest of the king and the colony by releasing the ship and permitting the cargo to be sold at a price that would encourage other ships to bring badly needed supplies into the colony.37

The Forsaken Children of the King

Kerlérec convinced the crown to recall Rochemore, but the naval defeats of the Seven Year’s War produced instability in the marine ministry which reflected the disarray at the royal court. Jean-Jacques-Blaise d’Abbadie was sent to settle the king’s accounts and liquidate the


37 Berryer to Kerlérec, October 1, 1759, and Report to the King on the Texel Affair in Nasitir and Mills, eds., Commerce and Contraband, 146-147, 152-54.
French colonial enterprise in Louisiana. By the time his replacement arrived on June 29, 1763, Kerlérec had been summoned to France to answer Rochemore's charges against him.38

Desiring to shed the financial burden of Louisiana, the crown decided to invest d'Abbadie with the authority of both governor and comissaire-ordonnateur.39 The provisions of the original, secret "Act of Cession" to Spain had been changed to exclude all of Louisiana east of the Mississippi except New Orleans. When d'Abbadie took command as "commissary general and ordonnateur" in October 24, 1763, he received news of Pontiac's rebellion and heard the complaints of various Indian tribes before he received clarification of his orders and an update on the original "Act of Cession."40

On April 21, 1764, the French king had expressed his hope that his Spanish cousin would provide "for the prosperity and tranquillity of the inhabitants of the colony of Louisiana" by giving "orders to his governor" to ensure that the clergy and missionaries would continue to perform their services for the colony. Louis XV also expressed his

38Villiers du Terrage, Last Years, 172, 182.
39Ibid., 180.
40Ibid., 191-192.
hope and expectation "that the ordinary judges and the Superior Council will continue to serve justice, according to the laws, forms and customs of the colony." The king ordered d'Abbadie to "have this letter registered with the Superior Council of New Orleans, so that the different estates of the colony may be informed of its contents, and so that they may have recourse to it as needed"\textsuperscript{41}

On September 30, the new governor acknowledged receipt of the king's letter and reported that his "departure from this colony cannot be as prompt as you assume." The English had been unable to take possession of the Illinois territory and French troops could not be withdrawn before the arrival of the Spanish governor. Dealing with French settlers on the banks of the Mississippi required "careful handling, because of the Indians." The transfer of territory from France to Spain would take at least three months. D'Abbadie went on to say that it would be "necessary for the Spanish to adopt French methods in governing the Indians" because the English "will use all manner of means to win over the Indian tribes."\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{41}Louis XV to d'Abbadie, April 21, 1764 in \textit{ibid.}, 225-227.

\textsuperscript{42}D'Abbadie to Choiseul, September 30, 1764 in \textit{Ibid.}, 225.
The sudden death of d'Abbadie on February 4, 1765 brought Charles-Philippe Aubry to the helm as head of the colony. Denis-Nicolas Foucault assumed the duties of ordonnateur. As first judge of the Superior Council, Foucault was closely associated with Nicolas Chauvin de Lafrénière who in January 1765 convoked an assembly of "delegates of all the parishes of lower Louisiana" which sent Jean Milhet, a rich merchant and captain of the New Orleans militia, on an embassy to France to petition the king to "annul the act of cession of Louisiana." Milhet may have departed for France before d'Abbadie died, but he did not return until the end of 1767.

In the meantime, Aubry and Foucault faced a massive financial and political crisis. Aubry did his best to please the French, the English, and the Indians. Aubry claimed to work "ceaselessly from morning till night." He complained that there was no money, no supplies, and no commerce. "Everything falls on me, and I bear all the

43Brasseaux, Foucault, 41-42; Villiers du Terrage, Last Years, 232.

44Villiers du Terrage, Last Years, 234-35.


46Ibid., 239.
On February 25, 1765, he reported to Choiseul that he would send "several small gifts" to Louis St. Ange de Bellerive for the tribes that were "harassing" the Illinois commandant "on all sides." He explained that he would like to "dispense with all expenditures." It was in this atmosphere of penury and uncertainty that Aubry had to deal with Indian rebels and French councillors and merchants who slowly came to realize that the French king had forsaken his children in Louisiana.

One of the many Indian chiefs who invaded New Orleans during this period expressed his disgust to Aubry at hearing "strange words" which he, at first, did not believe. Not only did the French give away the land where his people lived to the English, but French traders were no longer permitted to come into their villages. "We have learned also that you, Frenchman (sic), whom we believed to be so powerful and so brave, have obeyed [the English] like women, letting us die from hunger and suffering." The chief asked Aubry for one thing only: that he "replace the guns, the

47 Aubry to Choiseul, April 24, 1765, in Carl A. Brasseaux, ed., Quest for the Promised Land: Official Correspondence Relating to the First Acadian Migration to Louisiana, 1764-1769 (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1989) 42. See also Villiers du Terrage, Last Years, 264-265.

