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Sébastien Demichel, Mark Sven Hengerer (Eds.)

VIGILANCE AND THE PLAGUE

FRANCE CONFRONTED WITH THE EPIDEMIC SCOURGE DURING THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

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Table of Contents

Sébastien Demichel and Mark Sven Hengerer

Foreword

In recent years, state institutions across Europe have urged heightened public vigilance in response to major threats, including terrorism. In France, appeals have even been made for a so-called "*société de vigilance*".[1] The call for vigilance is not only directed at responsible officials, but also at the general public. It appeals to the willingness of potentially everyone to observe the world with regard to threats to supra-individual values and, if necessary, to take action in one way or another. However, this call for vigilance is not new, but was also heard in the early modern period.

We believe that it is worth investigating the call for vigilance and vigilance itself, particularly as the concepts *gouvernementalité, surveillance*, and *sousveillance* – originally coined by Michel Foucault or inspired by his writings and widely used to analyse the process of state formation – have not sufficiently taken into account this potential public willingness as an element that contributes to the construction of social order.[2] We thus revisit the great plague epidemic that ravaged Marseilles and huge swaths of Provence primarily during the years 1720 to 1722, not least in view of the function that plague outbreaks and the lazaret assumed in the problematic argumentation of Foucault's *Surveiller et punir* (*Discipline and Punish*)[3], and all the more so because this particular outbreak was often interpreted as a building block in systematically expanding proactive monarchical control over the population.

This publication sets out in some detail the results of our invitation to re-examine the extensive literature on this particular topic and the ongoing research projects in light of this shift in perspective and to focus on vigilance both in the narrower and in the broader sense of the term. If we condense the finding of

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1 Codaccioni, *La société de vigilance.*

2 To do so is aim of the interdisciplinary project, in the context of which the workshop herein represented was carried out, namely the Collaborative Research Center 1369 "*Vigilanzkulturen*" at Munich's Ludwig Maximilian University. Sébastien Demichel's dissertation, *Risque et vigilance sanitaire* was written primarily for the component-project focussed on plague control. For further references: https://www.sfb1369.uni-muenchen.de/index.html. notably, Beauvieux, "[...] l'ayant secouru jusque a la mort".

3 Cf. Hengerer, Vigilanz und Responsibilisierung, p. 128.

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these empirically rich studies somewhat, certain salient characteristics of a culture of vigilance throughout the early modern period in France become more clearly discernible. Plague epidemics had an extremely unsettling impact on the local regime. In response, it embraced small-scale bureaucratised monarchical government. This process went hand in hand with the emergence of lower strata of the population, who were charged with fulfilling political tasks. When crossing the erstwhile boundaries that existed between the public and private spheres, this often engendered an increased assumption of responsibility. Although corporately organised bourgeois circles resisted social elevation of the lower echelons – particularly of artisans and small traders – their attempts ultimately proved futile. The tightening of controls over the lowest social ranks – whether through internment or micro-surveillance –drew consensus in this expanded political sphere.

The plague control institution, initially based upon the Italian model, was multi-functional: it served as a conduit for access to ports, ascertained the risk of plague, and implemented quarantine and disinfection measures. Though it failed in one particularly serious outbreak in 1720, it was generally successful in its remit. Furthermore, such a control centre was also set up along the Atlantic seaboard whenever the risk of plague was imminent, usually without long-term lazarets. The French monarchy, by dint of the intensive coordination of the various local and regional institutions specifically involved in the task, gradually assumed control. The Crown, or more precisely the Secretariat of State for the Navy, also played a seminal role in developing a correspondence system which over time was to span the entire Mediterranean region. The vast network boasted French consulates, vice-consulates, the Admiralty, the Chamber of Commerce, and Marseille's *bureau de la santé.* It also included local Intendants with their respective subordinate offices, other chambers of commerce and institutions, and various private individuals. This grid had multiple centres, allowing it to respond prudently to hazardous circumstances on the basis of stable communication channels.

Religion, in both its theological and practical pietistic dimensions, focussed on preserving both the individual and collective capacity for action. During an existential health crisis, with its concomitant isolation measures, religious bodies championed the social orientation of individuals and groups, thus striving for communitization [*Vergemeinschaftung*] as defined by Max Weber. Our examination of the plague epidemic that erupted during the reign of Louis XIII, which is our primary focus, points to the consolidation of political and administrative processes, enhanced techniques for acquiring knowledge about the state of affairs throughout the kingdom, the far-reaching internal pacification of the country, the mitigation of the long-lasting ramifications of external wars, as well as the easing of the tax burden that had exceeded the subsistence limit.

Let us now take a somewhat less abstract look at the more general results by the six individual contributors.

In her contribution, Fleur Beauvieux makes it clear how plague and its ensuing ramifications changed the institutional structure of the port-city's administration and expanded the hierarchy at either end of the social scale: on one hand, the French Crown became intensively involved in the administration, while on the other, new institutional *arrangements* were instigated locally and, in addition, other sections of the local population were involved in processes of legitimising and executing novel plague control measures. Marseilles' *bureau de la santé*, which was supposed to be responsible for protecting the city port against plague outbreaks, was scarcely involved during the epidemic, whereas external medical expertise was called upon. Furthermore, the plague epidemic was also to become the occasion for shaping the medical dimension of *police* action. The ensuing social diversification of political participation and the embrace of external expertise enabled the optimisation, in temporal terms, of a raft of public health measures in the areas of prevention, mobility control, care for the sick and dead, and disinfection. Five *actes déclaratifs de la santé* (declaratory health acts) allowed those responsible for the crisis management to communicate with the Crown and the public alike, and not just within the confines of the city, documenting the level of knowledge at their disposal, the measures being implemented to cope with the epidemic and the disinfection measures required in order to re-open the city. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that these five *actes* were imposed by an unusually large number of people and effectively delegated the execution of the required control measures to an equally unusually large number of city residents, thus rendering the urban space fully accessible. While there was some resistance to disinfection measures in private spaces and thus enabling access to valuable goods and belongings, the unusual integrative spread of the mandate succeeded in providing the publicly documented personnel involved in the disinfection campaign access to the private sphere, and thus ultimately to involve the entire population in making the re-opening of the city possible.

Régis Bertrand comprehensively analyses religious dimensions of vigilance both before and in the aftermath of the plague outbreak of 1720, including in Provence and in the papal territories located throughout the region. He first evokes the biblical command for vigilance and reminds us of the fact that people in early modern times were considerably more exposed to sickness than they are nowadays. On one hand, the Church advanced an explanation for the existence of plague, while, on the other, it offered material and spiritual support as well as forms of action and hope. Ultimately it was to create a sacred plague memorial landscape. Its explanation for plague epidemics – the result of contravening Divine Will – was to impel people to introspect and revise self-descriptions, and insisted

upon the collective action-like dimension of overcoming plague outbreaks; the focus was thus on sociality and the future, which is particularly evident in the ideally collectively binding vows made by city councils as well as in the emergence of religious processions on city streets. When it came to individual action, changes to contracts and last will and testaments can be found, as can reflections in the liturgy, in various forms of prayer books, as well as in sacred objects such as Zacharias Crosses and holy medals. Notwithstanding the danger of contagion, the core ritual of death-bed care was upheld (though not that of the funereal rite), but this sacrifice was compensated for by indulgences. Even the Papal Seat in Rome sought to mitigate the stress generated by the upheaval of the ritualistic society, and the regional bishops were particularly active in this respect. Many dozens of chapels were dedicated to those saints often invoked in times of plague, notably the Virgin Mary and St. Roch, the latter who also happened to be the saint venerated in the chapels at many cemeteries (St. Rochus cemetery). In the Memoria, a special place was accorded to those victims who had died from plague related causes, particularly those who had sacrificed themselves in providing care, comfort and pastoral care for plague patients, while in the medium of sculpture (Saint Roch) and iconic painting in and at Marseilles' *bureau de la santé* reminders of the plague outbreak were unmistakable and duly enriched with an additional religious dimension.

Gilbert Buti's contribution sheds light on an equally little-known dimension of vigilant plague control, namely the preventative measures implemented on France's western and northern seaboards. He first briefly outlines the emergence of the overall highly successful health infrastructure across northern Italy (notably in Venice, Livorno, Genoa), which transformed an intermittent plague defence regime into permanent public offices or municipal tasks, as had existed in numerous cities across France. After 1665, all French cities were supposed to have had a permanent health council. The French model consisted of legally diverting plague-prone shipping traffic from the Levant and Barbary to only two Mediterranean ports, namely, by default, Marseilles and Toulon, each equipped with isolated quarantine facilities (in the case of Marseilles a series of offshore islands) and a new military hospital, completed in 1668, whose purpose was to isolate and disinfect people and goods alike, as well as an authority which, depending upon the vessel's documents and other available information, categorised ships according to the level of danger they posed and determined their respective duration for quarantine. Taxes levied on imported goods aboard non-Provençal ships contributed toward financing this undertaking. In the event of a plague epidemic with the potential to spread along the Atlantic coast, the Secretary of State for the Navy warned local institutions monitoring shipping traffic and instigated a quarantine regime, which operated at sea with strict controls on all incoming ships and provided

for quarantine periods of varying length depending on the risk assessment. Temporary hospitals were also set up on islands or on coastal strips at a distance from urban centres. Of the numerous initial projects to construct permanent lazarets, only the one in Le Havre came to fruition, and it remained in operation until the 1760s. Conversely, no permanent *bureau de la santé* were established. At times central government banned ships from entering port; in many places people went well beyond their remit, ignoring directives, even going so far as to burn ships that were deemed suspicious. Any infraction of quarantine regulations, including the transport of contaminated goods, but especially making a false declaration, were severely punished, usually with the death sentence. It was only by working in close collaboration with the various local and regional institutions that the French Crown was to become the institutional centre for plague prevention along the Atlantic seaboard over the course of the eighteenth century.

In his contribution, Sébastien Demichel addresses yet another equally little-known dimension of vigilance, namely prevention of plague through correspondence. The *Ordonnance de la Marine* of 1681 already mandated French consuls to correspond with the Secretary of State of the Navy, with the Admiralty and the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles. Their reports frequently featured their assessment of prevailing epidemics. This process led to the establishing of a communication network in which even individual sea-faring vessels were described in great detail. This network also encompassed the Intendants from coastal regions who were repeatedly asked by the central government to be on high-alert concerning the dangers posed by a plague outbreak. Furthermore, Marseilles' *bureau de la santé* and its regional subordinate bureaux corresponded intensively in such a way that a polycentric communication network was created, thus interconnecting the central government, various institutions along the seaboard and in the ports with the French consulates and vice-consulates along the coasts of the Mediterranean. Although subject to certain cyclical fluctuations, this network's overall volume of correspondence increased over the course of the eighteenth century. This epistolary network occasionally gave concrete warnings, often stressing the need for vigilance while repeatedly highlighting the need for people to assume responsibility.

Nicolas Vidoni reconstructs the prevention control measures implemented during a state of legal exceptionalism over the course of the great plague of the early 1720s in the cities of Aix and Montpellier, both of which were ultimately spared the epidemic onslaught. The cities constituted a multifaceted and varied experimental field for developing novel forms of state surveillance over the population. As such, they integrated broader population groups in the legitimation and exercise of political and executive functions. In Aix, a re-configured *bureau de la santé* brought together various representatives from the city's institutions, notably

those who had not fled the city following the onset of the epidemic, and who could create legitimacy for innovative practices. This patchwork was to replace defunct institutions such as the city council and the local *bureau de police* and thus filled the institutional vacuum. In Montpellier, where, conversely, the city council and the *bureau de police* had not collapsed, Parliament reinstated the local *bureau de la santé*, which was formed on a more socially inclusive basis by integrating merchants and physicians alongside such conventional elite figure as the Consuls, *officiers*, and *avocats*. There was some resistance to the preventative measures introduced by the newly formed authorities in Montpellier and Aix. In both cities, high-ranking circles organised by the citizens' militias refused to cooperate with the newly established leaders among the lower classes. Agreement could be reached, however, concerning surveillance measures targeting highly-feared foreign traders and the poor: they were interned in Aix despite some opposition, whereas they were only monitored more closely in Montpellier. In both Aix and Montpellier, there were, inter alia, inspections of apartments and mandatory registration of outsiders and domestics, notwithstanding differences on the street and residential block level. In Aix, for instance, cleaning personnel bearing recognizable insignia were permitted to enter private dwellings, whereas in Montpellier surveillance tasks were delegated to those further down the social scale (inter alia to artisans) and allocated to a large number of people. These measures to foster acceptance among the populace were accompanied by an intensive public relations campaign. Innovative vigilance practices were so intensively enforced and bureaucratized, as for example with the printing of forms, that the Intendant of Provence was astonished that his intrusive Decree of 27 October 1720 concerning systematic and written surveillance did not encounter any resistance.

Thanks to his analysis of the Royal Councils' decision-making practices during the time of crisis marked by an under-researched plague epidemic in the years after 1629, Thorsten Busch draws attention *ex negativo* to just how extremely conjectural the newly developed or enhanced vigilance techniques were in the context of the plague outbreak of the 1720s. The plague epidemic that struck France in the 1630s was scarcely recognizable as such for the Royal Councils, which, in institutional terms, were still in a downright state of flux against the backdrop of a widespread plague outbreak throughout the kingdom on account of malnutrition and internal war campaigns; this endemic was considered as part and parcel of normality, even if the Royal Court and the king's entourage avoided it as best they could, which was quite challenging in view of how rampant it was within the army ranks. The epidemic was not least a consequence of attempts to militarily terminate the permanent conflict with the Habsburg Monarchy, even at the price of overloading the kingdom's tax burden with all its concomitant negative consequences for the population. The Royal Councils' decisions indicate to what extent the

management of the ramifications of war, plague, and impoverishment was reactive in nature. Uprisings served as indicators to the fact that the king's subjects' limits of resilience had been exceeded and thus explains the initially astonishing practice by the Council of generally granting requests for relief, support, tax reductions or permission to levy local taxes, even when tax collectors were those asking for such permission. While the king's army traveling around the kingdom on military campaigns brought hardship, plague, and scarcity in its wake, his councillors also offered tax amnesties and pardons.

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Fleur Beauvieux

Vigilance in Marseilles during the Plague Outbreak of 1720–1722

Disinfection Procedures within the scope of Marseilles' *Actes déclaratifs de la santé*

Institutional policing and urban administration have often been analysed from the standpoint of population surveillance across periods of high epidemic-related fatality levels during outbreaks of plague. These analyses have drawn partly upon the works of Michel Foucault, as well as on research presented during the 2010s and which continues to this day to be carried out on the gradual professionalising of urban police forces.[1] While the effective management of epidemics throughout the early modern era undoubtedly contributed to the increasing implementation of restrictive procedures for monitoring urban populations, the urgent need to prevent the spread of plague and the broad definition of the term "police" under the Ancien Régime invite us to think beyond these public health measures alone, and moreover to consider the function of "vigilance" specific to those times where the death toll was significant.

As for the specific term "vigilance," as opposed to "surveillance," it did indeed belong to the vernacular under the Ancien Régime. From the very outset, the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* defines *la vigilance* as a (French) feminine noun, denoting "care accompanied by diligence and activity"[2]. The dictionary's fourth edition revisits and elaborates on the earlier definition:

> Attention to something, or to someone, accompanied by diligence and activity. *Great vigilance. Extreme vigilance. Pastoral vigilance. He is very vigilant. Vigilance is an essential quality in any General. In this instance he exercised the utmost possible vigilance. Lack of vigilance. To rely on the vigilance of others.*[3]

1 With regard the emergence and establishment of urban and subsequently state police forces throughout Europe in the early modern era, see some contributions from the collective work *Métiers de police.* Michel Foucault's best-known text linking plague and surveillance forms one part of *Discipline and Punish.* Subsequently, Foucault thought about the modes of governmentality linked to what he termed "biopolitics," i. e. a "power over life" of leaders and their police relays (see notably his series of lectures *Security, Territory, Population* and *Birth of Biopolitics*). For an analysis of how the Foucauldian proposals were received by historians of policing, see the article by Vincent Denis, L'histoire de la police après Foucault.

2 *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie Françoise*, 1694, p. 617.

3 *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie Françoise*, 1762, p. 937.

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This set of connotations, which is broader in scope, primarily concerns objects and *not* people. Also of note is the proactive element linked to the notion of vigilance: it is not merely a matter of being passively vigilant, but rather of proceeding with diligence, or promptness. As can be observed above, no link to any form of professionalisation is offered as an example of how the term is or should be applied, although one example does indicate that it denotes a quality that can be attributed to a military rank. Hence, *la vigilance* bespeaks of a certain attitude or form of behaviour, or implies the quality of attentiveness.

It should be noted, howeveas was the case inr, that in this self-same dictionary, no entry for the concept of "surveillance" is to be found before its fifth edition of 1798. It was only in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the ultimate decline of the Ancien Régime that surveillance was defined as "the act of keeping close watch on."[4] And it was not until the dictionary's sixth edition, dating from the nineteenth century, that a professional body – in this particular instance the police – was cited amongst the illustrative examples:

> SURVEILLANCE. singular, feminine noun. *Act of keeping a close watch on.* The proper education of girls depends primarily on their mother's surveillance. To exercise active, continuous surveillance over someone or something. To be placed under someone's surveillance. He has been under the surveillance of high-level law enforcement for so many years. He must remain under surveillance for two years.[5]

Hence, within the context of the early modern era, the concept of surveillance belongs to the historian's analytical categories rather than to the vernacular speech of the early eighteenth century, even if surveillance practices per se did pre-date the inclusion of the term in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* in the aftermath of the French Revolution. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the urban police did not yet exist as a fully professionalized group, and if we focus our attention on the status that the free port of Marseilles then represented, the *offices de police* only date from 1699[6], i. e. a mere twenty years prior the outbreak of the Great Plague of Marseilles of 1720. In fact, not only does the term itself but also the very notion of vigilance seem to have characterized the measures taken by the urban police and also, more broadly speaking, by local residents who were mobilized for the good of their native city in the early years of the eighteenth century.

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4 *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie Françoise*, 1798, p. 619.

5 *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie Françoise*, 1832–1835, p. 2801.

6 Marseilles' *offices de police* were instigated in 1699 and acquired the following year by the *échevins,* the municipal magistrates. For a brief review of the institutional case of the Marseilles police and their normative action throughout the eighteenth century, see Beauvieux and Puget, Collecter pour ordonner.

This Great Plague, which erupted in the final days of the spring of 1720, was an unforeseen epidemic; following its initial manifestation it was poorly monitored and demographically resulted in the death of almost half the population of the city of Marseilles and the so-called *terroir*, its surrounding territory, i. e. an estimated 50 000 fatalities. The contagion subsequently spread to Provence and parts of Languedoc, causing the death of 120 000 individuals in total, i. e. one third of the entire Provençal population. The lockdown imposed on Marseilles, by dint of which city authorities sought to confine the further spread of the outbreak, was to last for nearly three years, a period punctuated by two epidemic waves within the city walls, the most destructive of which was that of 1720, lasting almost six months (from July to November-December) and which was responsible for the majority of epidemic related fatalities. It was followed by a brief recurrence during May 1722 when some 200 people succumbed to the contagion. Full resumption of the city's international trade did not materialise until early 1724.[7]

In terms of who actually wielded power within the city port, Marseilles was governed by four *échevins*, i. e. municipal magistrates who were replaced in pairs every second year, under the authority of a *gouverneur-viguier* [governor-vigilante], and an assembly of notables, many of whom were merchants earning their livelihood from maritime trade. Ever since 1669, Marseilles had been a free port, i. e., no excise duties were to be paid on merchandise passing through its port, and a major part of its economic activity was predicated upon trade originating in other Mediterranean seaports and the *Échelles du Levant*.[8]

Following the epidemic's initial eruption in the summer of 1720, the *État royal* [Royal State] placed Marseilles and its surrounding territory under military supervision: the chevalier Charles-Claude Andrault de Langeron was appointed military commander on 3 September 1720, whereupon he was entrusted with full powers, notably those of policing and justice.[9] This represented an unprecedented development in terms of who was ultimately responsible for reinforcing epidemic controls, for it usually befell the Parliament of Provence to exercise these exclusive rights. How, then, are we to view this link between *gouvernementalité* – the art of government in the Foucaldian sense of the term – and vigilance against the backdrop of this epidemic of 1720–1722? This article will set out to analyse this subject by dint of a specific source, namely, the city's declaratory acts, the so-called *Actes déclaratifs*

7 With regard to a precise chronology of the plague outbreak in Marseilles during 1720–1722, we refer to our summary article Beauvieux, Marseille en quarantaine, p. 14. For more detailed information, see the work by Carrière/Courdurié/Rebuffat, *Marseille ville morte.*

8 See Carrière, *Négociants marseillais au XVIII^e siècle.*

9 Archives municipales de Marseille (AMM), FF 292, Registre de Peste, Royal Commission of 4 September 1720.

de la santé pertaining to public health measures, which were dispatched at regular intervals to the royal authorities in Versailles. In particular, we will examine the most complete and detailed *Acte déclaratif*, namely, the Act dated 1 December 1722, an Act which marked the end of the plague outbreak and which was drawn up in the aftermath of the disinfection campaign executed in the autumn of 1722. Finally, we will describe the measures taken by the commissaires responsible for implementing these disinfection procedures in the city of Marseilles and the ramifications of such injunctions on practices in the field.

1 A Unique Source: Marseilles' *Actes déclaratifs de la santé*

Our examination of this subject matter is based upon an in-depth investigation of a truly original source linked to a period in which an epidemic was raging, namely, the city of Marseilles' *Actes déclaratifs de la santé*. These specific Acts, however, must be viewed against the overall normative production related to public health, a field which constituted one of core tasks for the urban police during the early modern era.

La Police de la Santé during the Early Modern Era

During normal times, public health formed part of the police's prerogatives, as it did in times of epidemic from the eighteenth century onward. In his *Traité de la police*, Nicolas Delamare devoted an entire book, *De la santé* [About Health], the fourth of the first volume published in 1905, directly by appointing the military commander to this very question, in which he points out that:

> Something so precious as health is at the same time so fragile that one is in danger of losing it at any moment; this may happen to anyone, either externally through injuries to their body, or internally by the disorder or disturbance to their moods, & to safeguard them from such dangers remains one of the Police's major tasks.[10]

Though most rubrics in Delamare's book refer to the hygienic supervision of foodstuffs and professions linked to the health sector such as physicians, the twelfth book focuses on leprosy, while number thirteen *De l'Epidémie, contagion ou*

10 Delamare, *Traité de la police*, p. 534.

peste [About the Epidemic, Contagion or Plague] is entirely devoted on how to control an outbreak of plague, as does the final title in the first volume, which duly reminds readers of the paramount importance of sealing off any affected towns or villages so as to thwart the risk of other locales throughout the region and across the realm being contaminated.

Delamare's publication primarily relates to the prevailing situation in Paris. In southern coastal cities such as Marseilles, the *bureaux de la santé* [local health offices] were in operation, often working in tandem with a lazaret – a quarantine station for maritime goods, ship crews and passengers – whose core mission was to impede an outbreak of plague within the city.[11] Furthermore, it was the Parliament of Provence that was responsible, notably during epidemic outbreaks in the seventeen century, for instigating law enforcement and for managing contagious outbreaks in the provinces, as was the case in 1649–1650 for what turned to be the final episode of the infectious disease prior to the eighteenth century.[12] The 1720 epidemic thus represents a rupture in terms of which actors and institutions were responsible for plague control and its eradication and, more broadly, for the overall health of the city's residents. In the autumn of that year, following the failure of Marseilles' *bureau de la santé* to contain the contagion to within the lazaret, municipal authorities (comprising four *échevins* and a *gouverneur-viguier*) became overwhelmed by the deteriorating sanitary circumstances, leading the State to finally intervene directly by appointing the military commander Charles-Claude de Langeron. This was the first instance in which the Royal State, over the course of the outbreak, made such a forceful intervention; it represented a clear break from previous epidemics during the seventeen century at a time the French State was gradually establishing itself, but was nonetheless allowing provincial parliaments to instigate measures for controlling plague epidemics.

One notable outcome of the *échevins* acquiring the *offices de police* in 1700 was that de Langeron effectively found himself at the head of Marseilles' urban policing body, which constituted his key intervention agency for managing the campaign against the epidemic. Indeed, the above-mentioned *bureau de la santé* was effectively side-lined for most of 1720 and 1721. This was not just on account of its failure to prevent the outbreak of plague in Marseilles in the first instance, but also because the health intendants had deserted the city during the epidemic's first wave.[13] Once the epidemic was no longer rampant in the city and it was becoming a question of deciding whether to indefinitely pursue the city's lockdown

11 On this topic refer to Hildesheimer, *Le bureau de la santé de Marseille sous l'Ancien Régime.*

12 On the role parliaments played in managing epidemics vis-à-vis that of the central government, particularly in 1720, see Caddeo, Santé publique et parlements au XVIII^{e} siècle.

13 Refer specifically to Mourre, La peste de 1720 à Marseille et les Intendants du Bureau de Santé.

policy, members of the *Bureau de la santé* gradually started participating in municipal deliberations, albeit invariably in a subordinate role to the municipal authority set up by the French Crown.

Producing *Actes déclaratifs de la santé de la ville* was part and parcel of this institutional complexity and, during the 1720 outbreak, these Acts were to become a source of military-police authority incarnated in the figure of the chevalier de Langeron and those men under his command.[14] On both a local and urban level, these *Actes déclaratifs* constituted one visible aspect of the *police de la santé* in place during an epidemic which had initially ran rampant and which authorities struggled to contain within the confines of the city of Marseilles. Addressed to the royal authorities, these Acts were documents outlining those measures needed to ensure the city's continuous healthy status when confronted with the epidemic. Examining their contents has enabled historians to observe an emerging body of police knowledge under construction, a body of knowledge that was adapting to the infectious disease's trajectory, and which can confirm the decisive role played by the policing institution in controlling public health, a function customarily assigned to the *bureau de la santé.*

In his article devoted to the role played by the *police de la santé* in public health, Nicolas Vidoni draws attention to the rationale underpinning policing policy in this field, one predicated upon medical knowledge and know-how derived from other institutions: in the case of Paris, for example, it was the link between the Royal Society of Medicine and the Lieutenancy General of Police which, particularly from the 1770s onward, made it possible to better monitor the health of Parisians[15] thanks to the public health measures taken by physicians in the field. One should bear in mind, however, that at the turn of the eighteenth century, Marseilles did not as yet have its own medical academy; it was still dependent on other cities. Indeed, medical practitioners from Montpellier were dispatched to the great port city to diagnose plague once the initial suspicious fatalities occurred.[16] Physicians, irrespective of their provenance, were subsequently associated with the control system set up to combat contagion within the city, and their practical medical recommendations were adapted in a bid to formulate injunctions issued by the municipality. The Great Plague of Marseilles in 1720 could thus be considered as a foundational event in terms of the sanitary role of the police during an epidemic, replacing for a time the local *bureau de la santé*, and working in conjunction with other actors from the medical sphere.

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14 On this point, see the article, Beauvieux, Épidémie, pouvoir municipal et transformation de l'espace urbain.

15 Vidoni, Protéger la santé des Parisiens au XVIIIe siècle, pp. 97–110.

16 See Signoli, La mission médicale montpelliéraine à Marseille.

Usages and Number of Health Acts during an Epidemic

If health-related concerns were a constituent element of urban policing and one of the prime areas for intervention during lockdowns, public health must nevertheless be situated in the context of all the legislative acts produced during such an emergency. Indeed, by its very nature, plague was a form of epidemic that profoundly devasted human society, particularly whenever it could not be prevented, as evidenced in Marseilles in 1720. If we take into account all the Acts (and in particular the Ordinances), 37.12 % of them addressed public health concerns – in the sense of epidemic control – and thus occupied the top rank if compared with other focus points in legislation concerned with policing. This plague control can, however, be subdivided into different types of measures, broken down as follows:

	1720	1721	1722	Total (%)
Preventing Contagion	8	1	1	10
Movement of Goods and People	5	10	3	18
Administrative Procedures for the Dead and the Sick	6	5	3	14
Disinfection	3	8	9	20
	22	24	16	**62 (37.12 %)**

Figure 1: Plague control measures in Police Ordinances issued during the Marseilles epidemic.[17]

This chronological breakdown illustrates the epidemic's various supervisory and administrative phases, which were also predicated upon its actual presence in the city. Hence, the least number of ordinances were required for issues related to preventing contagion; this is scarcely surprising given how plague had overwhelmed Marseilles in 1720 without any forewarning. One thus notes the failure of any prophylactic measures in face of the disease's virulence. Very few ordinances addressing this issue were adopted during 1721 and 1722: unquestionably, the city's elites deemed such measures ineffective, insofar as the contagion had not yet been completely contained. Much more numerous, however, were those ordinances aimed at restricting and controlling to the fullest extent possible the movement of goods and people – in other words, curbing the spread of the epidemic. These ordinances were primarily centred on the year 1721, as the city was no lon-

17 This table was constructed from an analysis of all the legislative acts the municipal authorities issued during the period 1720–1722, i. e., from the onset of the outbreak of plague in the summer of 1720. Two registers containing Police Ordinances, which are kept in AMM, have been taken into account: FF 292, *Registre de peste,* and FF 182, originals of police documents and other relevant items from 1717 to 1725.

ger directly affected by Black Death but was yet surrounded by it, given that contagion was still wreaking havoc across Provence.

If we consider how these ordinances equally served as preventive injunctions – and not merely for applying restrictive measures on the local population – we note that more so than routine hygienic measures (i. e., sweeping and cleaning the streets, continually circulating water through the streets so as not to allow rainwater or water from foodstuffs to stagnate, etc.), it was the act of isolating and rupturing contact with infected locales that best ensured protection against plague for eighteenth-century men and women. Those ordinances dealing with how to supervise the dead and the sick were centred on the end of 1720; chronologically speaking, this corresponded to the gradual waning of the epidemic and the beginnings of its ultimate control: a small number of ordinances were subsequently adopted in 1721, and very few in 1722 (where those from the previous year were simply reactivated). Generally speaking, a drop in the number of regulations directly linked to managing the plague in 1722 was to be observed, despite the temporary relapse in May of that year: this can be explained by the fact that either ordinances from previous years remained in force – the major limitation of such normative texts is that we cannot know how long a given ordinance remained in force or the date of its repeal, and moreover the need to legislate was not as urgent as when the contagion originally flared up. Or, and this appears to have been the case, the epidemic outbreak had been swiftly contained and the small number of those affected by this "second wave" did not call for a similar level of controls as in 1720 or 1721. Compared with the initial months of the epidemic, this temporary relapse in May 1722 did not provoke a massive flight from Marseilles and the city falling into utter disarray. As for those ordinances making provisions for disinfection measures, which, in turn, would serve as the basis for future normative texts when it came to producing *Actes déclaratifs de la santé*, they were all centred on the period 1721–1722, after the peak of the epidemic had already subsided.

37.12 % of all ordinances and policing regulations issued during the period 1720–1722 focussed on developing normative health regulations. Surmounting the epidemic clearly represented a top priority for the military-urban authority enacting these regulations. The other spheres impacted in developing such police measures were typical of the Ancien Régime: economic management thus occupied 35.32 % of the normative output during the outbreak (i. e. fifty-nine ordinances), given that the primary function of the city administrators and those involved in policing was to feed the people. This was followed by those focused on police supervision – including public safety and law and order issues, but also magistrates, municipal officers, and policing personnel, i. e. the "professionals" or those in the process of becoming so – which was at the core of thirty-three police ordinances issued during that period (19.76 % of the total), and finally the ideological and social

framework (including religion), which only applied to thirteen ordinances, i. e., 7.78 % of all regulations.

The Specificity of the *Actes déclaratifs de la santé de la ville*

Given the widespread disarray provoked by the epidemic, the period during which the contagion raged was one of intense regulation and saw the creation of more than 200 police ordinances in the years between 1720 and 1722.[18] As part of this prescriptive process, the *Actes déclaratifs de la santé* routinely served to review, in tandem with the royal authorities, every measure that had been undertaken to eradicate plague, and thereby to declare that the contagion was well and truly under control and no longer wreaking havoc. The Acts were drawn up under the name of the military commander Langeron and the serving *échevins* following a meeting convened at Hôtel de Ville, jointly with "the principal municipal officers," notably "the Prosecutor for the King and the Police, the health intendants, deputies from the chamber of commerce, hospital directors, several general commissaires and various other individuals representing the city's neighbourhoods and parishes, as well as other noteworthy citizens."[19] Unlike those diverse ordinances bearing but a single signature, namely, that of the head of the municipality, the collective signature on these Acts ordinarily served to guarantee the accuracy of the facts reported therein. Alongside the *bureau de police* and its representatives, various social actors operating across a variety of urban settings and locales (hospitals, trade, maritime health related to the port, etc.) were included.

In all, five *Actes déclaratifs de la santé* were formulated during the outbreak; their form varied depending on the evolving level of expertise concerning the epidemic and its impact upon the city and its residents. The Act of 30 September 1721, for example, was merely some three pages long and assumed the form of a plea to re-open Marseilles, arguing that there were no longer any plague-stricken patients within the city, and moreover declared that new general health quarantine measures were going to be implemented for more than a month in order to ensure that the disease be completely eradicated. Accompanied by a Declaratory Act "of what had transpired in the city of Marseilles and its *terroir* during the health quar-

18 On this question, see two previously published articles: Beauvieux, Épidémie, pouvoir municipal, et transformation de l'espace urbain, pp. 29–50; Beauvieux/Vidoni, Dispositifs de contrôle, police et résistances pendant la peste de 1720, pp. 53–61.

19 *Acte déclaratif de la santé* in Marseille on 30 September 1721, in: Jauffret, *Pièces historiques*, p. 351.

antine between 1 October and 9 November 1721,"[20] the Act of 30 September set out in detail the key health measures adopted. Yet again, this document was signed by each individual municipal officer. In addition to the military commander and the *échevins*, sixty-six persons or more ("etc.") co-signed the Act, inter alia, intendants from the *bureau de la santé*, trade deputies, general commissaires.

What makes this source truly unique is how the measures to be adapted were set out in detail: focus was not on surveillance and segregating the healthy from the sick, or how corpses should be handled – even if such measures may inevitably have featured – but rather on those disinfection procedures that would facilitate an "exit" from the prevailing plague-ridden plight. What ensued was a set of practices put in place whose objective was to restore the city's health as a whole – and that of its inhabitants in particular – in such a way that would enable resuming the routine functioning of the city and the winding down of quarantine procedures. Ultimately, it was a matter of compiling those police ordinances issued dealing with disinfection and their implementation, for this disinfection phase could last for many months on end. These injunctions were to be found, in part, in the Declaratory Acts, sometimes copied out in full, as were the outcomes of the implemented health and safety practices in the form of reports. Hence, the Act of September 30 was meant to be both preventive in intent and also an inventory of past experiences, notably those measures that had proven effective, and about which the municipality had to inform the Royal State. Only three such Declaratory Acts are to be found in the *Registre de peste* [plague register], for the Act from the year 1720 was not listed there. They do not seem to be as elaborate as those sent to the Royal State, however: the Act of 1 December 1721, for instance, merely comprised the previous ordinance that had been recopied.[21] Hence, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many health acts were transmitted to the Royal State based solely on what can be found in the local archives, but this channel of communication would have been used routinely.

From the standpoint of the legal status that such acts assumed, no specific way of codifying is evident and their codification varied from one act to the next, depending on who signed it and the relevant measures to be implemented. The final Act, drawn up in 1722, differed in this respect: it was more akin to a collection, i. e. a cluster of texts of a similar nature – police ordinances and more structured regulations in several aspects – assembled in an orderly whole in an attempt to fashion a coherent law, structured and organised according to a specific programme.[22]

20 Ibid., pp. 353–358.

21 AMM, FF 292, *Registre de peste, Acte déclaratif de la santé* 1 December 1721.

22 Gaudemet, Codes, collections, compilations, p. 3.

This collection was based on pre-existing texts which were not only copied but also grouped together in an organised fashion in an attempt to adapt the rules to the requirements of that particular time, in this specific instance to those of the epidemic. In addition, there was the cumulative aspect of the knowledge and insights obtained by law enforcement agencies, thus facilitating the drafting of these acts to become more precise and detailed over time, depending on which particular measures taken by the city administration had worked or failed during the outbreak of plague.

The last specific feature of these Acts was that, as with the Ordinances, they were made public and known to city residents. They were to be found copied, for example, in reports related to outbreaks of plague, and not just in those emanating from the existing political authorities. Nicolas Pichatty de Croissainte, whose function was that of the king's prosecutor in the police and the city's orator, made mention of these Acts in his publication, as did Father Paul Giraud, who copied the Declaratory Act of 30 September 1721 in Folios 295–296.[23] Two other chroniclers of plague reports,[24] who lived through the 1720 epidemic and had first-hand experience of its impact within the city walls, also alluded to these particular administrative documents in their accounts. These documents emanating from urban government had a double destination: the Royal State and the city's residents, in a somewhat similar vein to the police ordinances that were read, posted in public, and shouted aloud during the Ancien Régime.

2 The Final Act of 1 December 1722: Lifting Quarantine

In the wake of the second successive epidemic wave to hit Marseilles in May 1722, those population control procedures adopted in 1720–1721 were reactivated and the military commander officially returned to retake administrative control of the city on 30 May 1722.[25] Even if only 200 plague-related fatalities were recorded, quarantine measures were once again tightened and the French Crown advocated a re-

23 Pichatty de Croissainte, *Journal abrégé*; Giraud, *Journal historique.*

24 Bertrand, *Relation historique*; Roux, *Relation succincte.*

25 In the aftermath of the initial wave of the epidemic during 1721, the military commander Langeron turned over command to the city's ordinary municipal government (the *échevins* and the *gouverneur-viguier*), even though the lockdown of the city had not yet been lifted. However, following the relapse of 1722, he was re-instituted with full powers by the French Crown (AMM, FF 292, *Registre de peste*, Royal Commission of 30 May 1722).

newed general disinfection campaign in the summer of 1722 to include the city of Marseilles and its environs. It was only finally implemented in the autumn of that year on account of stiff resistance from local residents following its announcement. The *Acte déclaratif de la santé* of 1 December 1722 declaring the city's health status, on which we will now focus, evaluated this latest disinfection campaign.

The Disinfection Campaign: What was at Stake

The absence of any new plague-related victims, who had either succumbed to or survived the infectious disease, was not per se deemed sufficient reason to reopen Marseilles' urban area to people and goods coming from other cities and regions within the kingdom. Nonetheless, the French Crown demanded a thorough disinfection of the entire city and its surrounding territory in order that quarantine could be definitively lifted. By dint of such an operation, Marseilles' municipal authorities had to prove that there had been no fresh cases of plague over a period of several weeks and months. The most complete of the *Actes déclaratifs* formulated during that period was the Act of 1 December 1722,[26] whose date corresponds, in fact, to the final section of the Act (p. 31). Comprising thirty-two pages, and subsequently printed before being transmitted to the King's Council and stored in several archival locations, it differs from the other Acts in that it took into account not only Marseilles' urban area but also its adjacent regions, where the epidemic had also been wreaking havoc.[27] The Act features no less than 132 signatories, many of whom were physicians and surgeons who had fully participated in the public health campaign by sharing their medical knowledge in an attempt to bring this latest disinfection campaign to a successful conclusion.

The *Acte déclaratif* of 1 December 1722 thus included all relevant injunctions and a report concerning everything that had transpired between 5 September and 1 December of that year in order to enable the swift reopening of the city of Marseilles at the beginning of 1723 and thus to a resumption in commercial transactions. Along with re-establishing trade, re-opening the city was the key issue behind the formulation of this Act. Formally, this declaratory act of Decem-

26 Bibliothèque municipale à vocation régionale de l'Alcazar (BMVRA), 3611, Collection of various printed and handwritten pieces concerning the outbreak of plague of 1720 in Provence, *Acte déclaratif de l'état présent de la santé*, (now referred to as *Acte déclaratif de la santé* of 1 December 1722).
27 This consideration of the *terroir* came into play in other eighteenth century general police regulations: see the study carried out jointly with Julien Puget, Collecter pour ordonner.

ber 1 compiled nine separate documents, of different types: seven[28] were regulations on several aspects concerning specific disinfection procedures to be implemented according to the city district, the various urban locations or socio-professional groups involved (the city in general; shops or stalls run by second-hand clothes dealers; retail traders and their business premises; Marseilles' environs and its *terroir*; places of worship; merchants and their vessels docked in the port; shops sealed up for a second disinfection). A list of those individuals appointed to execute these orders was to be found at the end of each document,[29] with or without specifying the precise urban district where they would intervene in-situ (these could be commissaires for the urban area within the city walls, clerics or commissaires in charge of the *terroir*, under the orders of lieutenants).[30] In three of the above-mentioned regulations, reports were appended to the end of the documents with a list of sites that had already been visited, outlining the problems the commissaires had encountered, and the suspect items confiscated during disinfection (inter alia, fabrics, furniture still likely to be infected). Finally, a brief text concluded the Act, in which a few sentences were explicitly devoted to hospitals and galleys, attesting to the fact that no sick person had been discovered anywhere during the three months set aside for general disinfection. It was at the close of this final report that the names of those persons attesting to the completion of the actions therein described followed one after another, thus finalising the *Acte déclaratif* of 1 December 1722.

Hence, the objective of this ultimate Act was to attest to the fact that a general disinfection of Marseilles and its *terroir* had been executed, with the aim of lifting quarantine and thereby declaring an end to the outbreak. The stakes were at once economic and social, given that for several years the lives of local residents and tradesmen had been such that they were unable to move freely, either across the kingdom of France or throughout the Mediterranean region.

28 A regulation included several points where the orders therein were to be applied, and was therefore a detailed and numbered document, whereas an ordinance usually regulated one or two issues and is shorter, without necessarily going into detail about the relevant policing procedures to be implemented.

29 See Figure 2, p. 27.

30 For the 253 commissaires concerned, a table was even inserted into the Act, indicating their distribution across the 42 districts of the Marseilles area, included in four *départements*.

Merchants' Opposition to the Final Disinfection Campaign of Summer 1722

This final general disinfection campaign did not, however, proceed without some resistance from the people of Marseilles. Indeed, if we leave aside administrative sources in order to examine how the public reacted to such enforced sanitary measures, we come across observations in the plague reports bearing witness to protests by city-dwellers during this plague-ridden period, notably during the summer of 1722 when this disinfection campaign had been initially envisaged. Hence, in July 1722, Father Paul Giraud describes in his *Relation historique* how

> At a meeting *Monsieur le commandant* [Langeron] convened at city hall, he asserted that His Majesty's aim was to disinfect all the merchandise in Marseilles. This proposal instantly had the entire city up in arms, and in view of its consequences it was the only thing talked about, and it was often a matter for debate, and for this reason the King was rebuked on several occasions. This project was greatly scaled back and was only carried out during the month of September in a way which we shall relate later.[31]

Although the language employed by the cleric concerning the public's level of dissent to this final disinfection campaign would suggest that their opposition did not give rise to any large-scale demonstrations or lead to violence, as was the case in August 1720 when two mini-riots erupted in front of the Hôtel de Ville, it is interesting to note how widespread the rejection of this campaign seemed and indeed manifested itself on every societal level. How should this public reaction be interpreted? Was it a case of Marseilles' residents becoming weary of the scheduled disinfection procedures and the more comprehensive public health measures to which they had been subjected for almost two years? In another written account of the outbreak, this time by a local merchant, Pierre-Honoré Roux, who became one of the city's *échevins* in the decades following the outbreak, it was noted how the general population was pleased about the small number of sick cases registered between 29 June and 5 July 1722 (there were six, and only five fatalities). And yet, this development also induced a sentiment of "imaginary quarantine"[32] amongst city-dwellers, who ostensibly could not imagine that the epidemic would persist to such a degree, and how they were becoming less and less willing to accept living in isolation and to endure the various health constraints imposed

31 Giraud, *Journal historique*, f. 331.

32 Roux, *Relation succincte*, p. 91.

upon them.[33] Furthermore, Roux also penned an extensive account of the protests against the disinfection measures proposed by the municipality:

> Mr de Langeron left all the establishments of Mr de Pilles [the governor-vigilante] unchanged, and he maintained the order that he [de Pilles] had established and he gives a most gracious welcome to citizens of low status who come to visit him, as he did to those living in better conditions, everyone praises his honesty; but soon afterwards they speak in a different tone: he has just declared that the foreign ministers have requested that all the goods and furniture in the city undergo a general disinfection, without distinction or exception. He proposed this to the *échevins* who soon spread the word. Immediately everyone rose in anger, this news inflames the public more than the plague itself, the women possessive of their furniture, livelier and quicker in carrying out a task than the men, soon send their complaints to him and he is forced to abandon his project with regard to furniture; he still persists in asking that those goods likely to be used at an assembly which he holds be disinfected, but the merchants are opposed to this as well and assign this task to someone else. [34]

Unlike the two popular mini-riots which erupted due to starvation in the summer of 1720 during the contagious upsurge, dissent in the summer of 1722 was characterized only by noisy din and not by mass gatherings in front of the Hôtel de Ville. During the first wave, the city's more affluent social groups had effectively fled to their local *bastides* or country houses, entrusting the city's administration to those *échevins* who had stayed put. One can also detect a refusal to authorise the remobilising of the police in order that they enter people's homes and eject residents while disinfection procedures went ahead, despite the fact the police were not normally vested with such authority. Furthermore, such opposition was markedly social in character: it was clearly a case of resistance by property-owning merchants and individuals who did not want to entrust their properties and belongings into the hands of the commissaires and their auxiliaries, some of whom were of low social status – galley convicts – whom the general population did not trust. It was the fact that such a thoroughgoing clean-up had been planned "without distinction or exception" for the entire city that posed a problem in the way Pierre-Honoré Roux chronicled this widespread reluctance. The risk of damaging furniture and property thus seems to have fuelled this dissent. Finally, that such a request for a general disinfection had not only come from the Royal State, who had left Marseilles to its own devices for more than two years, but also from "foreign ministers" of countries with whom it was no longer possible to

33 Françoise Hildesheimer has studied this tendency to rapidly forget the plague experience, revealing the extent to which Ancien Régime populations tended to swiftly banish any traumatic memories of the epidemic immediately after its passage, as did those historians examining the subject. See Hildesheimer, *Des épidémies en France*, pp. 162–165 (section Le reflux et l'oubli).

34 Roux, *Relation succincte*, p. 92.

trade, flew in the face of Marseilles' sense of autonomy, a city which could no longer determine by itself whether it could reopen, and upon which state supervision had been imposed ever since the military commander had been appointed.

The Entire Population's Participation in the Disinfection Campaign

In a bid to blunt city residents' resistance and to avoid stoking any fresh tensions, the municipal authorities modified their modus operandi for governance in order to impose their latest disinfection campaign. Whereas strong authoritarian controls had been imposed during the contagion's initial months and years, this time round the entire population was being asked to become involved in the disinfection campaign, and thus effectively to take a stake in reopening the city. This not only made it possible to prevent any theft or damage to objects and furniture that might occur during the implementation of the disinfection procedures – a possibility the population feared – but also to have city-residents assume some responsibility and to involve them in ensuring that their native city escape the shadow cast by contagion.

The number of commissaires thus appointed in the Declaratory Act of 1 December 1722 was considerable, much higher in fact than during previous disinfections campaigns: 238 were appointed for operations within the urban precincts, 253 for the *terroir*, an area which was certainly less densely populated yet spatially much more extensive.[35] The private premises where the urban police were not permitted to enter or frequent on a regular basis were specifically protected by having their users and owners assume responsibility for disinfecting their own properties. Ergo, as far as religious houses were concerned, the urban police were not to get involved and the municipal authorities appointed ecclesiastical commissaires with the concurrence of the bishop of Marseilles:

> 4. M. the Bishop is willing to consent that the General Commissaires and the Individual Commissaires shall make the same inspection in all the [Religious] Communities in the City, both for Men and for Women, they will proceed there with the same exactitude as [they do] in Private Houses, in the following manner.
>
> Whenever a matter of inspecting a Girls' Convents, they shall refrain from entering them unless they are accompanied by an *Echevin*, as is the custom, and one of the Clergymen appointed for this purpose by the Bishop, whose names shall appear at the end of this Ordinance.

35 *Acte déclaratif de la santé* of 1 December 1722.

> And whenever it is a question of a similar search in the Men's Convents, it shall suffice that they be accompanied by an *Echevin*, as is the custom, and one of the Clergymen appointed for this purpose by the Bishop, whose names shall appear at the end of this Ordinance.[36]

Although the municipal authorities had the ultimate say on how and where to disinfect and on which procedures to implement, they did nonetheless delegate to each social group – in this case the religious orders – the task of putting these sanitary measures into practice. The disinfection campaign was thus planned in consultation with local communities, as can be gleaned from the number of signatures collected for the *Acte déclaratif* before it was forwarded to the Royal State. Appointing commissaires by district enabled creating this sense of accountability and of making public the names of those in charge of disinfection. The various lists contained in the Act, including the names of 491 city residents to be entrusted with temporary police duties, spoke for themselves: as a rule, we do not find such names in police sources, apart from those holding a policing function and who were professionals in the field, or those to whom the task of guarding of city had been vested. Here, we can thus witness an individualisation of policy, that is to say of the policing authority granted – in this case temporarily, for it was only valid for the time required to complete the general disinfection campaign – to individual local residents who were not professionals in the strict sense of the term, but who nonetheless participated in setting up a policing force focused on public health concerns whose objective was to bring an end to the plague outbreak. Unlike the ordinances or police regulations formulated during the early modern era – where the social structure was not typically considered in any other way than collectively – the lists of temporary commissaires added at the end of these regulatory documents in the *Acte déclaratif de la santé* enable us to know their individual identities: this constitutes the paradox of this list which gave access to a substantial number of names, an uncommon feature during the Ancien Régime. These Acts represented a call to individual accountability, a human trait normally considered a feature of the contemporary period, and how the role of the individual was envisaged in the aftermath of the French Revolution. It was that specific period of contagion that enabled this individualisation and its subsequent appearance in the historical sources. Coupled with ramping up levels of police knowledge and know-how, the eighteenth century equally saw the gradual empowerment of ordinary people, whose dissent can be gleaned in the sources.

36 Ibid., p. 10.

3 Decontaminating and Cleaning Marseilles: Disinfection Procedures

The year 1720, and much of the following year, were devoted to attempts to thwart and subsequently curb the further spread of the epidemic, in particular by instigating measures to control and isolate those impacted by the contagion. Spanning several months, the disinfection procedures at once espoused and coexisted with those measures originating in the special privileges assigned to the commissaires, thus enabling the development of new policing skills.

Commissaires' Division of Labour

In addition to the individual neighbourhood and block commissaires, who had been appointed on a quasi-permanent basis throughout the contagious period, the implementation of Marseilles' overall disinfection campaign led to the temporary appointment of new commissaires to carry out any task related to decontaminating the city. The table below, based upon the *Acte déclaratif* of autumn 1722, summarises these appointments for the final disinfection campaign, as well as the tasks assigned to the commissaires.

This table clearly indicates how commissaires were appointed in order to accomplish three distinct missions: to ensure "widespread disinfection" and they were thus spread right across Marseilles' various districts, or in the case of a more targeted disinfection that concerned a particular social group (e.g., secondhand clothes dealers), or specific locales (religious houses and churches, merchants' sea-going vessels in the docklands). In the *terroir,* moreover, it was not a policing organisation that predominated but rather a military one: it was divided into 42 *départements* or precincts further sub-divided into four large districts, with the commissaires under the orders of district captains and the more general command of the Marquis de Mizon. New personnel were added to the initial appointments decreed on 25 September 1722 on account of the growing number of sites to be disinfected. Indeed, at the close of day on 5 September alone, for which 102 commissaires had been envisaged, some 940 shops and business premises were sealed up throughout the city.[37] This confirms that despite the above-mentioned reluctance, as portrayed by Pierre-Honoré Roux in his account of the outbreak, shops had been successively disinfected, as police documents prove.

37 Ibid., p. 8.

Urban Area			*Terroir*		
Date of Ordinance	**Number of Commissaires**	**Tasks to be Executed**	**Date of Ordinance**	**Number of Commissaires**	**Tasks to be Executed**
5 and 22 September 1722	102	General Disinfection	22 September 1722	253	Disinfecting residential dwellings
14 September 1722	67	Inspecting second-hand clothes retailers and disinfection			
22 September 1722	14 (clergymen nominated by the bishop)	Disinfecting religious houses and churches			
25 September	+ 40 (reinforced by 102)	General Disinfection			
1 October 1722	15	Disinfecting merchants' vessels in the port			

Figure 2: Appointment of commissaires and tasks to be executed during the final disinfection campaign in 1722.

The 102 commissaires and their reinforcements were thus spread across the entire city, although it should be noted they were somewhat thinner on the ground in the city's older districts, notably in the Major area, adjacent to the Charité Hospital and the neighbourhood most afflicted by the epidemic given that it was the contagion's breeding ground and where the majority of pestilence-related fatalities occurred. These neighbourhoods were monitored at the expense of local clergymen, who had to disinfect church property all while taking charge of the surrounding streets.

And yet, in the Rive-Neuve district, which had been redrawn and created as an administrative precinct during the plague outbreak, a relatively large number of commissaires were envisaged and duly spread out over those wharves in the port where most merchandise shops were concentrated. These establishments had to be decontaminated in like manner to the houses of individual residents. The port and docklands were equally the area where food supplies and provisions arrived by sea. As for the newly-constructed district known as the *nouvelle ville*, the upshot of the urban development plan decided upon in 1660, it was less densely populated than the older districts and thus required fewer personnel to execute disinfectant procedures.

One week after the proclamation of this first Ordinance of September 1722, the municipality issued a second Ordinance in a bid to increase the number of commissaires involved in disinfecting the city. Fourteen clerics were then appointed

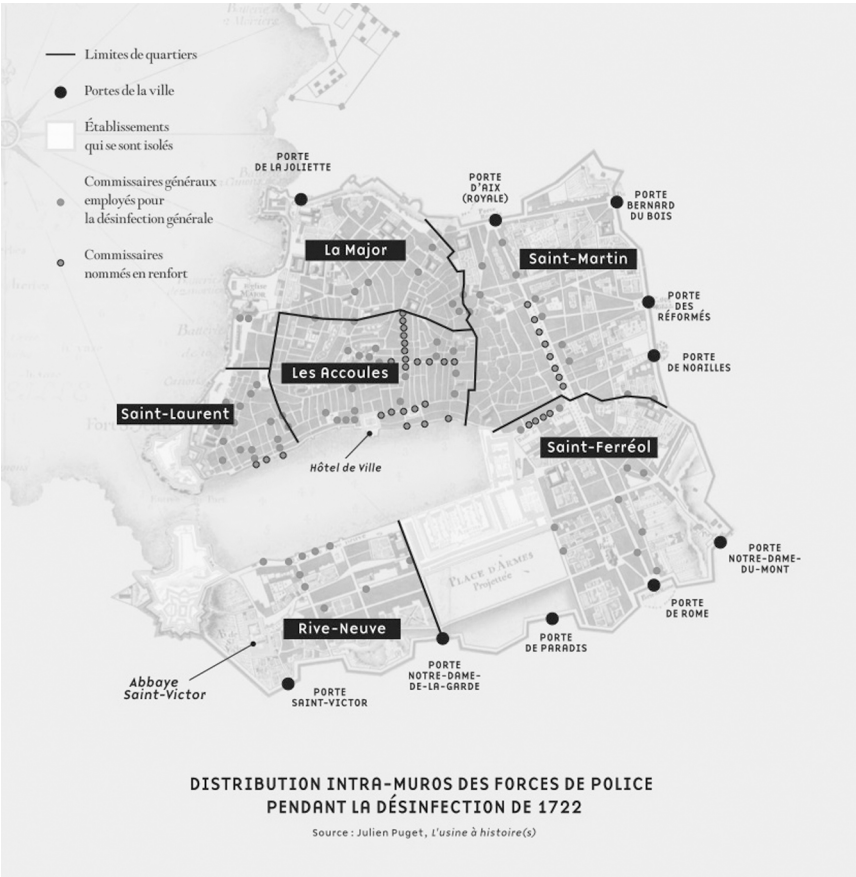

Figure 3: Distribution of commissaires throughout Marseilles' urban area during the disinfection campaign of autumn 1722. The map, whose graphic design was conceived by Vinciane Clemens, was produced by the History Museum of Marseilles (MHM).

to disinfect places of worship, while forty new commissaires were appointed for the rest of the city. They were split into groups along the city centre's principal axes (around the port, the Cours, the Canebière, the streets neighbouring on Hôtel de Ville and the Hôtel-Dieu), a strategy which, in effect, enabled them to closely scrutinize the adjacent streets. The commissaires were positioned precisely where scrupulous vigilance was called for: the area around Hôtel de Ville, the hub of municipal authority and headquarters for the *bureau de police* from which the teams were dispatched; along the port and around the Cours and the Canebière, the major areas for shipping and commercial trade. More than 46 commissaires thoroughly controlled the Accoules district, while the la Major district was entrust-

ed to the fourteen newly-appointed clerics charged with disinfecting places of worship.

Washing, Scouring, Cleaning

The number of locations subjected to such a thorough cleaning and decontamination process was considerable[38]; not one single street in Marseilles was without a house or a business premise in need of disinfection.[39] Although houses where plague-related fatalities had occurred were marked with a red cross to differentiate them from other dwellings during the city's initial disinfection campaign, this differentiation strategy was not repeated in the autumn of 1722, at which stage the entire city needed to be decontaminated.

In their attempts to thoroughly execute the disinfection campaign, the police commissaires started keeping "disinfection log-books" in which they recorded, in addition to the street name where the relevant house or shop was located, the owner's name, the tenant's name, as well as the various perfumes used for disinfection purposes, and a list of items found in the houses that were perfumed.[40] A preliminary inspection of the house in question would ascertain whether anyone sick was to be found therein, and, where necessary, to determine whether those dwelling in the house had carried out a clandestine burial during the contagion. Every room in the dwelling had to be inspected "as well as the Cellars and the most hidden Places attached to them"[41]: here, we can already observe an increase in the number of settings where the police could routinely intervene directly; in normal times, their scope for manoeuvre was limited to the street level, given that they rarely entered the private sphere inside residential houses.

Initially, the commissaires' right-hand men and the so-called *corbeaux* (gravediggers) executed an exhaustive cleaning, on occasion accompanied by professional perfumers (known as disinfectors[42]) and porters, under the close supervision

38 In order to provide a more comprehensive overview of all the processes involved, this section and the following one have been constructed based upon an analysis of the *Acte déclaratif de la santé* of 1 December 1722, while also taking into account the ordinances dealing with disinfection produced during the years 1720–1722.

39 Bertrand, *Relation historique*, p. 376.

40 AMM, GG 373 and 374, *Journaux de désinfection*. These diaries differ from one commissaire to the next (for example, single sheets may be substituted for bound notebooks), which attests to a certain latitude granted to them to carry out their missions.

41 *Acte déclaratif de la santé* of 1 December 1722, p. 25.

42 Ibid., p. 30.

of the commissaires. Every single item in the rooms where sick patients had lain (mattresses, straw mattresses, pillows, blankets, sheets, linen, etc.) and more generally every item of furniture, had to be removed from the house so as to be transported to a washhouse (as for example the one operating at La Joliette) in order that they be scalded and laundered. Mirrors as well as metal parts had to be scrubbed with *eau-de-vie* [brandy] or vinegar. To ensure a sufficient supply of disinfectant liquid was available, the grape harvest continued throughout the epidemic, even at the height of the contagion: in September 1720, for example, local vignerons were thus urged to proceed as usual, for wine "could contribute greatly to disinfecting and halting the [spread of] contagion."[43] Entire dwellings or premises had to be washed down; floors and walls needed to be whitewashed, on account of the lime paint's antiseptic properties. The commissaires were obliged to take care of the bureaux or cabinets in the merchants' houses, first by locking them and then handing the key over to the *bureau de police* should the owners be absent:

> WHENEVER the said General Commissaires will have all the Keys of all the Shops in their *Départements* & that seals have been affixed to them in the aforesaid manner, they shall draw up a general statement of the Shops in their *Départements*, in which they shall mention, the Street or Place where they are located, the names & surnames of the Owners of the Shops, of the names and surnames of the Owners of the Merchandise, the number of Keys for each Shop, and the day on which they will have been handed over the keys and that the seal will have been affixed to the [shops]: this report shall be given to Us by them, & a copy to the Echevins.[44]

As this extract from the sources indicates, a similar procedure was carried out on shops, and despite the opposition voiced by some merchants, as Pierre-Honoré Roux alluded to above, their premises were, in fact, well and truly disinfected in 1722. *Bastides* in the *terroir* had to be disinfected with the same level of vigilance as private dwellings in the city.[45]

Burning, Scenting, and Ventilating

Once houses had been scrubbed clean, they then had to be perfumed. Every rag and piece of clothing in poor condition, and generally anything that might serve as a potential source of infection, were discarded and burned. Straw and hay

43 AMM, FF 292, *Registre de peste*, Ordinance of 19 September 1720.
44 *Acte déclaratif de la santé* of 1 December 1722, p. 3.
45 Ibid., p. 15–16.

were also destroyed, for families often used them as bedding for the sick before they transferred them to the hospital. Houses had to be thoroughly aired and all fabrics and clothes piled in one spot. Bedspreads and curtains in private houses, carpets, chair covers, tapestries and clothes had to be exposed to fresh air for at least fifteen days, beaten, brushed and scented, along with everything else in the dwelling. Finally, the commissaires would systematically perfume each space three times, every second day, with the windows thrown open between each perfuming session so that fresh air could easily enter and circulate, and thus "complete the purification."[46]

Several steps needed to be taken before each perfume was deployed: the dwelling had to be thoroughly sealed off, all conduits and chimneys plugged so that no smoke could escape. Often composed of gunpowder, a *parfum de la ville* was also deployed using a relatively straightforward procedure. All that was required was to start a fire in the centre of the room into which all the ingredients meant to perfume the space were thrown: inter alia, sulphur, antimony, arsenic, camphor, cinnabar, laurel berries, juniper seeds, cloves, ginger, valerian, and saltpetre.[47] Small-scale burners could also be made for these different preparations, into which hay soaked in vinegar was thrown. This concoction had to burn for some twenty-four hours before the house could be reopened and aired. Furthermore, certain perfumes had been previously deployed during a contagious outbreak by those in contact with anyone who had contracted plague: these perfumes could be made and processed into a paste or soap, or inserted into sachets to be carried on one's person and inhaled from time to time.[48] City authorities paid for the deployment of perfumes in the homes and on the belongings of the poorest people, but extracted an advance payment from those who could afford to pay for them: those commissaires executing cleansing operations had to keep a statement of expenses and a general statement concerning every citizen obliged to contribute to the financial outlay, along with a list of houses that had undergone disinfection.[49]

As far as shops were concerned, their entire merchandise had to be transported to the lazaret in Arenc where it was perfumed at some distance from the city walls during a quarantine period. The infirmaries, too, were equipped with special

46 Ibid., p. 10.

47 AMM, FF 292, *Registre de peste.* On how to make perfume in order to disinfect houses of plague victims, 11 May 1722.

48 AMM, FF 292, *Registre de peste*, Letter from the intendant dated 20 September 1720.

49 AMM, FF 292, *Registre de peste*, Ordinance of 10 October 1722. These lists also appear in the disinfection log-books kept by the commissaires (GG373 and GG374), partially burned but sections of which have been restored.

rooms for ventilating merchandise. Generally speaking, Marseilles' disinfection campaign was identical to a city-wide implementation of procedures usually reserved for suspicious vessels entering port:

> [A]ll suspicious Goods the [houses] contain & to have them carried up into the most elevated and airy Attics and Apartments in the House, to be spread out there & exposed to the air for forty days, during which time all Doors & Windows of the aforementioned Places or Apartments are to be kept open; such precautions have long been sufficient to allow for a daily flow of goods, without risk of contagion.[50]

Such disinfection procedures for goods and commodities were routine practice at Marseilles' lazaret: these measures were replicated and extended to all the city's dwelling-houses and shops. Given that the contagion was particularly rampant throughout Provence and Languedoc during 1720–1721 and not yet completely eradicated, goods from these particular areas were tracked down for any possible sign of contamination:

> If they [the commissaires] espy any merchandise from Avignon and the Comtat, they shall inquire about the name and residence of the owner of this merchandise, and for how long it has been in the vessel, in order to give us an account of [the situation], after it had been brought to the Lazaret, where it will undergo a thorough quarantine.[51]

The lists of silk bales found in some houses proved the existence of such contraband and were included in the enforcement records of the Ordinances in the Declaratory Health Act of 1 December 1722.[52]

The commissaires duly closed, sealed off, and retrieved the keys of shops, just as they had previously done in houses emptied of their inhabitants.[53] Certificates were drawn up with a precise appraisal of the emptied shops in question, each location being assigned a number as well as an inventory of items present.[54] If some merchandise happened to be more suspect than others, then all the merchandise to whom it belonged would also have to be quarantined. As for those clergymen responsible for disinfecting churches and church property, they were obliged to quarantine in their convents once cleaning had been executed. They would then receive their sustenance "only from providers who shall bring it to them without

50 *Acte déclaratif de la santé* of 1 December 1722, p. 9.
51 Ibid., p. 25.
52 Ibid., p. 14.
53 Ibid., p. 10.
54 AMM, GG 384 to GG 388, "various certificates of commissaires visits to shops, sources burnt but partially restored."

coming in contact with them."[55] Their mission, once completed, was inspected by the general commissaires who, in turn, had to probe every nook and cranny in the churches – sacristies, bell towers, chapels, cellars, the various chests and cupboards – and make certain that any corpses, which might have been buried within the church grounds at the onset of the contagion, had been properly covered with lime, in sealed vaults.

All disinfection tactics deployed during the contagion tied in with the Hippocratic tradition, an approach which had inspired preventive medicine throughout the Middle Ages: air was considered the primary vector in the spread of any disease, just as it constituted the solution for decontaminating any contaminated object once the air had been purified by perfume. The only way to protect oneself from such contaminated bodies, whether sick or dead, and from the pestilential air they exuded, was to envelop oneself in disinfected air with an odour that could keep the tainted emanation at bay. Hence, in order to lift quarantine measures and to avert any fresh outbreaks of plague, once sick people were no longer to be found within the city, each of its constituent components – residential dwellings, business premises, docklands, religious houses – had to endure a thoroughgoing disinfection campaign for which perfumes were one of the elements considered capable of purifying the air.

Conclusion

This article, which specifically focuses on the disinfection campaigns executed in Marseilles in the wake of the plague outbreak of 1720–1722, as manifest in the *Actes déclaratifs de la santé* drawn up by the municipal authorities, probes the notions of surveillance and vigilance underpinning sanitary policing practices. During 1720–1721, as the epidemic was raging uncontrollably, it was patently a matter of surveilling residents of Marseilles in their movements and mass gatherings, even though, it should be noted, the term "surveillance" did not yet feature as such in the dictionaries in circulation during the Ancien Régime, and the surveillance practices executed by the urban police pre-dated the definition of this notion. Furthermore, the notion of "vigilance," which was closer to the way of thinking about governmentality during the early modern era, seems thereafter to have taken precedence once the outbreak had abated and it was no longer causing fatalities on a daily basis. On the whole, the plague outbreak represented a unique period in the unfolding early modern era: rampant contagion was a determining fac-

55 *Acte déclaratif de la santé* of 1 December 1722, p. 10.

tor in accelerating the professionalizing of the urban police and its control mechanisms (post 1720, these would focus on foreigners in Marseilles). Even in the ultimate *Acte déclaratif de la santé* of 1 December 1722, such surveillance manifests itself by way of the census of second-hand clothes traders, considered at that point as an occupational group with an elevated health risk, and in the extensive creation of lists, whether they be lists of people (appointed commissaires but also city residents who had contravened the injunctions in place following inspections of their houses and shops) or of potentially dangerous objects.

As far as the practical implementation of the various disinfection procedures and techniques were concerned, however, (whether they impacted localities, objects, or people), what ultimately prevailed was the alert response to those persons and objects deemed suspicious, and thus the vigilant approach. Thereafter, mustering this concept of vigilance became particularly productive, for it required that the entire population participate in any attempt to implement preventive measures and thus enable quarantine to be lifted, or at least for those who had survived the epidemic and who had *a minima* a home and/or was a citizen of Marseilles (the most underprivileged social strata were not mentioned in the ultimate *Acte déclaratif de la santé*, apart from a few second-hand clothes dealers who were not shop owners and were selling their wares on the city streets). This call upon everybody to participate can therefore be interpreted as a form of political restructuring of the social body and its cohesion in the aftermath of plague's devastating impact, by galvinising the population through their participation in disinfection measures. The various individual measures were effectively aimed at a collective objective: bringing an end to quarantine restrictions, the return to "normal" life, and the renewed free movement of goods and people.

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Régis Bertrand

Religious Vigilance Before and After the 1720 Plague Outbreak in Provence and the Pontifical States

Vigilate et orate ut non intratis in tentationem, "Watch (in the sense of to be vigilant) and pray, that ye not enter into temptation." This phrase by Christ, one of the last he addressed to his Apostles on the Mount of Olives (*Matthew* 26:41), at once summarizes the purpose of this study and underscores an essential feature of both individual and collective life during the Ancien Régime, as well as the prevailing mindset: the need to be vigilant. Not only were people constantly beleaguered by multiple forms of insecurity, risks were numerous, and occupational accidents and illnesses, which nowadays can be readily treated and cured by modern medicine, could at that time prove to be fatal. We should not overlook the frequent recurrence of plague outbreaks between the mid-fourteenth and the early eighteenth centuries. In the introduction to his book on plague literature, Joël Coste observes: "During the 236 years of the time-span covered by our study (1490–1725), the disease was present in France for 148 years, that is to say for some 63 % of that period."[1] Furthermore, during that period nearly everyone believed, or at least was obliged to believe, in life in the hereafter. The injured or the sick had to think about salvational gestures during a public health emergency. Given Catholicism's predominant position in France during those "plague-ridden centuries," it behooves us a fortiori to examine the role the Catholic church played in vigilance toward contagion. In fact, this sacerdotal institution was to participate to such an extent that its representatives were beseeched by the civil authorities, whenever, for instance, the latter were taking decisions of a religious nature such as instigating plague vows. At a time in which people were largely defenseless against the spread of plague, the Catholic church could furnish an explanation about contagion and its origins, and moreover offered possibilities for action and hope in order to be able to circumvent contracting it or to mitigate its impact. Church members strove to spiritually assist the plague-stricken and to seek peace for their souls in the afterlife. Moreover, once the contagious scourge no longer plagued the land, religious memorials would serve to remind people of its potential menace.[2]

1 Coste, *Représentations et comportements en temps d'épidémie*, p. 29.

2 General studies: Biraben, *Les Hommes et la peste*; Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident*. Typology of collective behaviour in times of plague, pp. 98–142. Hildesheimer, *La Terreur et la pitié*; Coste, *Rep-*

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I Divine Punishment? The Traditional Religious Explanation

The traditional religious explanation for the existence of disease, an exegesis by no means exclusive to Christianity, was that it constituted the manifestation of God's ire toward a sinful population. Sinners could, however, aspire to escape divine retribution through contrition by reforming their lifestyles and mores, and by virtue of penance and prayer. As the bishop of Carpentras once wrote in one of his pastoral letters, "Given that contagion is just punishment for sin, divine remedies are practically the only effective ones."[3] "There can be no doubt that such ailments originated in God, and we are convinced of this whenever we read Scripture," wrote in 1720 Pastor Bénédict Pictet (1655–1724), a professor of theology at the Academy of Geneva who supplemented this statement with half a page of scriptural references while persisting in providing other references.[4]

1 Biblical References to Epidemics

In their theological argumentations, Catholic and Protestant authors alike would, where necessary, resort to every biblical passage in which disease is mentioned, even allusively – *The Book of Job* being a prime example. The Bible mentions plague in several passages – yet the questions lingers whether it refers to the pestilence which we now call plague. Strictly speaking, however, we ought to consult the Latin text of the Catholic *Vulgate* – and not current translations of the Bible – in order to ascertain the passages where *pestis* or *pestilencia* are explicitly mentioned.[5] Seventeenth and eighteenth centuries readers may have simply taken it for granted that the disease mentioned in certain passages was indeed plague. Hence, the pestilence striking the city of Ashdod when the Philistines transported the Ark of the Covenant taken from the Israelites (1 *Samuel* 5–6) was considered in contemporary times to be a form of plague and translated as "tumours," the Hebrew word designating its symptoms. The *Vulgate* lacked such precision (*et percussit [Dominus] in se-*

résentations et comportements en temps d'épidémie. Norms for conduct and religious values, pp. 353–414. On the plague outbreak of 1720: Gaffarel/Duranty, *La peste de 1720*; Buti, *Colère de Dieu.*

3 Quoted by Delacour, *Pernes au temps de la peste*, p. 71.

4 Pictet, *Lettres et prières de consolation,* p. 8 f.

5 The French translation of the Bible, which Catholics who did not know Latin could consult, is one largely compiled and translated by Louis-Isaac Lemaître de Sacy in Port-Royal, was published sometime between 1667 and 1696.

cretiori parte natium Azotum), which the King James version of the Bible renders by a "'plague of emerods' that smote the people of Ashod in their 'secret parts'." Nowadays, *The Plague of Ashdod* equally refers to the painting on exhibit in the Louvre by the French artist Nicolas Poussin, which he originally titled *The Miracle of the Ark in the Temple of Dagon.* Similarly, the pestilence that struck Sennacherib's army (2 *Kings* 19:35 and *Isaiah* 37:36) is not explicitly presented in the text as plague. Nor is it certain that the disease with which Elijah threatens Joram in the *Second Book of Chronicles* refers to plague, in the current sense of the term, and not simply as a scourge: *Ecce Dominus percutiet te plaga magna.* The King James version of the *Bible* renders this passage: "Behold, the Lord shall strike you with a great plague," for Elijah specifies: *Tu autem aegrotabis pessimo languore uteri tui, donec egrediantur vitalia tua paulatim per singulos dies*, "And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day." (2 *Chronicles* 21:14–15). Finally, the account given in *Revelation* 6 and 8 depicts four horsemen, one of whom sows "death" according to the *Vulgate (mors)*, but nowadays this word is often interpreted as plague; the same holds true for *Revelation* 18:8.

2 Biblical References to Plague

Plague appears explicitly in the Bible as a threat to those not obeying or following God's will. The fifth plague to strike Egypt (*Exodus* 9:2–3) is called a "highly dangerous plague" (*gravis valde pestis*) – yet it refers to a plague that beset livestock. And yet, God will strike humankind with plague should they not respect his Commandments: "I shall send the pestilence among you" (*mittam pestilentiam in medio vestri*), in *Leviticus* 26:25. In *Numbers* 14:11–12, God says unto Moses, "How long will this people provoke me? […] I shall smite them with pestilence and disinherit them" (*Usquequo detrahet mihi populus iste? […] feriam igitur eos pestilentiam, atque consumam*); yet Moses obtains forgiveness for their sins. A similar threat is made in *Deuteronomy* 28:21, "The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it." (*Adjungat tibi Dominus pestilentiam, donec consumat te de terra, ad quam ingredieris possidendam.*) Likewise, *Jeremiah* 24:10, in which God insists: "And I will send the sword, the famine and the pestilence among them" (*Et mittam in eis gladium, et famem, et pestem*), a theme revisited in *Jeremiah* 29:17 and 29:18, as well as in *Ezekiel* 14:21, "How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments – sword and famine and wild beasts and plague – to kill its men and their animals!" (*Quod et si quatuor judicia mea pessima, gladium, et famem, ac bestias malas et pestilentiam, immisero in Jerusalem, ut interficiam de*

ea hominem et pecus), or yet again in *Ezekiel* 28:23, "For I will send pestilence into Sidon, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I am the Lord." (*Et immittam ei pestilentiam, et sanguinem in plateis ejus, et corruent interfecti in medio ejus gladio per circuitum, et scient quia ego Dominus*). The passage whose posterity is most evident is the account of the outbreak of "plague during the reign of David" (two accounts: 2 *Samuel* 24:10–25, quoted here, 1 *Chronicles* 21:7–30). King David angered God by taking a census of the population of Israel. God gave him the choice between seven years of famine, three months of fleeing before his enemies, or three days of plague. David opted for plague and declared: "it is better for me to fall into the hands of the Lord than into the hands of men, for he is full of mercy." God visits this disease upon Israel (*Immisitque Dominus pestilentiam in Israel.*) Yet, as the exterminating angel prepares to ravage Jerusalem, a repentant David declares that he alone is guilty and implores God to punish him instead: "As the angel of the Lord was about to lay his hand on Jerusalem in order to destroy, God had compassion for so many ills and said unto the exterminating angel, 'Enough, hold your hand'." (*Cumque extendisset manum suam angelus Domini super Jerusalem ut disperderet eam, misertus est Dominus super afflictione, et ait angelo percutienti populum: Sufficit, nunc contine manum tuam.*) Following the angel's guidance, a contrite David erected an altar to God "so that he may put an end to this plague that kills so many people" (*et edificem altare Domino, et cesset interfectio quae grassatur in populo.*) "The Lord thus reconciled himself with Israel and put an end to the plague with which he had struck his people" (*Et propitiatus est Dominus terrae, et cohibita est plaga ab Israel.*)

In the version depicted in the *First Book of Chronicles*, the vision of the angel, who will acquire an iconographic posterity, is to be noted: "And David, looking up, saw the angel of the Lord who was between Heaven and Earth, and who had in his hand a naked sword turned against Jerusalem." (1 *Chronicles* 21:16, *Levansque David oculos suos, vidit angelum Domini stantem inter caelum et terram, and evaginatum gladium in manu ejus et versum contra Jerusalem.*) Once God considers himself satisfied, "Then the Lord commanded the angel to put his sword back in the sheath, which he did" (1 *Chronicles* 21:27, *Praecepitus Dominus angelo, et convertit gladium suum in vaginam*); and again: "David […] was too frightened when he saw the sword of the angel of the Lord" (1 *Chronicles* 21:30; *David […] fuerat timore perterritis, videns gladium angeli Domini.*) This account offers a description of the conduct to be followed in times of plague: its cause, namely behavior or a deed not in conformity with God's dictates; the collective punishment God inflicts; the contrition and penance to be observed by those it strikes; and the atonement, which will equally be found in the solemn vows made by French city councils centuries thereafter. In the New Testament, however, Christ foretells of the impending destruction

of Jerusalem at the end of time: *Et terraemotus magni erunt per loca, et pestilentiae, et fames, terroresque de caelo, et signa magna erunt.* (*Luke* 21:11, and also *Matthew* 24:7): in addition to wars, "there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven." The well-known prayer dating from the late Middle Ages, "*A peste, fame, et bello, libera nos Domine*" (Lord preserve us from plague, famine, and war) repeated during the recitation of the major Litanies, is derived from this utterance by Christ. These words also validate the quest for heavenly omens heralding the scourge. Jean-Noël Biraben has thus shown the apparent coincidences between the appearance of comets and the recurrence of plague outbreaks, whose concurrence can, in fact, be explained by the frequency of epidemics.[6]

3 Divine Punishment and Collective Repentance

We can observe that in the case of David, it was he alone that sinned and yet all his people were punished. This sometimes implicit model is to found in other biblical passages quoted: the conduct of a few, whose behavior is likely to engender scapegoats, may draw the wrath of God upon everyone – namely, the Jews toward the end of the Middle Ages, the "sowers of plague"[7] or even the Jansenists in 1720, should one believe the bishop of Marseilles, Henri de Belsunce.[8] On the whole, those who endured the 1720 plague accepted this explanation of contagion as a form of divine retribution – stemming from the *Old Testament* and not the *New Testament* – and one which called for penance.[9] One of the initial accounts of the plague outbreak, published as early as the end of year 1720, and possibly penned by a clergyman judging by the multiplicity of biblical references, notes:

> The hand of the Lord, though less heavy-handed, remains outstretched so as to let us know without doubt that we must contribute by our penance so as to disarm it completely and that we shall only see the last of our afflictions by the last of our crimes.[10]

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6 Biraben, *Les Hommes et la peste,* vol. II, pp. 12–17; Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident,* pp. 129–131; Coste, *Représentations et comportements en temps d'épidémie,* p. 363 f.

7 Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident,* pp. 131–136; Naphy/Spicer, *La Peste noire*, pp. 50–57 and Naphy, *Plagues, Poisons and Potions*; Martin, *Les religions face aux épidémies,* pp. 28–31. Examples in the account of the plague outbreak in Milan in 1630 written by the historiographer Giuseppe Ripamonti and published in Lavocat, *Pestes, incendies, naufrages.*

8 Bertrand, *Henri de Belsunce*, p. 127 f.

9 Significant analysis in Walter, *Catastrophes*, notably pp. 51–61.

10 *Discours sur ce qui s'est passé de plus considérable à Marseille pendant la contagion en 1720*, Speech on the most significant events in Marseilles during the contagion of 1720, J.-A. Mallard,

To cite the laity, inter alia, Marseilles' *échevins* [magistrates] decided on 8 September 1720 to make a solemn pledge to the Blessed Virgin in order that she intercede with God on behalf of their city, "Considering that plague is a scourge conveying God's wrath, all the support given by men and all the efforts they've resolved to make shall be useless and in vain unless they turn to His mercy in order to placate Him."[11]

The physician Jean-Baptiste Bertrand, whose numerous scriptural references François Walter has pointed out[12], was to observe, however, in his account of the epidemic published in 1721, just before the final resurgence of plague: "So many misfortunes following upon the contagion must make it seem more akin to a scourge from Heaven than the consequence of a natural revolution." Those final words in that phrase would suggest that at some point a purely medical cause for plague had also been advanced and could well contain a discreet echo of the raging debate concerning the potential antagonism between medical and religious perceptions of the issue.[13] In the case of Henri de Belsunce as quoted above, did he genuinely believe in the "Jansenist plague", or did he just exploit this habitual explanation in a bid to stigmatize the small number of *appelants* in his diocese?[14] If all the Bishop of Marseilles' writings penned during the outbreak are taken into consideration, it would appear as though it was less a question of an oratorical convention than of genuine conviction on his part, and a tenet imbuing the texts he subsequently published. On 15 July 1720, at a time the medical definition of the contagious disease ravaging Marseilles was still being discussed, De Belsunce published an *Ordinance [...] concerning the earliest rumours about the invasion of the contagious disease.* He indicated that he issued this ordinance based upon the "pious representations" the *échevins* had made to him on that very day. He took care not to arouse any undue anxiety amongst the clergy and the populace, and alluded to "a very small number" of the sick "in danger." He suggested that "God's mercy could still be invoked." Hence, he ordered that prayers be recited to St Roch in order "to obtain from God, through the intercession of this almighty

BMVR de Marseille, recueil factice 3611, reproduced in Jauffret, *Pièces historiques sur la peste*, vol. I, p. 309.

11 Bertrand, *Henri de Belsunce,* p. 139; Villiers, *La peste de 1720–1721*, cites p. 22 f. from the correspondence of two Aix notables who used this explanatory schema.

12 Walter, *Catastrophes*, p. 56 f.

13 Bertrand, *Relation historique,* p. 6 f.; Coste, *Représentations et comportements en temps d'épidémie,* pp. 400–414; Pineau, Soigner la peste.

14 Refers to those priests and laymen who, in 1717, appealed in vain to a General Council against the *Unigenitus* Papal Bull promulgated in 1713 by Pope Clement XI, which had condemned the doctrines of Jansenism.

saint, that he may console, strengthen, heal and preserve those of our dear brethren who [are] now and before our eyes in such manifest peril." Furthermore, every priest should:

> urge the faithful to come back to God through timely penitence and with complete and perfect submission of mind and heart to the Church's sacred rulings, [which is] the safe and only way to restrain the arm of an enraged God who threatens us, who has been chastising us for some time and who is perhaps prepared to strike anew and with even harsher blows.[15]

Without explicitly naming the contagion, de Belsunce nonetheless provides some vital information: St Roch had become, as we shall observe, the divine intercessor par excellence in times of plague, and moreover the people of Marseilles could scarcely be mistaken about the true nature of the mortal disease they were having to confront. Their bishop thus put forward an explanation of plague and also indicated how to put an end to the disaster that was about to befall them. The prevailing moral corruption and the presence of Jansenists within the city had unleashed this scourge upon Marseilles. The sole solution to ward it off was for those not complying with the pope's magisterium to repent.

Some days later, on July 30, de Belsunce issued a pastoral letter "prescribing public prayers and a general fast to appease the wrath of the Lord," and in which he reasserted: "He is the terrifying God, the God of justice, but at the same time He is the God of peace and goodness who is chastising us, who afflicts us only in order to encourage us to come back to Him in the sincerity of our hearts."[16] On the issue of the Jansenists, the pastoral letter circulated by Jacques de Forbin-Janson, Archbishop of Arles, dated 12 October 1720, struck an even more virulent tone. It was crudely explicit in their regard, indeed to such an extent that the Regent had this pastoral letter suppressed at the Council of State on 31 December 1720.[17]

The physician Bertrand was to astutely observe, however, what transpires whenever plague strikes: "divine worship is suspended, temples closed, public worship of religion forbidden, burial honours proscribed, all adding to the horror of this spectacle."[18] Not only did the clergy have to improvise in perilous situations in a bid to sway the will of God but also to urge the faithful to initiate personal initiatives for the salvation of their souls.

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15 Original plates in BMVR Marseille, collection 3611. Text reproduced in Jauffret, *Pièces historiques sur la peste*, vol. I, p. 134 f.

16 Ibid. et Jauffret, *Pièces historiques sur la peste,* vol. I, pp. 136–139.

17 Jauffret, *Pièces historiques sur la peste,* vol. I, pp. 158–162 et 162–164.

18 Bertrand, *Relation historique,* p. 3.

II Vigilance on an Individual and a Social Level

First and foremost, it was a matter of foreseeing the likelihood of an outbreak of plague and of being prepared to confront it, by observing a way of life in conformity with the Church's moral dictates and teachings. And moreover, by taking some precautions.

1 Plague Clause in Contracts

The so-called *clause de peste* to be found in contracts negotiated in Marseilles during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would appear to offer proof of the level of consideration given to the potential risk of plague in everyday life and the omnipresence of a religious frame of reference. Indeed, a period of plague was legally equivalent to a period during which the applicability of a contract was suspended.

> Given how this disease is contagious and usually fatal, it stops all trade in those places afflicted by it. It is for this reason that, as long as it endures, that which [the time] is required for the statute of limitations or for the lapse of [legal] proceedings will not apply.[19]

The following two examples highlight the circumstances. The agreement signed on 29 April 1637 between Étienne Bernard, "master of writing and arithmetic" and François Ferrenc, squire, to teach ("demonstrate") these academic subjects to Ferrenc's son provided for three contingencies: the death of either the master or the student; the father withdrawing his son from instruction, and finally plague. Master Bernard wrote: "According to the *Pache,* also in times of pestilence[20] – may God so wish – he will no longer be required to teach until such time the city shall be isolated from the surrounding cities and localities."[21] In a similar vein, the four-year apprentice contract the adolescent Pierre Puget signed with the sculptor Jean Roman on 15 November 1634 concluded with the following clause:

> Let it be known that should plague ever come to Marseilles – may God watch over us – both master and apprentice shall be liberated [from these contractual terms].[22]

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19 Ferrière, *Dictionnaire de droit*, art. Peste, vol. II, p. 319 f.

20 *Pache*, provençal term for convention or agreement.

21 Published in facsimile and transcribed in Audisio/Bonnot-Rambaud, *Lire le français d'hier*, pp. 97–99.

22 Reynaud, Pierre Puget, les années d'apprentissage, p. 373.

2 Last Will and Testament in Times of Plague

Yet another manifestation of the prevailing vigilance, which manuals for preparing for death then strongly recommended, was to consider making one's will and last testament in good time.[23] Contracting such a fatal disease invariably entailed a struggle to find both the time and the means to make one's final arrangements, both religious and secular. Problems arising from a nuncupatory will – one dictated by the dying testator in the presence of witnesses – formed the essence of the article *Peste* published in the *Dictionnaire* compiled by Claude-Joseph de Ferrière. Under routine "healthy" circumstances, seven witnesses known to the testator were required to complete the task. In times of plague in Provence, for instance, the custom was for five witnesses to be present and it was acceptable that the parish priest or a clergyman could formulate the will in writing.[24] Most difficulties encountered were settled at a much later stage by Articles 33 to 36 of the August 1735 Royal Ordinance on Wills, which permitted that the declaration of one's last will and testament could be made by way of derogation in the following manner: either in the presence of two notaries without a witness; a single notary and two witnesses; in the presence of two judicial officers, or lastly in the presence of a priest and two eye-witnesses. It should be noted that the *testament de peste* [plague will] or wills for "other such contagious diseases" still remained the focus of Articles 985 to 987 of the Napoleonic Civil Code, which replaced the requirement for a notary and a priest by a justice of the peace or a municipal officer.[25]

3 Prayers

Numerous prayers in Latin or in the vernacular evoked the risk of succumbing to contagion. Some were propitiatory in nature (beseeching God to spare the city); others were intercessory (beseeching God to bring an end to the plague outbreak, typically through the intercession of a member of the Courts of Heaven). Others signaled atonement (beseeching God for forgiveness for those sins that provoked

23 For these publications, refer to *infra, III. La vigilance du clergé en temps de peste.*

24 For examples of pestiferous wills and testaments annotated by the clergy, see Feldschuh, *Les mentalités religieuses face à la peste*, pp. 102–106. The author's analysis is somewhat debatable, however: the absence of pious invocations could be explained by the clergy's haste to write down the testator's last wishes, given how most testators requested that masses be offered on their own behalf.

25 Aubenas, *Le Testament en Provence*, pp. 158–171; Ferrière, *Dictionnaire de droit*, vol. II, p. 319 f. See also Vovelle, Entre baroque et jansénisme, and Buti, *Colère de Dieu*, pp. 154–162.

the outbreak), and offering thanks (whenever an outbreak abated). As soon as an impending scourge was announced, the bishops initial dictates to the faithful were: prayer, fasting, and a procession for expiatory purposes in order to atone for the faithful's wrongdoings.

3.1 Heavenly Intercessors

The *Roman Ritual* of 1614 contains the liturgy of the *Processio tempore mortalitatis et pestis.* Two privileged intercessors with God are mentioned by name: *Intercedente beata et gloriosa Dei Genitrice Maria semper virgine et beato Sebastiano, martyre tuo, et omnibus Sanctis* (Through the intercession of the Blessed and glorious Mother of God, Mary always Virgin, and of Blessed Sebastian, Your martyr, and of all the saints). Here, the medieval origins of prayers recited during the *Roman Ritual* are evident, as can be noted by the absence of any mention of St Roch.[26] In fact, during previous plague epidemics, several privileged intercessors had been had singled out[27], inter alia, the Virgin Mary, whose worship was deeply enrooted across Provence.[28] The *Ave Maria* [Hail Mary] was probably known from memory well beyond literate circles: hymn collections in Latin, French and Provençal provided paraphrased translations in these last two languages, and some of their prefaces did indeed suggest that their owners ought to do a charitable deed by teaching the most important prayers to those unable to read. Among the active confraternities, Our Lady of the Rosary, whose members had to recite fifteen dozen Hail Marys, was the most widespread throughout Provence with the exception of the confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, who were dedicated to the upkeep of churches.[29] Mention should be also made of the initiative undertaken by the Archbishop of Avignon, François-Maurice Gonteri, who, on 29 October 1721,

> directed the Dominican RRPPs [i. e., Reverend Fathers] to go into the streets in order to have the rosary recited [or five dozen Hail Marys] in every neighbourhood throughout the city. In fact, two of those priests, one with the stole and carrying a small statue of the Blessed Virgin

26 The texts remained unaltered until the twentieth century: *Rituale romanum*, pp. 308–310.
27 On all potential intercessors, see Coste, *Représentations et comportements en temps d'épidémie*, pp. 371–381. Delumeau, *Rassurer et protéger*, pp. 179–193.
28 Cousin, La dévotion mariale en Provence.
29 Bertrand, Usages religieux du provençal, p. 112 f.; Froeschlé-Chopard, *Espace et sacré en Provence,* pp. 414–459.

> in his hands, sang the *Miserere,* while the other stopped at the end of each street, exhorting people to recite the rosary.[30]

Gaby and Michel Vovelle's study of the iconography used on altarpieces dedicated to the deliverance of souls from purgatory also reveals the privileged function of Marian intercession.[31] St Sebastian equally played a vital role in iconography. According to the *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine (Jacopo da Varazze, circa 1228–1298), the centurion Sebastian was condemned to be pierced with arrows, for he had dared to profess his Christian faith. Though he survived that ordeal, he was then clubbed to death. He would have been widely considered an anti-pestilential saint on account of how closely his arrow wounds resembled the pestilential buboes so characteristic of plague. Another reason for this designation was *Psalm* 38 (37) attributed to David containing verse 2. It was thought to evoke plague by dint of this description: "For thine arrow sticks fast in me and thy hand pressed me sore." Or also perhaps, as Hypolite Delehaye points out, because the *History of the Lombards* by Paul Diacre (circa 720/724–circa 799), revisited by Jacobus de Voragine, attributed the end of the plague outbreak in Pavia in 680 AD to the transfer of St Sebastien's relics from Rome.[32] St Anthony the Abbot was to become a therapeutic saint thanks to the Order of the Hospital Brothers of St Anthony initially established in Dauphiné in connection with his presumed relics which more specifically treated and cured ergotism, a form of poisoning caused by ingesting infected rye.

In 1720, St Roch (in Montpellier?, circa 1346–1350, in Voghera?, circa 1378) was apparently the most invoked saint, probably on account of his association with plague seeming much more explicit. Ever since the final years of the Middle Ages, he was to embody "a new type of saint for a new disease" (A. Vauchez).[33] St Roch was born during the so-called Black Plague according to a legendary, albeit somewhat "hagiographic novel" (A. Vauchez)[34], widely distributed in print from the time of the *incunabula,* the earliest printed works. After distributing all his worldly goods amongst his family and the poor, he donned a pilgrim's habit and set out for Rome. He was said to have treated plague-stricken victims successfully during his Italian sojourn (he reportedly received medical instruction in his hometown, yet nonetheless he also recited invocations and traced the sign of the cross over the

30 Feldschuh, *Les mentalités religieuses face à la peste*, p. 60. A plague outbreak was declared in Avignon in August 1721.

31 Vovelle, *Vision de la mort et de l'au-delà.*

32 Voragine, *La légende dorée*, pp. 92–97; Ressouni-Demigneux, *Saint Sébastien.*

33 Vauchez, Introduction. In: Rigon/Vauchez, *San Rocco*, p. 4.

34 Ibid.

sick). Finally stricken by plague in Plaisance in 1371, he was then placed in solitary confinement in a forest, whereupon a small dog (the *roquet*) and an angel would visit him every day and provide him with bread the dog had carried in his mouth. In due course he was cured of the infection. At the Council of Constance in 1414, a procession carrying St Roch's icon through the city would finally put an end to the plague outbreak raging there. It is noteworthy how and when certain saints in the religious calendar dates are celebrated. While St Sebastian is commemorated on 20 January, the feast of St Roch happens to fall on 16 August, the very time of year in which plague reached its peak across several localities in 1720.

3.2 A Small Group's Prayer: Penitents' Liturgical Books

To what extent can such intercessors be found in liturgical works published in Provence? A tentative search we made in some liturgical books intended for the confraternities of Marseilles penitents was necessarily limited in scope, for this type of publication rarely found its way into public libraries. Penitent societies were a category of pious and charitable confraternities who played a vital role in the religious life of the laity over a period spanning the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Administered according to egalitarian principles, they typically formed small and quasi self-contained groups. Their statutes required that the "brothers" (members) embody a certain diligence with regard to chapel services – each of the confraternity's chapters had a chapel in Lower Provence – as well as direct involvement in its daily life and activities. By wearing the so-called *sac* – a long woolen robe fitted with a hood, tightened at the waist by a cord and with only two slits for the eyes – the penitent symbolically isolated themselves from the outside world, thereby guaranteeing anonymity whenever members of the chapter ventured out beyond the confines of their chapel.[35]

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, the penitent societies' liturgical books constituted a trans-regional publishing enterprise. Indeed, wherever choir books for lecterns, usually handwritten, were to be found, the printed books were the property of the individual confrères, at least of literate ones. They were not strictly destined for those well-versed in Latin or who had studied at school: it would appear that some confraternity members, notably those who had only attended *petites écoles* (the current equivalent of French primary education) did not understand Latin but had nonetheless learned to pronounce and sing it. Fur-

35 Vauchez/Froeschlé-Chopard, Pénitent; Froeschlé-Chopard, *Dieu pour tous et Dieu pour soi*; Bertrand, *Les Compagnies de pénitents de Marseille.*

thermore, even illiterate confrères were able to comprehend the words *pestis* or *pestilentia* when hearing those words sung aloud by those who could read Latin. The White Penitents of Our Lady of Mercy's liturgical book (1621), among the earliest to be published, contains a specific hymn to be sung on the feast of St Roch (16 August), which explicitly addresses the saint, imploring his protection against plague – *Ora pro nobis beate Rocche, ut mereamur praeservari a peste* – [Pray for us, Saint Roch, so that we shall deserve to be saved from plague). This was followed by a prayer directly addressing God, beseeching Him to grant the supplicants' request for divine intercession.[36] Likewise, a hymn and a prayer are to found in the Black Penitents of Saint-Jean-Baptiste's liturgical book (under the title "Hymn to St Roch to be recited if in doubt about [contracting] contagion)"[37] and also in that of the Blue Penitents of Notre-Dame de Pitié (1674), which contains a "Prayer to the Virgin Mary in order to be saved from plague": *Stella caeli extirpavit, quae lactavit Dominum / Mortis pestem quam plantavit primus parens hominum.* [Star of Heaven, You who have breastfed the Lord, You have destroyed the plague of death that the first ancestors of men had planted].[38] The White Penitents of Saint-Lazare, established in the parish of the Cathedral of Marseilles, an area which had been severely affected by plague, printed a liturgical book derived from the Roman breviary in 1748. It contained, inter alia, the Service for the Feast of St Roch on 16 August. An addendum was published in 1778, which was also inspired by the book of the *Offices* of the diocesan saints, in which the religious service for St Roch was even more elaborate.[39]

Over the course the eighteenth and especially during the nineteenth century, booksellers published voluminous liturgical books compiling a maximum of services and prayers, primarily intended for the confraternities in those towns and large villages lacking the wherewithal to have their own book printed. The book published in Carpentras in 1826, for instance, amounted to all of 1140 pages and contains the hymn to St Roch followed by the above-mentioned prayer to God. It also features prayers "against plague or other calamities":

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36 *Heures contenant les offices que se doivent dire durant l'année en la chapelle de la compagnie des Frères penitens, fondés soubs le tiltre N. Dame de Miséricorde à Marseille*, 1621, p. 142.

37 *Heures des frères pénitens de la compagnie fondée sous le titre de la décolation S. Jean Baptiste, en habit noir […]*, 1678, p. 79.

38 *Heures des frères pénitens bleus, fondez sous le titre de Nostre-Dame de Pitié […]*, 1674, p. 425 and p. 24 (p. 313, the Lesson for the feast of Saint Sebastian makes no reference to plague).

39 *Offices tirés du bréviaire romain à l'usage des frères pénitents blancs fondés sous le titre de saint Lazare […], nouvelle édition, revue et corrigée*, 1748, pp. 359–361; *Offices à l'usage des frères pénitents blancs de saint Lazare, tirés du brévaire romain et du propre des saints du diocèse de Marseille, pour servir de supplément aux autres offices*, 1778, pp. 60–68.

> A peste, fame et bello, libera nos, Domine [...]. Deus qui culpa offenderis, poenitentia placaris, preces populi tui supplicantis propitius respice, et flagella tuæ iracundiæ quæ pro peccatis nostris meremur, averte.
>
> [God protect us against plague, famine and war [...]. O God, You who are offended by sin, You are appeased by penance. Look with mercy upon the prayers of Your supplicant people, and reject the scourge of Your anger which we deserve because of our sins].[40]

3.3 Personal Prayer: The Example of the *Ange Conducteur*

Prayers in French would appear in those collections printed for use by the faithful. One of the most well-known *L'Ange conducteur dans la dévotion chrétienne* [The Guiding Angel in Christian Devotion] was compiled by the Jesuit Jacques Coret (1631–1721), originally published in 1691 in Liège and which saw multiple reissues, with variations in the texts. Julien Brancolini and Marie-Thérèse Bouyssy could identify 51 provincial editions between September 1779 and March 1789 and even went so far as to estimate its overall distribution during that period at 97 700 copies, a figure which amounted to a "truly extraordinary circulation."[41] Copies printed during the Ancien Régime, however, are not widely available in public libraries, and those to be found mostly date from the nineteenth century. A Lille edition from 1774 contains, inter alia, "Prayers in Times of Plague, Famines and Public Deprivations," with a "Divine and Miraculous Antiphon against Plague," an "Antiphon to the Virgin Mary" (this being the French translation of the abovementioned *Stella Maris* prayer). It also featured "Litanies for Deliverance from Plague," a "Prayer for Deliverance from Sudden Death," as well as a "Prayer to St Roch" so that he may deliver the supplicant from plague and sudden death, and an "Invocation to St Beard."[42]

3.4 *Occasionnels*, *Brevets* and *Placards*

Such personal prayers could also be printed on so-called *occasionnels*, either in the form of loose sheets of paper or as small booklets, often printed on a large sheet

40 *L'Office de la glorieuse Vierge Marie à l'usage des pénitens séculiers de l'un et l'autre sexe [...]*, New edition substantially enhanced, Carpentras, Devillario-Quenin, 1826, p. 422 and 1127 f.