48 Aubry to Choiseul, February 25, 1765, in Promised Land, 30.
powder, the tomahawks, and the knives that we expended in fighting with you." He then expressed his rage at the Englishmen who heard his speech.49

Charlot Kaské, a Shawnee chief, returned to Illinois from New Orleans to form an alliance with French traders to continue to resist the English occupation of the Illinois country after Pontiac suffered military defeat and could no longer command the allegiance of the Indian confederation. Presenting himself to the French governor as "a representative of the Shawnee 'great chief,' seeking aid from his father," Charlot expressed surprise that the "emperor" yielded the territory. Angry at being rejected, he told Aubry: "we are masters of our bodies and our lands."50 It was clear that the Indians were determined to resist the English with or without the support of their French "father." After being rejected by the French, who refused to provide protection or iron, Charlot returned to Illinois, where he continued the struggle against British occupation under the pretense that Aubry "had promised assistance and demanded attacks on the British."51 If there were no powerful European protector to be had, the old

49Quoted in Villiers du Terrage, Last Years, 239.
50Quoted in Richard White, Middle Ground, 300-303.
51Ibid., 301.
Indian captains would invent one so as to overcome their foes with powerful rhetoric which could sometimes be as effective as a powerful military force. They surely could not seek the protection of the British who now refused to provide them with the things they needed.

Conclusion

In spite of Aubry's efforts to dissuade them, the old captains and their people had rebelled against the express orders of the king. They tried to excuse their disobedience by arguing that the Spanish did not respect any of the laws, established customs, and usages. The Council sent two representatives to France to plead the colony's cause, but Choiseul received the deputies only as private citizens. Their pleas were ignored.52

The October 1768 "Memoir of the farmers and merchants of Louisiana" represented the position of the Superior Council and overflows with the language of the ancien capitaine. The Superior Council here pleaded with the king on behalf of his people. The "magistrates ... could no longer refuse to reply to the plaintive cries of an oppressed people." Collectively they

authorized a suffering people to bring their requests and their wishes to the king ... quite convinced that their respectful attention for

52Ibid., 305-11.
their monarch would not be rejected by His Majesty who is so benevolent, who is for his people the earthly image of the savior ...

The Spanish governor Ulloa was a tyrant who had violated the "promises" contained in the letters of April 21.53

From the very beginning of French exploration in the Mississippi Valley, LaSalle and Iberville had cajoled the king into supporting the colony with the prospect of increasing his wealth, power, and glory. After the death of Louis XIV, France was in Glenn Conrad's words, a "reluctant imperialist."54 When the Company of the Indies withdrew, Maurepas took the colony under his wing, but he kept expenses down by promoting the frontier exchange economy while vigilantly taking precautions against profiteering by the governor and post commandants. France would not or could not pay the costs of Rouillé's determination to increase the number of regular troops. After Vaudreuil, Kerlérec cultivated a broad base of popular support and steered a course guided by the interests of the colony.

A bizarre situation resulted when the crown decided it was no longer in the king's interest to support the colony.

53 Ibid., 315.

Aubry became the reluctant head of a colony that no longer needed to compete with the English for Indian allies. He governed in the name and service of a king who had transferred the territory to the king of Spain, whose governor was perceived as a tyrant. The people rose up to proclaim their liberty under the protection of a French king, who had turned his back on his children.

Aubry, Ulloa, and Foucault were links of a chain that had been broken. The councillors who promised the people that they would restore the linkage with the French king had deep colonial roots as leaders of the many and varied companies that the king termed the "estates" of the colony. But the Indians and the French inhabitants would only recognize a sovereign who protected their lives and property and supplied the goods they needed. The Indians and the habitants were ready to obey the strong, wealthy chief who could ally with a "Frenchman" able and willing to supply their needs. The key to Spanish control would be to enlist French captains in the service of the Spanish king.
CHAPTER 9

Posts and People: French Captains in the Spanish Service

When the French crown transferred Louisiana to Spain in 1763, the French governor and his captain-commandants continued to maintain the loyalty of the Indians. Spain hesitated to take formal possession of the orphan colony. After the short-lived rebellion of 1768, General Alexander O'Reilly spent less than eight months (from August 17, 1769 to March, 1770) securing Spanish control of the province and installing Luis de Unzaga as the new governor.\(^1\) In New Orleans O'Reilly prosecuted and punished the rebel leaders and replaced the Superior Council with the Cabildo, but in the outlying posts very little was changed.

The general appointed former French officers as commandants of the various posts. Only the Illinois post was placed under a Spaniard, but even there Louis de St. Ange of Bellerive continued in Spanish service because of

his knowledge and experience governing the Indians. In 1736 Bienville had described St. Ange as the "son of an ancien capitaine de milice ... vigorous in spirit and valor." More than twenty years later Kerlérec endorsed him as an "excellent officer for the country and particularly for the savages that he leads and guides as he wishes." Ulloa had explained to Grimaldi that it was "necessary to keep him in the same command which he has held not only on account of his conduct but also because of the credit and reputation which he has among the Indians." O'Reilly established a hierarchy of officials in the frontier posts by placing two lieutenant governors in strategic posts in charge of the French captains performing their duties as commandants of the smaller posts. On the list of officials appointed by O'Reilly on February 4, 1770, Pedro Piernas was listed as Lieutenant Governor of the Ylinueses (Illinois) district with the rank of Captain of Infantry while de Mézières, ranked as a captain of militia,