41 Brancolini/Bouyssy, La vie provinciale du livre, p. 14.

42 Coret, *L'Ange conducteur*, 1774, pp. 261–263; Id., *L'ange conducteur*, 1802, pp. 346–349. Similarly in a Paris edition, Carrez/Thomine/Fortic, 1828, pp. 233–236 and Lyon-Paris/Périsse frères, 1837, pp. 195–197.

which could then be folded. The prayers were likely to be used in two quite distinct ways. As with hymnbooks, they could be read mentally for individual use by the literate. Alternatively, the literate could read them aloud to the illiterates until the latter could memorize and then recite them. The *occasionnels* or handwritten copies of prayers taken from a printed collection, for example, could also serve as a *préservatif*, where they acted as a *brevet* in this case. A *brevet* was a bill or a note on which one or more prayer formulas were printed or copied out. As far as the wearer was concerned, the *brevet*[43] functioned in all likelihood as a protective amulet would. In particular, these sheets of paper could be folded and sewn into a devotional scapular and might even contain ground dust from a shrine or a small relic, fastened by two ribbons and to be worn around the neck.[44] A compilation of printed or handwritten pieces concerning the plague outbreak, kept in the Marseilles library, contains some of these *occasionnels.* Hence, we can read:

> Antiphon and prayer to beseech God through the intercession of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary [that we] be delivered from plague, printed by order of the Bishop of Marseilles so that it can be recited in churches and communities after service during contagion and individually by each believer in this city who shall be devoted to reciting them.

Bearing a woodcut of the Virgin with Child above the text, this *occasionnel* originated from the presses of the Marseilles printer Jean-Pierre Brébion. In addition to the above-mentioned *Stella Maris* prayer, an invocation to Christ was also found in a penitent's liturgical book. The leaflet culminated with a historical account, affirming how these texts had been penned by Portuguese Franciscans and how they had proved their worth during plagues that afflicted their native land.[45] Another brevet not bearing the printer's name introduced an "Antiphon to the Blessed Virgin against plague" followed by a prayer identical to those quoted above, as well as an "Antiphon to St Roch" also against plague, formed by the hymn already mentioned in the Black Penitents' liturgical book and a prayer beseeching God to accept the saint's intercession.[46]

A variant of such *brevets* consists of *placards,* namely sheets made to be posted (displayed) publicly. One such, printed by a certain Joseph Senez in Aix in 1720, bore the "Blessing of Saint Francis," "the Tau Cross" along with other Latin formu-

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43 This term appears to have been derived, by means of a formal analogy, from the ancient meaning of "patent": a simple notarial deed given to the parties themselves without being recorded in the *minutes.* See Nisard, *Histoire des livres populaires.*

44 Delumeau, *Rassurer et protéger*, pp. 385–389.

45 BMVR de Marseille, compilation 3611.

46 Ibid.

las.[47] Sylvain Gagnière has argued that St Francis' blessing was "the most common prayer in our country" (le Comtat), quite a plausible proposition given the number of convents claiming to be linked to St Francis of Assisi and the indispensable role played by the Capuchins and Observantins during plague outbreaks.[48] His blessing was shorter and thus easy to remember. Actually, the text is taken from *Numbers* 6, verse 24–26, with the exception of the final phase:

> + Benedicat tibi Dominus and custodiat te + Ostendat faciem Suam tibi et misereatur tui + Convertat vultum Suum ad te, et det tibi pacem. Dominus **T** [sign of Tau] benedicat te **N.**
>
> [May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace. May the Lord bless you, so-and-so (…)].

The symbol + corresponds to signs of cross. The **T** or *tau* is a letter from the Hebrew alphabet, which God commands in *Ezekiel* 9:4 to be marked on the foreheads of those he wishes to save. Furthermore, given its resemblance to the sacred cross, **T** is the emblem for the Antonin Order, as well as for St Francis' seal. Whoever recited this prayer would have to replace the **N**, *nescio*, by his or her name or that of a beneficiary to whom the prayer was being offered.

When such a *placard* was posted onto a door, as was the case in the city of Bollene, it served to indicate that "plague never was present and has never visited any house." It could equally function as a *brevet*, in that it also stated that "Pope Clement V also sent this verse to his Catholic Majesty (following a Latin text about the Holy Cross and Christ's stigmata) and that all those wearing it [on their person] shall never contract plague." Such assertions implied that this piece of paper was intrinsically imbued with an automatic protective power and therefore not in keeping with Catholic orthodox teachings.

4 *Préservatifs:* Saint Zacharias' Cross and Religious Medallions

Whenever a person wore a religious medallion on a chain around their neck or small pectoral crosses either on or underneath their garments as a personal safeguard, this could be seen by the faithful as a means of protecting themselves against illness and death, embodying as it were an attitude which attested to a spiritual faith in Providence. And yet, here again, wearing such a medallion entailed the risk of seeking out the object's intrinsic efficacy – which was tantamount to

47 Ibid. Cited by Gaffarel/Duranty, *La peste de 1720*, p. 130.
48 Gagnière, Les saints évoqués en temps de peste, p. 272 f.

superstition. Such *préservatifs* would rarely appear in people's bequests except in the form of jewellery, occasionally handed down in wills, and sometimes in portraits which bore witness to their use. Down through the years, archaeological excavations of funereal sites have uncovered them.

Among such devotional objects is the double-cross known as the Anti-Plague Cross of Saint Zacharias, deemed a *préservatif* in times of plague. St Zacharias (Zechariah), patriarch of Jerusalem, preserved the relic of the "True Cross" when the Persians looted the city in 614 AD. After its liberation, he solemnly restored the Cross to the city on 14 September 629 AD (Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross). The best known example of such a cross is to be found in the Copenhagen Museum.[49] In France, one such cross was found in a plague pit in Martigues, whilst others were discovered in a vault at the Madeline Church in Aix and in the vault of a nun at the Benedictine abbey in Montmartre.[50]

On this double cross, the upper horizontal line theoretically corresponds to the *titulus*, an inscription placed above the head of the crucified Christ, while the lower line supports Christ's feet. In addition to its use in the Orthodox Church, this double cross was typical of the reliquaries of the "True Cross" especially in the Occident.[51] These small crosses, reputed to provide personal protection, bore inscriptions varying from one model to the next, but they can nonetheless be grouped into a few broad categories. The cross from the Madeline Church in Aix bore little more than the IHS Christogram (often interpreted as *Iesus Hominis Salvator*, Jesus Savior of Men). The crosses in Copenhagen and Martigues are not entirely legible. In the case of the Danish one, the obverse or facet featuring the principal design (where Christ on the Cross is depicted in carved strokes) bears, in addition to the titulus "INRI", at the very top, "D[O]MINE MEMENT.", i. e., the abbreviation for *Domine, memento mei* (Lord, remember me). The figure of St Francis is engraved on the reverse side, arms open-wide, revealing his stigmata, with the acrostic: "S.FRA.... ORAPROME," *St. Fran[cisce] ora pro me* [Saint Francis, pray for me]. The Martigues Cross apparently carries a similar form of invocation to Mary Immaculate and to St John.

49 Published by Mollaret/Brossollet, La peste, source méconnue d'inspiration artistique, pp. 32–35; Biraben, *Les Hommes et la peste*, vol. II, p. 8.

50 Signoli/Chausserie-Laprée/Dutour, Étude anthropologique d'un charnier de la peste, pp. 182–184; Galliano/Bertrand, Les caveaux de l'église des Prêcheurs, p. 4; Périn, Fouilles archéologiques et histoire récente, p. 64 f. and sheet III.

51 This is the case with the Baugé Cross: Cambell, *Essai sur la vraie croix de Baugé*, vol. 1, p. 17 f. on the subject of the double cross. It should be noted that the author says nothing about the use of a small cross of this type as a *preservatif* against plague.

Variations of Saint Zachary's Plague Cross printed on an *occasionnel*, representing only one of its faces, contain groups of letters between which small crosses have been inserted. These are the initials of the first word from biblical verses or prayers, as Waldemar Deonna (1880–1959) has shown by providing complete Latin words and references to those printed on an *occasionnel* housed at the Museum of Geneva.[52] The Marseilles historian Auguste Laforêt (1801–1880) published the general outline of the cross with the memo: "Cross to be worn on the left arm during times of plague."[53] He makes mention of this *occasionnel* in a private collection. Its existences is otherwise known only by means of an old and partial photocopy and believed to be an *occasionnel* published by the Marseilles printer Jean-Pierre Brébion in 1720. He provided the drawing and an "explanation of the letters written on the Cross, which must be worn on his person, attached to the left arm during the plague season": an annotation in French of the verses indicated by their Latin initials and prayers corresponding to the crosses. Brébion added a "Prayer to be said every morning in times of plague" which implores Christ: "Deliver this city and its inhabitants, and I, your servant unworthy of this pestilence, [...] deign, also O Lord, [...] to restore to this city the goodness of clean and healthy air, and to those who have remained here the health they once enjoyed." At the bottom of the leaflet, a legend indicating its origin referred to the Council of Trent, which would have approved of this inscription.

In each of the above-mentioned and other published copies,[54] one essentially comes across the identical initial letters, yet in a different order. The initials found on the Plague Cross of Saint Zacharias also featured on the reverse side of the Saint Benedict Medal, whose inscriptions on the obverse side were also a series of initials, but which corresponded to a word from an invocation when calling upon God.[55]

III The Clergy's Vigilance in Times of Plague

If literate, a true believer could, in the hope of ensuring his own salvation, read works such as *Préparations à la mort* [Preparing for Death] – a genre of publication specific to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – and apply the precepts

52 Deonna, Talismans chrétiens, p. 32.

53 Laforêt, *Souvenirs marseillais*, p. 23.

54 Sébillot, L'imagerie populaire, pp. 525–527; Gamba, Gli antidoti "spirituali" contro la peste.

55 The fact was criticised by Guéranger, *Essai sur l'origine*, pp. 150–152. An example is described in Giraud, Nouvelle étude sur Saint-Cyr, p. 230 f.

their authors were advocating.[56] And yet, the chapters in those books devoted to the faithful's final moments on Earth were generally unsuited to the prevailing circumstances during a plague outbreak: their ideal of a "good death" was one in which a patient lies in bed, surrounded by family, and in the presence of members of the ministering clergy, whose vigilance led them to wait for the propitious moment to administer the Last Rites. Starting with Confession, this was followed by absolving the dying person of their sins, and Communion "in viaticum" (with a consecrated host the ministering priest had brought from a place of worship), and Extreme Unction, which occasionally preceded Communion and which was not considered absolutely indispensable for salvation.[57] The ministering clergy would then attend to the dying person through their agony with consoling words and prayers. In sharp contrast, the plague-ridden patient could run the risk of a "bad death," all alone, deprived of the holy sacraments. In despair, he might be tempted to curse God. Such a risk was at once individual and collective: individual in the sense of salvation for the deceased, and collective for the community of survivors perturbed about the fate in the afterlife of those who had to endure a "bad death."

One could certainly object that the above-outlined schema emanated from clerics and how it is difficult to ascertain the laity's true attitude regarding the need for obtaining absolution for their sins, the last rites, and possibly even Extreme Unction before dying. In all likelihood, these Catholic sacraments had no significance for the clandestine Protestant minority, or for those Protestants convicts "for the faith" who had been condemned to the galleys for belonging to the Reformed Church. If the faithful truly regarded absolution as an indispensable condition for salvation, would they then have insisted upon religious ceremonies or rites for collective absolution, such as those ministrations delivered by a sailing vessel's chaplain in the event of shipwreck? Note that in such perilous circumstances, death struck *everyone* as being imminent and approaching all those assembled before the priest in times of disaster. During an outbreak of plague, however, circumstances utterly differed. Whenever penitential ceremonies were organized, those administering the faithful strove to sway God's mercy in favor of every living being and not just the plague-stricken. And yet, let us not forget that society at the juncture was highly ritualistic. The funereal rite of passage incorporated the Com-

56 Roche, La mémoire de la mort, pp. 103–150; Coste, *Représentations et comportements en temps d'épidémie,* pp. 385–399 reports a few treatises for the plague period but dating from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century; Favre, *La Fin dernière.*

57 Bernos, *Les sacrements*, L'extrême-onction à l'époque moderne. Onction des malades ou démarche pénitentielle pour les mourants, pp. 267–276.

mendation of the Dying, and moreover the plague of 1720 happened to erupt at the pinnacle of the Catholic Reformation's inroads among the faithful.

1 Administering the Last Sacraments: Ministering the Sick and the Dying

Ever since their foundation in the sixteenth century, the Capuchins (Franciscans) had consistently made a name for themselves by virtue of their voluntary activities and good deeds on behalf of the plague-ridden, a code of conduct which required them not to forsake a plague-ridden locality and to accept taking considerable risks by assisting pestilence victims. Another remarkable feature of 1720 was that the diocesan heads did not forsake their episcopal city in quest of a safer haven. This code of conduct was exemplified by Henri de Belsunce, Bishop of Marseilles, who devoted himself entirely to the city's streets and its communities. Similarly, Charles-Gaspard-Guillaume de Vintimille du Luc in Aix, Jacques de Forbin-Janson in Arles, and Louis-Pierre de La Tour du Pin-Montauban in Toulon all demonstrated such an altruistic disposition.[58] Their role model, and unequivocally so in the case of Henri de Belsunce, was unquestionably St Charles Borromeo (1538–1584), Archbishop of Milan, the exemplary prelate during the Catholic Reformation. Ignoring the dangers sweeping through his episcopal city during the outbreak of plague in 1576, he instead set out to help its victims.

Henri de Belsunce's charitable deeds have been best documented. On 29 July 1720, he convened all Marseilles' parish priests and all the superiors of male religious communities in a bid to "jointly take the most effective measures to keep all those assembled [alive]" and to focus on ensuring the continuity of public worship and the administration of the holy sacraments. We know what those assembled discussed thanks to Fr. Giraud, superior of the Trinitarians in Marseille, who summarised the meeting's minutes in his plague account.[59] De Belsunce authorised the confessors to absolve all the grave confessional cases he had hitherto reserved for himself; "at the same time he advised each priest to briefly question those who were sick on matters of conscience [during Confession]." The issue of whether to administer the Last Rites and Extreme Unction to plague-stricken victims gave rise to some debate among the parish priests, which, as matters transpired, proved to be a theoretical consideration. The eldest cleric in their midst suggested limiting

58 Bertrand, *Henri de Belsunce*, p. 123 f.; Villiers, La peste de 1720–1721 à Aix, p. 23; Caylux, *Arles et la peste*, p. 161 f.; Lambert, *Histoire de la peste de Toulon.*

59 Giraud, Journal de 1720, pp. 58–62.

themselves to absolving the dying person's sins and in a bid to bolster his argument cited the authority of the theologian Bonacina[60] and the practice observed during the Milan plague. All the others present were of the opposite opinion. One parish priest proposed making rods with tweezers attached with which to hand out the communion Host and to administer the oils for use in Extreme Unction. De Belsunce "did not reject this out of hand, but he did find them cumbersome to use." Giraud specified that ultimately "neither rods nor tweezers were used." François-Marie Abbati, Bishop of Carpentras, published a summary description of an instrument "in the form of a spoon" that could be used for distributing communion Hosts and another for anointing the sick. To date, no evidence to prove that either object was ever made has emerged.[61]

The bishop's mission, as exemplified by Monsignor de Belsunce, and especially those of the priests and religious who had remained behind in Marseilles, was twofold. First and foremost, they were to distribute alms, either in the form of foodstuffs or as coins. Their primary concern was that plague victims should die in the least possible bad conditions, provided with the sacraments, and, above all else, that they should not blaspheme or curse God *in extremis.* Soon, however, it became apparent that plague victims could not be administered all the Last Rites. Communion was administered as a sacrament to those unlikely to vomit up the Host. Primarily, it became a matter of obtaining a confession from those dying patients, sometimes hastily, and having them recite the Act of Contrition in order to absolve them of their sins. In a "Pastoral letter serving [as guidelines] for rules of conduct with regard to religious observance in this city whenever plague was suspected," Mgr. Gonteri, Archbishop of Avignon, authorised the clergy on 27 September 1721 to reduce the scale of Extreme Unction: "A single unction shall be sufficient, including in it the names of all five [external] senses that should be uttered when anointing each one of them."[62] In fact, once the contagion had started to subside, Extreme Unction would have been administered to the sick taken to hospital as well as to those eleventh-hour plague victims.

As soon as the last rites had been administered, the priests would do their utmost to remain with the dying in a bid to "console" them. Societal rites of passage, such as funeral corteges and liturgical celebrations, could only take place under exceptional circumstances. This was not the case, however, for religious rites in-

60 This priest must have based his arguments on Bonacina's *Operum omnium de morali theologia*, p. 259, "Extrema unctio, art. 10."

61 Mentioned in Delacour, *Pernes au temps de la peste*, p. 72 and 74. Concerning this whole debate, see Collet, *Traité des devoirs d'un pasteur*, pp. 101–118.

62 Feldschuh, Les mentalités religieuses face à la peste, p. 57. Similar prescription from Henri de Puget, Bishop of Digne: Gaffarel/Duranty, *La peste de 1720*, p. 139.

tended to facilitate the deceased's passage toward and their subsequent stay in the afterlife.

Those clergy remaining behind in the cities and who duly devoted themselves to plague victims were primarily secular priests and members of apostolic or teaching religious orders, accustomed as such to regular contact with the laity. They took considerable risks, the nature of which they did not fully appreciate. Plague wreaked havoc amongst several religious communities: the Franciscans in Marseilles – the Observantines, the Capuchins and the Recollects (a mendicant order not reconstituted in France in the aftermath of the Revolution). As for the Jesuits, eighteen of their congregation passed away, nine were deemed *réchappés*, in other words, survivors, while two other members of the order escaped its impact. Numerous canons regular of Saint Antoine, a Hospitalier Order, also succumbed to the contagion. In total, one fifth of Marseilles' clergy died as a result of plague during the epidemic.[63]

Male and female contemplative orders alike[64], however, were under the impression that they, too, were participating in the fight against plague by virtue of their supplications.[65] In Marseilles, the Benedictines of Saint-Victor shut themselves up in their abbey. The Carthusian monks in Aix refused to allow their monastery to be transformed into an infirmary, for they would then have to house the poor from the Hospital of Charity. Ultimately, however, they had to cave in to the first consul and the archbishop who insisted they do so; the archbishop offered the monks hospitality at his palace. In Avignon, the Celestines refused to forsake their vast convent, in which the local authorities wanted to set up a "quarantine" station. The vice-legate was then obliged to send "the entire palace garrison, supported by a company of militia" in order to "force their way in."[66]

2 Indulgences and Prayers for the Souls in Purgatory

Similarly, the prelates were concerned about the fate of plague victims' souls in the hereafter, particularly those who had passed away without receiving the sacraments and those who had been buried in "profane soil." Mgr. de Belsunce received

63 This impact has been developed at greater length in Gaffarel/Duranty, *La peste de 1720*, p. 152 f. and Bertrand, Sauver les âmes et les corps.

64 Feldschuh has examined the case of nuns: Feldschuh, Les mentalités religieuses face à la peste, pp. 39–46.

65 Bertrand, *Henri de Belsunce*, p. 164.

66 Gaffarel/Duranty, *La peste de 1720*, pp. 172–179; Dubois, Le monastère des chartreux d'Aix, pp. 87–106; Feldschuh, Les mentalités religieuses face à la peste, p. 51.

two Apostolic Briefs (letters bearing a papal decision) from Pope Clement XI, dated 14 September 1720. In one of them, the Pope granted plenary indulgence on behalf of the deceased faithful (whereby all purgatorial sentences for their past sins were removed) to those priests who would celebrate Mass for the Dead during the contagion. In his Pastoral letter of 9 October, de Belsunce communicated these "Church treasures," i. e., the Apostolic Briefs, to Marseilles' secular and regular priests, as well as those in the surrounding regions; he urged them to "procure deliverance" (from purgatory) for the many thousands of souls for whom no prayers have yet been contemplated." The archbishops of Aix and Arles also obtained Apostolic Briefs in favour of those who had succumbed to plague. The Brief issued for the diocese of Arles granted "the archbishop authority to designate shrines meant to deliver the souls of those already dead from or for those who will succumb to plague from the torments of Purgatory."[67]

IV The Religious and Civil Authorities' Pledges

In *Le Capucin charitable,* Father Maurice de Toulon (whose baptismal name was Jean Tassi or Taxil, 1610–1666) adamantly urges: "One must first turn to God in times of plague and offer Him pledges and prayers in order to appease his anger." Initially published in Italian in Genoa in 1661, the book was based upon the author's personal observations and experiences of disinfection through the use of perfumes during the plague outbreaks of 1640 (in Solliès-Pont, near Toulon); 1649–1650 (in Marseilles and La Ciotat); and 1656–1657 (in Genoa).[68] In 1721, the work was reprinted in Lyon and Dr. Jean-Jacques Manget issued a completed version in Geneva.[69]

1 City Councils' Role

During plague epidemics, city councils could supplement those actions instigated by bishops who, for their part, were prescribing prayers and taking solemn vows. In all likelihood, the councils were motivated by an urge to ensure that "God shall arrest the hand of his Angel of Death," to employ the biblical expression, i. e. to bring the raging epidemic in their towns or villages to an end. Or, al-

67 Jauffret, *Pièces historiques sur la peste,* vol. I, pp. 312–317; Caylux, *Arles et la peste,* p. 163.
68 Toulon, *Le Capucin charitable,* pp. 77–89.
69 Manget, *Traité de la peste.*

ternatively, as a preventative measure and directly linked to vigilance, the councils pledged to avoid taking any risks, thereby articulating their wish that the scourge raging throughout the region not strike their city. To this end, and in accordance with the Catholic principle of recourse to divine mercy, the councils implored that one or more members of the Courts of Heaven come to their assistance, for these members could intercede with God on behalf of their city under threat or in distress. In addition to the above-mentioned anti-pestilential saints, if their city had been placed under the patronage of a given saint, of whom the city usually possessed a relic, the council would then beseech that saint directly. On 20 October 1720, for example, the general council of Fréjus made a vow to the Blessed Virgin and the commune's patron saint, François de Paule, promising to provide for "a poor and well-behaved girl from the city" each year in perpetuity should their protective saint intercede with God on their behalf in order to bring the plague outbreak to an end. Residents of Apt placed themselves under the protection of St Anne (of whom they thought they were in possession of some important relics), alongside St Roch and St Sebastian. The consuls pledged to hear Mass in the chapel dedicated to St Anne in the cathedral and to offer her a candle of white wax on her feast day each year. Similarly, in Tarascon, the community venerated the head (skull) of St Martha in their collegiate church, a saint who had previously come to the city's rescue in 1629 and 1640.[70]

2 The Role of the Bishops. The Example of Marseilles

On 8 September 1720, feast day for the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and just as the epidemic was wreaking havoc throughout the city, Marseilles' *échevins* invited Mgr. de Belsunce to city hall in order to concelebrate Mass and to accept the solemn vow they had decided to undertake in the name of the city, by virtue of which they would seek to solicit God's mercy through the heavenly intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and the earthly intercession on behalf of the city's poor. Whereupon they agreed to donate in perpetuity 2 000 *livres* annually to the most recently established hospital, namely, the one designated in 1713 for orphan girls, which had been named after Notre-Dame de Bon-Secours.[71] It should be noted, however, that once the scourge was on the wane, their successors tended to have somewhat for-

70 Buti, *Colère de Dieu,* p. 263 f.; Bruni, *Le pays d'Apt malade de la peste*, pp. 103–106; Gagnière, Les saints évoqués en temps de peste, p. 270.

71 Bertrand, *Henri de Belsunce*, p. 138 f.

gotten this pledge. Meanwhile, however, the bishop suggested that another solemn vow be taken, as we shall observe.

From the onset of the epidemic, Mgr. de Belsunce is known to have instructed the clergy to recite daily prayers to St Roch. Furthermore, the Convent of Grand Trinitarians, adjacent to La Charité, was in possession of one of the saint's relics which was displayed on the convent's high altar. It was here that Mgr. de Belsunce came to officiate at Mass. On 16 August 1720, he celebrated St Roch's feast day with a procession on which he was accompanied by the city's clergy. It would appear, however, that this first attempt at divine intercession had scarcely any effect. He then sought out a new intercessionary form of worship. Not only was he a past student of the Society of Jesus, he also had been a member of the Jesuit order for some years, and yet he seemed to have hesitated between two devotions championed by the Jesuits. The first, a devotion to Jean-François Régis (1597–1640), the one and only French Jesuit to have been beatified at this time (since 1716); he was reputed to have prayed for the souls of plague victims during his lifetime. And a more recent form of Christian devotion, namely to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which at that juncture remained highly controversial, notably among Jansenists who characterised it as "muscular theology." They opposed such an emotional form of devotion, for the heart, a cardiac muscle, was then considered the seat of human feelings and sentiments. In an unprecedented move, Henri de Belsunce had the audacity to dedicate his diocese to this form of devotion, which at that time was only observed in the convents of the Visitandine order.[72] Historiographic research has emphasised the putative role played by a mystic nun in de Belsunce's life, a certain Sister Anne-Madeleine Rémuzat (1696–1730), a member of the earliest Visitation monastery in Marseilles. While no explicit proof of a link has been established, her influence seems highly likely. Particular mention should be made of the following extract from one of her texts, which underscores a strong convergence with the Bishop's utterances:

> Having been instructed by my superior to entreat God to let me know how He wants the Sacred Heart to be honoured, in order to obtain the cessation of the scourge afflicting this city [...] through the knowledge He [Christ] gave me after Communion, I understood that in afflicting this city with contagion, mercy played a greater role than justice in the design he proposed: that He wanted to purge the Church of Marseilles of those [doctrinal] errors[73] with which it had been infected, by opening it to his adorable Heart as the source of all truth; that He asked for a solemn Feast on the day He Himself chose, that is to say, the day after

72 Ibid., pp. 163–178.

73 The reference here is to Jansenism, a religion practiced by a small minority of *appellants*.

> the *octave* of the Blessed Sacrament[74], to honour His Sacred Heart, [and] that while waiting for the honour He asked to be accorded to Him, each member of the faithful should devote themselves to a prayer chosen by the bishop to honouring, according to God's design, the adorable Heart of his Son; that in this way they would be delivered from that contagion and that finally all those who would dedicate themselves to this devotion would only lack for help when this Sacred Heart would lack strength.[75]

De Belsunce decided to organize a large-scale expiatory ceremony on the occasion of the Feast of All Saints, on 1 November, including an expiatory procession, the celebration of Mass on the Cours, a main thoroughfare in Marseilles, and the consecration of his diocese to the Sacred Heart. Without his customary mitre and with a rope around his neck, as Saint Charles Borromeo had previously done, a barefooted de Belsunce walked through Marseilles' streets in a bid to demonstrate that he was taking all the sins of this sinful city upon himself. He thus placed the diocese under the protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and "in atonement for all the crimes which have drawn Heaven's vengeance down upon (this city)." He also inaugurated the Feast of the Sacred Heart, which was to be celebrated "every year on the first Friday immediately following the eight days devoted to the Blessed Sacrament." If we are to believe de Belsunce, the mistral blew ferociously on that day, yet it calmed during the ceremony, reflecting as it were his penchant to regard gusts of winds as a sign from God. In fact, the plague outbreak was already beginning to abate following the arrival of the initial cold bout of weather and continued doing so gradually over the ensuing winter months.[76]

In the aftermath of plague's re-emergence in April 1722, de Belsunce succeeded in convincing the *échevins* that they should place the city of Marseilles (and not just the diocese) under the protection of the Sacred Heart: On 28 May, the *échevins* solemnly pledged to attend Mass at the Visitation monastery on the anniversary of the Sacred Heart every year and to offer "in atonement for any crimes committed in this city, a white wax candle or torch weighing four pounds decorated with Marseilles' coat-of-arms, to be lit on that day before the Blessed Sacrament." On this occasion, the bishop upgraded the locally-based thanksgiving procession to the rank of a prominent procession, which would henceforth bring the feast day to a close. The *échevins* also committed themselves to participating in the ceremony.

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74 In the Catholic religion, the *octave* is the eight-day period following each major feast day in the religious calendar, during which that feast day is "remembered." The feast of the Blessed Sacrament (Corpus Christi) was celebrated on a Thursday. To this very day, the Feast of the Sacred Heart is celebrated on the Friday of the following week.

75 Quoted by Bertrand, *Henri de Belsunce,* p. 168.

76 Ibid., pp. 173–179. The Ordinance of 22 October 1720 which established the feast day, is found in Jauffret, *Pièces historiques sur la peste,* vol. I, pp. 164–173.

The novelty, however, of dedicating themselves to a form of devotion which was still not very widespread was such that numerous witnesses seem not to have fully understood its significance, with the sole exception of an educated minority who had the text of the pastoral letter to hand. Other Provençal prelates followed de Belsunce's example in advocating the worship of the Sacred Heart throughout their dioceses, notably the Archbishop of Avignon as of 1720, the Archbishops of Aix and Arles and the Bishops of Toulon and Carpentras in 1721.[77]

V Plague Memorials

In the image of David erecting an altar to God, individual consuls and their councils in some cities took the initiative of committing themselves to an enhanced form of worship to an intercessor of their choice. This entailed founding or endowing a charitable hospital or a chapel under the name of a celestial protector, or installing the effigy of an intercessor on one of the city's gates or in front of it, or more modestly of initiating a penitential procession.

1 Votive Chapels

Votive chapels built after an outbreak of plague became ever more numerous throughout the modern era. Some were dedicated to the Virgin (as with the *Salute* in Venice) or to individual saints. But for the period we are studying, they were primarily consecrated to St Roch, whose devotion, according to Sylvain Gagnière, "expanded greatly" in the Comtat region during the seventeenth century and more widely, as we shall see, in Provence, where it experienced "an extraordinary expansion" during the plague of 1720.[78]

Among multiple other examples, small Marian chapels were built in front of three of the town's gates in the small town of Pernes-les-Fontaines, in Comtat Veneto, (the fourth gate, the Porte Notre-Dame, was already endowed with a chapel). As a relic of the dreaded plague of 1580, the chapel of Notre-Dame des Abcès remains standing on Avenue Jean-Jaurès, opposite the Porte de Villeneuve, a small single-bay building erected by the city council following the solemn vows they pledged on 8 September 1580 and 15 August 1581, as plague was in the throes of

77 Andurand, *La grande affaire*, pp. 190–194.

78 Gagnière, Les saints évoqués en temps de peste, p. 260 f.; Coste, *Représentations et comportements*, pp. 371–376.

resurging. During the outbreak of 1628–1630, the council had pledged to erect a chapel in front of the gate of Saint-Gilles, under the name of Notre-Dame du Salut "for deliverance from plague." Another Marian chapel near the Portail-neuf, Notre-Dame de la Rose, dates from the same period and would appear to have been founded by a local family. In the district of Pernes, the rural chapel of Saint-Martin located at the crossroads for Isle and Avignon was also founded in 1630 and has meanwhile vanished into thin air. The chapel of Saint-Roch, on the road to Saint-Didier, might have been established in the fifteenth or late sixteenth century. In the aftermath of the Great Plague of 1720, this picturesque small baroque building was enlarged in 1723 thanks to a solemn vow made by the town and guarded by a hermit.

Sylvain Gagnière (1905–1997) and Abbé Joseph Sautel's (1880–1955) outstanding research carried out both in the archives and in the field[79] has revealed how these chapels often had either a double-entrance door (Saint-Roch and Notre-Dame de la Rose in Pernes) or two square bays framing the door. It is far from certain whether such a time-honoured blueprint – perhaps derived from rood screen façades – was characteristic of plague chapels, and even less so if the double-entrance door was intended to protect the clergy and consuls from contracting plague from the congregation gathered outside. This distinctive feature could likely be explained by the concern to enable a large group of worshippers congregated outside the chapel to follow the Mass being celebrated at the altar inside, notably on the feast of St Roch.

A less onerous option would have been to install an oratory on pillars at the entrance to an urban agglomeration, as for example happened in Fontvieille, where two such oratories were erected in 1721. Both owe their survival to the present day to the fact they were restored during the cholera epidemics of the nineteenth century.[80]

2 Votive Statues

A variant on the votive motif consisted in having a statue of the intercessor erected in a public place. In Avignon, for example, at the close of a general procession, a statue of the Virgin was blessed and then installed at Porte Saint-Michel "as a sign of the protection under which the city had been placed."[81] Cavaillon placed itself under the patronage of its first bishop, St Véran. Local residents vowed on 7 No-

79 Gagnière/Sautel, *Les épidémies de peste et leurs souvenirs.*

80 Gagnière, Les souvenirs de la peste, p. 236. For this type of small structure, see Bertrand, Die "Oratoires" der Provence.

81 Feldschuh, Les mentalités religieuses face à la peste, p. 96.

vember 1720 to erect "a stone statue of natural dimensions." Executed by a sculptor from Avignon in 1723, it can still be seen to this very day. St Veran holds an open book in which can be read *Manifestavi nomen tuum hominibus quos dedistis mihi, nunc rogo pro eis* [I have revealed your name to those men you have entrusted to me. Now I pray for them]. In Bollène, the monumental effigy of Notre-Dame de Bonne-Garde, the work of a local sculptor in 1721, was installed in front of the Porte du Pont so that local residents did not have to cross barriers in order to go and pray in the chapel of Notre-Dame de Bonne-Garde, situated on the far bank of the river Lez.[82]

3 St Roch's Triumph

While it is currently not feasible to specify how many churches and chapels were named after anti-pestilential saints before and after 1720, we can at least seek to draw some conclusions from the study conducted by Marie-Hélène Froschlé-Chopard[83] on churches and chapels in eastern Provence dedicated to saints spanning the entire second millennium. In total, she counted 301 such edifices linked to Marian patronage. Next in frequency were those placed under the patronage of St Peter or St John the Baptist, with 86, respectively. The ranking of these results corresponds, with a lower total of sanctuaries, to the list she was able to draw up for the eleventh and twelfth centuries; not only does it reflect how primarily multi-secular antiquity was but also the stability of parish titulatures.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, St Roch assumed fourth position, with 73 instances. At the turn of the twentieth century, he had moved up to second position, with a slightly reduced number of churches and chapels. 265 places of worship were dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, followed by St Roch (64), St Peter (60), St John the Baptist (59), and then by the two other anti-plague saints who apparently had been strongly petitioned during the epidemics of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, St Anthony the Hermit lay in seventh position with 46 dedications and with 33 at the beginning of the twentieth century. St Sebastian came in twelfth position in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with 34 churches dedicated to him (with 22 at the turn of the twentieth century). As an indication of their popularity in bygone times, a survey conducted in 1600–1601 of parish altars in the diocese of Fréjus placed the Virgin in prime position (64 altars) followed by St Se-

82 Gagnière, Les saints évoqués en temps de peste, p. 270 f. et Les souvenirs de la peste, p. 237 f.
83 Froeschlé-Chopard, *Espace et sacré en Provence*, pp. 101–108.

bastian (31), and St Anthony (27).[84] Mention should also be made of the discreet presence in eastern Provence of St Charles Borromeo, with two chapels in the dioceses of Grasse and Vence. In Marseilles, a chapel built circa 1614 after the Milanese cardinal had been canonised gave its name to the Saint-Charles district. Henri de Belsunce once visited this chapel during the plague outbreak in order to celebrate Mass.[85] And we should not overlook the fact that cemeteries where plague victims had been buried also bore the name of St Roch, as can be seen in Arles, Toulon and Avignon, for example.

4 Votive Processions and Solemn Religious Services

In the words of Jean Delumeau, the plague outbreak erupted during a period of "processional civilisation."[86] These annual votive processions should not be confused with other forms of public processions which were more cyclical in nature and held in times of plague, such as the propitiatory processions triggered by the announcement of an outbreak of plague in nearby towns and cities, or the general procession that the Archbishop of Aix, Charles-Gaspard-Guillaume de Vintimille du Luc, decreed on 24 August 1720.[87] Nor should they be confounded with those penitential processions, in which clergy and faithful alike begged for forgiveness for their sins and showed repentance, such as the procession held on 1 November 1720 in Marseilles. It was in that city that Mgr. de Belsunce organised on 31 December 1720, on the final day of that calamitous year, a great expiatory procession through the streets, following the outer palisades of the city's perimeters. At each of the city's gates, he gave his blessing to the city and to the adjoining townlands. Upon arriving near the aqueduct, that is to say in the general area of the current Boulevard Charles-Nédélec, "the said procession passed through cemeteries where [therein lies] a very large number of those who died from this contagious disease, and most of those dead were only half-covered, and one could see the heads, arms and legs of various dead people, and having passed through all these corpses, the Monseigneur gave his blessing to those districts."

After the "return of plague" the following year, de Belsunce organized a great procession on 8 November 1721 attended by "a large crowd of people" who traversed the entire city, from the cathedral to Notre-Dame de la Garde, both in thanks-

84 Ibid., p. 158.

85 Froeschlé-Chopard, *La religion populaire en Provence orientale*; Bertrand, *Henri de Belsunce*, p. 178.

86 Delumeau, *Rassurer et protéger*, p. 90 f.

87 Jauffret, *Pièces historiques sur la peste*, vol. I, pp. 139–144.

giving "for the deliverance of this city of Marseilles" and to pray to God for Avignon, which at that juncture was being ravaged by the scourge. These were once-off exceptional ceremonies.

On an annual basis, the votive procession led, and to this very day still leads, the faithful to the chapels built during plague outbreaks. This procession has served as a reminder of the risk of plague and the possibility, depending on the prevailing circumstances, to avoid it altogether or to at least mitigate its impact.[88] In some instances, the local city council was able to organize a votive procession to an existing chapel. Hence, in 1720, the consuls of Saint-Didier initiated such a procession to the pre-existing shrine of Notre-Dame de Sainte-Garde. In Pernes, the above-mentioned rural chapel of Saint-Roch was to become the chosen destination for the procession from the parish church on 16 August, St Roch's feast day. In Cucuron, an expiatory procession led by local consuls, barefoot and covered in ashes, alongside the clergy and local residents visited the hermitage of Notre-Dame de Beauvoir, where they carried the relic of Sainte Tulle, the town's local and patron saint. Their exertion was reported to have brought the outbreak of plague to an end. The consuls made a solemn vow to repeat *ad perpetuam* the procession every year and to plant a *mai* (a large tree felled and carried by local residents) in front of the church on the eve of the patron saint's feast day.[89]

In Marseilles, the *échevins*' solemn vow has been commemorated up to the present day, with the exception of several years during the French Revolution and in the early nineteenth century. From the Restoration until the inception of the Third Republic, the Sacred Heart procession was the most important in the city's religious calendar. It was then banned by an anti-clerical republican municipality, who refused to attend the ceremony and to provide the candle pledged by the *échevins*. Whereupon, the then president of the Chamber of Commerce decided that his trading company would henceforth offer the candle on behalf of the people of Marseilles. His successors or their representatives followed suit every year thereafter in the Visitation monasteries, until the last one closed its doors in 1986. Ever since, a service to commemorate this solemn vow has been held in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Prado built in the twentieth century.[90] The text used in the consecration, which the archbishop reads each year, is a modernised version of the one originally compiled by Mgr. de Belsunce.

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88 Delumeau, L*a Peur en Occident*, pp. 138–140.

89 Castel, *Histoire de Cucuron* p. 61. The author asserts that the public ceremony was no longer celebrated and that the *mai* was no longer planted after the mayor issued a decree in 1914. In fact, the planting of a *mai* (a poplar) as part of the votive feast was to resume during the twentieth century.

90 Bertrand, *Henri de Belsunce,* pp. 183–186 and 327–328.

5 Bearing Witness to the Efficacy of a Vow through an *Ex-voto*

Votive churches or chapels often contain an *ex-voto*, a votive offering in the form of a painting inaugurated "in fulfilment of a vow" that commemorates a solemn pledge undertaken by the city council. Such votive chapels and other pre-existing chapels may also house such votive paintings donated by individuals, families or groups, as for example, by a religious community who likewise had made a request, pleading for protection, help or recovery during an epidemic, and who considered that their wish had been granted thanks to the divine intervention of the Virgin Mary or a given saint with God. The *ex-voto* thus serves as a form of thanksgiving to the heavenly mediator for this divine act of mercy between God and mankind and bears public witness for their beneficial intercession.[91] In plague-ridden localities, such a votive offering somehow tempered the prevailing image of an utterly incurable infectious disease, whereas in areas not afflicted by the contagion, it bore witness to the effectiveness of the plea made to God.

6 Commemorating Plague Heroes

In 1722, Toussaint Pasturel (1671–1731) a Minim friar from Aix published a memoir in Latin, *In Provincia et Comitatu Venaissiano pestiferis inservientes demortui annis 1720, 1721 et 1722* [...] [In Provence and Comtat Venaissin, [they] perished while caring for plague victims in 1720, 1721 and 1722], in which he evoked 41 biographies of individuals who lost their lives as a result of their devotion to plague victims. Though predominantly affiliated with religious communities, the deceased also included seven Good Shepherd nuns and two lay people.[92] One can surmise, however, that this memoir had a rather limited impact in light of the fact that it was written in Latin and the scarcity of copies that made their way into public libraries.

The mausoleum for the consuls of Arles who succumbed to plague, built in 1722, is without equal in the region. A distinction had been made between "the cemetery of Saint-Bourdon where the consuls, priests and other distinguished townspeople are buried" within the perimeters of the ancient and medieval Alyscamps cemetery, and Saint-Roc cemetery in which most other plague victims

91 Cousin, *Ex-voto de Provence* et *Le miracle et le quotidien*; Fabre, La peste en l'absence de Dieu, et *a contrario* Bertrand, L'ex-voto des visitandines.

92 Beysson, Le *In Provincia et Comitatu Venaissiano pestiferis inservientes.* On the two lay persons, Delphine and Marie-Marguerite Ribbe, see Ribbe, *Deux chrétiennes pendant la peste.*

were interred.[93] In the aftermath of the plague, the town council had "this *mauzolée* erected on the site, adorned with an epitaph composed by M. le chevalier de Romieu in praise of the dead in order that it should serve as a memorial to posterity." Although over the intervening years it has been relocated and restored, this solemn monument is still visible. It bears two Latin inscriptions memorialising the civil notables *armati lorica charitatis* [armed with the breastplate of charity] and *presbiteri arelatenses parrochi, pastores boni qui videntes venientem lupum sicut mercenarii non fugerunt* [Arlesian parish priests, good pastors who saw the wolf coming and yet did not flee like mercenaries], and who devoted themselves to their compatriots. In both instances notables and priests alike were mentioned by name.

Arles' Order of Minims, a male monastic order which established a convent at Les Alyscamps, no doubt judged this tribute exclusively to secular priests as somewhat lacking. In 1723, they had a plaque installed in the vestibule of their church in order to commemorate the sacrifices made by *percutiuntur variorum ordinum religiosi milites [...] familiis pestiferis inservientes* [the religious from various orders, fighting [against the contagion, who] were struck down [...] by providing care for plague victims.] The text listed ten religious orders.[94]

Bishop Gonteri had "a kind of *placard*" published which was to be placed in every sacristy throughout the diocese of Avignon in order "to perpetuate the memory of those who died performing similar charitable works [among plague victims] during the contagion that devastated his diocese." This rather long Latin text culminated with a list of 21 secular clergy and 26 regular clergy, "*eorum igitur nomina nunquam peritura in fastis saltem Ecclesiae Avenionensis*" [whose names should never disappear, at least from the splendour of the Church of Avignon].[95]

These were remarkable initiatives, for they all served to anticipate the act of commemorating "great men" by dint of the printed word, monuments and inscriptions. That is to say, to perpetuate the memory of those who had devoted themselves to their fellow human beings to the point of losing their own lives. In Marseilles, it was not until the turn of the nineteenth century that the "Plague Column" was finally erected, with inscriptions in French commemorating clerics and civilians alike who fought against the scourge, as well as the deceased and the survivors. On one side, the inscription reveals the concern to immortalise the exemplary nature of their voluntary deeds against the scourge, at a time the resurgence of plague was feared:

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93 Bertrand/Baudat, Aux origines du monument aux morts.

94 Ibid., pp. 545–546. This text is quoted in the appendix of a publication with multiple editions: Collet, *Traité des devoirs d'un pasteur*, p. 561 f.

95 Collet, *Traité des devoirs d'un pasteur*, pp. 561 and 563–564.

TRIBUTE TO MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY PRIESTS,
TO A GREAT NUMBER OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS,
WHO DIED VICTIMS OF THEIR DEVOTION
TO HELP AND CONSOLE THE DYING.

THEIR NAMES HAVE PERISHED.
MAY THEIR EXAMPLE NEVER BE LOST!
MAY OTHERS FOLLOW IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS
SHOULD THESE CALAMITIOUS DAYS STRIKE ANEW.[96]

7 Constant Reminder of Plague: Décor at Marseilles' *Consigne Sanitaire*

In 1720, the building that was to house the city's sanitary office, the so-called *consigne sanitaire*, was still under construction. Upon its completion, the *bureau de la santé* members who installed themselves in it either commissioned or purchased artworks in a bid to keep the memory of the plague outbreak constantly in their gaze. Although de Belsunce had constantly advocated worshipping the Sacred Heart, this image of the flaming heart was missing from this décor where St Roch, the traditional intercessionary saint, was venerated instead. In 1724, local health intendants commissioned the sculptor Lazare Veyrier to make a statue of St Roch which was to crown the pediment of the facade of the *consigne sanitaire* on the city side. Destroyed during the French Revolution, it was replaced at the begining of the nineteenth century by the current sculpture, the work of Barthélemy-François Chardigny. In 1729, members of the Bureau asked the painter Audibert to create a mural for the ceiling of their council room, which no longer exists. It depicted "the Virgin Mary in all her glory, St Roch as intercessor for the city of Marseilles [...]." In 1730, they succeeded in acquiring from Pierre Puget's grandson the bas-relief that his grandfather had sculpted shortly before his death and which had remained as a family heirloom, *Saint Charles Borromeo Praying for the End of Plague in Milan.* The infirmaries (*lazarettos)* in Arenc, near the city, were under the protection of St Roch. In 1733, the health intendants commissioned a painting for their chapel on the theme of St Roch interceding with the Virgin on behalf of the plague-stricken city. It has meanwhile been misplaced. After rebuilding the chapel, in 1777 they commissioned the young Jacques-Louis David (the future portraitist of Napoleon's coronation) to do another painting. Once again, they asked him to work on the theme of "St Roch and a Virgin," even though the saint could conceivably have been depicted in prayer before an image of the Sacred

96 Mognetti/Noet/Bertrand/Marantz, *Fontaines de Marseille*, p. 21 and 36.

Heart. This painting, *St Roch Asking the Virgin Mary to Heal Victims of the Plague,* which they exhibited in the council chamber, is now housed in Marseilles' Musée des Beaux-Arts.[97]

8 Lessons Learnt from a Tragic Experience

Les instructions sur le rituel published by the Ancien Régime bishops may well contain remarks concerning the possible contagion yet they seem highly theoretical and were often published in the aftermath of the plague outbreak. Among the most elaborate commentaries, those by Louis-Albert Joly de Choin, Bishop of Toulon, were published in 1749 and reissued on several occasions.[98] In this episcopal city frequently and heavily stricken by plague, he exposed a concern to adapt the ritual *a posteriori* to the exceptional and emergency situation with which the clergy had been confronted a generation earlier. The author justifies this approach in two ways: he recalls how "at his Fifth Provincial Council, St Charles Borromeo himself had determined everything that needed to be done in times of plague" and how the extremely simplified ritual he prescribed was in keeping with those persecutory times. First, he urged parish priests to "expose themselves courageously for the salvation of souls" all while observing great prudence with regard to the contagion. He assured them that should they die while exercising spiritual charity toward plague victims, their deaths "would be very precious in God's eyes" and equated with martyrdom for the Christian faith. De Choin permitted that Mass be celebrated on church squares and street corners in a bid to avoid crowds congregating and to enable the sick to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist from the safety of their rooms. He also authorized Confession being heard at a distance of "eight to ten paces," or from behind a door. In the case of Extreme Unction, a single anointing using a spatula, which was subsequently to be disinfected by fire, would suffice. He went so far as to allow the bread consecrated at the Eucharist to be deposited at a distance from the sick person in a piece of paper under a stone, from where the sick person could pick it up after the priest had withdrawn. The challenges posed by performing the funereal rite of passage while simultaneously praying for the departed would be solved collectively: every day a priest would celebrate Mass in a chapel made of planks erected in the plague cemetery. At a wooden altar he would plead "for all those who died during the plague

97 Hildesheimer, *Le bureau de la santé de Marseille,* pp. 51–56; Mognetti, Le fonds de l'intendance sanitaire.

98 Joly de Choin, *Instructions sur le rituel,* De l'assistance des malades en temps de peste, vol. II, pp. 151–167.

outbreak and the funereal service normally performed at the burial site would be performed there." The religious convents of nuns would recite prayers for the deceased at least once a week "for all those who had died of plague." In its aftermath, the bishop had to decree that for forty years a solemn service be held in every church across the diocese for the repose of the souls of those who succumbed to the contagion.