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2Etat-major, La., 1736, AC D2c 50:45.
3Apostille, 1759, AC D2c 50:vo63.
4Ulloa to Grimaldi, August 4, 1768, SMV 2:59; Bernardo de Galvez reported to his uncle José on March 21, 1777 that he had selected "the retired captain of infantry, formerly of the French service, Don Pedro Francisco Volsay to replace St. Ange as an advisor on Indian affairs after the death of the old captain who "had a perfect knowledge of [the Indians]." SMV 2:236.
received the title "Lieutenant Governor of Natchitoches." Simard de Bellisle, selected as commandant of the St. Charles half of the German coast, was also ranked as a captain of infantry.⁵

O'Reilly listed five post commandants as captains of militia, but two others held this position without any military rank. Marafret Laysarde, commissioned as the Rapides Post commandant, had been a merchant in New Orleans before he served as storekeeper of the Arkansas Post.⁶ Fusilier de la Clair at Opelousas was a merchant and trader.⁷ Their appointment demonstrated that anciens capitaines were not necessarily military men. They earned their posts because of their position at the head of prominent colonial families. The fact that they had not participated in any active way in the rebellion, their profession of loyalty to the Spanish crown, and their ability to govern the inhabitants and Indians in and around their posts were the most important factors in O'Reilly’s

⁵SMV 2:157.


decision to appoint them. Each qualified as an ancien capitaine and a good père de famille. Athanase de Mézières was noted for his ability to bring the Indian tribes of Louisiana and Texas into allegiance to the Spanish crown. The Rapides Post actually served as a dependency of Natchitoches. Several French officers did their apprenticeship at Natchitoches before being placed in command at Arkansas, Pointe Coupée, or Opelousas. For example, Balthazar de Villiers moved from Balize to Natchitoches, then to Pointe Coupée. In 1772, he served as acting lieutenant governor while de Mézières traveled to Europe. He later served as commandant of the Arkansas Post while Governor Gálvez was aiding the Americans in their revolt against England.

The Vaugine family provides another example of the special importance of the Natchitoches Post as a school for post commandants. Étienne Martin de Vaugine de Nuisement was the patriarch of a clan that was to dominate the Arkansas Post by the time the Louisiana Territory was sold to the United States in 1803. In 1753 he married Antoinette

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8O’Reilly to Arriaga, October 17 and December 10, 1769; O’Reilly to Grimaldi, December 10, 1769 in in SMV 2:99, 101-02, 127-29; See also Herbert Eugene Bolton, Athanase de Mézières and the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1768-1780 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1914), 1:79.

9Bolton, Mézières, 1:100.
Pelagie Petit de Livilliers, a descendant of Pierre Boucher who had arrived in Canada in 1634. Vaugine de Nuisement established an indigo plantation in the Attakapas district in 1764 and served in the Louisiana Infantry Regiment. From 1780 to 1786, he served as commandant of the Natchitoches Post. His son, François, represented the United States when the Arkansas Post came under American sovereignty.\(^{10}\)

The primary purpose of the Spanish frontier posts was to protect the North American border of the Spanish empire. Natchitoches was the training ground for commandants whose most important qualification was the knowledge of how to control the Indians and settlers in the territory surrounding their posts. By 1776 the number of Natchitoches Indians living next to Fort St. Jean had dwindled to 10, but the census of Indian Tribes conducted that year counted 1443 Indians living along the northwest radius extending 135 leagues from the Natchitoches Post.\(^{11}\) French officials did their best to convince the Choctaws and the Alabamas who still numbered in the thousands to accept British dominion. The Osages west of the Mississippi would have to be


controlled, and numerous tribes requested to migrate to the west after the British took possession of the Ohio valley.¹²

The Indian population may well have declined sharply from what it had been in 1500, but their numbers were still immense compared to the number of Europeans living in the Mississippi Valley.¹³ Of course it was always in the interest of the post commandants to exaggerate the Indian threat, but the commercial and demographic advantages of the British rendered reliable Indian alliances essential to the process of controlling the Louisiana territory. The ability

¹²"D’Abbadie Journal," in Brasseaux, Comparative View, 113-124. See also Din and Nasatir, Imperial Osage, 54; Bolton, Mézières, 1:73.

¹³O’Reilly himself pointed out that Pointe Coupée, located fifty leagues upriver from New Orleans, was, except for the capital city, the "only well populated district in this Province." David K. Bjork, ed., "Documents Relating to Alejandro O’Reilly and the Expedition Sent Out by Him from New Orleans to Natchitoches, 1769-1770," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 7 (1924), 21. A census dated September 2, 1771 indicates that the city of New Orleans and both river banks downstream numbered 2,232 white inhabitants. Pointe Coupée counted 548. The total of whites, free negroes, negro and Indian slaves in the whole province was only 11,344. The white population of Natchitoches and Rapides barely exceeded 500. See SMV 2:196. A census of the Arkansas Post reported by De Villiers on April 3, 1777 reveals that 509 Indians, 11 slaves, and 50 habitants were counted in the area surrounding the post. (Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Papeles Procedentes de la Isla de Cuba, legajo 190:111-113. Microfilm copies, Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana at Lafayette. Hereafter cited as AGI, PC, leg.)
of a commandant to distribute gifts wisely "to the various tribes ... harassing him on all sides"\textsuperscript{14} was required to maintain the territorial integrity of Spanish Louisiana against the British threat. Aubry, the last French governor of Louisiana, did his best to warn his Spanish counterpart that most "of the tribes residing on this continent, both in English territory and in ours, are very populous and fierce."\textsuperscript{15} The "vast horde" of "powerful and warlike tribes"\textsuperscript{16} would present the greatest challenge to Spanish governors who would be responsible for occupying the vast Louisiana territory. The magnitude of the task of controlling the Indians clearly indicates the important role that post commandants and Indian captains would continue to play during the Spanish period.\textsuperscript{17}

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\textsuperscript{14}Aubry to Choiseul, February 25, 1765, in \textit{Promised Land}, 30.
\textsuperscript{15}Aubry to Choiseul, March [probably May] 28, 1766, \textit{ibid.}, 63.
\textsuperscript{16}Bolton, \textit{Mézières}, 1:67,70.
\textsuperscript{17}In his \textit{Memoria} of 1776, Francisco Bouligny observed that the innumerable "Indians who inhabit that immense country" deserve special attention. "Without their friendship and good relations, it will not be easy for us to ascend the [Mississippi] without employing superior forces and making heavy expenditures. On the contrary, assuring ourselves of their friendship, not only will we have free passage of the river, but they themselves will be the guards and defenders of our rights, impeding and containing any insult or invasion which we might fear from the English." \textit{Louisiana in 1776: A Memoria of Francisco Bouligny}, ed.
In October 1769, O'Reilly reported to Minister of the Indies Julián de Arriaga that he had taken possession of Louisiana in the name of the Spanish king and received a profession of loyalty from the inhabitants. Afterwards he "summoned all the Indians living within sixty leagues" of New Orleans. When the Indians arrived at his house they were received into his presence by "all the officers of the garrison and the principal persons of the city." The greeting ceremony included saluting the governor with his flag and smoking the peace pipe.\(^{18}\)

Following this ceremony the Bayougoula chief spoke on behalf of the Indians, their chiefs and warriors. He addressed O'Reilly as the father of the Indians and the "chief whom the great King of Spain has sent to take possession of these lands." He had been careful to ask permission to speak and he prudently did not speak too long for fear of displeasing the "great chief of chiefs." He

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Gilbert C. Din (New Orleans: Jack D.L Holmes, 1977), 65. Bouligny was an officer in the Fixed Havana Regiment when O'Reilly developed disciplined militia units by using regular soldiers to train local soldiers. He came to Louisiana as O'Reilly's aide-de-camp and remained in Louisiana to serve successively as lieutenant governor of Louisiana, commandant of Natchez, commandant of the Fixed Louisiana Regiment, and acting governor. Gilbert C. Din, Francisco Bouligny: A Bourbon Soldier in Spanish Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 17-18, 29, 55-102, 141-156, 178-205.

\(^{18}\)O'Reilly to Arriaga, October 17, 1769, SMV 2:101.
assured O'Reilly "that all these red men, warriors and chiefs of the tribes will be inviolably faithful to thee, both here and in all the posts where there are people at thy orders." 19

O'Reilly then described to the Indians "the close bonds of blood and alliance between the kings of Spain and France, as a result of which this cession of the colony had been made." He made it clear that the friend of the French king was a friend of the Spanish king and the enemy of one was the enemy of the other. He even encouraged the Indians to treat the English well because they were friends of the Spanish king, although "they were not related by the same bonds as was the French nation." The Indians would be given their annual presents without delay and the king would demand of them no "other gratitude than their constant fidelity." Then O'Reilly placed medals on each chief and had them "kiss the royal effigy" before touching them on the shoulders with his sword. 20 In performing this ceremony for the Indians surrounding his post of New Orleans O'Reilly acted as a type of surrogate king.

When O'Reilly made a trip to Pointe Coupée on December 12, 1769, he performed the same ritual. He asked the

19 Ibid., 101-102.

20 Ibid., 102.
inhabitants to assemble in certain designated places so that he could "listen to all complaints which they may have," gather information about "the conditions of the country and the number of inhabitants," establish militia companies, and "issue regulations by which they may be rapidly united for defense in case of Indian insults or in case this Governor should need them for any other purpose." To outlying posts which he could not visit personally, O'Reilly sent emissaries as his representatives. On November 16, for example, the General had sent two officers to Atakapas, Opelousas, Natchitoches, and Rapides "to administer the oath of allegiance to the inhabitants and to obtain all information which I may need."  

The Discourse of de Mézières  

Athanase de Mézières came to Louisiana as a young cadet. His mother was Marie Antoinette Clugny, and his sisters had established matrimonial alliances with the D'Andelot and Montessons families. While serving in Louisiana as ensign, lieutenant, and captain, de Mézières acquired the knowledge and experience needed to govern the Indians. He married Marie Pétronille Feliciana, a daughter

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22 Ibid., 22.
of St. Denis. His first marriage ended when Marie died in 1748, and sometime before the end of 1769 he established another alliance by his marriage to Pelagie Fazende, a descendant of Jacques Fazende who had begun his lengthy service on the Superior Council in 1722.23

Military rank and family connections spurred the career of de Mézières, but his years of living among the Indians, his trading activities, and his linguistic ability earned him his appointment by O'Reilly as lieutenant governor of Natchitoches. Prior to his Louisiana assignment O'Reilly had organized a disciplined militia in Cuba as a means of defending the sprawling Spanish empire at the least possible cost.24 Similarly in Louisiana, he chose not to replace the local captains with professional administrators from Spain but rather to select those French captains whose loyalty to the Spanish crown could be ensured by royal favor.25

23Bolton, Athanase de Mézières, 1:80-81.