The clergy in Toulon lacked the opportunity to put these obligations into practice in the second half of the eighteenth century. It is not inconceivable, however, that these religious dictates may well have influenced the clergy in the nineteenth century when confronted with cholera outbreaks, particularly given how Joly de Choin's *Rituel de Toulon* was still being reprinted during the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Constant Reminders…

Exercising vigilance entails that the faithful be able envision a future in which plague might at any moment hamper their activities and plans, and also, in the event of death, have a bearing on their belongings and the fate of their souls in the hereafter. Hence, the need for a whole series of preventative measures or *preservatifs*, as they were then referred to, ranging from notarial acts to personal or collective prayers and wearing crosses and religious medallions, by virtue of which the faithful of yesteryear could hope to have done their utmost and not failed to be vigilant. Should an outbreak of plague ever erupt, the succour which a plague-stricken person could expect and receive was not just dietary and medical: the very presence of the clergy, and being administered the last sacraments, albeit reduced to the barest minimum, must have reassured the sick and the dying. The indulgence prayers for the dead could also reassure those who survived the ordeal.

The religious memory of plague is primarily underpinned by writings and printed texts, notably triggered by the last large-scale outbreak of plague (1720–1722). This remembrance was primarily transmitted through memorial rites, which were effectively plague vows with their concomitant annual ceremonies and plague chapels, and the *ex-votos* which local residents had before their eyes. And whenever Marseilles' laymen and health intendants wanted to have a constant reminder in their meeting room of the hazards related to plague, they would display artworks invariably religious in nature.

Finally, the specificity of a plague outbreak needs to be underlined: what we have outlined in this study has no equivalent for any other medical emergency during the Ancien Régime. And yet, when the initial cholera epidemics erupted in the nineteenth century, the St. Zacharias Cross once again started to circulate,

in the form of leaflets used as *brevets.*[99] The recent Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the Cross's reappearance, as can be seen with a virtual version on the Internet, or as an engraved wooden cross as proposed by a vendor of religious artefacts.

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Gilbert Buti

Protective Surveillance against the Invisible Enemy along the French Seaboards during the Eighteenth-Century

Defined as "sustained attention to watch over someone or something, and to do so with unflinching surveillance,"[1] vigilance is challenging to put into practice whenever it comes to protecting oneself from a disease whose existence is known yet whose medical reality remains an unknown. This observation about the outbreak of plague that struck parts of southern France between 1720 and 1722 could equally be applied to the study of any epidemic outbreak and, without running the risk of backsliding into an anachronism, could well apply to the recent Covid-19 pandemic.

Elevated to the rank of a "great figure from the history of yesteryear,"[2] outbreaks of plague were not unknown throughout the eighteenth century, yet the intervals between successive eruptions – once circa every eight years between 1348 and 1536, thereafter once every eleven years from 1536 to 1670 – may well have lent the impression that the contagion was becoming less aggressive, or at least that the likelihood of its resurgence was becoming increasingly improbable.[3] Furthermore, its sudden re-emergence in 1720 was undoubtedly traumatic for a generation with only a relatively distant and often indirect memory of that fateful contagion then considered a divine punishment. People believed themselves insulated from it, and they were, above all, unaware of how plague was actually transmitted. Invariably, disagreements between proponents of the *aéristes* (airborne transmission) and *contagionnistes* (transmission by direct contact) theories were acrimonious and the controversies then roiling the medical establishment were ultimately to have direct repercussions on how those confronted with the contagious disease behaved. Hence, in February 1721, at a juncture in which plague had already been spreading out from Marseilles over a period of several months, the clerk of the town council in a small town near the port-city of Toulon refused to touch the register of communal deliberations on account of the fact that it had previously been kept and touched by a municipal official who had succumbed to plague.[4] Mean-

1 According to the definitions provided by the *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales* (CNRTL).

2 Bennassar, *Recherches sur les grandes épidémies*, p. 65.

3 Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste.*

4 Archives municipales de La Valette du Var, II-20. *Livre jaune.* Buti, *La peste à La Valette.*

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while, the key question as to how the infectious disease was transmitted remained unresolved until Paul Louis Simond's experiments in 1898 were to eventually demonstrate the critical role played by the bite of an infected flea as a vector in transmitting from a "reservoir" of bacilli, in this particular instance the rat.[5] Indeed, Alexandre Yersin, who discovered the bacillus a few years earlier (1894), was to write to his mother on announcing his discovery: "Adieu, dear Mother, wash your hands after reading my letter so that you are not stricken with plague."[6] Hence, the sanitary measures instigated, which largely bore traces of these uncertainties, "reflected the medical conceptions as well as the administrative and human reactions in face of an ever-present danger."[7]

Insofar as the "great contagion" impacting Marseilles, Provence, as well as parts of Comtat Venaissin and Gévaudan between 1720 and 1722 constituted a reference point and triggered reactions among other coastal communities right across the realm, it is necessary to outline, first and foremost, the public health model that was implemented in Marseilles, and then to observe the preventive infrastructures in place along other seaboards throughout the kingdom. Finally, we need to examine how surveillance was reinforced whenever an outbreak of a contagious disease erupted, and how, at times, certain elements in society succeeded in gaming the protective sanitary systems in place.

In response to the exigencies of this research specifically focusing on the French seaboards, spanning not only the entire Mediterranean seacoast but also the Atlantic coastal regions, the English Channel and the North Sea, the documentation I sought out and drew upon is multi-faceted. My research has concentrated on, inter alia, the archives created by the kingdom's admiralties, the copious correspondence between the offices of the navy's class service and the supervisory authorities, without omitting, however, more traditional sources such as the minutes taken by notaries, communal deliberations, and parish registers. Over the course of this research, no stone was left unturned in our efforts to seek out documentation that would confirm the measures implemented so as to combat "the evil that cannot be seen," as a person in charge of the *bureau de la santé* [local health office] in Salon en Provence once characterized the contagion ravaging the region in 1721.[8]

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5 Audoin-Rouzeau, *Les Chemins de la peste*; Séguy/Alfani, La peste: bref état des connaissances actuelles, pp. 15–38.

6 Préface by Mollaret, *Journal de l'Année de la Peste*, p. 10.

7 Hildesheimer, La protection sanitaire des côtes françaises au XVIII[e] siècle, p. 442.

8 Buti, *Colère de Dieu, mémoire des hommes.*

Marseilles as a Template: Surveillance in order to Prevent Infectious Diseases

The specifically Mediterranean aspect of the sanitary infrastructures and protective institutions was primarily the result of the contagion's geographical reach and the risks of contamination associated with maritime exchanges with the eastern and southern Mediterranean where plague was endemic at that juncture. Against the historical backdrop of the Second Pandemic, which originated in the farthest reaches of Asia in 1347–1353, and the subsequent iterations of contagious outbursts, the question as to how to effectively structure and monitor public healthcare was initially worked out in the various city-states of Northern Italy: the Republic of Venice, the Duchy of Tuscany (Florence, Livorno), the Duchy of Milan and the Republic of Genoa. Ultimately, outbreaks of plague resulted in the establishment of special magistracies. The epidemics' recurrent nature, in turn, led to these provisional emergency committees being transformed into permanent magistracies.[9]

After crossing the Alps, this particular healthcare model was to shape throughout the kingdom of France the framework for any future sanitary defence system with the establishment of temporary and subsequently permanent *bureaux de la santé*. These *bureaux* consisted of elected, appointed or voluntary members, whose number varied according to the period and location (in Marseilles, 24 in 1640 and 16 during the eighteenth century) and who served their native cities on a voluntary basis. While its designated function differed according to locality, its core mission essentially remained one and the same: to avert the risk of epidemics by exercising the utmost vigilance. To this end, Avignon appointed *députés de santé* [health deputies]; Orange designated *maîtres de santé* [health masters]; Marseilles assigned *intendants de santé* [health intendants] to this function; Montpellier established *capitaines de santé* [health captains]; Lyon and Bourg-en-Bresse chose *commissaires*, while Paris opted for *prévôts de santé* [health provosts] who donned a black gown bearing a white cross. At the turn of the seventeenth century, most of the kingdom's cities would appear to have instigated such an organizational structure on their own initiative, a structure which was to be set into motion once the initial threats of contagion arose. In 1665, the Parliament of Paris recorded the obligation for each city to operate a permanent health council.

If Provence and Languedoc appear to be the first French provinces to have mobilized against the contagion in this protective manner, it was largely because the

9 Cipolla, *Contro un nemico invisible.*

local authorities had their ear to ground concerning the adjacent "Italian model." These regions moreover had previously been imperilled by contagion through their constant exposure to maritime trade routes. Although the "venom," as it was sometimes called, had already infiltrated the kingdom via an overland route in 1629, more specifically through the Rhone corridor thanks to the Marquis d'Uxelles' troop movements, the epidemic scourge did arrive via a sea route in 1649, as it did again in 1664 and yet again in 1720. Mediterranean ports consistently found themselves on the front line, in direct and quasi permanent contact with the Mediterranean's eastern basin (the Levant) and North Africa (Barbary). It would appear as though Marseilles was the most successful example in terms of ensuring public health protection and security.[10]

As with all other coastal communities, the intendants making up the Marseilles health office rarely fell under the jurisdiction of the medical profession. An edict dating from March 1717 stipulated that the intendants "shall every year be taken and chosen from among members of *la Loge* [the lodge], merchants and traders."[11] In a port city primarily devoted to overseas trade, was it viable to serve the interests of commerce and yet ensure the health of the general population? Personal links with the *comptoir* [export-office] were particularly strong in Marseilles: in 1719, for instance, out of a total of sixteen intendants, ten were merchants, and fourteen out of twenty in 1720 – which also happened to be the very year in which the *Grand Saint-Antoine* under the command of Captain Jean-Baptiste Chataud imported the epidemic. Undoubtedly, some voices were raised to denounce the manner in which intendants were recruited and also to reiterate the principle of never allowing anyone's private interests eclipse those of public health in any deliberations on sanitary matters.[12] Nevertheless, the urge "that commerce should suffer as little as possible from any precautions taken" did not exclude health administrators being chosen from among the city's business community. In 1780, six of Marseilles' nine health intendants were merchants. Generally speaking, not only moral fiber and good repute, but also experience seemed to have been the decisive criteria when it came to appointing such operatives. These officials were chosen "from among the [city's] leading merchants, most of whom had previously resided in the Levant for several years [with] usually one or two former sea captains who had left the navy." Their extensive knowledge

10 Hildesheimer, *Le bureau de la Santé de Marseille sous l'Ancien Régime.*

11 *La Loge*, located on the ground floor of Hôtel-de-Ville in Marseilles, was the meeting place for merchants and brokers, the place where business was done (chartering, insurance, speculation, etc.). See Carrière, *Négociants marseillais au XVIII^e siècle*, p. 235 and Buti, I luoghi dello scambio commerciale, pp. 156–170.

12 Buti, Veille sanitaire et trafics maritimes à Marseille, pp. 201–224.

of the Arab-Muslim Mediterranean world vindicated the choice of these men of experience. Furthermore, assuming that each year the city council only renewed half the number of intendants (i. e. eight out of sixteen), whose tenure was limited to two years, the elder members were effectively meant to be "in a position to teach the rules to those newly appointed." Moreover, two *échevins* or municipal magistrates, who had just stepped down, were then placed in charge of those newly appointed intendants, thus also contributing their expertise in the field.

In fact, it was not at all unreasonable that those coming from outside the medical sphere should assume such responsibilities. On one hand, they could, and did indeed, consult physicians and surgeons for advice and counsel. Their designated tasks, on the other, primarily required administrative skills and not specific medical expertise. Elected on an annual basis in Marseilles on 29 October, the intendants assumed office on 2 January of the following year. At the first meeting convened, the various tasks required to ensure the Bureau's proper functioning were allocated: *trésorier des deniers,* [treasurer for expenditure]; *contrôleur des dépenses* [controller for expenses]; *auditeurs des comptes* [account auditors], and the so-called *semainiers* [inspectors for masonry, locksmiths, fountains]. These intendants were vested with ample autonomy to carry out, whenever necessary, "all they deem appropriate for safeguarding against plague and contagious diseases [...] the treasurer shall pay any expenses incurred on this occasion, in whatever sum it may amount to." Marseilles' *bureau de la santé*, however, had a greater, if not exceptional role, following the 1622 Act of the *Parlement* of Aix which specifically limited access exclusively to the ports of Marseilles and Toulon to any ships or vessels coming *en droiture* from Muslim countries (i. e. coming non-stop without having made any intermediate port-of-calls).

Until the mid-nineteenth century, public healthcare policy was formulated according to some twenty decrees, orders, laws and regulations of general scope. Hence, from 1682 onward, the Parliament of Provence was divested of its authority over health affairs to the advantage of the French Crown and from 1683 decisions were made by the Secretary of State of the Navy, the Council of State, or the acting royal intendant. In Marseilles, as elsewhere within the realm, the municipal authorities were not completely ignored in the decision-making process; they still played an appreciable role in formulating government policy regarding public health matters.

In a bid to diminish any further risk of contamination, the French Crown limited the number of ports authorized to permit the docking of vessels coming directly from those regions deemed "infested." Marseilles' *bureau de la santé* thus shared command with its counterpart in Toulon – which, albeit smaller in size, operated a maritime quarantine station in Saint-Mandrier-sur-Mer at the entrance to the main harbor – over other health offices along the French Mediterra-

nean seaboard.[13] These subsidiary offices had to transmit to them, obligatorily and as swiftly as possible, any information in their possession and to redirect to them any suspect ships or vessels, with guards on board. Such a hierarchical structure followed the pattern already established in Northern Italy's city-states.

Thereafter, any seagoing vessel arriving from the Levant, Barbary or any "other suspicious places" had to anchor off the islands of the Frioul archipelago (Pomègues, Ratonneau, Tiboulen, and If), some six nautical miles from Marseilles, i.e. circa eleven kilometres. From there, either the captain, his second-in-command, or the ship's log-keeper were to present themselves, on board a rowing boat, to the health intendants who, ever since 1670, had been stationed at the entrance to the port of Marseilles in a pontoon of sorts next to Fort Saint-Jean. In 1724, this floating office was replaced by a stone structure known as the *Consigne* or *Intendance sanitaire*, whose construction commenced in 1719. An officer from the Bureau was stationed there round-the-clock either in this small office or aboard a watch-boat meant to monitor ships at anchor and prevent any vessel or ship from approaching within 100 *toises* (a cable length measuring some 200 metres). There, "hat in hand," the person accountable for the vessel declared aloud and under oath its provenance and any health-related incident that had occurred on board during the sea crossing, without omitting to mention any possible "*communications*" [contact] with other ships or sea-faring vessels en route. Behind screened windows, the intendants, *semainiers*, clerks, secretaries and valets listened, recorded depositions, and placed any post and packages that had been handed over into a receptacle containing "vinegar and perfumed lotions." The intendants duly examined the so-called *patente de santé* [bill of health] issued by the authorities at the port of origin and which had been stamped at every port-of-call en route. This indispensable document was then officially declared either as *nette* [clean] (i.e., embarkations/disembarkations and stopovers in healthy countries), "affected," "suspected" or "susceptible" (embarkations/disembarkations and stopovers in a country directly linked with a suspected zone of contagion), or *brute* [foul] (in contact with a contaminated region). Essentially, how any vessel and crew were processed upon arrival depended on the status of this document, a forgery of which was subject to the death penalty.[14]

13 Joseph, *Histoire du lazaret de Toulon (1587–1934).*

14 In 1799, Bonaparte, on his return from Egypt, managed to circumvent this sanitary constraint. Given that he boarded ship a contaminated country, he should have submitted to this constraint when disembarking in Fréjus. However, having voluntarily made a brief stopover in Corsica, he declared to Frejus' port authorities that he was arriving from that island in order to avoid the regulatory confinement.

A sea-crossing's duration (30 to 40 days) constituted a first "sanitary barrier" yet it did not entirely eliminate the risk of a subsequent epidemic outbreak. Hence, any incoming vessel or ship was subjected to a period of isolation known as *quarantine* on one of the Friuli Islands (usually Pomègues)[15], while passengers and cargo were placed in a lazaret or moved to an infirmary. The required duration of quarantine varied according to the degree of medical severity as indicated on the bill of health; quarantine conditions could differ for the vessel or ship in question, the passengers on board, and the cargo being transported. Crew and passengers were confined for the shortest period: four to five weeks for those carrying a "foul" bill of health, two to three for those with a clean bill. The vessel itself underwent quarantine similar to that for passengers and crew or perhaps slightly longer. Either it anchored at Pomègues or was piloted toward another small island, to the east, to the island of Jarre, as was the case with the *Grand Saint-Antoine* in the summer of 1720.[16] Cargo, on the other hand, was subject to more extensive quarantine, especially for so-called susceptible goods, i. e. those that could serve as a breeding ground for disease (textiles, furs, wool, cotton, etc.), whereas "non-susceptible" wares (foodstuffs, metals, coffee) had to remain in quarantine for a more limited period: 50 to 60 days for susceptible goods, as opposed to 20 to 30 days for the latter, if transported aboard a vessel that had presented an "affected" bill of health. Similar constraints were imposed in Genoa, Livorno, and Malta.

In a bid to ensure such a high degree of isolation, costly and complex facilities, known as lazarettes or infirmaries, were built across Europe from the fifteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century. The first such establishment was the *lazaretto* constructed in Venice (1423, on the small island of Santa Maria di Nazaret) to be followed by Livorno in 1590 (enlarged in 1648), then Naples (1626), Palermo (1628) and Ragusa (1642).[17] The wave of epidemics striking Western Europe during the mid-seventeenth century resulted in the construction of additional lazarettos, namely in in Genoa (1656), Nice-Villefranche (1669), and Malta (1683).

The foundation stone for such an edifice meant "to clamp down on and quell the plague" was laid in Marseilles in August 1663. These "New Infirmaries" established in the Arenc neighborhood in the city's northern district, situated at some 400 meters from the ramparts, were to replace the "Old Infirmaries" in the Catalans district in the south of the city, for the older infirmaries lacked sufficient space to cope with the burgeoning maritime traffic. Encircled by a double wall,

15 Frioul, an archipelago located at the entrance to the port of Marseilles, includes the islands of Pomègues and Ratonneau. Pomègues served as the site for the facilities used to carry out health quarantine.

16 Goury, *Un homme, un navire.*

17 Panzac, *Quarantaine et lazarets.*

this fenced-in area designed for segregation and medical care, this "prison hospital" as Françoise Hildesheimer once described it, was divided into enclosures with a chapel, a parlor, a refectory and accommodation for the supervisory staff placed under the authority of a middle-aged man whose probity and uprightness had to be beyond reproach.[18] Given how physicians and surgeons did not remain permanently on site, staff only became numerous during outbreaks of plague. The new sanitary surveillance and prevention regime was completed in 1668, one year before the edict concerning the concession granting an exemption from duties on goods entering the port of Marseilles was enacted, in addition to the introduction of the 20 % *ad valorem* tax on goods imported from the Levant and Barbary transported by any vessel or ship of a non-Provençal origin. The health-related structures associated with the *obligation* decided in 1622 concerning sea-faring vessels coming from the Levant and Barbary – where plague was then endemic – to observe quarantine either in Marseilles or Toulon thus played a critical role in establishing Marseilles' de facto monopoly of trade with the entire Mediterranean basin. Besides, Marseilles' *bureau de la santé* held sway over its counterpart in Toulon, and even more so over those *bureaux* established in other Provençal and Languedoc ports. Not only information, but also rumors, circulated between these *bureaux*; at times these contained reports from various locations throughout the Mediterranean basin through the intermediary of consuls and commission agents from trading houses established in the trading posts in the Levant and Barbary. Overall, this system of safeguards was as much based on medical theory as on empirical evidence, as indicated by the application of ventilating techniques – a process which entailed the opening and airing of so-called susceptible goods, and the refusal to have any contact whatsoever with individuals and products deemed such.

The Maritime Provence region in general, and Marseilles in particular, both endowed with secure and permanent health structures throughout the seventeenth century, were thus to serve as models for other ports across the realm. Local conditions, however, differed somewhat along the Atlantic seaboard, from the North Sea to the Bay of Biscay, from Dunkirk to Bayonne.

18 Hildesheimer, *Le bureau de la Santé de Marseille sous l'Ancien Régime.*

Health Surveillance Systems along the Atlantic Seaboard

While port cities along the so-called Ponant (Atlantic) coast were not as exposed to contagious diseases to the same degree as those along the Mediterranean seaboard, they nevertheless could not ignore the risks they presented. Only exceptional circumstances would lead to similar or comparable sanitary measures being instigated, yet these remained provisional despite plans to put them on a permanent footing. This situation arose repeatedly: in the wake of the plague outbreak during the "Great Northern War" between 1709 and 1712, as contagion struck the Hanseatic ports and all along the Baltic coast; again in 1751 during the outbreak that originated in Constantinople, as well as in 1758 for the contagious eruption in Portugal, and for a renewed Northern Plague in 1770–1771, which originated in vessels coming from the Baltic Sea region. Any initiative to react to such threats generally fell upon central government, the authority which seemed best informed about any impending danger. In the event of such, the Secretary of State of the Navy would dispatch a circular or an emergency ordinance to the relevant local port authorities in order that they initiate the necessary precautions and designate locations at a safe distance from the port cities set aside for a period of quarantine, or even to simply refuse ships entry into the ports.[19] The dearth of permanent structures ultimately resulted in episodic consultation and cooperation between the various authorities across the kingdom: inter alia, municipalities, parliaments, the admiralty, intendancies, lieutenants general, naval commissioners, chambers of commerce. Nevertheless, as can be observed in the case of Nantes, where "the arsenal of protective measures was swiftly implemented because it had already been tried and tested [...], centralized administration never hampered a local initiative's pro-active approach."[20]

It should be recognized, however, that efforts at international coordination were indispensable in order to boost surveillance and to prevent any further spread of the disease. Hence, in 1713, as the plague was raging across the nations of northern Europe and "had penetrated some provinces of Holland," the authorities in Versailles forwarded an urgent request to Maximillian II Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria, to inform him of those "measures already taken in French ports in a bid to prevent any contact whatsoever with vessels or crews coming from those countries." On that occasion, the central government furnished a list of French

19 Hildesheimer, La protection sanitaire des côtes françaises au XVIII[e] siècle, pp. 443–467.

20 Saupin, La municipalité nantaise face à la peste de Marseille, pp. 145–170.

ports where any incoming vessels or ships from the North would be subject to quarantine, namely Dunkirk, Saint-Valéry, Le Havre, Saint-Malo, Morlaix, Nantes, La Rochelle, Bordeaux and Bayonne. Discussions among those responsible for health structures at these ports became more intense whenever an outbreak of disease was suspected, as was the case in 1665, or when plague was officially declared, as came to pass in 1709, 1713, and during those years between 1720 and 1722.

This absence of permanent measures led to a somewhat improvisational approach being taken, one which contrasted with the system put in place along the Mediterranean seaboard. The abatement techniques to which the authorities resorted and deployed in combatting the epidemic sweeping through Marseilles in 1720 were in keeping with the prevailing Miasma theory and not with the contagious nature of the disease.[21] Furthermore, small crafts or rowboats, with a physician or a surgeon on board, were sent out to meet any incoming ships or vessels upon their arrival in order to "visit" them, thus exposing the medical personnel to a risk of contamination. They would not have found themselves facing such jeopardy had they been operating under the system based upon inspecting bills of health. Depending on the findings compiled by these "visitors," the municipal health authorities would then determine whether to authorize the vessel to dock. The application of such sanitary procedures was to be observed in the Admiralty of Vannes in 1770 as a plague epidemic was raging across the Baltic regions. An ordinance instructed local health commissaires to dispatch an armed boat and to flag down the ships to be inspected by "means of a blowhorn," to use "iron tweezers" whenever handling any paperwork, and only bring the said-papers to the municipal officers "after having held them in front of a good fire and perfuming them with vinegar for an hour." While such preventative practices were somewhat similar to those observed in Provence, an airing-out process or ventilation carried out by *éventeurs* remained the predominant purging technique employed on the kingdom's Atlantic coast (whereby vinegar was often used, but the perfumes remained unidentified).[22]

For all practical purposes, the facilities put in place for quarantine – as transpired in the Admiralty of Vannes – with appropriate food supplies yet without any direct contact to the outside world, were limited: in Nantes they were confined to the small island of Saint-Nicolas, in Bordeaux to the island of Patira in the Gironde Estuary opposite Pauillac, in Port-Louis/Lorient to the islands of Glénans and Groix; in Calais along the Risban sandbank; in Bayonne "down by the river" at some distance from the city; in Rouen to Launay downstream from the city;

21 Carrière/Courdurié/Rebuffat, *Marseille ville morte,* pp. 159–196.

22 Hildesheimer, La protection sanitaire des côtes françaises au XVIII[e] siècle, p. 467.

in Saint-Malo to the island of Cézambre. At some stage, nearly every commercial port could boast of a project to construct a lazaret (Brest, Saint-Malo, La Rochelle, Bordeaux) but these never materialized. The recurrent obstacle invoked to postpone or abandon their instigation was the cost involved in completing the project: who would be responsible for their upkeep, especially given they were just destined for temporary use?

In fact, the only permanent facility with a lazaret built for the purpose of quarantine was to be found in Le Havre. After multiple trials and errors, consultations and uncertainties right throughout the seventeenth century, a simple and inexpensive facility modelling itself on Marseilles' lazaret was envisaged for the Pointe du Hoc. Work commenced in 1713 but remained unfinished due to a lack of funds, which, in turn, led to the sanitary structure for the quarantine station being limited to a cluster of simple huts. A project to construct a lazaret was revived during the plague outbreak of 1720, but this time on the island of Saint-Marcouf, not far from La Hougue. This site was nevertheless abandoned in favour of the island of Tatihou, opposite Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue. The *lazaret royale*, built during the years 1721–1722 on the instructions of Melchior Vieil, Health Inspector for Normandy and which remained in operation until circa 1760, bore all the Mediterranean hallmarks of its creator. Indeed, for nine years Vieil had been the health intendant in his native city of Toulon, and moreover had visited trading posts throughout the Levant before being appointed inspector at La Hougue. Throughout his extensive career, he constantly sought to apply those practices in use in Provence, even if at times such an approach rattled the local authorities insofar as he did not strictly share their *aéristes* view of how the disease spread. He was of the opinion that plague could be transmitted by "touch" as well. Among the preventative measures meant to serve as a barrier to its further spread, Vieil undoubtedly instigated the deployment of perfume at the lazaret on La Hougue.

And yet, no bona fide *bureaux de la santé* were to be found in municipalities along the Atlantic seaboard. Admittedly, such a bureau was set up in Nantes during the summer of 1721, where the agenda at its inaugural meeting on 10 October of that year dealt with the traffic and trading of cloth from Gévaudan – a region designated as contaminated. The Nantes bureau, however, was launched more in response to a specific political objective, a longing for a local political reset in the balance of powers at a time the city-port was under the dual supervision of the governors and the intendant, with Parliament being side-lined.[23]

23 Saupin, La municipalité nantaise face à la peste de Marseille, pp. 145–170. Here, the parliament in question is the Parlement de Provence established in 1501, which sat in Aix, (later referred to as Aix-en Provence).

Whenever an infectious disease was deemed an imminent threat or officially declared such, surveillance intensified all along the kingdom's seaboards, on a local, national and even international scale.

Ramping Up Surveillance, Outmanoeuvring Preventative Vigilance Measures

Collective measures were urgently taken to monitor the surrounding territories in order to reduce any contact with potential sources of contagion. In the port cities of Marseilles and Toulon, for example, such vigilance resulted in the closure of the arsenal, forts, shops (except for bakeries), gambling dens, and religious houses. In a bid to avoid *communications,* i. e. contact with others, markets could only be held at a limited number of locations and placed under guard, while religious processions were forbidden.[24] In an attempt to fend off any popular outcry, municipal officials supervised the proper supply of provisions (foodstuffs, medicines, firewood, etc.,). Anyone suspect or relatives of those who had succumbed to a "hasty death" were placed under surveillance in quarantine on the outskirts of the city, or under protective custody in rural residences known as *bastides.*

Trade and traffic routes were rigorously controlled. Ships patrolled the length of the coastline in order to prevent any illegal landings, while those vessels moored in port were stringently inspected and screened. "Barriers" sometimes adjoining ditches were installed on roads and overland routes in order to check the bills of health issued by the municipalities; these were presented by those travelling, especially by anyone coming from outside the locality. At times, it woud appear as though that such vigilance measures were circumvented through the fabrication of forged bills of health. Near Oraison, in Provence, for example, a wallet belonging to some merchant from Valensole was found full of counterfeit unsigned and undated bills of health.[25]

The ultimate ruling to monitor everyone's movements within the city precincts was the so-called *serrado* or strict confinement. In an attempt to enforce such a city-wide lockdown, Marseilles was divided into individual blocks knowns as *Îlots,* each placed under the charge of captains and intendants appointed by the city council. Those men carrying out street patrols were also responsible for distributing food to the populace impacted by the restrictive measures. Such a blanket quarantine, which had been determined late in the day and without taking into

24 Bertrand, La dernière grande peste, pp. 122–138.
25 Windsor, *Valensole. La peste de 1720,* p. 13.

account the disease's incubation period (given the lack of knowledge concerning the contagion's mode of transmission), was hardly conducive to protecting any community subjected to such a restrictive procedure, as was the case in Toulon and Valletta in 1721.[26]

In addition to these collective measures instigated by local authorities and the "medicine from Heaven above," as exemplified in the figureheads of Monseigneur de Montauban in Toulon and, even more so, by Monseigneur de Belsunce in Marseilles, individual attitudes played a decisive role. These, however, were often difficult to discern on account of how they were discreetly pursued.[27] Some individuals wore amulets, others carried sachets containing camphor in a bid to ward off the contagion all which beseeching the divine therapists who at that time were St Sebastian and even more so St Roch. Ever since Hippocrates drafted his medical treatises, however, exodus, i. e., "run fast and come back late" seems to have been the initial if not the optimal reflex: "a good pair of boots was the surest remedy"[28]. And yet, by attempting to protect themselves in this manner, people were exposing others to risk and further spreading the disease. More than two thirds of Toulon's residents were reported to have withdrawn to the surrounding countryside where they were responsible for introducing plague. Those more fortunate took refuge in their *bastides* or country houses in the surrounding terroir, in Aubagne or Albauch, near Marseilles, in Sainte Marguerite in Toulon. Vinegar and "perfumes" were used to purify the air, disinfect letters, clothes and everyday objects and utensils. Any form of physical contact was to be avoided. The Marseilles merchant Pierre-Honoré Roux noted those measures to be followed in order to fend off contagion:

> The first precaution to take is to lock yourself up at home, and not let anyone in. Should someone go out, he must not come back in again. To ensure that nothing suspicious enters the house, the master of the house must hold onto the key [...]
>
> Cats should be killed, for it is difficult to prevent them from getting out, and dogs should be tied up.
>
> Ensure that nobody in the house can come in contact with the outside world through the windows. These should be nailed or padlocked.
>
> We have got to settle for the basic necessities for as long as this terrible scourge persists, but in order to bring them into the house we have to place barriers in front of the main door and inside the house, equip ourselves with pincers or iron tongs, wicker baskets, metal bowls.
>
> Prepare a vat full of water, a small tub of vinegar and a box of perfume, for whenever objects are passed through the window, they must be purified: meat, vegetables, poultry, fruit, herbs [vegetables], eggs and anything that does not risk being damaged in water is to be

26 Buti, Lettres de Toulon pendant l'épidémie de peste de 1720–1722, pp. 155–162.

27 Bertrand, *Monseigneur de Belsunce.*

28 Delumeau, *La peur en Occident*, p. 110.

> thrown into the vat full of water. Live poultry must be held in the vat by force with the tongs [...]
>
> Every object (baskets, hemp ropes) must be placed under water so as to remove the sweat or grime of anyone who has touched them.
>
> Hot bread is a very dangerous, but it doesn't pose any risk when cooled. It must be handed over with the small clamp and placed in a sparte net and let hang for several hours before being handled.
>
> Hats, shoes and letters are to be placed in the perfume box; letters and papers must be properly soaked in vinegar, as must silver and metal. Any object removed from the perfume box must be lifted out with the pincers [...]
>
> If you must go outdoors, dress in silk, cover yourself, if possible, with a wax cloth and avoid touching anyone [...]. If you are obliged to speak with others, keep a stove in which perfume is being burned between you [and those persons].
>
> I have also stated that no one should be brought into the house; but should you be forced to do so, for example, if your son is returning from a journey, you must have him undress, and undergo an examination outside the house by a physician on the understanding that he will inspect whether your son bears any marks of plague. After ensuring such, your son must be admitted naked, all his clothes must be thrown into water for several days and thereafter exposed to the air and the sun for several days and nights. This individual must be taken to a separate apartment, without coming into contact with anyone, nor leave his room, nor touch anything.[29]

In order to curb the disease and prevent its further spread, as happened during those years of the Black Death between 1348 and 1353, the Royal State deployed troops to Marseilles and its environs, and subsequently to several areas in Provence, with armed soldiers under orders to shoot at those who sought to cross beyond the boundaries of the cordon sanitaire. In the heartlands of Provence, this cordon was buttressed by a so-called *muraille de la peste* [plague wall], built along the right bank of the Durance, a major river in south-eastern France, between the Durance and Mount Ventoux. Divided into several sections, it was adapted to the terrain's topography and marked out by watchtowers and guard-posts.[30] These surveillance measures were further reinforced during the summer of 1721. As the burgeoning number of cases of infectious disease attested to the further spread of the epidemic, the regent[31] ordered that a military-sanitary cordon be es-

29 Archives de la Chambre de commerce et d'industrie d'Aix-Marseille Provence, L. IX. 1304. Pierre-Honoré Roux, *Relation sur la peste de Marseille, 1720–1722*.

30 Larcena, *La Muraille de la peste.*

31 The regent is Prince Philippe d'Orléans who assumed power after the death of Louis XIV because the king's heir (great-grandson of Louis XIV) was too young to be crowned and made king; he was less than 6 years-old in 1715 when Louis XIV died and he would only come of age when he turned 13 years and 1 day, which was the case in 1723 when he became King Louis XV.

tablished around Languedoc, Rouergue, and Vivarais: 33 000 soldiers and 3 000 cavalrymen were then stationed along the roads, paths and near bridges.

Other provinces and neighbouring states then started stepping up surveillance levels. Directives were sent to ports on the Atlantic seaboard (from Bayonne in the Bay of Biscay as far as Dunkirk in the English Channel) to instruct them to bolster their vigilance levels and to refuse entry to any suspect ships. Of note is how the port authorities reacted: Their response, in fact, often exceeded what had been officially recommended. Ultimately, the spread of plague resulted in the closure of the Atlantic ports to any incoming trade from Provençe and Languedoc, and even from the wider Mediterranean. Any vessel or ship arriving from Provençe, and even more widely from the Mediterranean region, was expelled from Bordeaux, Dunkirk and La Rochelle; ships were completely submerged over the course of three tidal cycles in Nantes, while seagoing vessels from Provence were set aflame in Le Havre, Saint-Malo, Granville and Caen. Some coastal cities, such as Bordeaux and La Rochelle, positioned guards at their outer gates, and patrols were organized in an attempt to track down anyone deemed persona non grata, starting with foreign beggars. Residents of both Bordeaux and La Rochelle "ended up cooped up behind their walls."[32] Fear was so pervasive that the noblemen of La Rochelle set fire to three bales of camel hair that had originally come from Smyrna and arrived in La Rochelle, after having made a diversion, with a clean bill of health, via Amsterdam, where the goods had not been ventilated. Packages destined for export were placed under seal and fairs suspended. In Lyon, some merchants "did not just content themselves by plunging into a river the soap boxes" coming from Provence, but rather took "the bars of soap with tweezers so as to ventilate them over the flames of a Sulphur fire, pouring casks of oil over that self-same fire."[33]

Foreign nations were equally wary of any incoming ships or vessels. In Ireland, for example, three English vessels arriving from Toulon were set ablaze in February 1721. The English authorities demanded a health certificate from passengers arriving from France, including from anyone traveling from those regions not subject to quarantine regulations, and ordered the construction of quarantine stations specifically for maritime travelers. As the year 1721 drew to a close, the King of England and the Emperor of Germany started exerting pressure on the United Provinces of the Netherlands to break off all trade relations with France. The question does arise, however, whether mercantile ulterior motives were sometimes at

In the interim, i. e., between 1715 and 1723, Philippe d'Orléans (son of a brother of Louis XIV) served as regent.

32 Barry/Even, Perceptions et réactions face à la peste, pp. 17–21.

33 Carrière/Courdurié/Rebuffat, *Marseille, ville morte*, p. 153.

play behind such excessive vigilance? Didn't such a "contagion of rumors" equally set out to divert trade from competing markets in order to undermine, if not eliminate them?[34] This phenomenon was hardly new in 1720, as could be observed in the strife concerning rumors which had erupted between Genoa and Marseilles in 1676, in the wake of innuendos circulated by passengers aboard a ship from Genoa bound for Marseilles. A month later, in retaliation, the Genoese, well-aware of the detrimental impact of such erroneous information, started spreading rumors to the effect that "the infectious disease has reached Marseilles." Such malicious intent was highly effective in its impact upon commercial traffic, for it embedded the most toxic catalyst between rivalling economic players in the trading hubs, namely, distrust.

Such excessive vigilance was accompanied by an increase in disciplinary powers. Arrests were followed by punishable offences, repression, and harsher sentences. The grounds for such penalties and penal sanctions pointed to the tensions engendered by fear of contagion and the demands of lockdowns (physical disputes and flight from those spaces set aside for quarantine, illicit contacts in Hoc, Lorient, Bayonne), attempts at forgery (missing or falsified bills of health).[35] Sanctions were at once exemplary and severe, "under the penalty of a life sentence," according to the regulations and ordinances in place.

A burgher from Antibes who had dared to cross the river Var was shot in October 1720. Two months earlier in Toulon[36],"a valet and a woman from a locality called La Cadière, who had concealed two pieces of blue cloth from the Levant among some fruit[37], were shot at the entrance to Porte Neuve, at the foot of a gallows." Soldiers who plundered barns containing corpses of plague victims were condemned to be executed by firing squad in February 1721 in Mazaugues, near Saint-Maximin.[38] In April 1721, a gravedigger who had fled from Orange was arrested and shot in Comtat. The following month in Aix, two nurses were hanged and a third whipped for having removed clothing from the infirmary during the quarantine period. In August 1721, the intendant of Provence had a woman shot for attempting to cross from Gévaudan to Auvergne[39] and the chief-of-staff established in Langogne (Auvergne) had "a man from Gévaudan shot, and right in the middle

34 Calafat, La contagion des rumeurs, pp. 99–119.

35 Hildesheimer, Prévention de la peste, pp. 65–79.

36 Note by the French consul in Nice, 26 October 1720, quoted by Hildesheimer, *La Terreur et la pitié*, p. 55.

37 Service historique de la Défense, Toulon. 1 A1.146. Correspondence with the Court dated 4 December 1720, f° 349.

38 Gardiol, Contribution à l'histoire de la peste de 1720 dans le Var actuel, p. 23.

39 Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste,* T. 1, p. 249.

of the square had the head of a *courbeau* deserter from Mende smashed in."[40] Apparently, he had entered the commune using a false identity.

Falsifying health documents was unquestionably the gravest offence. This was the charge brought in 1732, a decade after the "great contagion," against Pierre Laborel, captain of the *Saint-Tropez*, suspected of having forged a false bill of health with the complicity of his ship's log-keeper, Jean Joseph Martin. Though Laborel was initially sentenced to death in absentia, and Martin was imprisoned with a heavy fine, they were both eventually cleared of the accusations following further investigation. Such prosecutions, however, exposed the depth of concern and apprehension that vigilance, as executed by those authorities committed to protecting public health, would and could lead to erroneous conclusions. Beginning in the 1730s, Marseilles' *intendance sanitaire* [health authorities] started keeping logbooks designed to record "secret depositions," i. e. reports by sea captains concerning "hasty deaths" on board their vessels during sea-crossings. Vigilance with regard to public health remained on high alert and the secrecy surrounding this measure contributed to this state of watchfulness.

A distinct contrast in approach was to be observed between the kingdom's two maritime coastlines: the complete absence or the somewhat improvisatory approach toward measures to combat the epidemic on the Atlantic and northern seaboards (except in Le Havre/La Hougue-Tatihou) contrasted with the permanent system put in place along the Mediterranean coast. This state of affairs was primarily the result of the knowledge, even at times partial, of the disease and its spread, hence the primacy of ventilation techniques, on the one hand, and ventilation complemented by isolation, on the other. Was such a public health policy truly effective? The tragedy which befell Marseilles and the ensuing demise of an estimated 20 % of the Provençal population over the period 1720–1722 would hardly argue in favour of such a modus operandi. During the eighteenth century, however, an estimated 210 000 ships, including small coastal vessels, set down anchor in the port of Marseilles, 23 000 of which originated in the Levant and Barbary. And yet, during that period less than a hundred infringements were documented, and only one single case is known to have circumvented the vigilance practiced by the port and municipal authorities in 1720, with, of course, the well-known dire consequences. Between 1722 and 1845, outbreaks of plague were reported on 22 separate occasions on ships at the entrance to the port of Marseilles, but these were strictly confined to the lazaret. Marseilles could then boast of the most effective structures to implement permanent health prevention measures, structures which, in fact, could serve as a model for the entire kingdom of France, if not for all of Europe:

40 Mouysset, *La peste en Gévaudan, 1720–1722.*

"Marseilles played a role at least as important as Versailles in matters relating to safeguarding public health in France, and was undeniably the nation's capital in that field."[41]

Implementing the municipalities' social assistance measures, including the distribution of aid, was in keeping with their concern to protect the overall social fabric, in the desire to maintain the established order.[42] Ultimately, it was not a matter of Christian charity, but rather of a series of initiatives instigated by local authorities, with which the central government co-operated, moderately yet clearly nonetheless, whenever they made donations to the infected localities. Focus gradually shifted from a policy of exclusion to one of social assistance. In times of plague, the traditional hospital, the fruit of Christian charity, was gradually replaced by health facilities intended to safeguard the community.[43] The presence or the impending risk of contagion thus progressively transformed the notion of charitable assistance into an exercise in public health policy.[44]

Furthermore, all throughout this fight against the threat of plague, the Royal State worked in tandem with local institutions and was to become the key player in the chain of command in withstanding the spread of the epidemic. Admittedly, the enemy was still too powerful to crush, yet central government was nonetheless laying the foundations for a renewed engagement. The magistracies affiliated with the *bureaux de la santé*, set up to implement local preventative measures against the spread of disease, ultimately became permanent health institutions responsible for monitoring hygiene across every stratum of society, whether in communities, hospitals, private households, or on an individual level. What had started out as the work of the municipalities was ultimately taken over by the State from the latter half of the seventeenth century and especially in the eighteenth century. The royal administration revived forgotten practices, encouraged the work of the municipal health offices, and deployed troops in the fight to curb any further spread of the epidemic. Any outbreak of plaque was spatially contained and treated as an enemy against which the army campaigned. By providing impetus in the fight against plague, the State was to assume a new responsibility for health and social protection during the Ancien Régime's final century.

It was not long, however, before the State took charge of the fight against every form of pestilence and turned public health into an affair of state. Throughout the nineteenth century, the State's involvement in the field of urban hygiene and hospital administration was regarded as standard practice. Abolishing Marseilles' *Bu-*

41 Hildesheimer, La monarchie administrative face à la peste, p. 310.

42 Caylux, *Arles et la peste de 1720–1721.*

43 Aziza, *Soigner et être soigné sous l'Ancien régime.*

44 Hildesheimer, *Des épidémies en France sous l'Ancien Régime.*

reau de la santé in 1850 was undoubtedly a decisive step in this transition. Any remaining vestiges of local autonomy were thereby erased; thereafter, sanitary matters were merged with medical concerns, the volunteer intendants were replaced by physicians appointed by central government and, after 1851, agreements brokered by diplomats were to spell out the sanitary measures to be taken in response to the risks posed by epidemics.

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Sébastien Demichel

Correspondence on Public Health and Vigilance: Preventing Plague in France during the First Half of the Eighteenth-Century

> For more than two years we have had a secret enemy which threatens us & surrounds us; it is all the more to be feared is because it is invisible & because it is hidden in forts and entrenchments where it is not easy to uncover.[1]

This short statement by Jean-Baptiste Goiffon – author of an account and a reflection on the terror that plagued the land of Gévaudan – enlightens us as to the hardships the populations of the Ancien Régime had to endure in their attempts to curb the spread of plague. The above description of that invisible enemy, omnipresent in the sources, echoes that of Carlo Maria Cipolla's study on the fight against plague in Italy during the seventeenth century.[2]

Characterised by its recurrent violent surges, the endemic nature of plague throughout France from the fourteenth-century until the close of the seventeenth-century has been the subject of numerous studies.[3] Because of multiple factors, however, from circa 1670 onward plague lost its endemic character and was to die out on French territory until it tragically and unexpectedly resurfaced in Marseilles in 1720; it subsequently spread throughout Provence and ultimately across Comtat and Languedoc. This particularly devastating episode of the epidemic has also been of considerable interest to historians, who have devoted several outstanding studies to the topic.[4]

This contribution will seek to shift away from the event-driven history of plague throughout the kingdom of France in a bid to instead focus on the role vigilance played in the history of the fight against this contagious disease. Françoise Hildesheimer points out that plague can at once be experienced as "a permanent possibility" and as a "transient reality."[5] As a transient historical phenomenon pla-

1 Goiffon, *Relations et dissertation sur la peste du Gévaudan,* preface.

2 Cipolla, *Contre un ennemi invisible.*

3 Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste.* Lucenet, *Les grandes pestes en France.* Hildesheimer, *La terreur et la pitié.* Hildesheimer, *Fléaux et société.*

4 Carrière/Courdurié/Rebuffat, *Marseille ville morte.* Bruni, *Le pays d'Apt malade de la peste.* Caylux, *Arles et la peste de 1720–1721.* Mouysset, *La peste en Gévaudan.* Buti, *Colère de Dieu, mémoire des hommes.*

5 Hildesheimer, Le poids de la peste, pp. 12–13.

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gue has generally enjoyed a high profile, whereas plague as a permanent possibility is routinely discarded. The concept of vigilance enables us to consider plague specifically from the standpoint of contingency. The Collaborative Research Center (CRC) "Cultures of Vigilance"[6] defines vigilance as "individual attention directed toward a supra-individual objective." If applied to plague, it can be viewed in terms of how State or health actors mobilised individual and collective attention whenever confronted with the threat of contagion. This supra-individual objective, which moreover is explored in the sources, is none other than protecting and promoting public health.

Given the paucity of studies on epidemic prevention, this analytical definition of vigilance and its historical compatibility afford us some heuristic perspectives.[7] Furthermore, it strikes me as appropriate to approach, within the framework of this contribution, the question of prevention through a specific source that is rarely examined in terms of healthcare, namely, written communications. Some recent studies have focused on the emphasis placed on public health concerns in written communications.[8] To date, however, no study has highlighted the fundamental role correspondence played in preventing further transmission of plague by dint of written warnings in advance. Which actors were using written communications to express concerns about the state of public health? From which region were they writing and to whom was this correspondence addressed? How regularly did such written exchanges occur? What was the nature of the information therein transmitted? And how about the extent, if any, of epistolary exchanges during outbreaks of plague?

The spatial and temporal framework used in this analysis needs to be explained. Concerning the spatial framework, I could have confined my research to the French Mediterranean coast and the pivotal role played by Marseilles' *bureau de la santé* – the local health office responsible for public health in the port-city. It strikes me as more to the point, however, to consider the kingdom of France in its entirety because written correspondence clearly reveals the extent to which plague outbreaks were effectively becoming a matter of state.[9] And yet, this present analysis does not incorporate the Ponant coast (i. e. the French Atlantic

6 Collaborative Research Centre 1369, Cultures of Vigilance, Transformation – Space – Techniques, Ludwig–Maximilian University of Munich, 1 July 2019–30 June 2023.

7 Françoise Hildesheimer introduced this perspective in the early 1980s with her thesis: Hildesheimer, *Le bureau de la santé de Marseille.* The following year, her article appeared: Hildesheimer, Prévention de la peste et attitudes mentales. It is also worth mentioning Stéphane Barry's more recent thesis: Barry, *Préventions et réactions face à la peste.*

8 Pilloud, *Documenter l'histoire de la santé et de la médecine.* Dinges/Barras, *Krankheit in Briefen.*

9 Refer to the contribution by Thorsten Busch, pp. 147–193.

coast) on account of certain difficulties encountered in accessing the relevant sources during my research period.[10] In terms of a timeframe, I have limited myself to that period spanning the end of the seventeenth century until the middle of the eighteenth century for two core reasons: First, the plague's endemic character throughout the kingdom started to wane from circa 1670: although for all intents and purposes the contagion itself had disappeared, it nonetheless remained a fortiori the focus of vigilance. Second, is the question of sources. From circa 1700 onwards, correspondence pertaining to health matters was kept in the Bouches-du-Rhône departmental archives.[11] Up to that point, some letters had undoubtedly been exchanged on the issue, notably at a municipal level, but from the end of the seventeenth and the turn of the eighteenth century, such correspondence became more systematic, thus enabling us to clearly identify bona fide health information networks.

Plague outbreaks will first be considered from the standpoint of maritime traffic and trade between East and West, and all that pertained to such commercial exchanges. Further, I will provide an introduction to the health communication networks and the actors involved. A third section will deal with the frequency of exchanges and will be followed by a fourth on the substantial content of these dispatches. The last section will focus on how communications effectively operated in times of contagion.