In December 1769, O'Reilly noted that de Mézières had "a good amount of capital of his own with which to answer for his conduct, [and] much experience, and knowledge of the Indians and the district of Natchitoches." By enlisting de Mézières's two eldest sons as cadets, O'Reilly "caused great satisfaction to the father" and bound "him more firmly to the service."²⁶ On his part, de Mézières continued to profess loyalty to the Spanish crown. In a letter to Governor Luis de Unzaga written in June, 1770 after O'Reilly departed Louisiana, he made it clear that he was glad to "sacrifice my person and my goods" in the enterprise of inducing the Osage Indians to sue for peace.²⁷

O'Reilly issued explicit instructions to be followed by the commandants of each post. Unzaga would occasionally reprimand de Mézières for not abiding by the rules, but the overriding need for government economy and the policy of preserving the tranquillity and territorial integrity of the Spanish empire without expense to the royal treasury meant

²⁶O'Reilly to Grimaldi, December 10, 1769, SMV 2:129-30.

²⁷De Mézières to Unzaga Y Amezaga, June 27, 1770, in Bolton, Mézières, 1:203.
that de Mézières actually exercised a substantial degree of autonomy. 28

De Mézières’s first concern as lieutenant governor of the Natchitoches Post was with the traders under his jurisdiction who set a bad example for the Indians among whom they lived by their lack of discipline. 29 De Mézières’s "Instructions to the Traders" contains a clear statement of the rules they were to follow and reflects O’Reilly’s policy of controlling the traders by placing them under the firm authority of the post commandants. They in turn would use the traders to control the Indians. The "Instructions to the Traders" reflects the traditional wisdom of the old Canadian captains and summarizes much of the discourse that constitutes the essential features of the Louisiana synthesis of Athanase de Mézières.

De Mézières began by informing the traders that his captain-general enjoined him to "choose persons known for their good habits and their zeal for the service of the king." Such persons were to be sent into the Indian villages "to encourage the savages more and more to work, and not to permit them to remain in an idleness dangerous

28Moore, Revolt in Louisiana, 83; Din and Nasatir, Imperial Osages, 62, 83-86.

29Din and Nasatir, Imperial Osages, 28, 62; see also Moore, Revolt in Louisiana, 92-102.
not only to their own interests but to those of his Majesty as well." After listing Grappe, Dupin, and Fazende Moriere as the traders to whom he extended trading privileges, de Mézières outlined ten rules for them to follow.

Rule one required that the traders furnish satisfactory, customary merchandise at the "ordinary trade price." Rules two to five banned English merchandise, identified the friendly nations which should receive supplies, and required the traders to arrest French or Spanish vagabonds and confiscate their goods. The sixth rule, which required a pledge to send couriers to keep the commandant informed of "any news of interest to the service of his Majesty," indicates that the traders were to perform a service for the post commandant that was similar to the services performed by the commandants for the governor. The seventh rule clearly indicates that a licensed trader was expected to perform the functions of an old captain and a père de famille in his assigned village.

They are likewise pledged to maintain peace and entire harmony among the people allied with us; and if any quarrel should occur between the families or individuals of the villages where they reside, or even among the neighboring tribes, they are pledged to stifle it and to conciliate the parties.
Rule eight required the traders to explain daily to the Indians the inestimable advantage which they enjoy of being under the happy dominion of his Majesty; that all the French are charmed to live under the laws of so august a monarch.

In addition, the traders were to assure the Indians that "this great king considers them as his dearest subjects." The king expected them "to submit to his will, but with no other purpose than their own happiness."  

The discourse of Athanase de Mézières is a window on the important role of the ancien capitaine as a link between the king and his people. Licensed traders and loyal Indian chiefs brought their families and tribes under the umbrella of the king's authority. They motivated their people to work and fight in the service of the king, established peace and tranquillity in their villages, and defended their local districts against hostile invaders. For his part, the king was obligated to supply them with European merchandise and to exercise the awesome power of his invincible arms on their behalf. The sacred pact that bound a people or "company of savages" to the king required each of his subjects to sacrifice their persons and their property in the service of the king. In return, the governor and the ancien capitaine assured the Indians that they were living under the laws of the most benevolent monarch in the world. 

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30"Instructions for the Traders of the Cadaux D'Acquio and Hiatasses Nations, February 4, 1770 in Bolton, Mézières, 1:148-50."
post commandant were required to place the welfare of the king's people above their own personal interests.\textsuperscript{31}

De Mézières served as a critical link in the new chain that connected the Spanish king to his people in what is now Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas. That link was tested, however, when O'Reilly issued specific regulations requiring de Mézières to defer certain decisions to the governor.\textsuperscript{32} The conflict between de Mézières's duty to abide by these regulations and the necessity of maintaining good relations with the Indians is illustrated by the case of Francisco Morvan.

Before the transfer of Louisiana to Spain, Morvan had killed a vagabond named Brindamûr, then found asylum with the Cadodachos where he remained for seven years and became an adopted member of the tribe. When de Mézières ordered the appearance of all traders and vagrants to appear before him in 1770, the Cadodacho cacique Tinhioüen escorted him to Natchitoches but asked that he be allowed to return to his

\textsuperscript{31}De Mézières to Unzaga Y Amezaga, October 23, 1770, \textit{ibid.}, 1:188.