Plague, Maritime Trade, and Communications

Public health-related information formed part of a communicative process between a number of actors whose ultimate objective was to hamper and prevent the further spread of plague, an infectious disease fueled by the constant movement of people and goods. This was particularly the case after 1670, at a juncture in which plague had already lost its endemic character in France, yet remained an imminent threat throughout the Ottoman Empire, whose territories continued to function as an epidemic reservoir for the highly infectious bacterium transmitted from rodents. The contagion originated in the ports of the Levant, the so-called *Échelles du Levant et de Barbarie*, i. e. trading posts, Ottoman regions with which the kingdom of France had been maintaining commercial relations ever since the *Capitulations,* the commercial agreement between France and the Ottoman Empire, established between King François I and Soliman the Magnificent, came

10 For further analysis on this point, refer to the contribution by Gilbert Buti on pp. 69–88.
11 AD 13, *fonds de l'intendance sanitaire, sous-série* 200 E.

into force in 1536. The *Échelles du Levant* were designated as "a pivotal commercial hub, port city or inland market of the Ottoman Empire where European merchants can reside permanently."[12] In those overseas trading posts, the resident consul, assisted by a chancellor and an interpreter/translator (*drogman)*, led the local community of French expatriates known as the *nation.* Barbary covered a large part of present-day North Africa and primarily refers to the "Regencies" of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, where the Ottomans still wielded considerable clout.[13]

During the early modern era, such routine exchanges with the Orient generated an expanding knowledge flow, notably in the medical sphere.[14] The commercial and scientific benefits derived from commercial and diplomatic relations with the *Sublime Porte*, i. e. the central government of the Ottoman empire, should not blind us to the health risks that such a flow of people and goods entailed. The threat of plague constantly loomed over the entire Mediterranean region; in fact, it was becoming such a highly regulated zone that maritime traffic was subject to constant controls.[15] Captains of seagoing vessels, for example, had to be in possession of a *patente de santé* [bill of health] indicating the health status, i. e., whether there were any indications of contagious diseases in their port of origin. Ultimately, such regulations contributed to transforming the Mediterranean into "a sea of procedures and paperwork."[16]

In parallel to the steady expansion during the early modern period,[17] the practice of letter writing was to assume an increasingly key function. The French social and cultural historian, Daniel Roche links mobility to written correspondence.[18] While this observation primarily applies to correspondence of an intellectual nature, travelers' letters and various written forms of sociability,[19] health-related and commercial correspondence were not immune to this tendency of putting pen to paper. Furthermore, the parallel trend toward the professionalization of the diplomatic corps and the sedentarization of the Royal Court, initially in Paris and later in Versailles in the seventeenth century, resulted in a growing

12 Courdurié, Échelles du Levant.

13 Fontenay, Barbaresques.

14 Rabier, Les circulations techniques médicales.

15 Buti, Pratiques et contrôles de la circulation maritime en Méditerranée (1680–1780).

16 Calafat, *Une mer jalousée*, p. 314. The author uses the formulation a "juridictionnalised sea."

17 On this point, refer to Margairaz, L'économie d'Ancien Régime comme économie de la circulation. The author notes that the notion of maritime trade is central to eighteenth century liberal economists, but also to the mercantilists, who regarded it as a pathway toward self-sufficiency. Mercantilist thinking links maritime trade to the theory of the State, while liberals emphasize the decisive role played by merchants and traders.

18 Roche, *Les circulations dans l'Europe moderne*, p. 150.

19 Ibid., p. 153.

need for delegating powers and written communications in order that the monarch could keep abreast of all that was happening within the confines of his kingdom and in the overseas consulates.[20] Ultimately, the practical limits of monarchic absolutism had been reached.

According to the *Ordonnance de la Marine* of 1681, French consuls across the Levant and in Barbary were obliged to inform and maintain correspondence with the Secretary of State of the Navy: "The Consuls shall keep a good & faithful Record of the important Affairs happening in their Consulate, & shall send it every year to the Secretary of State of the Navy."[21] In parallel, the commercial and municipal authorities in Marseilles were also to be kept informed regarding the latest dispatches from the consulates overseas: "Every three months, the *Consul* shall send to the Lieutenant of the Admiralty & to the Deputies of the Trade of Marseilles, a copy of the Deliberations taken at the Assemblies & of the Accounts rendered by the Deputies of the *Nation*, to be communicated to the *Echevins* & of the debates by them & the Deputies of Commerce, should need be."[22] The 1681 Ordinance thus set down in writing the duty to disseminate information in such a way that it became trans-Mediterranean in scope.

As for the sharing of intelligence in relation to public health matters, the surveys I undertook among the archival collections in cities along the French Mediterranean coast and in the French National Archives primarily guided me toward written correspondence. This type of source exhibits the following advantages:

1. It constitutes the principal source for any long-term analysis. Other available sources, such as written accounts of plague, treatises, and legal texts: ordinances, decrees, *lettres patentes*, have been deliberately omitted. An in-depth analysis of correspondence will enables us to highlight any permanent features, developments and disputes in the public health sphere.
2. Written correspondence affords ample scope to include an individual or actor-centred perspective of those who signed, whether individually or in groups, the dispatches. Such correspondence yields real insight into the day-to-day life of the health actors, their decision-making processes, their hesitations, and more broadly, a deeper understanding of how they communicated with each other.
3. It furnishes a quantitative dimension to the analysis.

20 Ibid., pp. 295–297.

21 Louis XIV, *Ordonnance de la marine.* Titre IX: *Des Consuls de la nation Françoise dans les Pays étrangers*, Article IX, p. 75.

22 Ibid., Article VIII, p. 74.

4. Finally, correspondence sheds light on information networks and the exchange of news and views related to public health concerns and issues – an aspect which, to date, has scarcely been mentioned in research.

Health Communication Networks

As a preamble to this topic, I should point out that it is difficult, if not nigh on impossible, to lay any claim to be exhaustive in dealing with health communication networks. Indeed, the relevant correspondence, which could demonstrate the full scope of such networks, is often scattered across the archives and thus quite easy to overlook. Nevertheless, a number of collections of correspondence can cast light upon the effectiveness of these networks.

The most important set of correspondence, both qualitatively and quantitively, has been grouped into different categories in the collections from Marseilles' *Intendance Sanitaire.* Their vast array of documents illustrates the plurality of correspondents with whom the health intendants were exchanging correspondence. While those letters penned by the intendants form a distinct whole, in which all recipients have been included[23], the letters received by the *bureau de la santé* have been divided into several sub-sections. First, the letters from the Secretariat of State of the Navy (*Secrétariat d'État de la Marine*)[24] attest to the extent to which the Versailles administration went about overseeing operations at Marseilles' *bureau de la santé.* Strictly speaking, the preventative campaign against plague was the responsibility of the Secretariat of State of the Navy, one of the four secretariats of State along with those for Foreign Affairs (*les Affaires étrangères*), for War (*la Guerre*), and for the Royal Household (*Maison du Roi*). Established on 7 March 1669, the date upon which Louis XIV entrusted the task to Colbert, this was the king's second attempt to consolidate maritime affairs into the hands of one man (the initial attempt had been made under Cardinal Richelieu, but proved to be short-lived).[25] Public health-related concerns were intrinsically linked to maritime affairs, for the port cities served as sanitary barriers, at least during campaigns waged against outbreaks of plague. In the absence of a centralised ministry of health, it was hardly surprising that responsibility for public health fell upon Pontchartrain, the Secretary of State of the Navy. He duly kept himself informed regarding any impending threats and routinely kept in touch with the health in-

23 AD 13, 200 E 166–183 (1713–1789).

24 AD 13, 200 E 287–302 (1680–1847).

25 Ulbert, Le secrétariat d'État de la Marine et ses bureaux, p. 9.

tendants in Marseilles. Hence, Pontchartrain acknowledged receipt of a dispatch concerning an irregularity with a *patente de santé*:

> I received your letter of the 15th of last month and read all you have written me about the *patente de santé* issued by the vice-consul in Alexandria to Cap[tai]n Thomassin. He was very wrong [to do so] if he had good reason, which you indicate to me, to suspect that the contagious illness had begun to strike some residents and that some houses had been closed up. Given that he is in Marseilles, you can clarify this with him, and I shall give him the just reprimand he deserves when he will be here.[26]

Second, letters from the intendancies in Provence[27], Languedoc[28], and Roussillon[29] indicated serious health concerns at a provincial level. During the second half of the seventeenth century, intendancies became widespread, so much so in fact that under Louis XIV almost all the kingdom's provinces and *genéralités*[30] were endowed with intendants and their administrative powers concerning fiscal matters were extended. These intendencies thus became de facto representatives of the central administration, embodying as it were the abstract reality of the State throughout the provinces.[31] A royal intendant was entrusted with three core responsibilities[32]: justice (the right to enter parliaments and to hear complaints and grievances from the king's subjects[33]); policing (in the Ancien Régime sense of general administration, which included numerous sectors such as town planning, agriculture, trade and public health); and finance (primarily raising taxes). Hence, the term *intendant de justice, police et finances* was adapted. Accordingly, the fight against any form of contagion was to become one of his prerogatives.

In practice, however, the provincial intendant emerges less as an omnipotent lord, as suggested by Alexis de Tocqueville in *l'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*[34],

26 AD 13, 200 E 287, letter dated 1 July 1705.

27 AD 13, 200 E 303–307 (1674–1789).

28 AD 13, 200 E 346 (1711–1839).

29 AD 13, 200 E 345 (1680–1834).

30 Administrative territorial subdivision (at times equivalent to a province as in Provence, sometimes of a lower level as the *generalité* of Montpellier which formed part of the province of Languedoc).

31 For the history of the intendancy, refer specifically to Barbiche, *Les institutions de la monarchie française*, pp. 383–406 (chap. XX: Les intendants et les subdélégués); Bordes, *L'administration provinciale et municipale*, pp. 116–132 (chap. V: Les origines et les pouvoirs des intendants); Mousnier, *Les institutions de la France sous la monarchie absolue*, pp. 1056–1114 (chap. V: Les intendants des provinces (origines-Révolution)).

32 Barbiche, *Les institutions de la monarchie française*, pp. 393–395.

33 On occasion, the intendant could equally preside over parliament as was the case in Provence.

34 Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution.*

than as a provincial administrator in regular contact with the authorities in Versailles, the consuls in towns and cities along the French Mediterranean coast, and the various health authorities operating on that same coastline. Yet again, the need for such multiple interactions demonstrated the practical limits of French absolutism. The intendant sought not so much to subjugate local health authorities; rather, he charged them with a duty of vigilance or precaution in the face of the threat of plague. Hence, the Intendant of Provence, Lebret, relied upon the expertise of Marseilles' health intendants and thanked them for their efforts:

> I ought to thank you for the precautions you have taken in relation to Captain André Roux's vessel, aboard which it was most likely that an outbreak of plague had broken out, but we should hope that given nothing has happened on the ship since the 4th of May, that the two incidents that occurred will not have any consequences [and that] those precautions you have been taking remain in place. I did not forget to write to Paris concerning the rumours that have been circulating here, and which have reached Avignon and even Lyon.[35]

Furthermore, Marseilles' health intendants were corresponding with other municipal and sanitary authorities along the French Mediterranean coast. Their letters reveal a network of exchanges that concentrate on Marseilles.[36] An analysis of this correspondence also explains how local health offices were evolving and how the intelligence network to cover the entire coastal region was expanding. As of the end of the seventeenth century, the *bureau de la santé* in Sète was routinely in contact with its counterpart in Marseilles, so much so in fact that following the outbreak of plague that erupted in Marseilles during the summer of 1720 and communications were severed, the health intendants in Sète found themselves at a loss:

> It is incumbent upon us to point out that the contagious disease has entered your infirmaries and even into some houses in your city which has us caused to conclude that none of your letters have arrived to inform us of that fact and until you do us the honor of replying to the present, [we] shall suspend entry to any vessel coming from your port, for we cannot but doubt that your infirmaries have been stricken by the contagion.[37]

In this particular instance, the rupture in communications was interpreted as a portent of impending danger. Any rumours concerning plague were taken seriously and the health intendants in Sète subsequently set up a blockade.

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35 AD 13, 200 E 303, letter dated 15 June 1724.

36 AD 13, 200 E 348–368 for the coast from Marseilles to Port-Vendres (1687–1850); 200 E 369–399 for the coast from Marseilles to Antibes (1677–1850).

37 AD 13, 200 E 352, letter dated 23 July 1720.

Finally, the consular dispatches depict the extent of the trans-Mediterranean information flow.[38] During the period we are focusing upon, consuls were no longer just playing an economic or patronage role; rather, they were *de facto* representatives of the French state in the so-called *nations françaises.* In light of Anne Mézin's historical and prosopographical studies, we have become more familiar with the role played by France's eighteenth-century consuls.[39] Her invaluable work tool has repeatedly enabled historians and researchers to identify the individual consuls when their hand-writing leaves room for doubt. The consulate's medieval origins were commercial in nature. The "merchant-consul" (*electus*) represented the merchant class in their dealings with all relevant local authorities and he generally pursued his own business affairs in parallel. Over the course of the seventeenth century, however, consulates were established as public agencies overseas and gradually assumed a more pronounced political function. The term "official consul" or envoy (*missus*) was adapted; his role was to buttress and uphold the French State's business and geopolitical interests.[40] Under Louis XIV, a vast network of consulates and vice-consulates were built up throughout the Mediterranean region and by the eighteenth century there were 129 such postings divided into 82 consulates and 47 vice-consulates.[41] These consulates covered the entire Mediterranean region and whenever a particular locale or region was stricken by plague, the consuls in-situ swiftly informed Marseilles' health intendants, even if an epidemic was merely in its preliminary stages. This was the case with the vice-consul in Patras, Louis Bonnet, who wrote: "I take it upon myself to inform you that plague has been declared in this city since the 26th of July, and that thus far the mortality rate has not been high, not exceeding fifteen people."[42]

In addition to the core collection of correspondence originating from Marseilles' health intendancy, other collections contain correspondence that should be systematically scrutinized. These differ in the sense that they are not primarily collections of public health-related correspondence similar to those mentioned above. Rather, they include more consular dispatches of a diplomatic or commer-

38 AD 13, 200 E 402–469.

39 Mézin, *Les consuls de France au siècle des Lumières.*

40 Bartolomei, Débats historiographiques et enjeux scientifiques autour de l'utilité commerciale des consuls. Grenet, Consuls et "nations" étrangères.

41 Mézin, *Les consuls de France au siècle des Lumières*, p. 50. These postings were divided into four groups: 1. consulates in the Levant and Barbary; 2. consulates in the countries of Christendom (a. Spain, Portugal and Italy; b. the North); 3. consulates established after the abolition of the privilege of the *Compagnie des Indes* (13 August 1769); 4. consulates in the United States of North America. Most consulates from which the sanitary dispatches originated were located in the Levant and Barbary.

42 AD 13, 200 E 459, letter dated 12 August 1719.

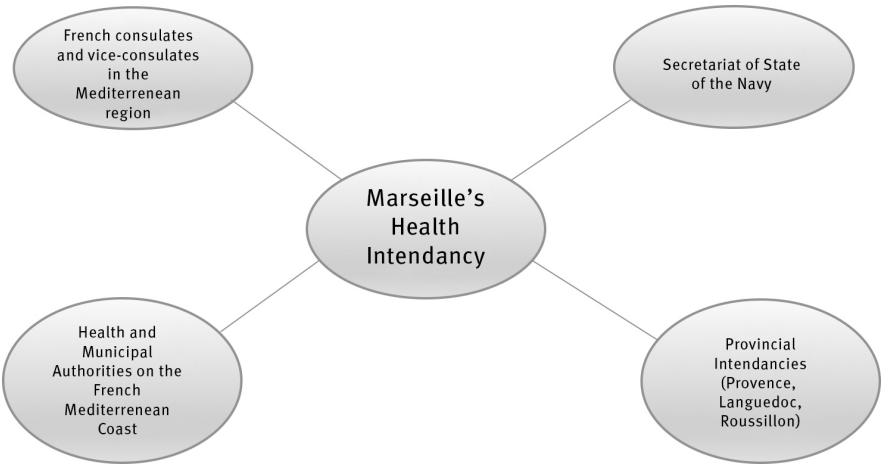

Figure 1: Marseilles' Health Intendants key correspondents.

cial nature in which information pertaining to health issues and related concerns may have been disseminated, either directly or are to be understood by reading between the lines. Two collections in particular merit further attention.

The first is housed at the Archives of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Aix-Marseille-Provence under the series J.[43] Here, one finds abundant consular correspondence, classified either by vice-consulate or consulate. Marseilles' Chamber of Commerce dates back to 1599, when the City Council created a commission comprising four deputies of commerce in an attempt to ensure the smooth running of trade. During the seventeenth century, this commission broke away from the municipal body and established an autonomous Chamber of Commerce whose key objective was to safeguard maritime trade throughout the Mediterranean region; this is why it came to rely heavily on the consulates overseas, for they were obliged to report back to it concerning their efforts to bolster French trade.[44] Furthermore, the Chamber of Commerce was responsible for remunerating the overseas consuls.

Consular correspondence addressed to Marseilles' Chamber of Commerce primarily dealt with commercial matters. Nevertheless, risks posed by plague and its devastating impact were also mentioned as potential obstacles to trade. For example, Jean-Baptiste Estelle, known as one of the four municipal magistrates in Mar-

43 ACCIAMP, J 1–1930. See the inventory: Reynaud, *Chambre de Commerce de Marseille.*

44 Boulanger, Au service du royaume en Méditerranée.

seilles during the 1720 outbreak, had previously been consul in Seyde, where he had witnessed firsthand its impact. In August 1702, he thus wrote to the deputies of Marseilles' Chamber of Commerce:

> It has come to my attention in Cyprus that plague has broken out in this *Echelle*, that merchants have been locked up in the *kam*, the place in which they are dwelling, or they have taken every precaution in a bid to keep themselves healthy. This made me decide to come here, all the more so, for I knew it was necessary.[45]

Without explicitly making reference to plague, the consul in Chio, Rougeau de la Blotière, alluded to "the disease that has befallen the Echelles."[46]

The second collection of interest is housed at the National Archives in Paris on account of the fact that it concerns correspondence addressed to the central administration in Versailles. The collections from *Affaires étrangères* (AE) and *la Marine* (MAR) should be examined in parallel. In 1669, Colbert effectively merged the administration in charge of the overseas consulates with that of the *Secrétariat d'État de la Marine*, a decision which ultimately led to the consular archives being classified under the Marine collection. In 1793, the *Convention*, the prevailing political regime between 1792 and 1795, integrated the overseas consulates into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and any consular archives were thus shared between the Ministry of the Navy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[47] Given that the manner in which they were classified remains somewhat unclear, both collections contain correspondence in relation to public health policies.

In these letters, mention of plague is usually found amidst a lot of other news. Hence, when the vice-consul of Candia, Jean Baume, wrote to Maurepas in 1724, he not only informed him of the prevailing political situation in Persia, Russian--Turkish relations and trade matters, but also about sanitary concerns. Noting Candia's favourable health status, he did interject, however, "that the contagion is wreaking havoc in Smirne (present-day Izmir), Chio, Métélin, Negrepont and Naples of Romania."[48]

In the Navy archives, the most abundant set of correspondence relating to sanitary affairs is undoubtedly the series MAR/B/3 which brings together letters from the French ports of the Levant (Mediterranean coast) and those from Ponant (At-

45 ACCIAMP, J 774, letter dated 6 August 1702.

46 ACCIAMP, J 446, letter dated 27 July 1728.

47 For the chronicle concerning conservation, refer to the site of the National Archives: https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/rechercheconsultation/consultation/pog/consultationPogN3.action?nopId=c614vuasqpw-vbzycwytaucq&pogId=FRAN_POG_02&search [last access: 06.07.23].

48 AN, AE/B/I/341, f° 297, letter dated 30 May 1724.

lantic coast). These include numerous dispatches from health intendants and other maritime authorities, such as the naval commander in Toulon, Duquesne-Monier, who raised the topic of the health risks that tobacco smuggling by naval troops could ultimately induce.[49] It also contains letters concerning *patentes de santé*[50] and regulations issued by the *bureaux de la santé.*[51]

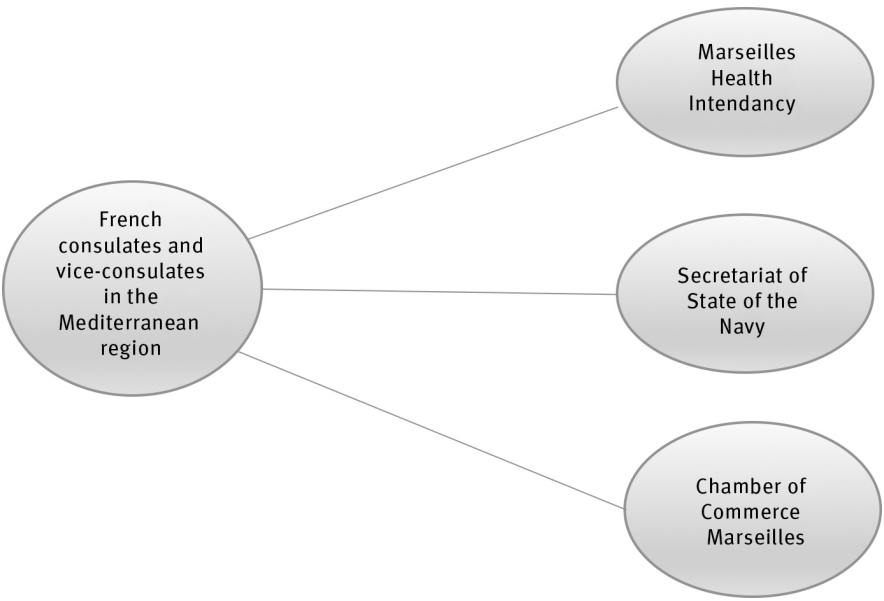

Figure 2: Correspondents addressed by the French consulates and vice-consulates in the Mediterranean region.

Frequency of Dispatches

The frequency of such letters could vary greatly depending on the individual correspondents involved and level of threat posed by plague. As a general rule, their frequency increased over the years. This trend becomes abundantly clear by examining a number of surveys I carried out. Amongst the correspondence from the in-

49 AN, MAR/B/3/289, f° 104, 110 and 114 (year 1723).
50 AN, MAR/B/3/327, f° 61, 88, 90, 92 (year 1728).
51 Ibid., f° 65 and 80.

tendant of Provence[52], I could count twenty letters for the period 1674–1698 and no fewer than 106 letters for the period 1711–1720. For the year 1724 alone, 26 letters are to be found. This figure includes copies of letters from other senders, which are also counted as letters.

Letters from the Secretariat of State of the Navy to the health intendants follow a similar pattern. Detailed below are all the letters I recorded up to the year 1750:

Table 1: Letters from the Secretary of State of the Navy to the health intendants in Marseilles, noting the number of letters per decade

Decade	Number of Letters
Prior to 1700 (1696)	1
1700–1710	12
1711–1720	50
1721–1730	110
1731–1740	57
1741–1750	166

Decade after decade, a marked growth in communications is to be observed between these two authorities, even prior to the outbreak of plague in 1720. Following its eruption, however, communications increased accordingly, thus underpinning the central authorities ever-growing desire to control any public health threat from a distance. The decrease in communications to be observed during the years 1731–1740 is not truly significant and does not call into question this trend toward bureaucratization. In fact, this reduction can be correlated with the imminent danger of plague, which seemed less acute during the 1730s than throughout the following decade.[53] And yet, during the years 1743–1744, as Messina and Calabria were confronting a severe plague epidemic that would cause the

52 This correspondence, listed as 200 E 303–304, contains not only the correspondence of the intendant of Provence, but also that of the governor of Provence (Villars) and the king's lieutenant-general in Provence (Grignan). The intendant was not the sole correspondent, but several high officials sent dispatches to Marseilles' health intendants.

53 Only a few smaller epidemics are mentioned (Bosnia in 1731, Alsace and Smyrna in 1735, Barcelona in 1737), but it was less a case of large surges of contagion than suspicious diseases whose diagnosis had not always been clearly established. The correspondence refers more to breaches of the sanitary regime or other threats such as pirates.

deaths of several tens of thousands[54], 44 letters from the Secretary of State Maurepas[55] were dispatched to the health intendants in Marseilles. Hence, vigilance was particularly heightened in times of epidemics across the entire Mediterranean region.

In this consular correspondence, one can moreover observe how the entire correspondence network was expanding throughout the latter quarter of the eighteenth century. The *Échelles* in the Levant such as Scio, Candia or Cyprus only started epistolary exchanges with Marseilles at the end of the 1720s. Other correspondence, such as that from Aleppo, commenced at the end of the seventeenth century but was only to become a regular feature some decades later. As can been seen from the selection below, a framework was already in place for a generalized channeling of communications from the Levant, Barbary as well as from Mediterranean cities in those lands in which Christianity reigned, notably Cadiz and Alicante.

Table 2: Dispatches from a sample of overseas consulates along the Mediterranean coast

Classification No.	Consulate	For the Year/s	Number of Letters
200 E 442	Cadix	1721–1750	37
200 E 444	Alicante	1702–1755	13
200 E 454	Algiers	1723–1755	26
200 E 462	Scio	1726–1732	6
200 E 462	Candie	1728–1738	17
200 E 462	Chania	1729–1752	16
200 E 462	Cyprus	1728–1740	5
200 E 466	Aleppo	1687–1744	27
200 E 466	Seyden	1688–1759	34
200 E 466	Tripoli	1728–1736	16
200 E 466	Damascus	1736	1
200 E 467	Damietta	1740	2
200 E 467	Rosette	1728–1760	8
200 E 467	Alexandria	1697–1759	16

In formal terms, more often than not (albeit not systematically) these letters began by thanking the person being addressed for the letter hitherto received. The letter, to which the correspondent was replying, was thus acknowledged, a particularly

54 Bedini, La morte per epidemia nel XVIII secolo.

55 Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, Count de Maurepas, Secretary of State of the Navy from 1723 to 1749. He signed himself simply "Maurepas".

interesting point when evaluating the swiftness of the information flow. Intendant Lebret, for instance, replied several times to a letter which had been penned one or two days previously, a fact which illustrates just how efficient communication was between Marseilles and Aix. On 8 August 1724, for example, he wrote: "I received, Sirs, along with the letter you took the trouble to write on the seventh of this month, the deliberation [...]."[56] Between Versailles and Marseilles, the time-lapse between a letter being dispatched and its reply could vary anywhere between eight and seventeen days.[57]

With regard to consular correspondence, it is somewhat more difficult to estimate just how long it took for information to circulate given that a dispatch was not systematically written in response to another, but rather was triggered by some public health emergency. A systematic survey of all the letters sent by Marseilles' intendants or by the Versailles administration would undoubtedly enable us to evaluate the overall length of time needed for a reply to arrive. Nevertheless, the infrequent letters from Aleppo, bearing witness to those letters to which they were replying, would suggest a period ranging from one to two months, which may well correspond to the length of time it took a ship to cross the Mediterranean. For Cadiz, it took about one month.

Jörg Ulbert, historian of consular services, has examined the question of the delivery of consular dispatches during the reign of Louis XIV. He noted a disparity in delivery times between consulates connected to an institutionalised postal link and those overseas consulates for which delivery times were unpredictable. Dispatches transported by sea took longer to arrive at their destination than those sent overland. Hence, there was the constant risk that the information communicated could well have been out of date ever before it was read upon arrival.[58]

For correspondence within the French territory, the postal system's efficiency seems to be borne out. The beginnings of the State Post Office can be attributed to

56 AD 13, 200 E 303, letter dated 8 August 1724.

57 AD 13, 200 E 287. Based upon the complete records for the years 1713, 1727 and 1747, randomly selected from the period 1700–1750.

58 Ulbert, La dépêche consulaire française, p. 48 and 52. Ulbert also develops an interesting typology of epistolary circulation by distinguishing three timespans: 1. the post-delivery, which is the duration from the date of writing at point A to the date of reception at point B; 2. the half-revolution, which is the duration from the date of writing at point A to the date of reply at point B; 3. the revolution or complete rotation, which is the duration from the date of writing at point A to the reception of the reply at point A. Generally, and this is also the case for correspondence related to sanitary matters, only the half-revolution is measurable on the basis of a defined corpus of letters. The full rotation should also be measurable, if the archives of the two actors whose communication is being studied were completely examined. This task has yet to be undertaken.

Louis XI at the end of the fifteenth century, following the establishment of the earliest temporary royal roads. The French postal system was set up at the end of the seventeenth century and centralized thanks to the reorganizing endeavours by the Marquis Louvois (superintendent general of the *Postes et Relais de France* from 1668 to 1691). A postal service provided by post carriers on horseback, under royal jurisdiction, carried official correspondence from point A to point B along routes equipped with way stations. Postal dispatches were placed either in a leather satchel or in trunks known as *malles.*[59]

The length of dispatches dealing with public health matters varied considerably; they could be anything from a few lines or run to several pages. Sometimes attachments were appended to the dispatch, usually a letter from another authority, given that it was easier to attach a copy rather than to rewrite a summary of its contents. Institutional actors were thus not merely messengers conveying information, but also served the role of relaying information, whereby they attached correspondence written by other actors rather than re-writing them. They would appear to have cultivated a disposition for thoroughness in their communications.

Content of Letters

Naturally, our interest in these letters equally lies in their content. They are living proof of the historicity of prevention through the sharing of information. Hence, vigilance with regard to public health was not simply a matter of reacting to a suspicious ship or vessel entering port, but rather was predicated upon preliminary information being transmitted. So, what was the nature of this information?

First, such dispatches, with their calls for vigilance, could convey to those receiving them a sense of their responsibilities. A recurrent semantic thread can be observed, notably in the frequent use of the terms "attentiveness" and "vigilance." This was particularly the case in correspondence from central government to public health authorities along the coasts. The Secretary of State of the Navy, Moras, for example, wrote to the health intendants in Marseilles:

> [...] you report to me concerning the successive arrival of Vessels at your lazaret and how *attentive* you are about regulating their quarantine with regard to the places from whence they came. I can only applaud your operations, which have been validated by success, and urge you to pursue your duties with the same *vigilance.*[60]

59 Allaz, *Histoire de la poste dans le monde,* pp. 129–161.

60 AD 13, 200 E 288, letter dated 16 January 1758.

Yet again, such a letter reveals the practical limits of monarchic absolutism in that it divulges the extent to which the central authorities in Versailles actually relied upon local health institutions; the central authorities did not consider supplanting the local authority's role, and moreover it reinforces the idea of conveying to those local authorities a sense of responsibility to exercise vigilance.[61]

Second, such letters at once constituted a viable means of informing others and, in turn, of being informed. This was particularly true in the case of consular correspondence concerning an epidemic upsurge in the Levant, or even of rumours concerning a possible outbreak. During the 1980s, Daniel Panzac was even able to piece together the trajectory of the epidemics throughout the Ottoman Empire largely thanks to such correspondence.[62] Any information received was subsequently evaluated by local authorities, who may or may not have lent it some credence. There was a comprehensive management of any rumours concerning outbreaks of plague. Hence, Lebret wrote to Marseilles' health intendants:

> The Conseil de Marine, Messieurs, having been informed by letter from Danzig that those rumours circulating about the contagion striking Livonia were unfounded and how that province has never been in better condition in terms of public health, instructs me to advice you of this so that you will observe similar precautions with regard to any vessels coming from Livonia as you had been doing before the orders the Coun[c]il issued on 22 January.[63]

Lastly, these letters represented a feasible way for issuing orders, or at least for reasserting an order dictated by royal decree. It was thus ensured that the application of norms was maintained, even in the absence of plague, a fact which, in itself, testified to a permanent state of vigilance. For example, the monopoly concerning public health administration exclusively entrusted to Marseilles and the port city of Toulon was repeatedly reaffirmed. Only these two Mediterranean ports were authorized to impose quarantine on ships or vessels arriving from the Echelles. Secretary of State of the Navy Pontchartrain ensured that the royal decree was implemented, so much so that Toulon's health intendants were to write: "This Minister thinks it appropriate that we jointly determine their quarantine period based upon opinions that you or we may have concerning the health status of the places from whence they came."[64] As can be observed, focus was on cooperation between the health authorities in Marseilles and Toulon, to

61 On this topic, I refer to the working paper on the theme of empowerment: Kölbel et al., *Responsibilisierung.*

62 Panzac, *La peste dans l'Empire Ottoman.*

63 AD 13, 200 E 303, letter from April 1721.

64 AD 13, 200 E 379, letter dated 15 August 1709.

whom Pontchartrain had granted some leeway in making public-health related decisions.

Communications in Times of Plague

As soon as plague erupted in an urban area or in the provinces, as was the case in Marseilles and Provence in 1720, communication methods changed. At that juncture contagion was no longer considered an external threat striking the Mediterranean region, and the actors involved were communicating on a regular basis. Henceforth, the contagion directly impacted the kingdom and, paradoxically, communications were to slow down. In her examination of public declarations concerning plague epidemics, Élisabeth Belmas discusses various factors that led the concerned authorities to withhold information about the plague outbreak or at least to postpone making it public knowledge.[65] First, any medical uncertainty surrounding a positive diagnosis of plague would leave a shadow of doubt linger too long. Against the backdrop of the debate between those advocating *contagionnisme* and those championing *anti-contagionnisme*, physicians in Montpellier, proponents of the anti-contagionist thesis, were prone to diagnose fevers caused by unhealthy foodstuffs.[66] It was only acknowledged at a later stage that the contagion was actually caused by plague. Second, Belmas notes a certain reluctance on the part of the authorities; they were not obliged to issue a public warning about the disease, given that the declaratory procedures had not been prescribed in the regulations pertaining to plague.[67] In addition to this political procrastination, there was also the matter of "not shocking the city and trade."[68] In their bid not to undermine the city's economic activities, municipal authorities resorted to denial or disinformation. Indecisiveness, however, at the onset of any epidemic could and did lead to extremely devastating consequences, as was the case in Marseilles in 1720. Though the onset of the plague outbreak seemed to have been characterized by denial, and communications at such times became less frequent, epistolary exchanges did not cease altogether. Indeed, the epidemic was not unambiguously a period of "obligatory silence," to borrow Françoise Hildesheimer's expression, at least as far as correspondence was concerned.[69] As can be observed in the following examples attested to in the sources,

65 Belmas, Pouvoir politique et catastrophe sanitaire.
66 Ibid., p. 39.
67 Ibid., p. 45.
68 Ibid., pp. 47–54.
69 Hildesheimer, L'histoire de la peste à l'époque moderne, p. 178. The silence to be observed in the sources in times of plague seems to be more characteristic of narrative (accounts, chronicles) and

written exchanges continued during outbreaks of plague. Hence, correspondence between the *Intendant de la Marine* Hocquart in Toulon and the Royal Court between August and December 1720[70] was multi-faceted and bore witness to a twofold vision of the unfolding situation. On one hand, there was a retrospective account of how the outbreak had struck Marseilles, for Hocquart informed the Royal Court concerning the deteriorating evolution of sanitary conditions throughout the city. On the other, he offered a prospective vision insofar as he anticipated how the disaster would further spread from Marseilles to Toulon and beyond to the rest of Provence.[71] The scourge he envisioned was ultimately to become reality in December of that year, when Hocquart shut himself up in his home. Annie Rivara then notes an absence of correspondence in the sources, a silence which she interprets as a form of powerlessness on the part of the intendant when confronted with an outbreak of plague.[72]

On examining the Navy archives, however, one can observe that this lacuna in the Toulon archives for the year 1721 did not entail a rupture in communications between Toulon and Versailles. The Navy archives debunk any such notion, for had this correspondence not been preserved in Toulon, one might well suspect how the plague-induced disarray would have prevented handwritten reproductions of letters being made and their subsequent conservation. The Royal Court, however, did receive dispatches from Toulon during the year 1721. "The contagious disease continues to be make its mark felt within the city and gives every reason to fear that it will rage even more so in the future [...]" wrote Hocquart on 1 March 1721.[73] Numerous letters from the intendant did reach the court throughout that year and duly reported on the multiple sanitary measures taken against the contagion in Toulon: inter alia, the use of convicts as grave-diggers (*corbeaux*),[74] the religious procession ordered by the bishop,[75] the end of the outbreak and the re-opening of the city gates,[76] and the *Te Deum* performed in thanks for its cessation.[77]

The case of Marseilles is equally worth mentioning. At the onset of the outbreak, communications with Versailles were pursued on a regular basis. Between

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medical sources, which usually appeared shortly after an epidemic but not during it (at least in those locales where it erupted).

70 SHD, 1 A1–146, f° 215–372.

71 Rivara, Les Lettres de l'intendant de marine Hocquart.

72 Ibid., p. 261.

73 AN, MAR/B/3/272, f° 122.

74 Ibid., f° 215.

75 Ibid., f° 216.

76 Ibid., f° 341, 349, 357, 370.

77 Ibid., f° 384.

29 July and 13 August 1720, local health intendants received three letters from the *Conseil de Marine* thanking them for the precautions they had taken to forestall an outbreak of plague. The last letter received transmitted the Regent's orders, whereby he urged them to "continue with your care and vigilance in order to hamper the progress of this disease, and prevent it from spreading either inside or outside, if at all possible."[78] Thereafter, communications with Versailles were suspended until October 1721. Nevertheless, copies of letters written by Marseilles' health intendants attest to the fact that communications did continue with other more locally-based authorities. Two recipients are frequently mentioned: Intendant Lebret, described in the letters as *Intendant de Justice, Police, finances et du Commerce et Premier President au Parlement a Aix*, and Gérin, Lieutenant General of the Admiralty of Marseilles.[79] It is equally worth pointing out how Toulon's health intendants, to whom the Marseilles bureau wrote at the end of December 1720, were advised to take every necessary precaution in their bid to avoid any untoward consequences, all while stressing that the disease had abated in Marseilles and that it was no longer spreading with the same level of ease as it had during its onset.[80]

Table 3: Frequency of letters written by Marseilles' health intendants during the latter half of 1720

Period (month)	Number of Letters
July 1720	12
August 1720	4
September 1720	9
October 1720	2
November 1720	1
December 1720	1

During the contagious outbreak, communications also continued between Versailles and the royal intendancies. The case of Languedoc is of particular interest. While some towns and villages in Languedoc, such as Alès, Marvejols and Mende, were impacted by the outbreak, most of that province had been spared. Bernage, the intendant of Languedoc, happened to be in Montpellier, a city which had not fallen victim to plague, and he was in regular contact with the central administra-

78 AD 13, 200 E 287. These letters were signed by Louis-Alexandre de Bourbon and Marshal Victor Marie d'Estrées, who headed the *Conseil de Marine* during the *polysynodie.*

79 AD 13, 200 E 166.

80 Ibid., f° 79^{v}, letter dated 31 December 1720.

tion. In order to inform him of an outbreak of plague in Alès, Bernage contacted the Chancellor of France, Henri François d'Aguessau, who replied by urging him to be extremely vigilant:

> [...] yet experience has shown us that initially the disease is barely a spark which later ignites a great fire. Amidst its misfortune, this city is fortunate to have fallen under the wings of a Bishop who is as vigilant and as dedicated as anyone who commences his ministerial duties in such sad circumstances.[81]

Finally, the archives also contain letters sent by some ecclesiastics or individuals during outbreaks of plague. While such written accounts are less frequent, they do nevertheless allow us to read "material noted on the spot," to adapt Gilbert Buti's turn of phrase when he introduced correspondence by the priest Jean-Félix Blanc, who was living in Toulon during the contagious outbreak.[82] Between September 1720 and July 1722, the clergyman penned some 25 letters to a Parisian gentleman, a set of correspondence which enabled future historians to discern how the disease was progressing from the standpoint of a given individual.[83] Without radically modifying historical knowledge concerning the outbreak of plague in Toulon largely documented by Antrechaus, this correspondence is testament to the fact that the epidemic was not always a period of enforced silence and how written exchanges between individuals nevertheless continued.

Marseilles' Municipal Archives contain several dozen letters from individuals addressed to the municipal magistrates.[84] These letters frequently included requests for the latest updates concerning a relative who had remained in Marseilles or call upon the magistrates to look after a particular individual. Louis Campon, for example, who happened to be in Aix, entrusted his children to the magistrates: "I beg you to watch over these poor children and to provide them with any help they may need."[85] The magistrates embodied the last remaining hope for these distraught individuals, ravaged by anxiety about their loved ones. Magdeleine d'Alliès left it entirely up to them: "You are the only gentlemen from whom I can best learn any details".[86] These letters also reveal economic concerns, marked by an interest

81 AD 34, C 590, f° 642–643, letter dated 12 November 1721.

82 Buti, Lettres de Toulon. This correspondence can be found in the AD 83 under the reference 4 J 17.

83 Ibid., p. 158. However, this clergyman had family links with Toulon's notables, for he was the brother-in-law of the naval commissioner Dasque and the uncle by marriage of Jean d'Antrechaus, first consul during the contagion.

84 These letters are kept at Marseilles Municipal Archives under GG 424 and 425.

85 GG 424, letter dated 27 September 1722.

86 GG 425, letter dated 26 August 1721.

in the inheritance of a person who had succumbed to plague. A certain Sieur Olivier, for example, wrote to the magistrates in a bid to recover the personal belongings of his late brother, Louis Olivier, who had attended the Beaucaire Fair but had died of plague in the *logis de la lune* in Marseilles on 13 September 1720.[87] Similarly, Magdeleine St-Martin asked the magistrates that she be allowed to retain her husband's assets.[88]

Conclusion: The Role of Bureaucratisation in the Public Health Campaign

Those correspondence networks focusing on concerns regarding public health, as outlined in this contribution, lead historians to speak of a "paper monarchy," to borrow Hervé Drévillon's formulation[89], or even of a bureaucracy of public health-related affairs. Max Weber defined an ideal type of bureaucracy, one which the German sociologist considered the most dominant structure within what he referred to as "rational-legal authority."[90]Although such a bureaucratic apparatus was not yet fully developed during the eighteenth century, a number of criteria can be observed in the health sector that gravitate toward that Weberian definition, notably, the presence of individual public servants within a well-established hierarchy, with well-established skills and expertise and often on fixed salaries. Another feature of Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy was the wholesale standardization of rules and techniques.[91]

Vigilance with regard to safeguarding public health equally relied upon a multiplicity of actors whose regular exchanges increased over the first half of the eighteenth century: inter alia, the Secretary of State of the Navy, provincial intendants, health intendants, French overseas consuls, the Intendant of the Navy were all actors who participated in curbing the further spread of plague across the length and breadth of the kingdom (and even beyond in the case of the consuls). Hence, correspondence could be considered one of the pillars in prevention, a form of upstream interception through the sharing of intelligence. Such a protective strategy focused on the act of writing was underpinned by concrete preventative measures, in the form of quarantine in the lazarettes.

87 Ibid., letter dated 2 October 1720.
88 Ibid., letter dated 17 [?] 1720.
89 Expression quoted by Martin, La correspondance ministérielle, p. 35.
90 Weber, *Économie et société*, pp. 292–294.
91 Ibid., p. 294 f.

Any information gleaned through correspondence was supplemented by *patentes de santé*, which, in turn, enabled recipients to update themselves regarding any impending dangers of an outbreak of plague, based upon a close examination of the ports where the ship had docked en route. Prevention was thus predicated upon a form of risk management. This observation jettisons that impression of a dichotomy between passive Ancien Régime societies and ultra-active contemporary societies with regard to the risks posed by contagion[92], and it moreover demonstrates that vigilance does indeed have a historical character: it is largely based upon the capacity of the individual to remain alert to any threat posed by plague, to communicate this danger to others, and to evaluate any potential danger thanks to control systems such *as patentes de santé.*[93]

Finally, institutional correspondence on public health was not confined to times of epidemics; such exchange also took place in healthier epochs. Health-related correspondence from individuals, albeit a much rarer phenomenon, seems to have been specific to times of epidemics, as the population's need for information concerning a relative or a legacy, for instance, was motivated by a sense of urgency. Hence, the letter, as a communicative medium, is a particularly multi-faceted source and deserves more serial and statistical studies, which, albeit certainly time-consuming, often reveals those processes at work in vigilance and the transfer of information on multiple levels.

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92 On industrial society as a risk society, refer to Beck, *Risk Society.* For a sociological reading of risk and prevention, see Luhmann, *Soziologie des Risikos.*

93 In France, research on the historical and cultural character of risk has developed considerably over the last twenty years: Collas-Heddeland, *Pour une histoire culturelle du risque*; Walter/Fantini/Delvaux, *Les cultures du risque (XVI^e^–XXI^e^ siècle)*; Cousin, *Les sociétés méditerranéennes face au risque: représentations*; Niget/Petitclec, *Pour une histoire du risque*; Bourg/Joly/Kaufmann, *Du risque à la menace*; Bertrand, *Penser le risque à l'âge classique*; Buti/Cabantous, *De Charybde en Scylla.* On plague in particular: Bertrand/Buti, Le risque de peste.

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Nicolas Vidoni

The Public's Role in Vigilance against Plague and Political Authority in early Eighteenth-Century France

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has seen the revival of rhetorical devices that call upon individuals to participate in the collective fight against such contagion. Such a renewal is predicated upon the participation of two types of entities: individuals and collectives. Individuals must become aware of any imminent danger, adopt whatever preventive gestures may be necessary all while modulating their attitudes and behaviour according to the prevailing prophylactic canons. Collectively, they form groups with different social statuses: the good students and those with generally good codes of conduct, on the one hand, and the objectors, on the other. This latter category have not yet been explicitly fashioned as a group posing any risk to the wider community, yet the demarcation line remains tenuous. The very existence of such a group of objectors partly justifies retaining preventive measures, in which "vigilance" by every member of society is invoked.

This veritable "vigilantism" needs to be called into question, however.[1] Indeed, when it comes to examining the past, can we know for certain what specific individual and group attitudes may have formed the basis for people's fear of plague? A number of private manuscripts or autobiographical accounts enable us to catch glimpse of some isolated elements of a plausible answer. The physicians' attitudes were known and they were not unequivocal, to such an extent, in fact, that during the plague outbreak of 1720–1724, the French Crown authorities revived the model of a powerful governing physician by republishing Ranchin's *Opuscules,* a medical treatise which had been written in the wake of the plague outbreak of the decade 1630–1640.

And yet, it can equally be observed how "vigilante" measures were devised and on occasion even implemented; they did indeed have a political impact, and one which studies on plague outbreaks have tended to neglect, at times echoing a form of depoliticisation of public healthcare related issues advocated by governmental authorities – on every level. Such latent forms of political conflict need to

1 We have borrowed this term from Favarel-Garrigues/Gayer, Violer la loi pour maintenir l'ordre, pp. 7–33.

 https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111026169-006

be probed in order to enrich our socio-political understanding of anti-plague measures.[2]

For this very reason, a comparative approach between two distinct stratagems adapted for plague prevention in urban conglomerations of comparable size and function might well be well worth considering. In a bid to avoid a uniform vision, which might simply convey the notion of the French Royal State taking charge of containing contagion, it will be insightful to compare how two cities not impacted in a similar fashion by the plague outbreak during the years 1720–1724 coped with that public healthcare emergency.[3] Aix and Montpellier, cities of comparible size and with administrative and political functions that render them similar in multiple respects, lend themselves favorably to such a comparative approach.[4] With their respective estimated population of 20 000 to 25 000, both cities concentrated economic influence if considered in terms of their overall significance in the Kingdom of France. Yet, their status on a provincial scale equally made it viable for them to narrow the scope of those procedures that account for the surveillance measures in place in urban areas and to understand how the various actors were involved in these systems. An initial presentation of these two sanitary regimes imagined at a city level in a bid to "surveil" the contagious outbreak reveals that, in reality, it was more a case of surveilling the general population. The second part of this presentation will enable us to analyse the ramifications of such surveillance measures in terms of the population's involvement and participation or lack thereof. And, finally, the practical consequences of participating in regulating urban problems will be discussed in an attempt to understand how this particular iteration of plague proved to be both a testing ground and a landmark moment in a new relationship to the "common good" taking form.

2 Times of crisis are useful for acquiring an historical understanding of various forms of political conflict. On this topic, see Bourquin/Hamon, *La politisation.*

3 In the vast and profound historiography on this episode of plague, the case of Marseilles has obviously given rise to numerous works, including Carrière/Coudurié/Rebuffat, *Marseille ville morte.* More recently, the policing aspect has been examined in greater depth by Beauvieux, Épidémie, pouvoir municipal et transformation de l'espace urbain. For the outbreak of plague in Provence: Bertrand, La Peste en Provence aux temps modernes and Buti, *Colère de dieu, mémoire des hommes.* For Arles, Caylux, *Arles et la peste de 1720–1721.*

4 Lepetit, *Les villes dans la France moderne.*

I Preventive Measures against Plague in Aix and Montpellier

The subsequently published historiography and multiple accounts concerning the contagious outbreak all emphatically demonstrate how systemically and authoritatively the French Crown took charge of the fight to contain the epidemic. While precedents did indeed exist, they did not necessarily serve as a model during the 1720–1724 outbreak in the case of Languedoc and Provence.[5] Hence, the actors involved had to operate in an exceptional manner, ultimately leading to the necessary adjustments in their attempt to make such highly restrictive measures acceptable.

1 Different Institutionalisations of Exceptionalism

Perilous times and the prevailing terror sweeping the cites enabled the institutionalisation of exceptional procedures, i. e., those procedures that did not respect conventional forms of law, or which created precedents that were subsequently ratified by the law.[6]

In the case of both Aix and Montpellier, a pathway which could be characterised as midway and marked by hesitation was followed. Within the framework of reviving conventional plague control measures, fresh practices were introduced, and then indisputably amended in the case of Aix. This discrepancy in approach can be explained by the fact that those measures initially developed during the 1630s and 1640s were revivied and supplemented by provisions formulated in the 1660s and 1670s,[7] but these had not been deployed in cities throughout the south of the kingdom for some fifty years. The memory of those practices had to some extent been lost.[8] The fundament underpinning these preventative measures was the so-called *bureau de la santé,* or local health office. Reactivated whenever a

5 We can thus read in the archives of the Intendant of Provence and first president of the Parliament of Aix Cardin Le Bret that he does not know exactly how plague prevention measures were constituted in 1630. In the case of Aix, see the recent thesis by Fleur Beauvieux, *Expériences ordinaires de la peste.*

6 Chassaigne/Delaporte/Le Mao, *Peurs urbaines (XVI^e^–XXI^e^ siècle).* On the issue of exceptionalism: Thomas, *L'exception dans tous ses états*; Saint-Bonnet, *L'État d'exception.*

7 Revel, Autour d'une épidémie ancienne.

8 Bertrand/Buti, Le risque de peste.

city was stricken with an epidemic outbreak,[9] this exceptional institution brought together the city's diverse authorities with the objective of forging a consensus within the dominant social groups in a bid to legitimise forms of public policy which occasionally went against commonplace and routine practice.