\textsuperscript{32}Instructions to the lieutenant governor of the Natchitoches district, November 24, 1769, AGI, PC, leg. 187 cited in David K. Bjork, ed., "Documents Relating to Alejandro O'Reilly and An Expedition Sent Out by Him From New Orleans to Natchitoches, 1769-1770," \textit{Louisiana Historical Quarterly}, 7 (1924), 22, note 5.
new "family." According to O'Reilly's regulations only the governor could then release Morvan from de Mézières's custody. However, not wanting to jeopardize his relationship with Tinhioüen, de Mézières convoked an assembly of those men who represented the most important families in and around the community of the Natchitoches Post. They agreed with him that Morvan should be delivered over to Tinhioüen. De Mézières tried to justify his action by deferring to the assembly, but Unzaga stiffly reprimanded him for ignoring explicit instructions and suggested that by exercising a pardon he was attempting to steal the glory that properly belonged to the governor. Unzaga complained that de Mézières's action in convening the council was not only contrary to Spanish law, but appeared "in such a light that only your meritorious behaviour, good conduct, and honest intentions absolve you from criminality."

De Mézières had acted here more as a spokesman for his people than as a agent of the king. In a conflict between the king’s regulations and tribal custom he convoked a

33De Mézières to Unzaga Y Amezaga, May 15, 1770, Bolton, Mézières, 1:160-162; n. 211.
34Ibid., 1:162.
35Unzaga Y Amezaga to De Mézières, June 1, 1770, ibid., 1:171-73.
council of his own "tribe" to justify actions that would insure the tranquillity of colonists and Indians alike. His language was that of the ancien capitaine.

Six months earlier O'Reilly had expressed his approval of the language used by de Mézières to instruct an Indian chief concerning the duties and privileges of his people as subjects of the Spanish king.

The language which you used, Sir, with the Indian chief, is quite in conformity with my intentions and with everything which I have said to you on the subject. These are the sole expressions which the service of the king and which the public welfare can dictate to each post commander. In this respect I am very well satisfied with the way in which you conduct yourself and with the means which you have taken to make known the mildness of the government and the clemency of the king, and I hope that as a result of your care you will experience the happiest results.36

Nevertheless, it was O'Reilly's policy which placed tremendous emphasis on providing for the happiness of the king's subjects while "maintaining the people in the fidelity and submissiveness which are due to their sovereign that created the bind in which de Mézières found himself."37

36O'Reilly to De Mézières, January 23, 1770, ibid., 1:134.

Governor Unzaga and the viceroy of Mexico continued to make every effort to keep tabs on de Mézières. Joseph de la Peña, a military officer serving as interim lieutenant governor while de Mézières traveled among the Indian nations in 1772, reported to the governor that de Mézières had a reputation of being a "man of two words." After accusing de Mézières of "pure deceit," de la Peña charged that the "only thing that has proved true is that the posts and mails are being directed to the traders who are in the nations, announcing his coming and giving new instructions, retiring some from trade in which they are occupied and establishing others to the injury of the former." In 1774 the viceroy instructed the governor of Texas not to correspond with the governor of Natchitoches. Near the end of the decade, however, Governor Gálvez praised de Mézières's special merits when he reported to de Mézières that he had asked Theodoro de Croix the Commandant-General

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38 De La Peña to Unzaga Y Amezaga, September 14, 1772, in Bolton, Mézières, 2:16.

39 Ibid., 2:15.

40 Antonio María de Bucareli to the Baron de Ripperda, May 8, 1774, ibid., 2:51.
of the Interior Provinces to afford him "the protection and confidence which you merit." 41

De la Peña was not the only Spaniard who denounced de Mézières. Fray José Abad informed the viceroy that the Natchitoches commandant was "one of the principal agents" encouraging a scandalous trade which was the "sole cause of the complete perdition of ... [the Indians'] souls and of the destruction of the province." 42 The implication was that the traders promoted warfare and drunkenness among the Indians so that they could profit from the sale of liquor and weapons. De la Peña and Fray Abad maintained that de Mézières abused his authority by protecting and encouraging traders who, together with their patron, profited by corrupting and exploiting the Indians at the expense of the public welfare and the tranquillity of the province.

Actually, de Mézières, who was willing to risk everything in his service of the king, resorted to borrowing money on his own personal credit in order to supply the Indians with trade goods and gifts to maintain their loyalty. By the time he died, his accumulated capital was

41 Bernardo de Galvez to de Mézières, March 22, 1779, ibid., 2:245.
42 Fray José Abad to Bucareli, July 15, 1774, ibid., 2:67.
Although he did have a vested interest in the Indian trade, and he was ready to resort to force when necessary, like St. Denis, he preferred a relationship with Indian allies who had such a profound respect for the captain and his king that they were willing to identify and destroy any enemy who would dare insult such a wise, powerful, and benevolent father.

De Mézières's speech to the seven chiefs of the Tavaïazés, Tuacanas, Iscanis, and Quitseys, which he included in the report on his 1770 expedition to the Cadodacho tribes, epitomizes the effective discourse of the ancien capitaine. With it he effectively performed the duties of an old captain and a good père de famille, by proclaiming to the errant Indians both the consequences of remaining outside the great household of the Spanish king and the rules and the advantages of joining it.