In Aix, in the absence of Parliament, an institution holding the upper hand in the city in terms of law enforcement, it traditionally fell upon the city's *avocats*, who served both as lawyers and urban counsellors, to assume responsibility for administering the *bureau de la santé.*[10] During the plague outbreak of 1720–1724, however, these *avocats* were removed from this administrative role. It was Parliament, by way of the *Chambre des vacations* which was sitting in Aix until October 1720, and the royal intendant, who also happened to be Parliament's first speaker, who led the clampdown against the outbreak. Whenever the *avocats* exited Aix to travel to Saint-Rémy de Provence, they entrusted the city's governance to those consuls who had remained in-situ, to the military governor and, more broadly, to the "bourgeoisie" in order to supervise the population and urban areas. Hence, up until October 1720, it was the consular authorities who duly informed the king's prosecutor in Parliament whenever any problems arose, and made a "verbal" request in order to obtain a ruling on the matter in question. Thereafter, it was the First Consul Vauvenargues and the military governor who were in the position to dispense justice. It is worth noting, however, that this narrative actually obscures the multiple difficulties that erupted between the *Chambre des vacations* and Vauvenargues. Indeed, a group of six magistrates refused to leave Aix until January 1721, and opposed any decisions made by Vauvenargues, despite the fact that he had been entrusted with the *office* of "commandant" and appointed director of the *bureau de la santé.*[11]

The standard municipal supervisory framework in Aix for neighbourhood captains was complemented by six health intendents appointed within the *bureau de la santé* and accompanied on the ground by "commissaires" entrusted with executing exceptional operations in times of plague. The Bureau oversaw the entire project, in coordination with the *Conseil de Ville* [City Council] with regard to certain matters. A twofold shift in how they operated unfolded within both these institutions. From a social standpoint, these institutions were not made up in a similar fashion. Aix's *bureau de la santé* brought together, by rotation in groups of seven, 28 members, including ten consuls or erstwhile consuls, seven squires, nine of the above-mentioned

9 For the *bureaux de la santé*, see Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste*; Panzac, Crime ou délit? La législation sanitaire en Provence au XVIIIe siècle; Hildesheimer, *Le bureau de la santé de Marseille.*
10 Stalh, *Résoudre les divisions religieuses*; Cabasse, *Essais historiques*, p. 60.
11 Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), ms fr. 8918, Letter from *chancelier* Daguesseau dated 17 February 1721 to Le Bret, fol. 339r°.

avocats, and two members drawn from the city's bourgeoisie.[12] Socially targeted recruitment was predicated upon a strong selection principle, for it was those ruling elites who had remained in Aix during the outbreak who effectively ran the *bureau de la santé*. And yet, this Bureau ultimately replaced the City Council and the *bureau de police*,[13] both of which had ceased to convene during the epidemic. The City Council ceased all activity from 28 September 1720 until January 1722, holding just two sessions in 1721.[14] As a rule, however, the City Council rarely if ever convened in Aix. As for the *bureau de police*, it ceased to function between October 1720 and March 1721, and again from May until August 1721.[15] Such an institutional vacuum was not as pronounced in Montpellier.

In Montpellier, however, the situation was less complex, given that Toulouse's Parliament had ordered that a local *bureau de la santé* be revived,[16] and one which was more inclusive than its counterpart in Aix, if considered from a social perspective, for it brought together six consuls, eight royal officers, three *avocats*, eight merchants and two physicians and apothecaries. Furthermore, the absence of plague meant that those permanent institutions responsible for administering Montpellier, namely, the City Council and the *bureau de police*, continued to function – albeit initially at a slower pace – yet without interruption. The City Council stopped convening meetings only in October 1721 while *the bureau de police* never ceased to operate. The least number of meetings was recorded for the months of February and March 1721, with the *bureau de police* meeting just twice in each of those months. Its reduced workload was compensated for by the *bureau de la santé's* quasi-permanent exertions, for it had taken in manpower from both the City Council and the *bureau de police.*

12 Archives municipals d'Aix-en-Provence (AMA), GG 526, "Department for those persons who have been chosen to attend the *bureaux de la santé* of this City, which shall convene daily at City Hall, from nine o'clock in the morning until eleven o'clock, & from three o'clock after midday until six."

13 With regard to the *bureau de police*, see Sautel, *Une juridiction municipale de police sous l'Ancien Régime.*

14 AMA, BB 108, Register of Council Deliberations, 1719–1739.

15 AMA, FF 72, Register of the *bureau de police*, 1719–1722.

16 Archives municipales de Montpellier (AMM), Ruling of the Parliament of Toulouse of 17 August 1720, which ordered the establishment of *Bureaux de santé* in all the towns under its jurisdiction. The plague outbreak of 1720–1724 was seldom mentioned for Montpellier: Dulieu, La peste à Montpellier; Dulieu, *La médecine à Montpellier*, vol. 1; the book edited by Cholvy, *Histoire de Montpellier*, briefly mentions this episode. The outbreak in Montpellier has mainly been discussed in relation to the dramatic episode of 1629–1630, which caused several hundred deaths. I refer to my article, La peste et le gouvernement municipal: Montpellier en 1720–1723.

This state of legal exceptionalism in Aix and Montpellier therefore needs to be assessed against the reality of how these traditional institutions functioned, for their operations were only completely interrupted whenever plague struck. The *bureau de la santé's* activities would then compensate for any work normally undertaken by traditional institutions in urban governance. Over the ensuing months, a catching-up process unfolded, one which enabled a gradual readjustment between those permanent institutions and the *bureau de la santé.* Such institutional exceptionalism was not self-evident, however.

2 Challenges to Exceptionalism

In both Montpellier and Aix, the imposition of such an exceptional sanitary regime was to pose problems and ultimately gave rise to disputes.[17] In Montpellier, these took the form of opposition to the city's lockdown and were instigated by the city's merchants who deemed it unjustified to interrupt trade, particularly given that no evidence of plague had been confirmed in Clapas. Yet, these disputes also represented a form of opposition to participating in any vigilance measures against plague. Hence, on 18 October 1720, less than two months after initiating plague preventative measures, a dispute arose between those merchants appointed by the *bureau de la santé* to guard the city gates and Montpellier's burgher guard. The *bureau's* merchant members (notably Charpentier and Rey) complained to the *bureau* on account of the fact that "officers of the bourgeoisie" had shown themselves "not alone unwilling to lend them a helping-hand, [something] for which they are solely responsible, but on the contrary, with the clear intent of neither recognising the *bureau de la santé's* commissaires nor the deliberations and orders from the self-same Bureau," they had refused to obey them.[18] The merchants pointed out, however, that the rule in force whenever contagion was detected was such that the *bureau de la santé,* under the authority of the commanders, had full authority "without any gainsaying." Furthermore, they called into question Selles, master surgeon, district captain, member of "the staff of the bourgeoisie" who would neither recognize the *bureau* nor its members. Similar incidents occurred at Montpellier's other gates. The *bureau* unanimously decided to urge the Duke of Roquelaure, the city governor, to support them and moreover that he provide a resolution to the issue, and with this end in mind they instantly went to him as a group. Assuming

17 For a comparison between Marseilles and Montpellier, see Beauvieux/Vidoni, Dispositifs de contrôle, police et résistances.

18 AMM, GG 66, Register of the *bureau de santé*, 1720–1721, not page-numbered.

a conciliatory approach, the duke replied that he would summon the troublemakers. Bureau members also approached the intendant, who replied that he found their claims to be "very fair." Such disputes reveal the political intricasies linked to vigilance, with dominant groups contesting the legitimacy of subordinate groups to participate in maintaining law and order and the surveillance of urban space, even during such exceptional times.[19]

In the case of Aix, it can be more clearly discerned how the control and surveillance regime was effectively circumvented. At once frontal in nature and manifestly directed against Vauvenargues, low-intensity resistance was to be observed behind the opposition by the officers from Parliament. Various social corps and professions practiced resistance: the medical corps, for instance, refused to systematically visit patients, as stipulated in the regulations in the event of any doubt concerning an outbreak of contagion. Hence, in September 1720, it was notably the academic professors who objected to such a systematic approach, arguing that medical visits should be paid for at the rate of 1000 *livres* per month, a sum which had been agreed upon in a contract signed with the consuls at the beginning of September of that year.[20]

In addition to the physicians, and in a somewhat more typical fashion, the burghers deserted the city when they were supposed to be on guard duty (28 August 1720), and those men appointed for that very purpose refused to stand guard (5 August 1720).[21] Furthermore, in similar circumstances in Montpellier, the traditional *commissaires de quartier* refused to work alongside the bourgeois guard.[22] Indeed, Monsieur de Meynier, commander of the bourgeois *guard at porte des Cordeliers*, complained of how the neighbourhood commissaires declined to communicate to him the names of those families and foreigners to be found there. The *bureau de la santé* then deliberated over what ought to be done. The exact reasons were not indicated, yet it does not appear as though it was on account of a census not being undertaken. It can thus be assumed that this new bourgeois guard, overhauled in an attempt to prevent a plague outbreak and to monitor the city, did not get involved with the commissaires, a group traditionally responsible for surveiling urban space, on the grounds that it would deprive the latter of a prerogative according them a certain sense of social superiority. In both instances, those guard corps trained during the public health emergency ended up colliding with traditional so-

19 Concerning the legitimacy to take action in public or communal space, see Cottereau/Ladrière, *Pouvoir et légitimité.*

20 AMA, GG 524, and Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône (AD 13), B 3702, Parliament registers.

21 AMA, GG 524, extract from the Parliament registers.

22 AMA, GG 526, 3 September 1720.

cial and political mechanisms determinung the appointment of high-ranking persons to guard over urban spaces. Ultimately, this led to conflicts of precedence and engendered effective opposition throughout the city which hindered the project from establishing a comprehensive surveillance of urban spaces. Such levels of opposition should lead us to investigate, alongside the institutional aspects, how the population was involved in vigilance against plague and how they accepted such exceptional sanitary regimes.

II The Population's Involvement in Vigilance against Plague

Vigilance regarding plague can be approached in two ways. The first is exemplified in the theoretical and practical works written by physicians and published or republished over the course of the 1720–1724 healthcare crisis. In this medical literature, vigilance was not primarily predicated upon how any given individual would behave, with a prophylactic objective in mind. For example, the above-mentioned Ranchin's *Opuscules ou Traictés divers et curieux en médecine, De M[aître] François Ranchin, conseiller*, which dates from 1640, does not lay down how anyone ought to behave in order to protect themselves.[23] Rather, it amounted to a government manual or handbook for municipal authorities in times of contagion: the city is viewed as a distinctly general entity in which functionally designated social groups (inter alia, consuls, physicians, *corbeaux* [those who "removed" the corpses of plague victims from the streets and later buried them] must take action. Republished in 1721, Ranchin's tract was distributed across Provence through the intermediary of physicians from Montpellier dispatched to Marseilles (Chicoyneau and Verny) and by the French Crown. The same held true for *Traité de la police*, penned by Nicolas Delamare, the investigating and examining commissaire at *Châtelet de Paris*; this tract, too, was distributed throughout Provence and Languedoc at that juncture.[24] Some twenty pages of its first volume were devoted to "the Epidemic, contagion or plague."[25] Its core provisions focused on the authorities and the role they should play in preventing the spread of disease and how to stop its propogation. The only individual behaviours mentioned were those concerning people living in a plague-stricken house and who therefore had been forced to isolate themselves. In this *magnum opus* of urban

23 Ranchin, *Opuscules ou Traictés divers et curieux en médecine.*

24 BnF, ms fr. 8916, letter from *chancelier* Daguesseau to Cardin Le Bret 26 August 1720, by means of which he sent him *Traité de la Police*, fol. 471r°.

25 Delamare, *Traité de la police*, more specific Book IV, "De la Santé", title thirteen.

policing, the campaign against plague was not fixated on individual conduct, but rather focused on collective practices.

A shift in attitude in this respect only became perceptible in the latter half of the eighteenth-century, when policing measures and hygienic medicine were to come up against one another. In an attempt to achieve a congruous policing of the human body, books penned by physicians were to become more prescriptive in terms of individual conduct. This was the case, for example, with Armand-Pierre Jacquin's *De la Santé* [On Health] published in 1762.[26] Indeed, with regard to the plague outbreak of 1720–1724, medical or policing literature did not seem relevant to the reinstating of vigilance regarding plague, even from a prescriptive standpoint. Another way of seeking to understand such levels of vigilance is therefore to examine the archives pertaining to practices in the field. The focus on alertness can be detected by the degree of attention the authorities paid to urban spaces and to their populations, primarily on the street and the block level, a focus which in due course gave rise to consequential social ramifications.

1 Traditional Urban Environments and Countermeasures to Plague

During epidemic outbreaks – to be understood equally as a period in which fear of an epidemic was taking grip and when cities were plague-stricken – the *bureaux de la santé* regularly issued plague regulations, which both reiterated and systematized rules that often already existed over the ordinary course of city life. Hence, emphasis was placed on the risk of contagion and the imperative for prevention,[27] and these regulations summarised typical patterns through which the contagious disease was introduced into the "besieged city."[28] For this reason, the authorities concentrated on those habitually on the move and so-called dangerous social groups, namely merchants and the poor. The surveillance system's objective was thus to restrict to the maximum possible extent the arrival of any migrants into the city, thereby justifying an exceptional mobilisation of city-dwellers in a bid to safeguard their city.

Those routinely involved in surveilling urban areas were requisitioned and provided with auxiliaries. Montpellier's six governing consuls (each of whom was entrusted with a given *sixain*) thus patrolled the streets more frequently, dur-

26 Jacquin, *De la Santé.*
27 Cipolla, *Contre un ennemi invisible.*
28 Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident.*

ing which time they were accompanied by two *capitaines de santé* [health captains] whose duties became permanent in the seventeenth century. And yet, it was the *îliers* who were mobilised in a much more painstaking manner. These *îliers* were in charge of monitoring an *île* or a residential block. A definitive urban presence throughout the seventeenth-century,[29] the *îliers* saw their influence expand as Protestantism was progressively suppressed before and in the aftermath of the Edict of Fontainebleau (1685) which revoked the Edict of Nantes.[30] Their role was revived between the years 1697 and 1700, during a stretch of harsh climatic difficulties and particularly challenging struggles for survival. They were then charged with monitoring the poor,[31] in an attempt to prevent famine and, above all, to defuse any potential social and political dissent which traditionally surfaced during periods of scarcity. Remobilised during the plague outbreak as of 1720, they were then required to execute four crucial missions: to regularly brief the commissaires and provide them with accurate list of accommodation sites or venues where people would congregate such as inns, hotels, or wine taverns; to monitor that anyone hosting a foreigner provided the *îliers* with a *billet de santé* [bill of health] to convey, in turn, the countersigned certificates to the health commissaires; and finally to ensure a painstaking inspection of any domestic servant who had been admitted to the residential block.

In addition, however, to systemising these traditional functions that duly authorised them to enter private spaces, the *îliers* equally assumed the role of informer, especially in order to report on potentially infested sites. This was the case, for example, when an *îlier* informed the consuls on 22 May 1722 that a valet had "maliciously" left his horses' excrement in the street.[32] It should be noted that this represents the only known denunciation made by an *îlier* during the plague outbreak. One thus wonders whether such a system was truly effective, especially as the mention of a "malicious" desire to contaminate the street might suggest that a personal grudge lurked behind the accusation.

29 AMM, BB without archive code, "Illiers 1664–1789," "Regulation made by Messieurs the Consuls & Viguier of the City of Montpellier, for what concerns the *Isliers* appointed by them in the *Sizains,*" poster, not dated. [1657].

30 In 1679, the *îliers* carried out an exhaustive listing of the city's inhabitants, marking in the margins whether they were Catholic ("C") or Reformed ("R"), AMM, BB 334.

31 AMM, BB without archive code, "*Illiers* 1664–1789," regulation (printed poster) made by the *bureau de police* of the city of Montpellier, for the purpose of establishing the *Isliers*, dated Tuesday 7 February 1696.

32 AMM, GG 18, *bureau de la santé* register 1721–1723, not page-numbered.

And yet, this idea of micro-surveillance[33] rooted in daily vigilance was equally found in Aix, where district captains and commissaires had to monitor people's movements, control *billets de santé* issued and ensure that migrants were in possession of them, especially when, as in July 1720, many people were exiting Marseilles and heading for the "countryside." The *Chambre des vacations* in the Parliament in Aix then revived the standard preventative shutdown provisions in times of plague, after having consulted about which measures had been taken during previous outbreaks.[34] It was only at a later stage, in October 1720, that this traditional system of supervising urban areas was tightened and reinforced. The *bureau de la santé* then appointed a "captain provost or health inspector" during the contagion period.[35] He was assisted in this task by "deputies and guards, valets, porters [for the sick]" in order to isolate any sick person and their relatives in the city's infirmaries. Furthermore, the mayor (premier consul) of Marseilles, Monsieur de Vauvenargues, was exceptionally appointed "commander" of the city and moreover had three military units comprising 30 men each and 28 policemen at his disposal in order to enforce municipal regulations. In a bid to reinforce what could be characterised as municipal manpower, 100 soldiers from the Artois Regiment were garrisoned in Marseilles under Vauvenargues' command. Control over urban space was thus to become both somewhat militarised and professionalised, given that experts in sanitary matters were appointed. They, in turn, reworked the paradigmatic instruments inherited from past experience in the fight against plague. The situation in Aix differed somewhat from that in Montpellier, where troops did not directly intervene, notably on account of the fact that the number of migrants was not of the same order as in Aix, and because the distance to an infected site was much greater.

The actual extent to which the outbreak spread during the winter of 1720–1721 led Intendant Le Bret to devise a general regulation for the province which would prohibit freedom of movement and effectively isolated all inhabitants. Whereupon those inhabitants were examined on an individual basis, a step he referred to as "universal quarantine."[36] Le Bret's scheme was going to deviate from standard pre-

33 Researched and examined by Fleur Beauvieux in the case of Marseilles: Beauvieux, Épidémie, pouvoir municipal et transformation de l'espace urbain.

34 AD 13, B 3702, Parliamentary ruling (*Chambre des vacations*) dated 3 August 1720; BnF, ms fr. 8916, copy of a letter from Le Bret to Le Peletier des Forts, 30 July 1720, fol. 209r°.

35 BnF, ms fr. 8917, copy of letter from Le Bret to Le Peletier des Forts, 5 October 1720, fol. 29r°. Just as in Montpellier, he only served temporarily, which differs from the case of Marseilles, Hildesheimer, *Le bureau de la santé*, chap. 2.

36 The initial mention dated from 26 December 1720, BnF, ms fr. 8917, fol. 283r° and especially 690r°. It was enhanced in January and February 1721, BnF, ms fr. 8918, fol. 283.

ventative measures to such an extent that even the chancellor became apprehensive about such a radical initiative and amended Le Bret's draft in a bid to erase its systematicity and exceptional character. This particular episode in Aix, albeit truly exceptional, should therefore not be interpreted as a ready-made path toward an outright and comprehensive regime of exceptionalism. Rather, it was a path marked by hesitation, a sense of trial and error, and experimentation that did not always imply the state authorities' approval.

And yet for all that, in terms of the degree of the local populace's participation and vigilance, these regulations were predicated upon the mandatory and broad-based participation of each and every city resident; they were not permitted to lodge any strangers and, more generally, they had to avoid taking any risks when maintaining relations or contacts with people from outside the city. At that juncture, towns and cities were defined in the strict sense of the term both physically and materially by their ramparts and fortifications, and moreover as identifiable topographical spaces,[37] which had not been really the case over the preceding months. Finally, in both Aix and Montpellier, one can observe how vigilance primarily operated on the level of the street and residential block, the so-called *îlot.*

2 The Scale of Operations: *Îlot* and Street

Places and locales throughout the city where contagion erupted fell automatically under surveillance given how they were those parts of the city destined for communal use. Outbreaks of plague created an opportunity to reaffirm those ordinances regulating the use of urban spaces. Hence, the city's cleaning brigade was revived, and rulings from the monarchical or municipal authorities, notably from the *bureaux de la santé*, duly reminded residents both of their individual and collective obligations to keep the city's thoroughfares clean by piling up any rubbish in front of their dwellings in such a way that that those responsible for removing it could pass unhindered through the streets every day. Non-compliance with this mandatory requirement was even subject to criminal proceedings. Hence, an Ordinance of 22 August issued by Aix's *bureau de police* stated that, following a ruling by Parliament's *Chambre des vacations* dated the previous 19 August, storing manure in houses was henceforth prohibited.[38] Any penalties incurred thereafter would in-

37 AMA, GG 524, *Ordonnance du Bureau de la police de la Ville d'Aix extraordinairement assemblé* [poster], 22 August 1720.
38 Ibid.

volve "[the] whip against the plebs, & an arbitrary fine against the others." On this occasion, the *bureau de police* reminded residents about the ban on throwing rubbish onto the streets, and the rules authorising street cleaners to remove manure. Article 1 required that every resident sweep in front of their house. Article 3 decreed that the *Balayeurs des Jardiniers* [gardeners' sweepers] should assemble every morning at 6 at the Place de la Tannerie, where they would be assigned to [sweep] the streets. For this purpose, they were allowed to "enter" backyards, houses and gardens, thus reviving that principle of temporarily and gradually abolishing the difference between private and public spaces for communal actions, all on account of the emergency. Article 4 shored up the erasure of the distinction between private and public spheres, for it pointed out how it would be strictly forbidden to prevent the *Balayeurs des Jardiniers* from fulfiling their duties, under penalty of a judicial sentence which would deprive residents of their rights. It then came down to the issue of how to identify the street-sweepers and their legitimacy to take action, to which Article 5 duly responded: in order to be recognised (both physically as well as in terms of their legitimacy), the sweepers "shall wear the Arms of the City on the upper part of their Stomach." Finally, the regulation's binding aspect was secured by the possible mobilisation of the armed forces, given how Article 6 stipulated that the *lieutenant de viguier* [magistrate] and his archers must reinforce the street sweepers in the event of any disturbance. Here, it was not a question of a continuous and permanent manifestation of force. Rather, the idea was that the magistrate imposing these exceptional rules concerning the usage of the Commons had the capacity to both keep a tight rein on and to deploy force.[39]

This formal measure of abolishing any distinction between private spaces subject to common sanitary obligations and public space did not occur in Montpellier, where regulations concerning street cleaning were evoked and republished, but not modified.[40] Furthermore, they were invoked whenever *the bureau de la santé* or the *bureau de police* imposed sanctions, and the instructive aspect of such reminders was essential in this respect.[41] Hence, it was the very presence or imminence of a plague outbreak that ultimately facilitated, or rendered acceptable, any modifications to traditional regulations and to their systematisation. Fear, and its corollary vigilance with regard to plague, thus temporarily abolished the distinctly clear demarcation under the Ancien Regime between spaces designated for communal use and private property, a sphere which, in theory, remained

39 Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, p. 116.

40 AMM, GG 18, 17 September 1721, 9 January 1722, 11 March 1722 for public summary of regulations.

41 On the pedagogical dimension of police regulations and the frequency of their renewal, against the idea of non-application revealed by this renewal, Piasenza, *Polizia e città*, chap. 2.

inaccessible to auxiliaries affiliated with policing institutions. And likewise, the crackdown on those violating that particular sanitary regulation became more severe.

3 Vigilance and Law Enforcement's Severity

This level of severity and the ensuing tightening of vigilance measures was to cause a stir amongst the general public. In Aix, no significant upheaval was observed whenever plague struck the city, except among law enforcement personnel in an episode which did not directly involve local residents and to which we will return later. In Montpellier, however, the situation differed on the ground, and that is what led the municipal authorities, in conjunction with the governor and the intendant, to devise a more extensive raft of measures which strove to monitor the entire urban area and to have local residents play a greater role in plague vigilance. This raised the question of whether exceptional vigilance would be acceptable, and local authorities had to win acceptance for their choices by means other than force.

Traditionally, the city of Montpellier had been divided into six districts referred to as *sixains*, each under the authority of a consul. In addition to this division into *sixains*, and at an intermediate level between the *sixains* and the *îles*, so-called *quartiers* were established during the scare that preceded the plague outbreak, following upon several months of reflection and perhaps consultation.[42] For each quartier, a *syndic* was appointed who had three *quarteniers* under his command. Hence, 142 people, primarily artisans or members of minor trades, routinely excluded from participating on the City Council or in the *bureau de la santé*, but not the *bureau de police*, were tasked with controlling urban spaces. Their names did not exactly match those of the *îliers* in place at that time. This expanded recruitment drive could be explained by the longing to render more legitimate a restrictive preventative regime that partly ran counter to the traditional rationales underpinning sociability, in that such a regime sometimes resulted in an intrusion into the intimate sphere (to be understood in both a spatial and social sense).

42 AMM, GG 18. The idea was advanced as early as 14 November 1721, but it only came to fruition in a Regulation of 23 February 1722: "Sub-division made by the consuls and commissaires from the *bureau de la santé* to divide the city into six districts, which were allocated to the six consuls and commissaires from the *bureau de la santé* and the six districts divided into quartiers by number of islands, with the appointment of *sindics* designated to each quartier and three quartermen for each s*indic*, all as follows."

These appointments, however, do not seem to have caused any major disruption in how surveillance operations were supervised, for the number of convictions the *bureau de la santé* meted out did not increase after that point – plague had yet to strike Montpellier – and most incidents the *bureau* dealt with concerned controls at quarantine stations. It is therefore questionable whether these supervisory measures were effective. Though they may well have existed both in law and on paper, they may not have generated any sanctions in practice. It would surely be naive to believe that no infractions occurred (the *bureau de police* were active at that point), but we can undoubtedly assume that micro-regulations predicated upon local networks at a neighbourhood level (here understood as a "living space" and not as an administrative demarcation)[43], may have existed.

In Aix, aside from certain behavioral traits that local authorities defined as deviant and dangerous, resistance to plague vigilance measures did not originate with the general public. Dissent, however, did surface from amidst the ruling elites, and was sometimes even violent in nature. This degree of opposition can be explained by a long-running affair. On 31 October 1720, a bailiff at the Parliament was mandated to allow a merchant from Aix along with his family enter Marseilles through the St-Jean's Gate. The bourgeois guard officer on duty at that gate, a certain Ripert, a lawyer by profession, refused to allow them enter because he had not received any orders to that effect from Mayor Vauvenargues. According to eyewitnesses, Ripert then "disparaged" Parliament's authority publicly, behaviour which justified, as far as the *Chambre des vacations* was concerned, his subsequent detention and arrest by agents affiliated with the former marshalcy. Alerted of this development, Vauvenargues viewed Ripert's arrest as undue interference in his authority, and duly decided to imprison the bailiff and his archers. The archbishop of Aix sought to mediate in the dispute, but failed just as the joint release of the prisoners was about to happen, because officers from the *Chambre des vacations* subjected Ripert to a *mercuriale* (a humiliating admonition), thus forcing Vauvenargues to follow suit. Both parties wrote to the intendant, to Chancellor Daguessau, and to the Crown Court in an attempt to justify their respective conduct. What really was being called into question – aside from the strife between the *Chambre des vacations* and Vauvenargues – was the authorities' capacity to act, considering the level of vigilance decreed and implemented throughout the city. On account of the prevailing vigilance, the commandant's agent, Ripert refused entry to those persons from outside not in possession of a valid *patente de santé* into Marseilles. His intransigence clashed with those mechanisms underpinning social domination. The officers from Parliament could only interpret Ripert's defiance as a direct attack upon their authority.

43 Cabantous, Le quartier, espace vécu à l'époque moderne.

On multiple occasions, Intendant Le Bret complained about how the self-same officers were incapable of ridding themselves of their traditional practices and customary modes of conduct, to the point of undermining the vigilance measures in place. Some months later Le Bret was obliged to surreptitiously withdraw the rebellious officers. He did not seek to expand the preventative system in order to render it more acceptable, for those amongst the elite, who might potentially be interested in participating in enforcing vigilance measures, were already doing so. Here, there was no willingness to render acceptable, and therefore legitimate, an exceptional surveillance and vigilance regime to a large section of the population.

All in all, the determination to expand surveillance measures in the face of plague was contingent upon increased vigilance through mobilising a larger section of the population, yet the modus operandi differed in Aix and in Montpellier. Obviously, such large-scale mobilisation aroused resistance from among the Ancien Régime's urban communities, who partly perceived this development as an attack on the equitable division of powers. This explains the envisaged legitimising procedures, whose implications we need to unravel.

III Political Ramifications of Plague Vigilance

The exceptional nature of this collective and yet differentiated vigilance regime led municipal authorities to publicise and, in a sense, justify these measures. Concurrently, it also enabled them to raise the question of who was most competent to execute and enforce the levels of vigilance required. Finally, it should be noted to what extent these proposals, however innovative they might have then appeared, and which at times even led to the great displeasure of the traditional ruling elites, did retain an eminently conservative dimension at a municipal level (from a polysemic perspective).

1 Proclaiming and Justifying the Exceptionalism

Beyond a quest for consensus, enforcing such exceptional vigilance measures required a publicity campaign in order to make these measures known and subsequently palatable. The initial step was to demonstrate and describe the specific measures involved. For this purpose, regulations were posted frequently and continuously throughout the city. Within the scope of this paper, it is not feasible to make a quantitative comparison with previous episodes of plague. Indeed, the archives in both Montpellier and Aix house considerably more posters for the plague

outbreak of 1720–1724 than for earlier outbreaks and other epidemics.[44] Montpellier's Municipal Archives, for example, have preserved a series of ordinances printed and publicly displayed during the contagion scare.[45] These posters bring together the most relevant texts, as for example the decision by the Parliament of Toulouse to re-establish the *bureau de la santé* in 1720, or ordinances issued by the intendant concerning the transport of goods and various quarantine regulations.[46]

No record of the *bureau de la santé's* ordinance to expand the number of those engaged in plague vigilance is to be found in the archives, nor any ordinances relating to problems encountered in guarding the city's gates. The publication of any decisions taken thus followed several rationales: The first was to bring to the public's attention the practical rules for observing quarantine, regulations that effectively applied to everyone,[47] notably to merchants who, it should be noted, would come to call the city's lockdown into question. The second rationale seems somewhat more covert: not every decision taken in the name of urgency implying the modification of the social and political equilibrium was disclosed. Regulations concerning how to behave toward the plague-stricken, for example, were published, whereas those dealing with the rules for how the *îliers* should supervise houses were not. It would appear, therefore, that a deliberate choice had been made as to what could be publicly announced in relation to plague vigilance, a choice in all likelihood made with the public in mind, and a public to whom the exceptional rules and their stated objectives would apply. All matters concerning the urban "Commons" and which did not call into question corporate privileges or powers was explicitly stated, while the rest, conversely, was played down. In this sense, the vigilance regarding plague contributed to redefining what exactly was public and what concerned the community, challenging that medieval notion of an outright assimilation between community and public affairs.[48]

The considerable number of posters preserved in the archives would suggest a willingness to uphold these regulations, with the aim of generating a model for administrative political initiative that would serve as a reference for any future recur-

44 AMA GG 525 Unfortunately, stolen and not recovered.

45 As an example, and without listing all the archive codes of the scattered documents, AMM, GG 56 and GG 62.

46 AMM, GG 56, Ordinance of the Duke du Roquelaure, dated 30 Septembere 1721, *arrêt* by the Toulouse Parliament of 17 August 1720.

47 On the public dimension of these rules, we can point out the significance of the notion of public space and refer to the ever stimulating work supervised by Boucheron/Offenstadt, *L'espace public au Moyen Âge*.

48 Saint-Bonnet, *L'état d'exception*, p. 77.

rences of plague. At the same time, this new model for action duplicated the increased exchanges between the intendants of Languedoc (Basville) and Provence (Lebret), between the latter and the *contrôle général* or with the various local authorities.[49] All the information exchanged thereby generated a body of knowledge concerning plague which served to justify introducing these regulations, their renewal, and ultimately their continuation. The public visibility of these regulations, by way of posters, thus forged a tangible link between vigilance as exercised throughout the city and the monarchy's more global guardianship. Here, similar processes can be observed as those operating in other state bodies, for example, in the police. In the case of Paris, for instance, it is known that the period in which René Argenson acted as *Lieutenance générale de police* (1697–1720) was not just tumultuous in terms of policing techniques but, above all, for their social acceptance. It was equally a time for widespread "police pedagogy" (Paolo Piasenza) involving regulations being renewed, and thus – as confirmed by their frequent republication – far from the notion of police inefficiency.[50] This process is a continuation of that which had already commenced during Colbert's time in power; he made the *controle général* the nucleus of the State's apparatus thanks to this ministry's capacity to gather intellgence throughout the length and breadth of the realm.[51] In addition to massively accumulating information, the authorities equally sought to anchor themselves within a tradition of fighting plague. They did so in an outright classic manner by republishing regulations concerning outbreaks of plague, as for example that of 1629 in Aix.[52]

In a similar vein, reprinting medical literature penned by physicians during the seventeenth century made it possible to scientifically justify those plague measures implemented throughout urban areas. Combining knowledge and authority, these reprints thus engendered a second type of justification. This was the case with the above-mentioned publication by Ranchin, whose tract was reprinted both in Languedoc and Provence. Yet, it was equally the case with texts composed during the healthcare emergency, works which acted both as a testimony and a procedural code to be followed. As early as November 1720, for example, Commandant de Langeron had the *Relation succinte Touchant les Accidens de la Peste de Marseille, son pronostic, & sa curation* [Succinct Account concerning Plague related incidents in Marseilles, its prognostic & its cure] printed and distributed throughout Marseilles, a text co-authored by Chicoyneau, Verny, and Soullier, the Montpellier-based physicians dispatched by the court. The text was distributed and subsequently kept in the

49 BnF, ms fr. 8916 à 8919, Le Bret's correspondence during 1720–1721.
50 Piasenza, *Polizia e città.*
51 Soll, *The Information Master.*
52 AMA, GG 524.

Parliament's archives and the municipal archives.[53] While its practical purpose was obvious, it was solely intended for medical practitioners, not for non-professionals. One characteristic of the vigilantism linked to plague to be discerned in these printed writings was that such levels of vigilance did not concern everybody to the same extent, and that such differentiation resulted in – without necessarily intending to – a certain degree of professionalisation of those actors involved in the fight against plague.

2 Greater Professional Vigilance

The exceptional dimension of this vigilance was reflected both out in the field and within the administrative offices.[54] First and formost, there was the more immediate usefulness for any document intended to coordinate such vigilance. In the case of Aix, charts indicating the names of those responsible for monitoring districts were printed and ready to be filled in, with the aim of swiftly offsetting any potential fatalities by completing the charts as the deaths occurred.[55] Montpellier saw the implementation of a similar regime, whereby one can observe how vigilance was reinforced through a burgeoning of bureaucratic procedures. While not a novel development per se, this bureaucratic development was expanded in parallel with the administrative and bureaucratic monarchy and the widespread diffusion of this method of public healthcare policy across the provinces and cities.

The counterpart on the ground for such bureaucratic vigilance was to appoint new agents to operate on the beat within the city. They were specifically assigned to spaces considered as posing a public danger and particularly conducive to spreading contagion. In Montpellier, the Poissonnerie district (an area where commodities imported into the city and potential sources of infection were in close proximity) notably attracted the authorities' attention. These appointments represented a seminal moment, for it thereafter enabled the consuls to install the presence of a "man of probity" in charge of the fishmongers' market, a man who would be responsible for "reporting on a daily basis to the Bureau [*de police*]" any infrac-

53 AMA, GG 511, *Relation succinte Touchant les Accidens de la Peste de Marseille, son pronostic, & sa curation.*

54 On the administrative reorganisation during the Regency period, see Dupilet, *La Régence absolue* and Denis, *Une histoire de l'identité.*

55 AMA, GG 524, "Status of the *îles* and persons designated to monitor each of them," together with a printed document, "Regulations for the commissaires entrusted to visit the houses of the City & to examine their interiors."

tions of the trading rules.[56] While based on the model of the health captains[57], this inspector differed from those officers actively patrolling the city streets by dint of his constant presence within the market area. These auxiliaries, however, were neither officers nor members of the city council; they operated by gleaning information from the fishmongers or from local residents. Hence, they built up an intelligence network that complemented the sanitary regime in place on the ground, thus spreading an awareness for the absolute need for vigilance amongst the population.

Over time, the auxiliary's stationary nature was to become an obstacle in terms of fulfilling his mission, and those responsible for the *bureau de police* gradually extended their sphere of jurisdiction all while expanding the scope of their assignements. Hence, after 1738, these inspectors became responsible for reporting any offences committed within the city bounds.[58] In practice, they concentrated on the markets and adjacent streets, with a view to uncovering any illegal transactions in foodstuffs. The period during which Montpellier succumbed to fear of a plague outbreak was, as elsewhere throughout the realm, a time for experimenting with various vigilance measures across urban areas, and Montpellier's Poissonnerie district was to become *the* testing ground for vigilance-based innovative policing measures in urban settings.

Such an experimental approach was equally evident in Aix, where, for example, the Regulation of September 1720, which instituted "extraordinary" manpower with a special legal status in an attempt to monitor local residents and their neighbourhoods, partly abolished the demarcation line between the private and public spheres. The Regulation's preamble clause is worth quoting, especially given how it was issued at a time in which Aix was yet not stricken by contagion:

> Whilst sanitary conditions in this City are excellent, nevertheless it is deemed prudent at this time by those responsible for the people to carefully listen out for any rumors of Contagion, with the needs of each individual [in mind], & with the help of the Commissaires to learn about all that is happening inside houses in the city, which may have to do with the common interest.[59]

According to the consuls, the effective solution was to select "people of probity"– employing the identical term to the one adapted in Montpellier – in order to document everything that was happening within the city, as well as to "make regular &

56 AMM, FF 286, Register of the *Délibérations du bureau de police*, 24 August 1723.

57 Dulieu, La peste à Montpellier, p. 14.

58 Vidoni, La police et les étrangers à Montpellier au XVIII[e] siècle.

59 AMA, GG 524, *Règlement pour les sieurs commissaires qui ont le soin de visiter les maisons de la Ville & d'en examiner l'intérieur.*

frequent visits to houses in their sub-division."[60] The dreaded prospect of plague breaking out thus opened up the way for potentially fresh approaches in terms of preventive administrative policy in both cities. But what seems to have changed from 1720–1724 onwards, both in Montpellier and in Aix, was the perennial character of the sanitary mechanisms enabling municipal authorities to get to know conditions on the ground and to ensure vigilance regarding plague. Indeed, in November 1720,[61] notwithstanding the contagious outbreak, Vauvenargues managed to convene the commissaires appointed to the city districts in an attempt to instruct them to draw up an exhaustive listing of local residents – a proposal he had been working on for several weeks. This meticulous assignment was completed at the beginning of December, when 18 000 inhabitants were counted in Aix. The led the intendant to write: "This is a quite a lot of people to feed and cater for, because they all need to be confined and provided with all life's necessities."[62]

One also notes that in October 1720, by way of an Ordinance of the 27th day of that month, Intendant Le Bret duly systematized this sanitary regime on a provincial scale; he ordered all Provençal communities to draw up a list of residents and record the population's movements (both in terms of fatalities and mobility) in order to hinder the further spread of plague.[63] To his subsequent astonishment, this measure was applied without encountering any tangible difficulties and moreover that the population had been forbidden to move about within the province.[64] All told, an outbreak of plague, whether through the fear it engendered or the real harm it inflicted when striking an urban area, was highly conducive to experimentation and innovation in terms of surveillance and vigilance techniques. Vested with exceptional powers, the authorities dared to innovate by expanding their knowledge base concerning cities, populations, and specific urban spaces. The uniqueness of the eighteenth century, however, to be observed in the aftermath of the plague outbreak, lies in the degree to which such sanitary regimes were upheld and proved to be durable. Such durability could not only be explained by the dominance of the authorities in place, but also by the bureaucratic direction the French Royal State had been adopting from the Regency onwards, a propensity which rendered these novel means of implementing administrative measures useful, necessary, and legitimate. They thus redefined and repurposed the municipal

60 Ibid., p. 1.

61 BnF, ms fr. 8917, copy of a letter to Le Peletier des Forts dated 20 November 1720, fol. 396r°.

62 Ibid., copy of a letter to Daguessau dated 9 December 1720, fol. 449r°.

63 Ibid., fol. 260r°.

64 Ibid., copy of a letter to Daguessau dated 9 December 1720, "[…] and what surprises me is that in some places the people themselves are willing to execute them," fol. 449v°.

and state authorities' "capacity to take action"[65], without calling into question, however, the cardinal objective behind such vigilante policies, namely: to maintain social order.

3 The Conservative Dimension of this Vigilance

The raft of measures ultimately enabling not only such levels of vigilance regarding plague itself but also their imposition thus required justification for targeting all social categories. But more generally, it could be observed that beyond some disagreements arising between elite groups, vigilance measures presented an opportunity to robustly reaffirm the cities' social structuration, serving as a reminder just to what extent certain social groups were subjugating the "poor." Given how the poor were to be recast as a dangerous social category, the upper echelons availed of this pressing need for vigilance to remind themselves of just how imperative it was to safeguard society by protecting themselves from the poor. As with the shift in sovereignty during the nineteenth century as identified by Michel Foucault, a shift which reinforced the right to live and to die with a right to make subjects[66] live or die, plague outbreaks were used to justify tighter controls over the poor in a bid to prevent them from dying. In a similar vein, two major types of justification were to be encountered in Montpellier and Aix.

The first set forth how the poor had been designated as one of the chief carriers of the contagion. Munical administrators, whether consuls or intendants, no longer hesitated to forcibly equate poverty and the risk of contamination. Montpellier's consuls set this down in writing in the registers of urban deliberations,[67] as did the sub-delegate in Marseilles and Intendant Le Bret.[68] The prevailing notion of how the poor constituted a major vector in spreading the epidemic was explained in more practical terms by the consuls in Aix. At the *bureau de la santé's* meeting on 13 August 1720, Consul Viviens informed everyone present that a lot people were selling rotten fruit in the market place and at the city's crossroads.[69] Given their low prices, the "poor" would then eat that rotten fruit, which in turn risked causing "impurities" that would ultimately lead to the emergence of serious diseases. Whereupon it was decided that local health intendents should set out in search

65 Mannoni, *Une et indivisible.*

66 Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, p. 213 f.

67 AMM, BB 413, 17 December 1720, fol. 65v°.

68 BnF, ms fr. 8916, letter dated 4 August 1720 to Le Peletier des Forts, fol. 240r°: Le Bret wrote how death only strikes "poor people" malnourished because of high prices.

69 AMA, GG 526.

of all bad fruit. Sanitary vigilance thus exposed the social, economic and political disparities that led to gaping inequalities in the face of the epidemic and that impelled the authorities to intensify quality control of any traded comestibles.

Differentiated solutions in accordance with the social and economic conditions were thus envisaged, in keeping with the structural inequalities pervading society under the Ancien Régime. For the city of Aix, punishment for the poor came in the form of whipping, lest they breached any regulations, a penalty not inflicted upon "the others."[70] More broadly, the solution envisaged was a systematic preventive confinement for all those "without means."[71] It should be noted how the physician Ranchin had already called for this preventive solution during his lifetime, although it was not unanimously supported, given how the rectors at Hôpital de la Charité opposed this decision in 1720.[72] The *Chambre des vacations* was then called upon; they thoroughly supported the *bureau de la santé's* decision to indiscriminately lock up all the poor and went against the hospital rectors. Such measures to confine the poor were also justified by way of posters displayed in the streets, the preamble for which revealed to extent to which this decision was meant to ensure preserving social harmony by also soliciting alms from "charitable persons." A close bond was thus reaffirmed between rich and poor, one which somewhat obscured and glossed over those removal measures meant for the "poor." A similar mechanism was also triggered in Montpellier, where Madame de Basville, the intendant's wife, notably organised exceptional charitable deeds. And yet, in the case of Languedoc, the consuls did not opt for an outright lockdown for the poor. Instead, they settled for keeping anyone suspected of being ill at a distance, in infirmaries and at a later stage on farm buildings outside the city's precincts, yet they never envisaged a general confinement. Here, these less stringent measure can be explained by Languedoc's relative distance from Marseilles, as well as the deplorable state of the community's finances, especially impacted at that juncture by problems linked to the drastic devaluation of banknotes in circulation.

The second aspect of such misgivings toward the "poor" was the notion that they, as a social group, constituted not just a physical and biological threat, but also a political one. This concern was frequently mentioned in the records of deliberations and the archival records concerning practice in the field. In the case of Montpellier, it was to some degree the matter of a loan the city had to take out in order to finance medicines and charitable works that opened up the debate

70 AMA, GG 524, Ordinance of the *bureau de Police* of the City of Aix extraordinarily convened, dated 22 August 1720.

71 AMA, GG 526, decision dated 18 August 1720.

72 AD 13, B 3702, *arrêt* dated 11 October 1720.

on the poor during the latter half of 1720. Cash collections were made from the city's elites. Still, on 17 December 1720, the *bureau de la santé* deemed the sum collected as insufficient, and the first consul, Ranchin, exaggerated the city's predicament at the *Conseil des Vingt-Quatre* in an attempt to acquire additional credits. He argued at great length that the peril facing them was not only sanitary but also social and political:

> It is also a question, through this foresight of which we have spoken, of protecting ourselves from the rebelliousness of which poor people are capable, which could be prevented by reasonable rations, which would scarcely be a lesser good, [and] by Avoiding the poor's rebelliousness and grumblings than by safeguarding ourselves from contagious disease.[73]

This notion of "foresight" can be encompassed within a broader conceptual framework regarding vigilance, which, to some extent, was exercised at the municipal government level. The monarchical authorities, however, did not exercise such foresight; rather, it was the consular and city authorities, emanating from the "Community" comprising all city dwellers who embodied such care. Following a paternalistic conception of power, it was the consuls' sense of responsibility and their insightful knowledge of people's living circumstances that determined their policy to purchase wheat, medicines and other commodities. Furthermore, the First Consul Ranchin never hesitated to declare this publicly in his attempt to mitigate any opposition that might arise amongst the ruling elites to this onerous policy,[74] and to adopt an unprecedented interventionist approach justified by such exceptional circumstances. He thus asserted that the example of Marseilles

> should affect us and awaken us [to the fact] that we are the administrators of a city whose mediocre services have been raised from a quite small number of families, and at the same time we know the poverty of a very large number of those we call poor people, especially at present because work has been stopped with the wool we used to receive from Marseilles and which we cannot receive for some time to come, we have many humiliated families whose needs are only too well-known and so-called commodious private individuals whose habitual status has been degraded on account of the decrease in their incomes, and the leading city-dwellers who have fled, who have not come to the rescue [of the poor] as much as they might have done at another time.[75]

Given how those traditional mechanisms underpinning solidarity could no longer function, plague vigilance was to culminate in an unprecedented level of interven-

73 AMM, BB 413, fol. 69r°.

74 On 29 November 1720, Ranchin had already expressed the wish to avoid "the grumbling by the poor and the Rich," AMM, BB 413, fol. 61v°.

75 AMM, BB 413, fol. 66v°.

tionism that modified municipal government's practices in order to preserve the prevailing social order.

The dominant political figures in Aix, responsible for governing the city during the outbreak, were no different in their public declarations. Hence, members of the *bureau de la santé* would justify their policy of buying medicines and confining poor beggars to the infirmaries on account of "foresight" that drew upon past experience.[76] Nevertheless, they expanded the scope of their vigilance to watch over certain specific groups, namely foreign beggars – who were to be expelled – and the disreputable poor, i. e. those lacking any means of subsistence. Such a watchful eye over these groups was justified by the desire to achieve the "salvation of the poor and the rich as a whole,"[77] which could be interpreted as preserving the habitual hierarchical social order. Some days after 17 December 1720,[78] the decision was taken to indiscriminately lock up the poor, and this sort of temporary "great confinement"[79] was coupled with increased surveillance and vigilance of people's behaviour. Indeed, Article 9 in the Regulations for the Commissaires designated to inspect residential dwellings in August 1720 stipulated that these commissaires shall notify the public prosecutor in Parliament should ever they encounter "people with bad lifestyles & whose debaucheries scandalise & infect the public through their defilements."[80] Here, a threshold had been crossed between individual conduct relating to morals and the spread of plague, which was not the case in Montpellier. Vigilance was therefore adapted to respond to this growing sense of disquiet among the dominant classes. As confirmed by the *bureau de police's* archives, during the extraordinary session of 30 July 1720, the consuls duly reported how they were both attentive to and afflicted by the "widespread groans of people who could not get any bread crying aloud in the streets."[81] The paternalistic conception of the municipal authorities' role to provide food for city residents was yet again to become discernible, and consuls found themselves in agreement with the poor against those bakers who had shuttered up their shops. Following this episode, a parliamentary ruling was procured, which dictated that bakers in Provence not leave their native city.[82]

One final point needs stressing in relation to this vigilance regarding contagion envisaged as an instrument for maintaining social order, namely, its ensuing

76 AMA, GG 524, extract from Parliament register, 13 August 1720.
77 AMA, GG 526 *bureau de la santé*, deliberation dated 13 August 1720.
78 Ibid., deliberation of 20 August 1720.
79 We have borrowed the term from Michel Foucault.
80 AMA, GG 524, *Règlement pour les sieurs commissaires.*
81 AMA, FF 72, fol. 22r°.
82 AD 13, B 3702, ruling dated 30 October 1720.

memory in future years. Plague literature, notably that of a medical character, as well as historical accounts published in the contagion's aftermath, have highlighted this sense of "foresight" and the level of consideration local authorities needed to pay to the general populace.[83] Such vigilance was multi-sensory, involving not only the eyes and ears, but also a tactile relationship with urban and social spaces. Rooted in individual emotions – those of the agents in charge of maintaining public order and keeping watch – vigilance had to respond to any potential collective emotion – especially those of the poor. In Montpellier, however, local authorities took this process of memorialising their actions yet a step further: by way of a narrative written in the wake of the epidemic. They inscribed this particular episode of plague into the city's history, incorporating it into the *registre du cérémonial consulaire,* a register containing accounts of Montpellier's consuls heroic deeds.[84] This register highlights the role the monarchical and consular authorities played, and can be interpreted both as a justification of what had been done – and well done – and as a handbook for any future leader in the event of a fresh epidemic outbreak. And yet, the key ingredient in forging the relationship between the authorities and the population was the degree of attention the former paid to the latter. Such attentiveness revealed a wide-ranging interpretation of vigilance, thereby concealing several layers of meaning, for it can be understood both as a series of technical and temporary measures designed, on one hand, to safeguard the city from plague, but on the other, as a trustworthy relationship with the community itself and toward common everyday practices, which imposed, in exceptional times, exceptional measures that implied outright obedience from the public. Hence, vigilance formed part of that aspect of pastoral power which Michel Foucault identified as characteristic of the modern era.