De Mézières first sent word "by means of the friendly tribes" that he had come to see the unruly chiefs at the "command of the captain-general of Louisiana." The chief, father, and protector of the Indians wished to receive information about their willingness to make amends for the "great abuse" that caused the king to suspend their aid. De

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43 De Mézières to Unzaga Y Amezaga, May 20, 1770, ibid., 1:200-201; Bolton, "Historical Introduction," ibid., 1:83.
Mézières pointed to the Spanish flag and told them "that we had become naturalized as Spaniards, that our new and beloved monarch was the most powerful in the world, and emperor of the Indies." Although their misconduct had angered the king, his clemency and magnanimity equalled his immense power. If they changed their behavior and proved themselves deserving of his benevolence, the king would grant them the peace they sought. If, however, they failed to "desist from robberies and hostilities ... they would bring upon themselves the imponderable weight of his invincible arms." De Mézières reminded them of the "good example and inviolable fidelity of the friendly Cadodachos."

De Mézières next reminded the errant Indians that the Osages to the north, the Comanches to the west, and the Apaches to the south surrounded them, and that if they did not make peace with the Spaniards to the east they would be reduced to ashes by four horrible fires. De Mézières took special care to convince the Indians that they could not turn to the French to aid them against their enemies and the Spanish. He emphasized that

the very name of Frenchman had been erased and forgotten; that we were Spaniards, and, as such,

as sensitive to the outrages committed as we would be interested in avenging them as soon as they might be resumed.45

At the end of his speech, de Mézières "cordially and affectionately" took "the hand of each one of the surrounding Spaniards," purposely demonstrating and making "evident the close and sacred pact which binds us."46

The recalcitrant Indians made a number of excuses for their refusal to comply with the conditions for making peace with the Spanish king and his allies. Upon being invited to accompany de Mézières to Los Adaes so that "the Spaniards there, by whom they would be lovingly received, might report it to the great captain at San Antonio, who would be much pleased by such authentic testimony," they balked. De Mézières suggested that they were afraid. He interpreted their "irrational" behavior by explaining that they were "savages." "Vengeance is not a defect, but a virtue" with them he wrote, "and since in treachery they find the laurel for their most heroic deeds, their material natures do not imagine that there could be people endowed with more sublime thoughts."47 In his "Instructions for the Traders of the Cadaux D'Acquitoux and Hiatasses Nations," issued the

45Ibid.
46Ibid., 1:211.
47Ibid., 1:213.
previous February, de Mézières had stressed that the Indians must be taught that the protection of the king is "assured to all natives who comport themselves as becomes men."\textsuperscript{48}

To become true Frenchmen, the Indians were expected to abide by the rules. They would only acquire true honor in the service of the king. The old captain pleaded for the rational behavior which would permit him to direct the activities of the Indians in accordance with the king's will. The discourse of de Mézières illustrates how the contrast between reasoning men and brute beasts opened the door for the old captain to present himself as both mediator and master to the Indian tribes.

After the transfer of Louisiana to Spain, the exercise of royal authority continued to depend on the old captain in the frontier posts and inside the Indian villages. Beneath the superstructure of military and administrative titles, lies the ancien capitaine de milice. Carl Ekberg has shown that the tension that developed between local power and Spanish authority in colonial Ste. Genevieve was resolved when the local militia captain, François Vallé II, became town commandant and through his influence over the local

\textsuperscript{48}Instructions for the Traders of the Cadaux D'Acquioux and Hiatasses Nations, February 4, 1770, \textit{ibid.}, 1:149.
community brought it into Spanish service.\textsuperscript{49} The tranquillity and stability of frontier settlements such as Ste. Genevieve depended to a great extent on the willingness of the militia captain to support the commandant of the post. In the case of Ste. Genevieve, the tension ended when the militia captain became the commandant.

Under the authority of the Vallé militia captains, Ste. Genevieve remained stable as the Louisiana territory was transferred back to France and then to the United States in 1803. In 1804, Jean-Baptiste Vallé succeeded his brother François as commandant. According to Ekberg, the younger brother "made the transition from Spanish officer to American commandant of Ste. Genevieve without so much as batting an eye." Jean-Baptiste's son, Louis, attended West Point, and "by returning to Ste. Genevieve he helped to fulfill Thomas Jefferson's plan of turning the residents of Upper Louisiana into Americans."\textsuperscript{50} Authority, stability, local autonomy, and the benevolent care of the local populace were the characteristic features of Ste. Genevieve under the patriarchal authority of the Vallé family. The United States inherited the services of the Vallé patriarchs


\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., 83-85.
who presided over the Americanization of a post noted for intensely local loyalties.

Don Juan Filhiol

A young French militia captain who entered the service of Spain during the American Revolutionary War used the technique and tactics of the ancien capitaine to establish Fort Miro on the Ouachita river. He obtained a land grant from the governor, led settlers into the virgin territory, established a trading post, and convinced Governor Esteban Miró to provide the things needed to build the fort.