Conclusion

The raft of measures taken to combat plague in Aix and Montpellier reveals, beyond certain similarities, varying degrees of vigilance. Obviously, these were not only predicated upon the contagion's geographical proximity, but also on past

83 Martin, *Histoire de la dernière peste de Marseille, Aix, Arles et Toulon*; Jauffret, *Pièces historiques sur la peste de Marseille.*

84 AMM, BB 202, "Report of what has transpired in the city of Montpellier between 2 August 1720 and 2 October 1722 of how the city remained gripped in fear of being stricken by the contagious disease because of that which afflicts the city of Marseilles and which subsequently attacked almost all the rest of the provincial part of Gevaudan and Sevens", pp. 95–101. I refer to my article with Lacour, La peste dans le Ceremonial des consuls, pp. 33–39.

and immediate experiences that determined whether to revive erstwhile techniques and, sometimes, launch innovative approaches, one of which primarily focused on prohibiting all movement within Provence and Languedoc, and required adapting the latest surveillance techniques for getting to know the population's conduct and movements. Public acceptance of such innovative techniques, including those deployed in Montpellier, could not be taken for granted. The measures envisaged required political justifications built around two sets of arguments: the need to control the population in a bid to prevent and combat an outbreak of plague, and the determination to legitimise these new measures. Ultimately, this had the effect of involving the population in this vigilance regarding plague in a new way. Of course, the level of involvement was differentiated according to the economic, political and social role of those categories mobilised. Individuals were not yet agents in surveilling themselves; rather, it was the social groups who were mobilised all while respecting the prevailing social hierarchies. For this reason, the "poor" were to become the object of the authorities' close scrutiny, and a whole cluster of intermediaries were required to implement this surveillance and plague vigilance, employing a finely honed territorial network and on an intensely local scale. The general public's involvement was therefore both gradual and uneven, yet they were nonetheless to eventually become both the actor and the object of their own surveillance. Entirely political in character, the goal of vigilance was to maintain social order by combining extraordinary and, for some, authoritarian and violent means of action. The numerous protests, particularly prior to an outbreak in periods in which a "fear of plague" was taking grip, demonstrated how wielding power did not proceed smoothly, even during exceptional times. Hence, public support was sought, a support that made it possible to give nuance to the idea of an absolutism coming from above and from the king, an absolutism which would make it possible to save the kingdom from the epidemic. What ensued once the King's Council assumed control of the fight against plague in September 1720 was anything but a transparent and coherent sanitary regime. In reality, those years between 1720 and 1724 were characterised by a series of local adjustments, of trials and errors, experiments and setbacks.

In fact, the notion of vigilantism made it viable to operate more subtly, at both local and individual levels, the idea of a power that exists because it is exercised. For this to be accomplished necessarily required a greater or lesser involvement by individuals or by certain individuals. In the case of the Ancien Régime cities, the prevailing inegalitarian and hierarchical social order resulted in an unequal participation in the measures to fight contagion, with the ruling elites, including intermediate groups, becoming active in this vigilance regarding plague in an attempt to protect themselves chiefly from the "poor." Poor people were still perceived ambivalently, treated not only as a needy group and the object of charity and of anti-

plague measureas, but also an eminently dangerous group ever-ready to revolt and spread the epidemic. The period during which vigilance regarding plague spread constituted a time for exploring and reinforcing municipal government procedures, which in turn not only concealed contradictions and dissent, but also opened up ways to systemising certain innovative mechanisms for controlling urban areas and their residents. Viewed from this perspective, vigilance participated in renewing power practices; it crept into the heart of the relationship between city dwellers and their rulers. In so doing, vigilance contributed to transforming urban governance because it gave both a new meaning and new forms to the notion of community and of the Commons.

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Thorsten Busch

Between Crisis and Catastrophe

The French Crown Council Confronted with Plague, Famine and War (1629–1631)

I The Curse of La Rochelle: The Ancien Régime circa 1630 between History and Historiography

1 Convergent Synergies

Few phases in the history of early modern France, so dense in climaxes and turning points, were as dramatic as the late 1620s and early 1630s: the siege of the Huguenot citadel in La Rochelle, the war against the Habsburgs in Mantua and Montferrat, internecine power struggles between Marie de Médicis and Cardinal Richelieu in Paris. This catalogue of significant events and developments occurring during that phase could be further elaborated without any great difficulty: suppression of the rebellion led by the Duc de Rohan in Languedoc, Louis XIII's Edicts of Alès and Nîmes in which Protestants were granted amnesty, the king's recovery from a life-threatening illness in Lyon. Even contemporaries were aware of the singular dynamics unfolding during those years, and, as with Cardinal Richelieu, saw the forces of nature at work.[1] Subsequently, however, historians were to judge events far more prudently than Louis XIII's cardinal minister. Nevertheless, they also assessed the period circa 1630 as a historical watershed, given how such extraordinarily momentous political decisions were made at that critical juncture.[2] And even today, the years between the Siege of La Rochelle (1627–1628) and the so-called *journée des Dupes* [Day of the Dupes, 1630] are still often characterised as the dawn of a new epoch.[3]

1 See Cardinal Duke Richelieu's diary which he kept during those formidable stormy scenes at the Royal Court during 1630 and 1631, taken from his memoirs written in his own hand, with other diverse remarkable pieces which appeared during his lifetime. No place given 1648.

2 See Pagès, Autour du "grand orage".

3 Although in his dissertation Jan-Friedrich Mißfelder begins this epoch much earlier, he also attaches considerable importance to events surrounding the siege and capitulation of La Rochelle. See Mißfelder, *Das Andere der Monarchie.*

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In terms of economic, social, and demographic history, the late 1620s and early 1630s equally represented – though perhaps not necessarily – the dawn of an era, but at least a profound turning point. In fact, these years marked the peak of a mortality crisis that was to cost between one-and-a-half and two million human lives over such a brief timespan.[4] Such extraordinary demographic bloodletting was the result of the simultaneous unfolding of multiple crisis phenomena, which, moreover, were predicated upon or intensified each other: widespread food shortages, extensive military conflicts, and devastating epidemics. This "*faisceau convergent de catastrophes couronné par la peste*" [converging cluster of disasters crowned by plague] as depicted by Françoise Hildesheimer, ultimately led in 1629, at the latest, to a crisis that was to impact France in its entirety[5], albeit not everywhere at the same time and also with considerable local or regional variations. Up to and including the year 1631, the Black Death had been blighting well over fifty towns and cities across the realm every year.[6] In fact, these outbreaks were the most menacing to have struck the kingdom since the late Middle Ages. This meant that during those years between 1629 and 1631, a significant number of momentous events and developments were unfolding beneath the purported summits of the political, administrative and constitutional levels.

Only over recent decades, however, have a whole series of local and regional studies been published focusing on the epidemics, famines, and wars that swept across the various regions at that critical moment in French history: here, particular mention should be made of the regional historical studies that emerged from the *démographie historique*.[7] An all-encompassing French synthesis for the intervening decades between 1680 and 1720, such as Marcel Lachiver presented some time ago in exemplary fashion, does not yet exist for the years 1629–1631.[8]

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4 See Bercé, *La naissance dramatique de l'absolutisme*, p. 123. The causes, trajectory and consequences of the mortality crises have long been a focus in French history. For some years now, research in this field has been receiving new and, it should be noted, sustainably effective stimuli from the field of palaeodemography. Among the numerous titles that meanwhile have appeared on the subject at the interface between the humanities and the natural sciences are here only *pars pro toto* mentioned: Kacki, *Influence de l'état sanitaire des populations du passé sur la mortalité en temps de peste.*

5 Hildesheimer, *La terreur et la pitié*, p. 69.

6 See Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste*, vol. 1, p. 386 f.; Lebrun provides a cartographic overview of the ubiquity of the diseases based on data obtained by Biraben: Lebrun, *Se soigner autrefois*, p. 162.

7 See in particular Le Roy Ladurie, *Les paysans du Languedoc*; Goubert, *Cent mille provinciaux au XVII^e siècle*; Lebrun, *Les hommes et la mort en Anjou aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles.*

8 See Lachiver, *Les années de misère.* The impressive panorama that Lachiver unravels here focuses on the phenomena of food shortages and hunger. Yet, the account also includes other crisis phenomena, including not only human but also animal epidemics.

In fact, notwithstanding the truly historic significance of those events and developments of the late 1620s and early 1630s, few attempts have been made to examine them in an integrated fashion. This is all the more regrettable given how those studies that have essayed – at least in part – to take such an integrated approach have yielded decidedly promising results.[9] Indeed, they have sharpened our focus on a phase of the Ancien Régime conspicuously characterized by convergence.[10] Such convergent synergies can optimally be described and analysed at a micro level, i. e., when small-scale socio-geographic structures such as a village, a city, or a territory are brought into focus. These synergies can equally, however, be pinpointed and their operative mechanisms understood with reference to larger-scale political or geographical units.[11]

2 Disease control neglected by research

The formulation "[*la*] *peste de La Rochelle*"[12] is probably one of those all-too-rare terms that can so aptly express the degree of synergetic convergence unfolding across France under singular circumstances during those pestilential-ridden years between 1629 and 1631. For not only does it allude to that port-city on the Atlantic seaboard, which presumably was the breeding ground for the epidemic, but also indicated the nexus for Huguenot Protestantism, with which plague outbreaks were routinely associated at that time.[13] Above all, however, it points (especially if one understands La Rochelle as a "paradigm" as Mißfelder did) to ques-

9 In this context, of particular relevance are the studies published since the 1960s on the uprisings and insurrectionary movements during the Ancien Régime: Porchnev, *Les soulèvements populaires en France de 1623 à 1648*; Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*; Pillorget, *Les mouvements insurrectionnels de Provence entre 1596 et 1715.*

10 In such cases in German historiography, there is sometimes talk of *Verdichtung* as an alternative to *Konvergenz*. This term describes a process which, on one hand, is characterized by a densely temporal sequence of events or developments, and on the other, by an overlapping of certain phenomena on the structural level. Combinations of a temporal and factual order are also quite feasible. In any case, this process is characteristic of interdependencies or interactions between events and developments or phenomena and structures. Effects can reinforce each other or causalities can be interlinked. Both reinforce the impression of accelerated change. Convergence, seen from perspective, is thus imbued with a strong perceptual and experiential dimension. See Meier, Xyngráphein – Historiographie und das Problem der Zeit, p. 300.

11 See Busch, Im Schatten des Schwarzen Todes.

12 The term, *peste*, however, was not a seventeenth-century invention nor was it widely used with reference to the epidemics of the late 1620s and early 1630s. It is mentioned, for example, in Desloges, *Observations sur les épidémies les plus meurtrières*, p. 44.

13 See on this topic: Brenot, La peste soit des huguenots.

tions concerning how plague and politics, contagion and the State intertwined, which the events of 1629–1631 raised.[14] Yves-Marie Bercé thus described this chain of events:

> On ne peut pas, en effet, ne pas remarquer la nette indifférence des politiques de déchaînement de la plus terrible épidémie de peste de l'âge moderne. A leur image, la plupart des historiens font le tableau de ces années sans prêter attention aux centaines de milliers de morts qui s'accumulaient alors dans nombre de villes du sud-ouest de l'Europe. De ces remarques on retiendra l'extraordinaire impréparation, improvisation des politiques opposées, les formidables fluctuations de la fortune des armes, et par conséquent les aspects de pari, de coup de dés que prenaient inévitablement les décisions des gouvernants de ce temps.[15]
>
> [Indeed, one cannot but fail to notice politicians' sheer indifference to the outbreak of the modern age's most harrowing plague epidemic. As with those politicians, most historians paint a picture of these years without paying any attention to the ever-growing hundreds of thousands of deaths in numerous cities across southwestern Europe. From these remarks, we shall extrapolate the extraordinary unpreparedness and improvisatory nature of opposing policies, the formidable fluctuations in the fortunes of armed conflict, and therefore the gambling aspects, the throw of a dice, which inevitably characterised decisions taken by rulers at that time.]

Historians' general disregard for the epidemics of the late 1620s and early 1630s, which Bercé lambasts in the above segment, has undoubtedly somewhat diminished by now. However, no fresh findings reporting on how those charged with political responsibility behaved at that time exist, a matter which he also critically examines in the above extract. This cannot, however, be attributed to the fact that Bercé's assessment has been repeatedly confirmed by other historians during the three decades since the publication of his text. Quite the contrary: over the intervening years other historians have simply not commented on this topic. And Bercé himself has not published any fresh findings to supplement the facts he originally presented.[16] Hence, to this very day, knowledge of how the French monarchy actually dealt with *la peste de La Rochelle* remains rudimentary at best, a finding

14 Mißfelder, *Das Andere der Monarchie*, p. 9, 305, 311, 313.

15 Bercé, *La naissance dramatique de l'absolutisme*, p. 113.

16 One can hardly reproach Bercé for this, however. On the contrary, it is important to acknowledge that his overview of the crisis and the crises in France of 1630, albeit only a few pages long, is the most exceptional, both qualitatively and quantitatively, which historical research has produced on this subject for some time. Bercé's comprehensive research work for his previously mentioned dissertation on the *Histoire des croquants* clearly put him in that position. At the beginning of this study, Bercé devotes himself extensively to the "*malheurs du temps*" that had been ravaging the southwest of France during the Ancien Régime in the late 1620s and early 1630s: See Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*, pp. 7–43.

that stands in stark contrast with the otherwise lively interest scholars have demonstrated with regard to questions of state and statehood in seventeenth-century France.

Against this backdrop of neglect, the present account will strive to shed at least some light on how the French monarchy responded when confronted with the "plague of La Rochelle".[17] For this purpose, a corpus of highly relevant sources in terms of content, truly extensive and clearly definable, will be examined and evaluated. All such criteria apply to the records kept by the *Conseil du roi* [Crown Council], and thus with a state apparatus which arguably was the French monarch's most prominent ruling and administrative body. The Crown Council discharged legislative, executive and judicial functions in equal measure. Among its multiple responsabilities was the *police.*[18] In her dissertation, however, Andrea Iseli clarifies its role: "In matters relating to public healthcare, the *Conseil* was only to become active during the years 1720 and 1721, as the whole of France was being threatened by plague."[19] Hence the leading questions: How did matters actually stand in this respect less than a century earlier, at a time the Ancien Régime was not only threatened by epidemics, but palpably impacted by them? Was the *Conseil du roi* not in some way concerned with questions regarding epidemic control? Were there, in 1720 and 1721, no precedents whatsoever which the Council could draw upon during those pestilent years for its disease control activities?

In an attempt to answer these questions, the author of this text has systematically reviewed and evaluated decisions taken by the *Conseil du roi* for the years between 1629 and 1631. Amounting to some several thousand pages, most of these documents are handwritten, though a smaller number are also available in print.[20] They furnish information focussing specifically on several thousand decisions taken by the Council. This elevated figure is not least due to the fact that the political and administrative resolutions taken by the king and his secretaries of state were routinely also issued as Council decisions.[21] The present study has specifically focussed on the years between 1629 and 1631 not on account of the volume

17 This is intended to contribute to a history of the state epidemic police in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A scientific examination of such, as one might say, *monarchie sanitaire* still represents a marked priority in French (and, moreover, international) research. See Busch, *Der infizierte Staatskörper*, currently in preparation and soon to be published.

18 See Iseli, *"Bonne Police"*, p. 74 f.

19 Ibid., p. 74.

20 The bulk of the *Conseils du roi's* surviving documents is being kept at the French National Archives. A by no means insignificant complementary collection is also held by other Parisian archives and libraries, notably at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).*

21 See Avenel, *Richelieu et la monarchie absolue*, vol. 1, p. 49.

of surviving decisions, but rather because that period marked the most critical phase of the crises then holding France on tenterhooks. And although plague outbreaks did take centre-stage, we shall now take another look at the events of that time in their entirety. Such an approach is predicated upon the fact that the epidemics, famines, and wars of the late 1620s and early 1630s were closely intertwined. Artificially separating these events in retrospect would scarcely do justice to the historical subject matter. Besides, without such contextual knowledge and insight, it would hardly be viable to adequately evaluate the response to the epidemic at that juncture. It is only by comparing how this particular emergency and other crisis phenomena were managed during those turbulent years that it will be possible to more accurately define the role disease prevention and control played in the royal state's administrative thinking and modus operandi.

II The Driving Force Behind the Monarchy: *Conseils du roi* between Reform and Revolution

1 Flexibility as a Governing Principle

Today, whenever discussing the *Conseil du roi* during the early modern period of French history, this designation refers to an ideal rather than an actual phenomenon. The principle of the Crown Council's unity and indivisibility even applied in seventeenth century France.[22] The Council emerged from the Royal Court, the so-called *Curia Regis*, an advisory body which had been assisting French monarchs in the exercise of their rule throughout the Middle Ages. Yet, this particular iteration of the Crown Council was to split into different sections from the reign of Henry II onward (1547–1559).[23] This process, over the course of which a firmly established organizational order of council bodies only very gradually emerged, was not yet complete even in the seventeenth century. This was also and especially true for the reign of Louis XIII (1610–1643), as four sub-councils of the Crown Council were of crucial importance, namely the *Conseil des affaires* [The State Council]; the *Conseil d'État et des finances'* [The Council of State and Finances]; the *Conseil*

22 See Pagès, Le Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 296 f., 302.

23 See Barbiche, *Les institutions de la monarchie française*, p. 280, 283, 290.

de direction des finances [The Council of Finances]; and the *Conseil des parties* [The Privy Council].[24]

These four sub-councils and their participant members owed their authority solely to the person of the king.[25] For his part, the king officially chaired the more or less regular sessions of the various council bodies, though he never attended meetings of the *Conseil d'État et des finances*, the *Conseil de direction des finances* and the *Conseil des parties* in person. Louis XIII, however, did make a personal appearance whenever the *Conseil des affaires* convened.[26] His attendance bespeaks of the primacy of this council, whose decisions constituted *arrêts en commandement*, and are thus fundamentally distinct from the *arrêts simples*, decisions taken by the other three advisory bodies under the chairmanship of the chancellor.[27] This is another reason that the *Conseil des affaires* can justifiably be characterised as a governing council, if compared with the *Conseil d'État et des finances*, the *Conseil de direction des finances* and the *Conseil des parties* which were merely administrative councils. These conceptual classifications, however, are somewhat sketchy and should not be understood too categorically, notably with regard to the first three decades of seventeenth century France, for at that time neither the sub-councils themselves nor the scope of their authority were clearly defined. The *Conseil d'État et des finances*, for example, also assumed governmental tasks and functions, which is why it would have to be positioned somewhere between the *Conseil des affaires* and the other council bodies.[28] The *Conseil des parties*, in turn, as its nomenclature suggests, focused on dispensing justice between litigating parties.[29] And yet, irrespective of which authority, which kind of *arrêt*, or what council body might have been involved, each and every decision taken by Louis XIII's councils was made in the name of the king. This effectively meant that

24 See Mousnier, Le Conseil du roi de la mort de Henri IV, p. 142. In addition, a *Conseil des dépêches* can be found in the sources at an early stage, which, according to Mousnier, did not attain any political significance until the latter half of the seventeenth century (see ibid., pp. 156–158).

25 See Poncet, Conseils du roi, p. 320.

26 See Bercé, Conseil du roi, p. 91.

27 Which kind of *arrêt* one is actually dealing with can be judged from the decision's opening phrase. While an *arrêt simple* commences with the words "Le roi en son Conseil," an *arrêt en commandement* begins with "Le roi étant en son Conseil": see Antoine, *Le fonds du Conseil d'État du roi aux Archives nationales*, p. 38.

28 See Pagès, Le Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 300 f.; Bercé, Conseil du roi, p. 92 f.

29 On this point, see Bercé, Le Conseil privé au temps de Richelieu et de Mazarin.

such an *arrêt* did not need to be registered by parliament in order for it to acquire legal validity.[30]

Given how the *Conseil des affaires* repeatedly operated under different names and its personnel composition was constantly changing, it exemplified the comparatively low degree of institutionalization that the Crown Council bodies had achieved during the first half of the seventeenth century. As far back as the 1930s, Georges Pagès thus described the most prominent Crown Council body as a "*petit Conseil intime*" which had not yet achieved a stable structure under Louis XIII.[31] This view is shared by Yves-Marie Bercé, who more recently has stated:

> Louis XIII, plus que tout autre prince, entendait composer son Conseil à sa convenance, appelant arbitrairement tels secrétaires d'État spécialisés ou tels dignitaires particuliers pour l'assister dans son travail. […] De façon impromptue, selon les urgences et selon aussi ses horaires de chasse, Louis XIII tenait le Conseil le matin ou en après-midi, deux ou trois fois par semaine.[32]
>
> [More than any other prince, Louis XIII was set upon filling his *Conseil* as he saw fit, arbitrarily calling upon certain specialised secretaries of State or particular dignitaries to assist him with his workload. (…) On the spur of the moment, depending on the urgency of the situation, and also on his hunting schedule, Louis XIII held the Council session in the morning or in the afternoon, two or three times a week.]

Here, Bercé not only alludes to how the *Conseil des affaires* was predicated upon Louis XIII's rulings and habits, but also insinuates that the king certainly knew what he was doing by repeatedly restructuring this Council. Seen from this perspective, the institutional instability, to which Pagès alludes, could be interpreted not just as symptomatic of an unfinished constitutional development, but also as a form of governing technique that would ensure a high degree of administrative and political flexibility. Another facet of this modus operandi was how those ex-

30 See Barbiche, *Les institutions de la monarchie française*, p. 305. A valuable introduction into registration rights and how it was handled during the reign of Louis XIII is provided by Kadlec, Le droit d'enregistrement des Cours souveraines sous Louis XIII.

31 See Pagès, Conseil, p. 297. Pagès, however, does not consider the *Conseil des affaires* to be a crown council in the narrower sense, given how this body was not officially considered a council at that time. None of the names under which the council was then known had an official character (ibid., p. 297, 300). Pagès, however, was not able to fully assert this view: only a year after the publication of Pagès' text, Edmond Esmonin explicitly described the *Conseil des affaires* as one of three authoritative councils in Ancien Régime France. According to Esmonin, however, the *Conseil des parties*, which was ultimately not a *conseil de gouvernement*, represented an anomaly: See Esmonin, Les arrêts du Conseil sous l'Ancien Régime, p. 183 f.

32 Bercé, Conseil du roi, p. 91.

perts Louis XIII gathered around him on the *Conseil des affaires* were rewarded with the title of minister of state (*ministre d'État*) as a mark of the monarch's gratitude for their engagement.[33] The secretaries of state (*secrétaires d'État*), for their part, were responsible for ensuring that all the Council's decisions were documented in writing, signed, and subsequently preserved for future use and consultation. Such tasks were entrusted to the *secrétaires des finances* and the *secrétaires-greffiers* among the rank and file of the *Conseil d'État et des finances*, the *Conseil de direction des finances* and the *Conseil des parties.*[34]

2 Efficiency as Draft Reform

While, as highlighted above, the notion of the Crown Council's unity and indivisibility still prevailed throughout the seventeenth century, sources from the 1620s were already frequently referring to the *Conseils du roi* in the plural.[35] Hence, a political and administrative reality that had been operative for some time was also reflected linguistically. It is striking how these Crown Councils were equally to become the subject for far-reaching regenerative efforts during this period.

From the sixteenth century onward, the French kings had sought to give their *Conseils* and the powers accorded to them a more robust administrative structure by means of corresponding regulations. Not only did Louis XIII pursue this established practice, which, by that stage, had already generated several dozen such decrees, he took matters to extremes, so to speak, by issuing nearly thirty regulations between 1610 and 1630 alone.[36] The most significant decree was that of 18 January 1630[37], which formed part of the legislative corpus embodied in the *Code Michau*, created under the aegis of the Keeper of the Seals Michel de Marillac.[38] That regulation, however, was also to form the keystone of a longer-term reform effort that

33 See Pagès, Le Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 297. This constituted an innovation to which Louis' successors also adhered.

34 See Barbiche, *Les institutions de la monarchie française*, p. 300 f.

35 See Pagès, Le Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 299 f.

36 See Mousnier, Les règlements du Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII.

37 See ibid., pp. 183–191.

38 Concerning this body of law that arose from the Gravamina asserted in the context of the Estates General of 1614 and the Notables' Assemblies of 1617 and 1626/27, see Schilling, Gesetzgebung im Frankreich Louis XIII – ein konstitutives Element des Absolutismus?, esp. pp. 100–130; Kadlec, Le droit d'enregistrement des Cours souveraines sous Louis XIII, esp. pp. 42–50.

had already generated several other regulations over the preceding years.[39] Marillac is to be regarded as the author in these instances, too.

The French monarchy's core concern, inter alia, was to reduce the number of members sitting on the councils.[40] In particular, the use of the title of *Conseiller du roi* was called into question. Previously, this title had been awarded to numerous *officiers* for honorary reasons. Some of these officials, who had received their *office* directly from the king in exchange for a given sum of money, then found themselves sitting on the councils.[41] The councils' workload, which even the monarchy complained about, was thus placed under considerable strain.[42] Over the course of the 1620s, Louis XIII thus sought to counteract this tendency by dint of several regulations, which, all things considered, proved successful. Hence, the so-called *brevets* or special certificate permiting the holder to use the honorific *Conseiller du roi* were successively withdrawn and replaced by *lettres patentes*, which thereafter were to become the "admission card" to the councils.[43] And so, in 1633, the *conseils* could boast a total of just under fifty members.[44] In addition to the king, the *Conseil d'affaires* was composed of the first minister, the chancellor, the chief intendant of finance, and at least one secretary of state, usually the one responsible for for-

39 On this point, see Mousnier, Le Conseil du roi de la mort de Henri IV, p. 149: "Elles [i. e. les réformes, T.B.] ont leur source dans l'absolutisme de Louis XIII et aussi, probablement, dans l'influence des vieux conseillers, pleins d'expérience, animés d'un très bel esprit de corps et d'un entier dévouement à la fonction, qui avaient besoin, pour faire prévaloir leurs vues, de la volonté du Roi." [They [i. e. the reforms, author.] have their origins in Louis XIII's absolutism and also, probably, under the influence of the elder councillors, full of experience, animated by a very fine *esprit de corps* and entirely devoted to the function, who required the King's willingness to make their views prevail.

40 See Mousnier, Les règlements du Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 184.

41 The title *conseiller du roi* did not only lead to confusion in the early modern era. Even today, it is still, in retrospect, likely to cause some confusion about the Ancien Régime in France. At that time, various public figures and functionaries were permitted to use this honorific. It is therefore all the more important to refer to the full title of those who actually had the right to attend the councils' meetings, for these persons or functionaries were officially addressed as *conseillers du roi en ses Conseils d'État et privé*: See, on this point, Barbiche, *Les institutions de la monarchie française*, pp. 282–284.

42 See, on this point: Mousnier, Les règlements du Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 173.

43 See Pagès, Le Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 314 f. It was also such *lettres patentes* that confirmed Cardinal Richelieu, who had already been a member of the Council since 1624, in his function and position as chief minister (*principal ministre*) on 21 November 1629. However, while Richelieu was not the only member of the Council to hold this title at that time, the regulation of 18 January 1630 assigned him a sole leadership role not only on the Council itself but in the monarchy as a whole. It was in this Regulation that the cardinal was for the first time named *premier ministre de l'État:* see Mousnier, Les règlements du Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 194.

44 See Mousnier, Le Conseil du roi de la mort de Henri IV, p. 166.

eign policy.[45] Furthermore, depending on the agenda at any given moment, there were those persons whom Louis XIII mandated to attend, as well as other members of the royal family and princes from an aristocratic bloodline. Insofar as the work of the *Conseil d'affaires* itself was concerned, this dynastic component, in the broadest sense of the term, was the root cause for this governmental apparatus' intermittent lack of efficiency.[46]

The urge to transform this state of affairs may also have underpinned the king's endeavours to more clearly define the purview for the various *Conseils du roi.* This concern constituted the secondary focus of those regulations adopted in January 1630 and whose aim was not only to improve the councils' overall efficiency but also to more thoroughly structure the king's affairs.[47] Louis XIII himself admitted that those regulations instigated during the 1620s were effectively meant to serve this very purpose.[48] That the king was prepared to make such far-reaching changes in this regard was also demonstrated in early 1630 as he partially redistributed executive powers between the councils, while transferring other legal competences to the courts of the realm. He thus aspired to spare himself and his councils the bulk of legal disputes that routinely had to be settled by the *Conseils du roi.*[49] Given the specific tasks assigned to *Conseil des parties*, this measure came primarily at its expense.

According to the research literature, the *Conseil d'État et des finances* was deemed the second major casualty of this regulation, having lost most of its extensive powers to the *Conseil de direction des finances* in 1630.[50] In fact, the regulation stipulated that the *Conseil de direction des finances,* established in 1615, would henceforth not only be responsible for virtually all the monarchy's financial and fiscal matters, but was also to assume critical tasks in the area of provincial administration.[51] Roland Mousnier sees in these modifications "[*u*]*ne véritable révolution* […]."[52]

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45 See ibid., p. 150.

46 See ibid., p. 147.

47 On this point, see Mousnier, Les règlements du Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 184.

48 See ibid.

49 See ibid., p. 184 f.

50 See Barbiche, *Les institutions de la monarchie française*, p. 289.

51 See Mousnier, Les règlements du Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 189 f. In the Regulation itself, this council is referred to as the *Conseil des finances.* It is clearly to be distinguished, however, from the (similarly named) *Conseil d'État et des finances.* Another regulation, however, which also dates from 18 January 1630, then explicitly speaks of a *Direction des finances* and describes its purview in detail: See ibid., pp. 191–196.

52 Mousnier, Le Conseil du roi de la mort de Henri IV, p. 149.

3 Mousnier as a Revolutionary

Whoever wants to make sense of this revolution – whether it actually took place, and whether it was the upshot of decisions taken by the Crown Councils – will find themselves confronted with a highly complex situation in terms of the manuscript tradition.[53] Insofar as the reign of Louis XIII is concerned, far more *arrêts simples* than *arrêts en commandement* have survived.[54] Only four volumes of the latter are to be found in the *Archives nationales* for the years between 1610 and 1643. Given that two volumes date from the 1640s, they are irrelevant to the purpose of the present study.[55] Furthermore, it can be assumed that the vast majority of Louis XIII's *arrêts en commandement* have not survived in written form until the present day.[56]

All the more significant are the quite extensive complementary surviving sources which exist for this particular period. A whole series of *arrêts en commandement,* for example, has been merged with the *arrêts simples* at the French National Archives.[57] Furthermore, other archives and libraries across France are in possession of records of many such administrative decisions taken in the presence of the Louis XIII. In context of this research, these include the *Bibliothèque nationale de France,* the *Service Historique de la Défense* and the *Archives diplomatiques*,[58] in view of the fact that these decisions have been kept in quite different collections. With regard to the latter two archives, that these decisions can be found in them can be explained by the fact that the secretaries of state responsible for war and

53 On this point, see Valois, Introduction: Étude historique sur le Conseil du Roi, vol. 1, p. CXLI: "De tous les grands corps qui composaient en France l'administration centrale, il n'en était pas de plus important que le Conseil: il n'en est pas dont les archives anciennes soient plus difficiles à reconstituer." [Of all the major bodies making up France's central administration, there was none more important than the *Conseil*, one whose ancient archives are more difficult to piece together.

54 See AN, E 95A–E 107B (*arrêts simples*) and E 1684–E 1687 (*arrêts en commandement*). Series E at the French National Archives contains only files from the *Conseils du roi.*

55 With regard to the *arrêts en commandement*, Y.-M. Bercé points out that one can only speak of regular record-keeping by the responsible council from 1641 onwards: See Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*, vol. 2, p. 872.

56 On this point, see Antoine, Les arrêts du Conseil rendus en commandement sous le règne de Louis XIII, p. 38.

57 See ibid., p. 43 f.

58 See ibid., p. 39 f. where the collections in question are also mentioned. These are the Morel de Thoisy collection at the BnF, the A 1 subseries at the *Service historique de la Défense* and the France collection in the *Mémoires et documents* series at the *Archives diplomatiques.* In addition to the handwritten *arrêts*, there are also printed *arrêts en commandement* in the BnF. See, for example, *Arrests du conseil d'Estat du Roy, pour tous Officiers tant Anciens que nouveaux qui n'ont payé cy-devant le droict Annuel y seront receus,* Paris 1627, BnF, F-47044, doc. no. 26.

external affairs both received and kept documentary evidence of any decisions taken by the Council.[59] These documents are nothing other than the original copies of Council decisions, the so-called *minutes*. This does not apply to *arrêts en commandement* which ended up among the *arrêts simples*, however. They are copies of the originals which served to communicate the Council's decision to all those concerned by the outcome. That is why they are also referred to as *expéditions* [dispatches].[60] In total, Michel Antoine estimates that these, as well as the other *arrêts en commandement* that have been added to the four above-mentioned volumes at the National Archives, come to about 1 500 documents.[61] Hence, the complementary surviving sources could well be as extensive as the main surviving sources.

Admittedly, there are also complementary surviving sources to the *arrêts simples.*[62] Research, however, is less dependent upon these sources than in the case of the *arrêts en commandement.* This specifically applies for those years between 1629 and 1631. Because even if it is true that there are a few gaps in the surviving sources, these gaps per se are not hugely significant.[63] On one hand, this is due to the fact that the content of the decisions is much the same, so much so that the collection, as a whole, is inherently repetitive. On the other hand, it is because the rest of documentation is extraordinarily rich and dense. For the three years spanning 1629 and 1631 alone, there are some two dozen volumes, each containing several hundred *arrêts simples.* Yet, these volumes merely cover a period of two months. In one particular case, the officials involved even succeeded in taking so many decisions in just ten days that the corresponding *minutes* fill an entire file.[64] In another instance, several dozen council decisions date from one and the same

59 Since the mid-sixteenth century, France had four secretariats of state. At the beginning of Louis XIII's reign, these were, in addition to the *secrétariats d'État* for foreign relations and warfare, those for the *maison du roi* and the *religion prétendue réformée.* In 1626, a secretariat of state of the navy was added. For further developments, see Ranum, *Richelieu and the Councillors of Louis XIII.*

60 Regarding the distinction between *minutes* and *expéditions,* see Barbiche, *Les institutions de la monarchie française,* p. 305, 307 f.

61 See Antoine, Les arrêts du Conseil rendus en commandement sous le règne de Louis XIII, p. 48.

62 On this point, too, it should be noted that the printed decisions are in the possession of the BnF. See, for example, *Arrest du conseil d'Estat du sixiéme Mars 1630. Par lequel est ordonné que les Officiers des vingt-deux Elections nouvellement creées en la Province de Languedoc jouïront de la Dispense des Quarante jours,* Paris 1630, BnF, F-47044, doc. no. 27. [*Arrêt du conseil d'État* of the sixth of March 1630, by which it ordered that the *Officiers* of the twenty-two newly-created *Elections* in the province of Languedoc will enjoy a Forty-day Dispensation, Paris 1630.]

63 Specifically, the missing files or entries are for the months of May and December 1628, as well as March, October and November 1629. This is partly due to the fact that the councils did not convene or work during those periods.

64 See AN, E 99B. The file contains 514 folio pages, including pages without text.

day.[65] The question then arises as to how the administration managed to deliberate over so many matters in such a brief time-span and then reach a decision. This equally addresses the more fundamental problem concerning the surviving sources' origins and characteristics. What is clear from the content of the *minutes*, copiously compiled in the above-mentioned documentation, is that they originated from the financial administration branch. Two councils were active in this domain, however: the *Conseil d'État et des finances* and the *Conseil de direction des finances.*

According to sources available at the National Archives, the several thousand *minutes* emanated from the *Conseil d'État et des finances.* Antoine's inventory, which is still of relevance today, came to a similar conclusion.[66] Interestingly, however, Antoine, who during his lifetime featured among the leading experts on the crown councils and their surviving sources, does not seem to have been absolutely certain in this respect either. Or else he subsequently partially revised the view he expressed in the inventory. In his 2003 essay on the *arrêts en commandement* issued under Louis XIII, he states at the outset that the first part of the series E, which includes the *arrêts simples*, can be traced back to the *Conseil d'État et des finances* and the *Conseil de direction des finances.*[67] This assessment, however, seems to be merely a Solomonic glossing-over of a problem Pagès had already identified and which Mousnier subsequently succinctly summed up: "*Il est absolument impossible de savoir de quelle section du Conseil viennent les arrêts, car tous se ressemblent*"[68]. [It is absolutely impossible to identify from which section of the *Conseil* the judgments originated, for they all look alike.]

Viewed in retrospect, however, the conclusions Mousnier draws from this judgement call seem problematic. Given how, in his view, the councils' decisions reveal too little about the councils themselves, he relies a fortiori on those regulations he himself had edited, and did so in such a way that these could replace a critical examination of the councils' actual decisions. His assessment, originally published in 1947, that one of those councils had one day lost its powers to another council is solely based upon the reference to the Regulation of 18 January 1630. Moreover, he evidently had not consulted the actual decisions taken by the council in question.[69] Here, the problem does not lie *with* and *in* the surviving sources, for

65 See AN, E 95B, f° 405^{r}–416^{r} (30.03.1628).

66 See Antoine, *Le fonds du Conseil d'État du roi aux Archives nationales*, p. 62.

67 See Antoine, Les arrêts du Conseil rendus en commandement sous le règne de Louis XIII, p. 37.

68 Mousnier, Les règlements du Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 112. See Pagès, Le Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 304.

69 See Mousnier, Le Conseil du roi de la mort de Henri IV, p. 159, note 2: In this remark, Mousnier refers to another document, which could attest to the change he observed. But that document is

which Mousnier is naturally not to blame. Yet, he is responsible for the conclusions he infers from them. And here it seems highly questionable whether it is permissible to deduce a revolutionary development in French constitutional history solely from provisions to be found in one, or possibly even two regulations, of which it is not even known whether they were ever actually implemented.

In view of what could be characterised as Mousnier's methodological blunder, one is reminded of a statement D'Avenel had already written back in the nineteenth century on how an attentive examination of the *minutes* and *expéditions* would yield more information about the nature and origin of the councils' decisions than any ordinance ever would.[70] Some years ago, Hildesheimer, for her part, recalled how the *Conseil d'État et des finances*, so-called *compétences* or administrative responsibilities in 1640 were as far-reaching as they originally had been.[71] The councils' decisions dating from the late 1620s and early 1630s reviewed for the purpose of this study convey a remarkably similar impression. Yet again, however, these sources make it clear: precisely where Mousnier pinpoints a revolutionary shift at work in the councils, no correspondingly significant changes are to be found in the *arrêts simples.*

III Humanity's Three Afflictions: *Conseils du roi* between Crisis and Catastrophe

1 Overtaxing as a Political Principle

Any attempt to systematically evaluate decisions adopted by Louis XIII's councillors has to reckon with considerable challenges. To date, no printed inventory exists for the files of the *Conseils du roi* in office during the reign of Louis XIII.[72] Hence, considerable effort is required to research and analyse the decisions contained therein. In the absence of appropriate search tools to trace the relevant

apparently also a regulation. Hence, this document cannot be regarded as reliable evidence for any kind of activity by the *Conseil de direction des finances.*

70 See Avenel, *Richelieu et la monarchie absolue*, p. 46 f.

71 See Hildesheimer, Le Conseil en Normandie, p. 28.

72 The decisions taken by the *Conseils du roi* under Henry IV and Louis XIV, on the other hand, are documented in printed inventories. See Valois, *Inventaire des arrêts du Conseil d'État (règne de Henri IV)*; Le Pesant, *Arrêts du Conseil du roi Règne de Louis XIV: Inventaire analytique des arrêts en commandement.*

sources, the historian's sole option is to leaf through the relevant volumes page by page.[73]

For the three years 1629, 1630 and 1631, it is noteworthy how many decisions adopted by Louis XIII councillors' can be traced back to external factors. The councils did not act primarily on their own initiative (*arrêts de propre mouvement*), but rather responded to suggestions and demands from personal and institutional actors who didn't belong to the councils (*arrêts sur requête*).[74] This was particularly so with the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or, as the case may be, the *Conseil de direction des finances.* The proposals and concerns, however, with which the Council was confronted also differed considerably. There was – to cite but three examples – the case of a widow who wanted to acquire the *office* held by her late husband.[75] Then there was the instance of a landowner who offered the King the prospect of developing new financial resources.[76] There were also cases of mayors of impoverished municipalities and communes who no longer knew how they were to pay for the overheads engendered by the multiple plague-stricken victims in their charge.[77]

Although each individual request addressed to the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* presented its own specific problem, the overall picture depicted is one of coherence in which darker tones sharply prevail. This is by no means only due to the fact that it was primarily those individuals and institutions seeking contact with the Council who were predominantly experiencing difficulties. Rather, France itself was traversing difficult times during the late 1620s and early 1630s; the kingdom was not just enduring grain shortages but also onerous troop marches all while deadly epidemics stalked the land. The *arrêts sur requête* demonstrate all this clearly to today's readers.[78] And yet, the *arrêts de propre mouvement*, issued at around the same time, testify to the French monarch's unwavering focus on generating fresh revenue sources. The councils, for example, established new purchasable *offices* on a large scale all while reforming tax collection procedures in several provinces in a bid to serve the central authority's

73 As far as the *arrêts en commandement* are concerned, a certain help here is a handwritten repertory dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which can now be consulted on microfilm at the National Archives. See *Répertoire chronologique et analytique des arrêts du Conseil des dépêches, 1611–1710, fin du 18e siècle*, microfilm n° 1: 1611–1652.

74 Concerning this distinction, see Barbiche, *Les institutions de la monarchie française*, p. 306.

75 See, for example, AN, E 100A, f° 40r. – The *office* referred to in this context is a state-sponsored function that could be purchased and subsequently passed on to a third party by the person who had initially bought it, under certain conditions.

76 See AN, E 97B, f° 31r.

77 See AN, E 101A, f° 287r.

78 See AN, E 103A, f° 78r–v; 100A, f° 9r; 103A, f° 146r–v.

interests.[79] The nation's population was in danger of being crushed between food scarcity and imposed troop movements, on one hand, and the Crown's quest for fresh financial sources, on the other. In any event, decisions taken by the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* reveal how large swathes of the population were feeling completely overwhelmed at that time.

Most regions of what then constituted France had to endure these excessive demands. And naturally petitions submitted during those fraught years repeatedly refer to the *calamités* afflicting everyday life: famine, war and pestilence.[80] Plague alone is said to have erased the lives hundreds of thousands during the period under consideration. This high mortality rate, however, may also have been the upshot of other factors, inter alia, malnutrition that had physically exhausted large sections of the population ever before the plague outbreak. Troop movements and mobilisations in turn also contributed to the rampant spread of Black Death throughout the realm.[81] In fact, during the late 1620s and early 1630s, virtually the entire nation was detrimentally impacted, as the epidemic continued to sweep across the regions in waxing and waning waves.[82] The contagion, however, particularly impacted the southern half of the country, with Languedoc and Provence being markedly affected.[83] Its accumulative effect placed an extraordinary burden on the population. That this quagmire completely overstretched society's capacities – as evidenced by those decisions taken by the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* – had primarily to do with the fact that the French monarchy was trying to impose a far-reaching policy shift even under extremely unfavourable circumstances.

Debate then focussed on two policy concepts which differed fundamentally from one another. Holding diametrically opposing political positions, Cardinal Richelieu and the Keeper of the Seals Marillac were the most prominent advocates for each of these standpoints at the court of Louis XIII. While Richelieu argued for

79 See AN, E 105B, f° 333^{r}–334^{r}; E 106A, f° 439^{r}; E 107B, f° 359^{r}.

80 The term *calamité* was already employed by contemporaries in a bid to depict the crisis symptoms they were facing. Its semantic non-specificity enabled this term to describe a wide spectrum of gravamina. It was quite similar to the term *misère*, which was already in use at that time. See *La complainte de la France sur les miseres et calamitez du temps, avec la remonstrance au Roy sur la rebellion des Rochelois, et leurs ad'herans. P.A.P.N.D. Avec la perfidie des Rochellois descouverte, Lyon 1628.* [France's lament about the miseries and calamities of the time, with the King's rebuke of the rebellion by the people of La Rochelle, and their supporters. P.A.P.N.D. With the perfidy of the Rochellois brought to light, Lyon 1628].

81 Regarding how plague, hunger and war interacted, see the ever-instructive remarks by Meuvret, Demographic Crisis in France from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century, pp. 507–522.

82 On this point, see AN, E 98, f° 180^{r}.

83 See AN, E 101A, f° 27^{r}–28^{r}, 595^{r}; E 102, f° 47^{r}; E 104, f° 511$^{r–v}$; E 106B, f° 133^{r}–134^{r}.

an aggressive French foreign policy, an approach which should ultimately bring glory and honour to Louis XIII through military successes over the House of Habsburg, Marillac advocated a compromising approach, notably with regard to Spain, a strategy which would, in his view, enable the monarchy to implement domestic reforms.[84] Similarly, the Queen Mother, Marie de Médicis, adapted this conciliatory stance. Widow of the murdered Henry IV (1589–1610), she was to play a key role in the conflict that escalated during the late 1620s.[85] Seeing how Marie, Marillac, and Richelieu were all prominent members of the *Conseil des affaires*, its workings could not remain unaffected by this ongoing strife. At the council meeting of 26 December 1628, it became clear that members of the realm's central governing body held divergent views regarding the monarchy's foreign policy.[86] Differences in terms of how to interpret facts on the ground were compounded by inter-personal rivalries. Both these contentious points came to light in 1630, as Maria insisted that Richelieu be banished from Louis XIII's court.[87] She went so far as to finally challenge her son to choose between Richelieu and herself. And so unfolded the dramatic developments of the *journée des Dupes* (10 and 11 November 1630), which ultimately resulted in Marillac and Marie de Médicis being politically disempowered[88], a development whose ramifications particularly impacted the workings of the *Conseil des affaires*, from which both had been expelled.[89] Alongside Louis XIII, Richelieu was then, at the latest, to become the dominant figure in French politics.

Admittedly, it was only in the aftermath of the *journée des Dupes* that the pendulum finally started swinging in favour of a political project that prioritised bolstering France's international standing. Louis XIII and Richelieu, however, had already for some time been steering the kingdom's policies, both in theory and in practice, toward this goal. From the beginning of 1629, the cardinal minister's relevant considerations were being consistently translated into military action with

84 On this point, see Pagès, Autour du "grand orage". A few years ago, Caroline Maillet-Rao dealt with this topic extensively in *La pensée politique des dévots Mathieu de Morgues et Michel de Marillac*.

85 On this point, see Hildesheimer, *Richelieu*, p. 236.

86 See Malettke, *Richelieu*, pp. 427–429.

87 See Pagès, Autour du "grand orage", p. 94 f. After there had been obvious signs of estrangement between Marie and the Cardinal, the Queen Mother finally broke with Richelieu, whom she had promoted a few years earlier: In April 1624, the King appointed Richelieu to the *Conseil des affaires*, whose leadership the Cardinal assumed a few months later.

88 See Chevallier, *La véritable journée des Dupes (11 novembre 1630)*; Mongrédien, *La journée des Dupes*.

89 On this point, see Malettke, *Richelieu*, p. 515, 518.

France's entry into the so-called Mantuan War of Succession.[90] This combative intervention took place just several months after the Siege of La Rochelle, which had culminated in October 1628 following the capitulation of the local Huguenots.[91] This war directly targeted the Habsburgs, who, for their part, had claimed the succession of the last Duke of Mantua from the House of Gonzaga. The military campaigns, which France instigated for this reason up until to the Peace Treaty of Cherasco in June 1631, were all aimed at strengthening France's foothold in Northern Italy. Concurrently, the King's troops in Languedoc were suppressing several uprisings by the Huguenot opposition.[92]

La Rochelle, Mantua, and Languedoc were ultimately to form the spatial and temporal benchmarks for the French Crown's renewed policy of expansion, which saw it militarily engaged both inside and outside the realm. These military ventures considerably aggravated the Ancien Régime's crisis as outlined above.[93] In a bid to pay for the ever-burgeoning costs related to these military exploits, Louis and Richelieu massively increased financial pressure on the kingdom's provinces in the late 1620s and early 1630s.[94] These extraordinary monetary burdens were imposed on a population already plagued by epidemics, famine and war. According to documents in our possession covering the workings of the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances*, this was the overriding reason for overstretching society's resources during the Ancien Régime. Many decades ago, Victor-Lucien Tapié stated that Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu consciously accepted these excessive demands in their attempts to achieve their foreign policy objectives: "*L'extrême misère du peuple est désormais consentie comme la rançon de la gloire de l'État.*" [The people's extreme misery is now accepted as the price to pay for the glory of the State.][95]

90 Richelieu recorded these considerations in a text widely acknowledged and used by historical research under the title: *Advis donné au Roy après la prise de La Rochelle, pour le bien de ses affaires.* In: Avenel (Ed.), *Lettres, instructions diplomatiques et papiers d'État du cardinal de Richelieu*, vol. 3, p. 179–213. On the Mantuan War of Succession, see Externbrink, *Le coeur du monde*, pp. 87–201.

91 On this point, see Crété, *La Rochelle au temps du grand siège, 1627–1628.*

92 On this point, see Dubled, Le duc Henri de Rohan et la révolte des protestants du Midi jusqu'à la paix d'Alès (1617–1629).

93 This can be examined particularly well with the example of Provence. See Busch, Im Schatten des Schwarzen Todes.

94 For a more detailed study on this point, see Le Roux, *Les guerres de religion, 1559–1629*, p. 463 f.

95 See Tapié, *La France de Louis XIII et de Richelieu*, p. 236.

2 Uprisings as a Safety Valve

Both Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu were thoroughly aware of the pressures the French population had to endure during these years.[96] They were moreover cognizant of the fact that the kingdom's administrative and institutional structures were in need of far-reaching reforms.[97] Nevertheless, the king and his chief minister attached less importance to these particular problems than to bolstering the Crown's prestige and geopolitical influence and clout. Indeed, this constituted the decisive difference to Marillac and Maria de Médicis, who both deemed it detrimental to France's best interests to become militarily involved in Northern Italy under such challenging socio-economic circumstances.[98] In any case, the Queen Mother and the Keeper of the Seals, who knew conditions throughout the realm better than anyone else on account of their respective positions, were profoundly concerned.[99] Given how they both floundered in their attempts to assert these concerns politically, nothing was to change in the population's living circumstances.

The councils' political leaders were equally aware of the population's plight. This is evidenced by the decisions adapted by the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* from the late 1620s and early 1630s, which repeatedly made mention of *decharge* [release from financial obligation] and *soulagement* – namely, financial relief.[100] As can be discerned from the councils' decisions, such demands required no further explanation: they effectively spoke for themselves. This was especially the case whenever someone demanded a *decharge* or a *soulagement du peuple* or *de ses sujets* (i. e. financial relief for the king's subjects).[101]

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96 The numerous written and oral petitions with which contemporaries sought to persuade Richelieu to end the war and offer the population some respite probably ensured this. In April 1630, for example, the treasurers of France (*trésoriers de France*) on duty in Lyon demanded that the cardinal minister grant some relief to the population, for otherwise they would be in such distress that nothing more could be expected of them. See Avenel, *Lettres, instructions diplomatiques et papiers d'État du cardinal de Richelieu*, vol. 3, p. 617, note 1.