Jean Filhiol's early military service in Louisiana was rewarded by a grant of land as well as a commission as a "Capitaine des Milice" who served as "Commandant Civil et Militaire" of the Ouachita Post.51

On July 7, 1787, Filhiol convoked a local assembly at his new post to tell them that the governor-general has conferred on me the command of this post in order to safeguard the tranquillity of the inhabitants who are dependant and to look after all who contribute to their greatest well-being.52


52 "Address to an Assembly of Inhabitants of the Ouachita Post," July 7, 1787 in AGI, PC, leg. 188-c.
As a civil administrator Filhiol exercised royal authority by performing the functions of mayor, sheriff, judge, jury, and notary in his jurisdiction. Local inhabitants appeared before him with petitions for services that included agricultural improvements, repair of the jail, bills of sale, and regulation of prices.53

Filhiol’s correspondence with Governor Miró illustrates how the captain functioned as a channel of royal authority. A letter of August 25, 1790, for example, indicates that difficulties of communication called for the exercise of initiative on the part of the captain. Filhiol informed the governor that the people had requested a fort to provide a refuge for families and a place of retreat for hunters and those who worked in the wilderness. He then explained that he had made the decision to build the fort because he had not yet received a response to his last letter, and it would be too late in the season to begin after the governor’s reply, which he did not expect to receive until the next spring. Captain Filhiol also told Miró that he could depend on the lieutenant of his company to help to construct the fort if the local people failed to follow through on their commitment to the project. The inhabitants proved to be

53See documents in Natchez Trace Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Barker Archives, Box #1.
somewhat obstinate, and Filhiol reported in October that the Fort would not be completed until January.54

The relationship between the captain and the local community depended to a large extent on what he could do for the people and what the people were willing to do for him. The new Spanish rulers held their French captains responsible for control of Indians, settling of disputes, maintenance of enterprise, stalwart generalship, accurate reportage and constant, subtle intertribal and inter-trader diplomacy. In short, the captain was required to lead or direct all aspects of regional administration. Filhiol lived long enough to perform these services for the United States as well.

The ancien capitaine clearly presented himself as the pivotal link between the king and his people. The effective frontier commandant was a royal officer who could command the loyalty of the fictive kinship groups surrounding his post. By offering protection, provision, and justice, the old captain would lead his people to clothe themselves with a new French or Spanish identity. Taking command of a post required the royal officer to forge a link in the chain by winning the loyalty of the little captains or chiefs and

54Filhiol to Miró, August 25, 1790 and October 12, 1790, in Hardin, "Don Juan Filhiol and the Founding of Fort Miro," 468-69.
establishing a good working relationship with the local militia captain. The use of words and force by the ancien capitaine forged the strong link of the chain that tied the people—families, tribes, and traders—of the captain's post to the kingdom, confederacy, or federal republic which was best able to defend and protect his people and supply their needs.
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APPENDIX

THE BALLAD OF ST. DENIS*

In days of old, the king of France
Sent a band of pioneers
Across the sea, to guard a land
Beset with trials and tears
And hostile redmen who had ruled
This strange great land for years.

Then to old Louisiana
This band of brave men came
Led by a valiant Frenchman,
St. Denis was his name—
A bold commander who aspired to prove his monarch’s claim.

Day after day, he led his men
Thru this unsettled land
And when they grew morose or tired
"Twas he who cheered the band,
For he was gifted with the strength Men need when they command.

One day St. Denis led his men
Thru forest gloom and shade
And there they came upon a camp
And Indian tribe had made—
And there they settled on a bluff That rose above this glade.

And there they built, of sturdy pines,
A small fort, crude and low,

*Reprinted from Portré-Bobinski, Natchitoches, 1936.
Upon the bluff that overlooked
The redmen's camp below,
Where lazily the waters of
The old Red River flow.

Not many moons had waxed and waned
Before this kindly man
Had won the secrets and the hearts
Of the wild neighboring clan,
Known as the tribe of Natchitoches,
A mighty, fearless clan.

The King of Spain had sent his men
Across the Rio Grande
And from Presidio del Norte
They threatened all the land
Where bold St. Denis was ensconced
With his intrepid band.

A rumor reached St. Denis' ears
The Spaniards planned to wage
War on the tribe of Natchitoches
So he, their friend and sage,
Set out upon his perilous way,
The Spaniards strength to gauge.

At last he reached the Spanish fort
Where ruthless foes of France
Were deep in making heartless schemes
Of their proposed advance
But here, alas! St. Denis fell
A victim of romance.

Strange are the hearts of fearless men—
Strange are the ways of Fate—
St. Denis fell in love with one
Whose sire he could but hate—
Commandant of the gate!

The course of true love often runs
Upon a troublous way
But after trying times, Maria
Became his bride one day,
And they set out to join his men
Who waited far away.

There he rejoined his loyal men
And ably did defend
The fort from many hostile troops
    That sought his rule to end.
The redmen now were his allies--
    And he, their truest friend.

He later founded, near this fort,
    The quaint old trading post
Of Natchitoches, where good folks like
    To sit around and boast
Of those exciting days when he
    Was their forefathers' host.

He lived and fought and died, a man,
    Beloved and revered--
True patriot, who never knew
    An enemy he feared--
True pioneer, whose name to us
    Forever is endeared.

L'ENVOI

Sleep on, O valorous soldier,
    And peaceful be thy rest!
Sleep on, O valiant pioneer,
    Among God's happy blest
No nobler dust than thine lies on
    Louisiana's breast!

GRACE TARLETON AARON
VITA

Jerry Micelle was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana where he graduated from Landry Memorial High School in 1960. He received his B.A. degree in Political Science from Loyola University of New Orleans in 1964 and his M.A. in History from Louisiana State University in 1967.


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