97 See Hildesheimer, *Richelieu*, p. 236.

98 See ibid., pp. 221–223.

99 See Pagès, Autour du "grand orage", p. 66, 78, 80.

100 See AN, E 101B, f° 273^{r}–274^{r}; E 99A, f° 128^{r}. One problem with evaluating and interpreting the *minutes* is that in most cases they allow for only very limited reliable conclusions regarding the words with which one or even several persons addressed the council. This is because the corresponding petitions are not reproduced verbatim in the *minutes* of the decisions, but rather only as indirect speech or in paraphrased form. The wording of the *requêtes* thus largely disappears behind the factual phraseology of the council decisions.

101 See AN, E 99A, f° 177$^{r–v}$.

During the late 1620s and early 1630s, anyone uttering the words *decharge* and *soulagement* in a political or administrative context was consciously or unconsciously using terminology coined primarily by Marillac.[102] The Chancellor recognised that the oppressive hardships from which the kingdom's population were every so often suffering was primarily due to Louis XIII and Richelieu's offensively-driven foreign policy. And Marillac did not hesitate to speak this truth openly, a matter of considerable inconvenience for the king and his cardinal minister alike. In a letter addressed to Richelieu, Marillac wrote:

> Le maniement des affaires m'oblige à vous représenter que nous faisons grand nombre de choses dont le peuple reçoit de grandes afflictions. [...] Il me semble qu'il est principalement de la gloire du bon gouvernement de penser au soulagement des sujets et aux bons règlements de l'État, qui ne se peuvent faire que par la paix.
>
> [In managing affairs I am obliged to convey to you that we are undertaking many things from which the people are suffering great afflictions. [...] It strikes me that the glory of good governance is primarily to reflect on how his [majesty's] subjects might be granted relief and about the State's good regulations, which can only be achieved through peace.][103]

In a series of other statements, Marillac moreover drew attention to the lamentable plight of French society. He did not, however, explicitly mention plague or any other epidemics.[104] It is quite likely that he had included them among those *grandes afflictions* to which he alluded in the above-quoted statement.

Marillac's assessment that the French Crown was imposing a great deal, even too much, on its subjects was vindicated by the fact that unrest was repeatedly erupting across the kingdom, especially from the mid-1620s onwards.[105] Hence, during the period under consideration here, uprisings broke out not only in Lyon, Dijon

102 This can be observed, inter alia, in Marillac's handwritten *Discours sur la manière de gouverner l'Estat* from the year 1630, from which Caroline Maillet-Rao quotes. See Maillet-Rao, La théologie politique des dévots Mathieu de Morgues et Michel de Marillac, p. 51, note 4, p. 67, note 83. For a brief assessment in this regard, see Avenel, *Lettres*, vol. 3, p. 709 f., note 2.

103 Cited in Hildesheimer, *Richelieu*, p. 172 f. While Hildesheimer dates this statement to the year 1626, it obviously dates from February 1629. This is also indicated by the context in which it was transmitted (Archives diplomatiques, Mémoires et documents 793). This statement would thus be a response to France's entry into the War of the Mantuan Succession. For further insight into this interpretation and dating, see also Pagès, Autour du "grand orage", p. 66; Malettke, *Richelieu*, p. 380 where he uncritically adopts Hildesheimer's questionable dating.

104 See, for example, ibid., p. 428, note 396; Pagès, Autour du "grand orage", p. 77. Whether this is truly the case could only be determined following a thorough study of Marillac's letters and writings.

105 In fact, the Chancellor took considerable umbrage at these riots and their extensive spread. He made this clear to Richelieu. See ibid., p. 72 f.

and Grenoble, but also in Orléans, Angers and Aix.[106] Irrespective of the specific causes and circumstances in each locality, all these uprisings shared one important feature: they were all directed against the Crown's attempts to impose even greater financial burdens on the populace. The ensuing unrest can therefore be distinctly understood as an outcry against the excessive demands inflicted upon the king's subjects over those years. It was not, however, only the weaker sections of society that took to insubordination. They had already been severely impacted by the crisis and were yet again confronted with even further financial demands.[107] References to *émotions populaires* [upheavals], often mentioned in relation to this insurgency, are therefore readily misleading.[108] This can be illustrated, for example, by the prevailing situation in Aix, where leading members of parliament played a significant role in the outbreak of the so-called *révolte des cascaveoux* of 1630 by dint of their inciting the local population to protest.[109] In other cities and towns across the realm, heterogeneous forces were also involved in the uprisings. Furthermore, the dire state of the economy may well have pushed many members of the lower classes to vent their pent-up discontent. This is particularly clear given how the surviving sources from the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* indicate that by the end of the 1620s and the early 1630s more and more people were sinking into poverty. Hence, the number of those in need of urgent care at the expense of municipal institutions seems to have been extremely high, especially in urban areas. This phenomenon was particularly dramatic in key urban centres such as Lyon. According to the sources, Lyon's *aumône générale* had to care and provide for between 9 000 and 10 000 poor people during August 1630.[110]

The prevailing unrest across France during those years is also clearly discernible in documents left behind by the crown councils. Not only is there talk, for example, of the above-mentioned *émotions populaires*. In an *arrêt en commandement* dated 15 May 1631, we even come across an explicit reference to *seditions et muti-*

106 See Porchnev, *Les soulèvements populaires en France de 1623 à 1648*, p. 134. A cartographic overview of the trouble spots can be in found in Drévillon, *Les rois absolus, 1629–1715*, p. 174.
107 See Pagès, Autour du "grand orage", p. 67.
108 See E 103A, f° 150$^{r–v}$. The question of the surveys' social basis triggered an intense controversy in the world of research during the 1960s. The two opposing parties in this debate have already been quoted here: the Frenchman Roland Mousnier and the Russian Boris Porchnev. In essence, they were concerned with the question of how the Ancien Régime society as a whole was structured. The fact that they came up with divergent answers to this question had not least to do with the fact that Mousnier and Porchnev also belonged to highly different ideological camps.
109 See on this point Pillorget, Les "cascaveoux": L'insurrection aixoise de l'automne 1630. The revolt owes its name to the insurgents' distinctive sign: a *cascaveou* (Eng. a small bell) attached to a ribbon or a strap.
110 See AN, E 104, f° 70$^{r–v}$. That the problem already existed can be seen in E 100B, f° 153^{r}–154^{r}.

neryes [seditions and mutinies] which had recently erupted in some of the kingdom's cities.[111] Considering the relatively late date on which those words were written, they seem somewhat euphemistic. The attempt to proffer a plausible justification for rioting was even more euphemistic in the document's following sentence. The "*viollances*" to which it refers were due to the failure of those responsible for the "*police*" to discharge their duties properly. His Majesty wanted to ensure that such riots would not re-occur in future.[112]

Despite the fact that the king's wish was to remain a somewhat pious aspiration, the above-mentioned and other *arrêts en commandement* nevertheless furnish greater insight into the topics of the day with which the most powerful crown council was concerned. In this context, a comparison with the *arrêts simples* proves worthwhile, for it enables us to define the *arrêts en commandement* more closely in terms of content and form, even though, as has been observed, only a relatively small number have survived. Accordingly, a decision adapted by the *Conseil des affaires* was not as often preceded by a request or complaint as those addressed to the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or, as the case may be, to the *Conseil de direction des finances.* Even the *arrêts en commandement* routinely make mention of how a certain matter had been submitted to Louis XIII.[113] External actors, however, were less often behind such initiatives than could be said for the *arrêts simples.* And yet, it is striking how the French monarchy primarily resorted to *arrêts en commandement* whenever its interests and institutions were directly affected.[114] Here, however, a highly selective demarcation with the *arrêts simples* also seems problematic, particularly when similarities between decisions adapted by the *Conseil des affaires* and the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* outweigh the differences. Viewed from today's perspective, it is difficult to fathom why the result in multiple cases with two highly similar situations differed: whereas an *arrêt simple* was issued in one instance, an *arrêt en commandement* was the outcome in the other.[115]

3 Mobility as Governance Technique

Notwithstanding, one should never underestimate the level of mobility required of crown councillors in the exercise of their duties during those years. Invariably,

111 Cf. AN, E 106A f° 26^{r-v}.

112 See ibid.

113 See, for example, AN, E 97A, f° 20^{r}.

114 See, for example, AN, E 105B, f° 275^{r-v}.

115 Compare, for example, AN, E 95, f° 407^{r-v} and E 106, f° 430^{r}.

the decisive factor was the question of where precisely Louis XIII was at any given time. If away from Paris or absent from his court for a prolonged period, the king would constantly have his councillors accompany him.[116] And given how Louis quite frequently travelled throughout the realm circa 1630, the *Conseils du roi's* other members would sometimes also have to travel considerable distances. Several councillors, however, always remained behind at court in order to take care of any government business that may have arisen.[117]

Given how every decision taken by the crown councils was stamped with the place and date of its execution, these documents can be used to draw up an approximate royal itinerary for this period. Hence, we can infer from them Louis XIII's whereabouts between 1629 and 1631. Particularly helpful in this context are the decisions adopted by the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances*, which, despite some gaps in the surviving sources, are available in close succession for these years. Decisions were not only taken in Paris and Saint-Germain-en-Laye, but also in a variety of other locations such as the [military] "camp in front of La Rochelle," in Valence and in Lyon.[118] Hence, these specific locations point us toward the key motives at play behind the king and his entourage's mobility, namely, the wars in which Louis and Richelieu were then waging both domestically against the Huguenots and abroad against the Habsburg dynasty.

What lay behind this ambulatory exercise of power was a military concern somewhat reminiscent of medieval organisational models, but which actually had to deal with highly specific problems and phenomena of the seventeenth century. Against such a backdrop, the crown councils were not only responsible for coming to grips with the calamitous consequences linked to epidemics, famines and wars, but were themselves also involved in both financing and coordinating hostilities against their adversaries. In an attempt to underwrite these warlike operations, they kept imposing new taxes upon the population. In other words, the *Conseils du roi* themselves had long been part of the problem, one which they were constantly seeking to resolve.

And yet, circa 1630 the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* approved requests brought to their attention in the vast majority of cases. Unquestionably, the royal headquarters' pronounced mobility equally contributed to their willingness to assume an accommodating stance. For it was only thanks to the temporary presence of this high command in the kingdom's various

116 See Mousnier, Le Conseil du roi de la mort de Henri IV, p. 155.

117 See, on this point, Pagès, Le Conseil du roi sous Louis XIII, p. 297–299, which speaks of a *sorte de régence* which Louis set up on such occasions.

118 See, for example, AN, E 96B, f° 29^{r}; E 100A, f° 5^{r}; E 104, f° 70$^{r–v}$.

regions that ultimately enabled the king's subjects to bring their concerns directly before the crown councils. Presumably, this was the case with Estienne Ferailles from Lyon whose request was heard by the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or by the *Conseil de direction des finances* at precisely the moment the king and his entourage happened to be passing through Lyon[119], thus enabling Ferailles to present his case in person. Ferailles's father had been an *officier* who had succumbed to plague. The responsible apparatus decided that Ferailles, who had moreover lost his mother to the Black Death, should be allowed to take over his father's o*ffice* in return for a payment of a not inconsiderable sum of money.[120]

Plague, however, was not the only epidemic spreading fear and terror across France. For in addition to the Black Death, typhus was also rampant throughout the realm circa 1630.[121] People had difficulty, however, in precisely distinguishing between these pestilences. Hence, medical terms such as *contagion* or *maladie contagieuse* feature far more frequently in the sources than the word *peste.* These two terms also predominate in the crown councils' records, whenever these documents allude to epidemics and pestilences.[122] In January 1628, for instance, a delegation from the city of Orléans pointed out to the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or to the *Conseil de direction des finances* the costs involved in coping with the *contagion* in general and with caring for those afflicted with contagious diseases (*malades contagiez*) in particular.[123]

The surviving *arrêts en commandement* and *arrêts simples*, however, provide scant information about the prevailing epidemics' trajectory and impact. Moreover, the documents make only passing reference to any reciprocal effects between the epidemics and other crisis phenomena flaring up in the years circa 1630. Nevertheless, they do allow us to draw certain conclusions about the scale of the epidemics afflicting the realm. This is especially true in terms of geographical scope, given how people and institutions from nearly every corner of France were turning to the crown councils with their petitions and complaints during those years. References to the *contagion* or to the *maladie contagieuse* did not always feature prominently in the documents. On the contrary, they were frequently not even mentioned. Nevertheless, those invoking the dreaded diseases had obviously un-

119 See AN, E 104, f° 168$^{r–v}$.

120 See ibid.

121 See Prinzing, *Epidemics Resulting from Wars*, p. 73.

122 Some decisions even employ the plural form *maladies contagieuses.* Hence, they explicitly refer to the simultaneity of various infectious diseases, although they not state anything about which specific diseases they were dealing with in detail. See, for example, E 104, f° 235$^{r–v}$.

123 See AN, E 95A, f° 111^{r}.

derstood that they could bolster their demands by deploying this public health argument.

Yet, above all, plague and typhus were a terrifying quotidian reality, the horror of which was rarely ever mentioned in the crown councils' decisions. The fact that those plague and typhus outbreaks striking numerous regions throughout France between 1629 and 1631 were to turn a long-standing crisis situation into a full-blown catastrophe was scarcely reflected in any of the councils' decisions.[124]

And yet, Louis XIII himself, his political and administrative staff and especially his troops equally suffered from outbreaks of disease – at least indirectly. Plague had apparently already spread to and within the royal army encampment outside La Rochelle. This hypothesis is also supported by a complaint made by the city's residents, who in July 1629 protested to the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or to the *Conseil de direction des finances* how they had been suffering from the *maladie contagieuse* and its consequences ever since the city had capitulated.[125] Those complaining to the crown council were not the only ones to suffer from epidemics, however. For following their discharge in the aftermath of the victorious siege, troops dispersed in every direction and appear to have spread plague even more widely.[126] The military campaign led by the Marquis d'Huxelles may also have contributed to the further spread of epidemics in 1628, and especially in 1629. This contagious impact was not to remain without consequences for Louis' political and military ventures; the king was forced to bypass Lyon on his way to Savoy at the beginning of 1629, for the Black Death was rampant there at the time.[127] Similarly, Louis was advised later in 1629 to forsake Languedoc on account of a plague outbreak. The disease was spreading there rapidly, too, as the cardinal minister informed the king.[128] In fact, key regional centres such as Toulouse and Montpellier, were soon struck by the pestilence.[129] In Provence, the situation was scarcely any better, for the Black Death had also taken hold here in June 1629, with Aix and Marseille, the most important cities in this province, also struck by an outbreak of plague.[130]

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124 A whole series of French research works are examining the epidemics of the 1620s and 1630s on a local or regional basis, and, against that backdrop, also describe their dire consequences. Among the most important of these research works to date are: Lucenet, *Lyon malade de la peste*; Lebrun, *Les hommes et la mort en Anjou aux XVII^e^ et XVIII^e^ siècles*, pp. 311–318.

125 See AN, E 100B, f° 162^r–v^.

126 See Lucenet, *Les grandes pestes en France*, p. 150.

127 See Tamizey de Larroque, *Les guerres du règne de Louis XIII et de la minorité de Louis XIV*, vol. 1, p. 73, note 2.

128 See ibid., p. 294 f.

129 See AN, E 2665, f° 292^r–v^, 323^v^–324^v^.

130 See AN, E 103A, f° 245^r^; 103B, f° 113^r–v^.

In terms of the French Crown Council's strategy, these multiple outbreaks of plague across the south of the kingdom meant conditions for political and military endeavours throughout the region were to fundamentally change. Although such circumstances were scarcely mentioned in the *Conseils du roi's* records, other documents reveal how those in leadership positions must have been clearly aware of such developments by 1630 at the latest. That the scope for manoeuvre available to Louis XIII and Richelieu meanwhile differed from what it had been just a few years previously was evident above all in the fact that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find suitable transit zones for their royal troops. With vast tracts of the countryside contaminated, it was scarcely viable for soldiers to march along the designated routes to the battlefields where they were to assume battle stations.[131] The deployment of mules, which were so vital for supplying troops with both food rations and ammunition during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries[132], encountered similar difficulties. The crown council was thus increasingly confronted with the unpalatable consequences of its own political aspirations, for these had not only overstretched the fortitude of the nation's own children, but had even sacrificed their health and their lives on the monarch's altar of glory.

This policy's defining feature was that the king and his cardinal minister subordinated all civilian interests to the military objectives they were pursuing.[133] This prioritisation was already becoming more than evident toward the end of 1628, as Louis XIII was also envisaging Provence as a transit zone as part of his planned military expedition to Savoy. He thus urged those in charge of parliament in Aix not to allow the planned transit march to founder on account of objections advanced by the epidemic police. Against this backdrop, the king moreover claimed that it should not pose any problems for the parliamentarians in Aix to take precautions against plague, yet more proof that the French Crown did not attach any great importance to epidemics at that juncture.[134]

Even as military leaders were searching for transit zones for their troops and the mules in 1630, this dismissive mindset was still widespread. At best, the welfare of those epidemic-ridden areas played a secondary role. In essence, the generals overriding concern was to hinder the epidemics gaining a foothold among the

131 See Avenel, *Lettres*, vol. 3, pp. 701–704, 813.

132 See ibid., p. 757. With regard to the mules' military function see Jung, L'organisation du service des vivres aux armées de 1550 à 1650, pp. 287–290.

133 See, using the example of Provence, Pillorget, *Les mouvements insurrectionnels de Provence entre 1596 et 1715*, p. 314.

134 On this point, see – with the literal reproduction of the corresponding quote – Busch, Im Schatten des Schwarzen Todes, p. 199.

royal troops.[135] This consideration is by no means insignificant, for the foot-soldiers themselves had previously regularly turned into a burden for local populations. By imposing themselves, the troops had obviously also appeared as transmitters of infectious diseases, although no indications of such a causal relationship are to found in the *Conseils du roi's* files.[136] That the royal troops were so dreaded in any town or village they approached had equally to do with the fact that the soldiers routinely harassed the local population, helping themselves to the local people's food supplies without compensating them in return.[137]

Furthermore, not only was it a case of catering for those mobile military units travelling or camping out in the provinces of southern France. Rather, Provence and Dauphiné also had to contribute to supplying food rations to the troops stationed in Northern Italy. Both provinces primarily supplied grain – a matter which had been the focus of the crown council's attention since 1629. This is not only apparent from Richelieu's copious correspondence on the topic[138], but also from other correspondence in the *Conseils du roi's* files. These files equally reveal how challenging it could be, even for the king, to procure large quantities of grain.[139] The pervasive shortage of grain in 1631 was no less a novel phenomenon as the fact that grain requirements for the royal army routinely exacerbated this penury. Louis XIII was thus already making considerable efforts throughout the latter half of the 1620s to ensure that grain harvested in France actually remained in France.[140] Hence, in his councils' rulings dealing with this issue, the king repeatedly indicated that the grain in question was destined for troops stationed on French soil.[141] Were the troops involved in an expedition beyond the national borders, however, Louis did not hesitate to authorise the export of substantial quantities of grain for his soldiers.[142] As was the case with policies dealing with the epidemic, military concerns took precedence over civil society when it came to grain supply. Or to reformulate the rationale at work: disease, hunger and inflation were the price the population had then to pay in order for the king to enhance his geo-political standing and power in the prestigious Northern Italian theatre of war.

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135 See Avenel, *Lettres*, vol. 3, p. 701f., 704.

136 On this point, see AN, E 105B, f° 86$^{r–v}$.

137 See AN, E 99B, f° 300^{r}–301^{r}; 106A, 252$^{r–v}$.

138 See Avenel, *Lettres*, vol. 3, p. 859, note 2.

139 See, for example, AN, E 106A, f° 13^{r}, 15$^{r–v}$.

140 See, for example, the Royal Privy Council's decision, which has survived in printed form: *Arrest du Conseil d'estat privé du Roy, pour le bled*, Paris 1626, BnF, F-47044 (12).

141 See Pillorget, *Les mouvements insurrectionnels de Provence entre 1596 et 1715*, p. 314. It is probably to be understood in this sense: AN, E 106B-107A, f° 263$^{r–v}$.

142 See AN, E 2665, f° 45$^{r–v}$.

IV Hail the Response!: *Conseils du roi* between Epidemics and Crisis Management

1 *Communes* Caught between Public Healthcare and Excessive Financial Demands

The supply problems endured by the French population during the late 1620s and early 1630s are a recurring theme in the crown councils' files. Two widows from different regions of the kingdom, for example, reported independently to the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or to the *Conseil de direction des finances* that a "*grande famine*" and "*disettez et necessitez du peuple*" [dearth and the people's needs] were rampant throughout the land.[143] While it is certainly conceivable that both these women might have exaggerated the supply situation in their respective regions in their attempt to galvanize the council into action, such a strategy would probably have been doomed to failure had the said *famine* or the *disettez et necessitez* to which they alluded not existed. Yet, something of far greater significance was unfolding here: prolonged periods of grain shortages, hunger and inflation were not at all uncommon during those years. Matters were further confounded by the epidemic control measures being enforced in numerous municipalities and provinces at that time. While the *communes* only allowed those people from other *communes* free of the disease to enter their precincts, the provinces often forbade their inhabitants from having any contact whatsoever with people from other provinces deemed contaminated.[144] In Languedoc, both regulations were probably in force concurrently. For in March 1630, a ruling adapted by *the Conseil d'État et des finances* or by the *Conseil de direction des finances* stated that this province had been so severely struck by plague, "*quil nya aucune sorte de commerce ny communicat[io]n*" [that no kind of commerce or contact is taking place].[145]

In fact, the epidemic police at that time were primarily concentrating on keeping the various population groups apart from one another.[146] This form of epidemic control was bound to severely impact an economy largely predicated upon the free movement of goods and people. The documents left behind by the crown coun-

143 AN, E 106A, f° 104^{r}; E 107A, f° 331$^{r–v}$.

144 See Pillorget, *Les mouvements insurrectionnels de Provence entre 1596 et 1715*, p. 315 f.; Busch, Im Schatten des Schwarzen Todes, p. 205 f.

145 AN, E 102, 321$^{r–v}$.

146 See Hildesheimer, *La terreur et la pitié*, pp. 44–56, 87–93.

cils, however, have little to say about how such control measures were configured. This renders the documents all the more eloquently or repetitively informative about the dramatic social consequences accompanying the epidemics in many localities and, in some instances, probably also concerning measures taken by the epidemic police. Hence, the latter half of the 1620s and the first half of the 1630s must have seen large swathes of the population becoming poverty-stricken. Nevertheless, the altogether quite unfavourable economic developments during those years probably also contributed to a growing reliance on handouts and alms in the cities of the realm. For example, Lyon's *aumône générale*, an institution originally created for the purpose of harbouring and aiding the poor, declared that the number of those it had to care for had increased twofold since 1627.[147] A steep rise in grain prices was cited as the cause. Furthermore, the majority of those citizens, who normally would have financially assisted the *aumône générale,* were to succumb to plague.[148]

According to the crown councils' records, conditions similar to those in Lyon were prevailing in a number of other cities throughout the realm. The degree of impoverishment among large swathes of the population can only be fully envisaged if one considers that the majority of communes never resorted to the *Conseils du roi* in any case. Given the far-reaching spread of the epidemics, those towns mentioned in the crown councils' documentation merely represent the tip of the iceberg. It is noteworthy, for example, how those communes seeking financial assistance from the crown councils often failed to mention how much they had spent on the poor. Instead, most of them referred to the sums they had raised to deal with the plague outbreak. The above-mentioned *arrêt* from January 1628, for instance, stated that the city of Orléans requires "*deniers de subvention*," [subvention funds] which were actually designated for caring for the poor, "*pour satisfaire aux frais et despenses des malades contagiez*" [in order to meet the costs and expenditures related to contagious diseases.][149] What at first glance might appear to be a misappropriation, on closer inspection points to the close causal link between epidemics and poverty during those years circa 1630.[150] Such an awareness also led, for example, to the fact that in 1629, during the plague epidemic that struck Aix, some of city's poor were segregated outside the ramparts.[151] Obviously, not only were the poor deemed particularly susceptible to infection, but also treated as a

147 See AN, E 2665, f° 187^{r}–188^{r}.

148 See ibid.

149 AN, E 95A, f° 111^{r}.

150 See Pullan, Plague and Perceptions of the Poor in Early Modern Italy.

151 See Dumoulin, La difficile gestion d'une ville pendant la peste : Aix-en-Provence au XVII^{e} siècle, p. 214.

highly contagious social group. Apparently, being poor was tantamount to being sick was a widely held opinion in France circa 1630.[152] Hence, under the prevailing calamitous conditions, scarcely any distinction was made between the sick and the poor, an inference which is moreover manifest in the crown councils' records.

Whether poor or sick or both, segregating such large segments of population groups *extra muros* placed an enormous financial burden on those communes concerned.[153] For not only had the cities in question to provide an adequate support system outside the city boundary, but they also had to cater for the poor or sick there. These and other expenses, such as costs for running the epidemic police, far exceeded many municipalities' financial wherewithal.[154] Such burdens and hardships were unquestionably the motivating force that prompted numerous cities and towns to resort to the crown councils, hoping to be reimbursed at least in part for the costs thus incurred. At the same time, however, taking such a step equally implied the de facto admission that the French Crown had a certain competence in these matters.

The situation in Nîmes, for example, differed somewhat. Located in Languedoc, the city had also incurred considerable financial outlays in the aftermath of the plague outbreak and thus sought permission from the crown councils to tax its citizens.[155] Other communes, meanwhile, hoped for tax relief in order to compensate them for the elevated costs to which they had been subjected in caring for the poor and the sick. Such an argument was introduced, for example, by a town in Quercy whose inhabitants claimed that they had been suffering enormously from plague, famine and war since 1628.[156] Lastly, there were those communes that petitioned the Crown for permission to levy a tax that would enable them to fund

152 On this point see, Biraben, Les pauvres et la peste.

153 It was commonplace in cities of the Ancien Régime for plague victims to be segregated and sent outside the city walls. This measure applied to those who had contracted plague as well as to those who had already succumbed to it. Finally, it also applied to those suspected of having contracted plague and who thus had to go into quarantine. The question of transforming urban fortifications into epidemic police barriers has not yet been systematically investigated for the early modern period. See Bourdelais, L'épidémie créatrice des frontières.

154 See Jacqueline Dumoulin's highly instructive studies on Aix: Dumoulin, La difficile gestion d'une ville pendant la peste: Aix-en-Provence au XVII^e^ siècle; eadem, Le financement de la peste à Aix-en-Provence au XVII^e^ siècle; eadem, Le coût de la santé à Aix-en-Provence du XVI^e^ au XVIII^e^ siècle. Le financement de la lutte contre la peste.

155 See AN, E 1684, f° 49^r^. This is one of the rare cases in which the king or his councillors did not render a final decision, but instead referred the matter to a commission or an institution that would then deal with it in greater detail.

156 See AN, E 2665, f° 654^v^–655^r^.

and build a plague hospital.[157] The traditional hospitals still in operation in many localities circa 1630 were proving to be unsuitable for dispensing care to plague-stricken victims.[158] It is striking how the *Conseils du roi* approved nearly every petition for financial relief submitted by the communes. The corresponding decisions were mostly issued as *arrêts simples*, but in some cases also as *arrêts en commandement.* An answer to the question as to why this was so can only be proffered after a systematic comparison of all documents from this first large group of decisions has been undertaken.

2 *Fermiers* Caught between Reality and Rhetoric

Two other large groups of actors, who turned to the crown councils during time of crisis, were actually working for the monarchy; namely, the *officiers* and the *fermiers.* Both groups were indispensable to the French monarchy's political and military apparatuses. The *fermiers* were tax gatherers whose primary task was to collect indirect taxes (*fermes*) either in a solo capacity or in groups. The advantages such a tenancy system afforded the Crown were indisputable: they spared the royal administration the onerous duty of directly collecting the taxes due from the king's subjects. At the same time, the *fermiers* handed over to the royal treasury the due revenue in the form of a lump sum, calculated according to the corresponding tax estimate.[159] Whatever money the *fermiers* collected in taxes over and above this lump sum, they could pocket as profit. Viewed from this perspective, the *fermiers* naturally had an interest in exacting as much tax as possible from the king's subjects. They thus found themselves acting as a liaison on the interface between the rulers and their subjects, thus fulfilling a pivotal hinge function that spared the Crown both from having to maintain a staff-intensive tax administration and from having to deal with the manifold forms of indirect taxation still quite commonplace during the seventeenth century. Especially in view of the Crown's considerable financial needs during the tumultuous wars circa 1630, the question of how such a tenancy system actually operated under the special constraints imposed by war, famine and pestilence assumes even greater relevance.

157 See AN, E 99A, f° 310r.

158 On this point see F. Hildesheimer's insightful comment: "The difference is obvious from the outset; the traditional hospital is the fruit of Christian charity; the plague hospital is an institution whose origins are administrative, corresponding to the community's automatic response to protect themselves, for plague transforms the notion of charity and assistance into an exercise in sanitary policing." (Hildesheimer, *La terreur et la pitié*, p. 45).

159 See Durand, Fermes, Ferme générale, p. 542.

Between 1629 and 1631, the *fermiers* were repeatedly turning to the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or to the *Conseil de direction des finances.* The crises and catastrophes then so severely afflicting France were mentioned much more candidly in the decisions triggered by their petitions than in other *arrêts.* One such example has already been cited above.[160] Another decision adopted also exemplifies what incited the *fermiers* to appeal to the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or to the *Conseil de direction des finances.* Drawn up at the end of September 1630, the document in question reveals how a certain Pierre de la Vau, a *fermier général* for the salt tax in Dauphiné and Provence, had been incurring substantial losses in revenue.[161] The injured party cited plague and the ongoing war raging across both provinces over the previous two years as the grounds for his petition. Such afflictions and infestations also meant that some salt storage facilities in those areas for which he was responsible could not be supplied. Hence, the king should issue a command whereby he, de la Vau, would be granted a discount on the sum of the *ferme* he must contribute to the royal coffers. As matters transpired, Louis XIII partially complied with this *fermier's* request.[162]

A similar fate to that of Pierre de la Vau equally befell a number of other *fermiers* in those years circa 1630. Other general tax collectors had already envisaged how plague and war would render tax collection considerably more challenging. In May 1629, a *fermier* in Languedoc thus petitioned the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* for a "*décharge*" [dispensation from paying taxes].[163] It remains unclear, however, whether the *fermier* in question wanted to resign outright from the function he originally assumed or whether his intention was to reduce his payments to the Crown in anticipation of inferior tax revenues. Decades ago, Richard Bonney pointed out how many *fermiers* were behaving in a similar fashion in the years circa 1630, availing of the prevailing subsistence crisis as a way to have their lease costs reduced.[164] As documented in the council decisions, the particularly drastic descriptions of widespread misery may well have been part of the *fermiers'* strategy. Nevertheless, there are no grounds to underestimate the massive socio-economic upheavals which the South of France, in particular, were having to endure at that juncture. In all likelihood, the *fermiers'* complaints were afforded an attentive ear, not least because they were credible.

Yet, irrespective of what the decisive factor might have been, the *fermiers* ultimately achieved their objective: they were able to engineer more or less signifi-

160 See above p. 183.
161 See AN, E 104, f° 511^{r-v}.
162 See ibid.
163 See AN, E 100A, 173^{r}.
164 See Bonney, *The King's Debts*, p. 143.

cant reductions in their lease costs. Amidst a highly fraught financial crisis, the Crown Council had to forego urgently needed funding sources. What's more, the royal administration felt itself compelled to enter into sometimes complicated negotiations with the *fermier*s. These interventions highlighted potential weaknesses in a tax administration system which had seen the tax collection process entrusted into private hands. The inherent weaknesses were to become fully apparent during the spring of 1631, following the bankruptcy of the *fermier* Claude Charlot, a development which compelled the Crown Council to resume taking charge of collecting salt tax (*la gabelle*).[165] Any financial benefits from such a shift in approach could only be expected in the medium or even long term, however. In the short term, nothing was to change in the alarm-inducing state of royal finances, a concern openly acknowledged in the files of the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances.* In fact, it would appear that the French Crown was on the verge of insolvency several times at this point. And what had triggered these debilitating costs? The army.[166]

3 *Officiers* between Calamity and Legacy

In a bid to raise the substantial sums of money needed for their military operations in France and Northern Italy, Louis XIII and Richelieu had set all wheels in motion during the years before and after 1630.[167] Their foremost comrade-in-arms was Antoine Coiffier de Ruzé, marquis d'Effiat, who, as Superintendent of Finances to the king, held a key position in the monarchy and especially on the *Conseils du roi* after 1626. D'Effiat was not lacking in creativity or acumen when it came to opening up fresh sources of funding for the royal administration or for channelling existing sources of finance more toward the service of the Crown than had been the case beforehand.[168] In an attempt to keep the king's finances at least somewhat in balance, despite massively increasing expenditure, he also relied on trading *offices.* The sale of *offices*, some of which had been created specifically for the purpose of financing military projects, had already for decades represented an indispensable source of income for the Crown.

165 See ibid.

166 See AN, E 101A, f° 18^{r}, 20^{r}; E 103A, f° 160^{r}.

167 See AN, E 1684, f° 25^{r}, where it states in the introduction: "*Le Roy ayant besoing en la necessité p[resen]te de ses affaires de se servir de touttes sortes de moyens* […]." [The King needs to use every means at his disposal given the current pressing state of his affairs (…)]

168 See, on this point, Bonney, *The King's Debts*, pp. 140–147.

Richelieu, who resolutely promoted d'Effiat's political ascension, had actually wanted to abolish the sale of *offices*.[169] The cardinal minister was soon, however, to switch priorities, abandoning this project for another, namely suppressing Huguenot political opposition on the domestic front all while bolstering the king's prestige in foreign policy.[170] And so it was that under Louis XIII the trade in *offices* reached unprecedented proportions. As early as 1629, the monarchy was able to gross 17 million *livres* as a result of this trading.[171] In fact, the sale of *offices* was one of the few thriving branches of business in an era plagued by wars and epidemics and during which trade in agricultural and industrial products virtually came to an outright standstill. Not only do numerous manuscripts emanating from the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* attest to this bustling trade in *offices*, but so, too, do a large number of contemporary documents. If these documents are collectively considered, the decisions adopted can be roughly subdivided according to content-related criteria. In fact, there were not only *arrêts* which established one or more purchasable *offices* in the name of the king[172], but also those which abolished, merged or duplicated already existing *offices*.[173] Other council decisions, in turn, primarily focused on the trade in *offices* per se, whereby they would target, for example, to make it easier to sell the *offices* in general.[174] And then there were those *arrêts* that would call to mind – already long-standing – regulations concerning the trade in *offices*.[175]

An example for this category of document is an edict issued by the king, which had already been set in motion in 1629, but only received the necessary confirmation from Normandy's *Cour des Aides* in 1631.[176] This edict assigned the levying of

169 See, on this point, Hildesheimer, *Richelieu*, p. 126.

170 See, on this point, Mousnier, *La vénalité des offices sous Henri IV et Louis XIII*, pp. 646–654.

171 See Le Roux, *Les guerres de religion*, p. 464.

172 See, for example, an *arrêt* by the *conseil d'État* quashing a judgment of the Parliament of Paris of 2 September 1628 and ordering that Mathieu de La Forest shall benefit from the *office* of alternative private master of waters and forests of the viscounty of Paris […], [Paris 1629], BnF, F-47047 (36).

173 See, for example, the king's edict abolishing the *offices* of treasurers and general controllers, treasurers and provincial controllers of roads and bridges; and [thereby] the attribution of the function of the said *offices* to the receivers and general controllers of finance in each *Generalité*. Verified at the *Chambre des Comptes* last December 1629, Paris 1630, BnF, NUMM-9740134.

174 See, for example, AN, E 106A, f° 439^{r}; E 107A, f° 317^{r}.

175 See, for example, *Arrêts du Conseil d'Etat* issued for executing the king's edicts and declaration concerning the expansion and union of His Majesty's *offices* of counsellors to the charge of the *avocats* in all the presidial seats, *bailliages* […] and other royal jurisdictions […]. All the-said edicts and declaration from the months of August 1578 and 25 March 1582 […], Paris 1629, BnF, F-26207 (9).

176 See The king's edict concerning the appointing, in a hereditary way, in each of this Kingdom's *election*, of three collectors for the rights due on the *tailles*, *taillon*, *soldes* of the provosts' marshals,

direct taxes to the *officiers*, whilst the *fermiers* remained responsible for collecting indirect taxes. The justification Louis XIII gave for this measure equally sheds light on the rationale that had guided royal policy over previous years.[177]

The numerous regulations which not only the king himself but also his *Conseil d'État et des finances* or his *Conseil de direction des finances* enacted throughout the late 1620s and early 1630s with regard to the acquisition of *offices* reveals the crucial importance attached to this issue at the royal court at that time.[178] Any questions regarding the conditions under which an *office* could be inherited or passed on were the subject of constant controversy and strife.[179] A key element in this context was a provision initially introduced by Henry IV under the name of *droit annuel*, whereby *officiers* were authorised to freely determine the sale, transfer and inheritance of their function in return for an annual payment.[180] Admittedly, however, this provision was subsequently called into question over and again, as was the trading of *offices*, notably toward the end of the 1620s. Yet, after Richelieu abandoned his rejection of the *droit annuel* for the sake of fulfilling his foreign policy aspirations, the monarchy once again renewed the *droit annuel* for the years 1630 and 1631, albeit under slightly different conditions than heretofore.[181]

During the period under consideration here, the *droit annuel* was a key factor in the deliberations undertaken by the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances.* One important decision proves that the Crown Council's

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the garrison's *creuës* as well as other *creuës* and levies of the *deniers* both ordinary and extraordinary […], Rouen 1631, BnF, F-46967 (6).

177 "Les troubles et divers mouvements arrivéz en cét Estat depuis plusieurs années par la rebellion d'aucuns de nos subjets, nous ayant obligés à de grandes despenses pour l'entretenement des armées que nous avons à divers temps mis sur pied par mer et par terre, afin de les ranger à leur devoir et donner la paix à cet Estat, comme nous avons heureusement faict avec l'assistance de Dieu ces dernieres années; il nous a esté impossible de satisfaire de nostre revenu ordinaire ausdictes despenses […]." (Ibid., p. 3).

"The disturbances and various movements that have been occurring in this State for several years due to the rebellion by some of our subjects have forced us to great expense to maintain the armies at various times we have launched by sea and by land in order to fulfill their duties and give peace to this State, as we have fortunately done with the assistance of God these last years; it has been impossible for us to cover our expenses from our regular income […]." (ibid., p. 3).

178 The fact that there are hardly any *arrêts en commandement* dealing with the question of the purchase and sale of *offices* should not mislead us either. This has only partially to do with the unfavorable situation with existing sources. The main reason is that the *offices* fell within the responsibility of the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances.*

179 See, on this point, Mousnier, *La vénalité des offices,* pp. 283–308.

180 See Barbiche, *Les institutions de la monarchie française*, p. 79 f.

181 See Mousnier, *La vénalité des offices*, pp. 655–661.

general treasurer in the *généralité* of Toulouse had issued a corresponding ordinance during the plague outbreak in that city.[182] Insofar as can be judged, the ordinance was addressed to all the *officiers* then working in the *généralité* of Toulouse, instructing them to pay their *droit annuel* in one of the non-infested cities in that administrative district.[183] Little else is known about the content of this ordinance. What is certain, however, is that *fermiers* were not legally authorised to enact such a regulation.[184] Rather, this ordinance attests to the king's willingness to preserve both the lives and capacities of his *officiers* lest an epidemic break out. The fact that plague and other epidemics had the potential to threaten not only the very existence of these officials and to undermine their working capacity and financial power, but also the trade in *offices*, is evident from another ruling passed by the same council some days later.[185]

Above all, however, epidemics were to endanger the very physical existence of those unable or unwilling to avoid or flee them. And so, during those pestilent-ridden years between 1629 and 1631, the ranks of the *officiers* also dwindled. Based on the sources and available research literature, however, it is not possible to ascertain even a reasonably precise estimate as to how many of them ultimately succumbed to an illness. The files of the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* at least enable us to conclude that several dozen petitions that reached this council over those years were indeed initiatives taken by widows and orphans whose husbands or fathers had succumbed to an epidemic. Furthermore, there were very few other instances in which husbands or fathers had died of the so-called *maladie contagieuse.* Notwithstanding, the sources do not allow us to make any definitive statement on this matter, for the documents were not primarily concerned with clarifying how fatalities came about. Rather, what comes across from this research and from the other files from the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* was that if such a decision happened to mention the death of a given individual, then it was first and foremost because that person was an *officier*, and secondly because the demise of this functionary raised problems for which the applicable rules pertaining to the *droit annuel* did not provide a generally binding solution.[186] The cases of the two persons

182 See AN, E 98, f° 83r.

183 See ibid. The ordinance issued in December 1628 thus anticipated in timely fashion the sequence of events: payment of the *droit annuel* in Toulouse usually paid in January would thus coincide with the widespread havoc wrought by plague.

184 This is also indicated, at least indirectly, by the remark that the regulation just explained was made "*souls le bon playsir de sa Ma[jes]te*" [At his His Majesty's great pleasure], ibid.

185 See AN, E 98, f° 180r.

186 See Pagès, Le Conseil du Roi et la vénalité des offices, pp. 249–251.

briefly discussed hereafter epitomise a whole series of other petitioners who likewise turned to the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* during those fraught years.

Our first example is a certain Charlotte Durant, whose husband had served as a collector of direct taxes in the *élection* Chaudun. In the wake of his death Madame Durant wanted to continue exercising this function in his place and had therefore already paid the *droit annuel* for the current year 1629.[187] A second important prerequisite for anybody intending to assume this *office* was compliance with the six-month rule: Mme Durant had to take over the *office* that her husband had held within six months of his death in order that it not revert to the king.[188] She feared, however, that she would not be able to meet this deadline, for plague had already spread to the house where she usually lived, leading her to retreat to the countryside for her own safety. She therefore requested an extension of that six-month deadline – a request granted by the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or by the *Conseil de direction des finances.*[189]

Our second example concerns a certain Jean Delbon from Cahors, whose father had been *procureur postulant* [postulant prosecutor] and who had succumbed to plague in late September 1628.[190] Delbon was able to provide all the documents required to take on this *officier* function, with the sole exception of the receipt for payment of the *droit annuel* for 1625.[191] He was determined not to let anything prevent him – not even the lack of a single document –– from assuming his late father's function, so he unceremoniously declared to the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or to the *Conseil de direction des finances* that he was willing to pay the overdue contribution voluntarily. Whereupon the Council agreed to his proposal and allowed him to continue exercising his late father's activities.[192]

In substantial terms, both these *arrêts* deal with a matter which in one way or another had also been addressed across a whole series of other decisions. Further-

187 See AN, E 2665, f° 42^{v}–43^{r}.

188 Regarding the six-month clause, see Pagès, Le Conseil du Roi et la vénalité des offices, p. 249.

189 See AN, E 2665, f° 42^{v}–43^{r}. This document is one of those very few *arrêts* implying that the deceased had succumbed to plague, yet it does not explicitly state so. Matters differ, however, in the document mentioned in the following note: here, the *arrêt* leaves no doubt that the *officier* in question died of the "maladie contagieuse". See ibid., f° 43^{r}–44^{r}.

190 See AN, E 100A, f° 81^{r}. What is unusual about this decision is that Jean Delbon specifically pointed out to the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or the *Conseil de direction des finances* that he had spared neither expense nor effort to present his case to them. He had been compelled to follow the King all the way to Valence. He had also spent considerable time waiting for his documents to be examined. This had also caused him to incur considerable expense.

191 See ibid.

192 See ibid.

more, this applies not only to the period of this present study, but also beyond, as Pagès has shown in his analysis of the *arrêts simples* for the years post 1623, where he was able to prove that many heirs of deceased *officiers* had already requested an extension of the deadline.[193] Little obviously had changed, however, with regard to how the crown councillors handled requests and complaints brought before them:

> Une autre observation qui s'impose, c'est que, dans la plupart des cas où il y a quelque irrégularité de forme, ou même de fait, le Conseil se montre presque toujours très large : la législation sur les offices n'a rien d'une législation draconienne.
>
> [Another observation that can be made is that in most cases where there is some irregularity of form, or even of fact, the Council is almost always very broad-minded: the legislation concerning the *offices* is not in any way draconian].[194]

4 Military Forces between Triumph and Tragedy

Whether concerned with the communes, the *fermiers* or the *officiers*, the measures taken by the crown councils during the years 1629–1631, as epidemics were raging throughout the realm, all had one thing in common: they were all aimed at offsetting the manifold financial and economic ramifications triggered by the epidemics and the ensuing control procedures. In their endeavours to support individuals, groups and institutions who had fallen victims to the epidemics, or who had sought to prevent their spread, or to mitigate the epidemics' impact on the population, the *Conseils du roi* themselves also became involved in epidemic control, albeit only behind the scenes.

The councils' activities, however, were not confined to material aid alone, even if this was undoubtedly its primary concern in times of rampant epidemics. On occasion, the *Conseils du roi* also intervened directly in the fight to fend off the epidemics. The measures they took were first and foremost applicable to the king and his entourage, who on their numerous journeys across the realm often happened to transit regions where epidemics were on the rampage. Richelieu, for example, was frequently concerned about Louis XIII's state of health and in April 1629 wrote to the Duke of Montmorency, the governor of Languedoc:

> Cette lettre n'est que pour vous avertir que l'appréhension que nous avons eue que la peste, qui s'approche fort d'icy, ne respectast pas la personne du roy, comme je désirerois qu'il fust

193 See Pagès, Le Conseil du Roi et la vénalité des offices, p. 249.
194 Ibid., p. 246.

> par tout le monde, fait que Sa Majesté a pris conseil de se retirer jusques vers Montmélian, ou Barrault […].
>
> [This letter is only meant to warn you of our sense of apprehension concerning plague, which is approaching very close to here, [it] will not respect the person of the King, as I would like that it respect him as everyone does [and] has caused His Majesty to take the advice to decamp to Montmélian, or Barrault (…)][195]

Undoubtedly, the greatest risk of contagion threatened the king in his own army camp. Hence, in an *Advis*, which was officially addressed to the king, but actually meant more as a briefing to the army commanders, Richelieu pointed out that in the event of an outbreak of plague amongst his troops, Louis was to sojourn in a neighbouring town that was not plague-ridden.[196]

In fact, such plague-ridden soldiers and infected military units were soon to prove an increasingly pressing problem. For independently of each other, the French and imperial units deployed to the theatre of war, imported plague into Northern Italy.[197] From 1630 onward, the region thus experienced epidemic outbreaks of unprecedented intensity. Not only was the population of Northern Italy plague stricken, however, but also the French army itself suffered massively from it.[198] A good illustration of this quandary would be how the capture of the town of Pinerolo, taken by French units in March 1630, initially represented a strategic coup for the French forces.[199] And yet, some three months later, the plague outbreak had transformed Pinerolo into a deserted site, so much so that Richelieu mulled over whether and how such a locality could still be held.[200] Against such an ominous backdrop, the cardinal minister also considered deploying troops close to the town. He entertained doubts, however, as to whether a contagion-free space could be found anywhere in the region.[201] The northern Italian theatre of war, which Louis XIII and Richelieu had hitherto regarded as the arena for the rise of a glorious and powerful France they had so longed for, suddenly turned into a theatre of action which could scarcely provide quarters for several hundred soldiers.

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195 See Avenel, *Lettres*, vol. 3, p. 787. See also, on this point, Lacour-Gayet/Lavollée, *Mémoires du cardinal de Richelieu*, vol. 10, p. 383.

196 See Avenel, *Lettres*, vol. 3, p. 290.

197 See Cipolla, *Cristofano and the Plague*, pp. 15–17.

198 See BnF, Dupuy 27, f° 18^{r}–22^{r}; Pagès, Autour du “grand orage”, p. 80.

199 See, on this point, ibid. pp. 82–84. Here, Pagès does not limit himself to a strategic appraisal, he also attributes a quasi-outstanding political significance to the capture of Pinerolo.

200 See Avenel, *Lettres*, vol. 3, p. 813.

201 See ibid., p. 790, 830.

V *Conseils du roi:* Governing between Crisis and Catastrophe

The impending reality that scope for manoeuvre in Northern Italy's theatre of war was diminishing, both figuratively and geographically, was not least the upshot of a policy that consistently placed the aspiration to bolster the king's glory above the needs of his subjects. An examination of the Royal Councils' files makes it clear how excessive demands were often foisted upon the populations of the Ancien Régime amid the ongoing crisis. In concrete terms, this sense of over-taxing expressed itself across the innumerable petitions bearing witness to the wish to obtain relief from other sources in view of the burdens triggered by famine, war and disease. Whether by way of *arrêts simples* or *arrêts en commandement*, the Royal Councils' rulings thus reached were already the result of an administrative coping mechanism. In all likelihood, it was largely on account of this process' inherent logic that the *Conseils du roi* rulings exposed, as can be deduced from the relevant local and regional studies, a crisis that was often truly catastrophic in scale.

In scrutinising the many thousands of resolutions that have survived, primarily those pronounced by the *Conseil d'État et des finances* or by the *Conseil de direction des finances*, but also those by the other royal councils, this article will not only enable us to draw conclusions about how this royal institution was transformed. It can also divulge reliable answers concerning the critical question of how the French Crown responded to outbreaks of plague that had kept the Ancien Régime society at large on tenterhooks at the end of the 1620s and the turn of the 1630s. Andrea Iseli's statement made some years ago that the *Conseils du roi* only started assuming an active or proactive role during the so-called plague of Marseilles of 1720–1722 is, to some extent, implicitly true. Because nearly all the *Conseils du roi's* rulings falling within the scope of this study and concerning the so-called plague of La Rochelle were triggered by corresponding external petitions by the king's subjects for financial compensation for damages incurred due to war, famine and contagion. Scarcely a century before the devastating epidemic that wrought havoc on Marseilles, as well as further afield in Provence and Languedoc, and in view of the even more devastating nation-wide epidemic, one must therefore refer to the *Conseils du roi's* passive role.

This was already evident in the case of the municipalities which routinely had to bear the brunt of coping with epidemic outbreaks. Many municipal authorities were also forced to heavily invest in the epidemic police during those years between 1628 and 1631. The royal councils did compensate them, at least in part, for this investment by way of channelling financial support to the city in question or by allowing them to levy an equivalent tax. Such a tax empowered the munic-

ipalities to rustle up the money they had previously spent on ensuring healthcare for the plague-stricken.

The *fermiers*, whose core function was to collect the indirect taxes levied by the French Crown, could also look forward to some financial compensation. As matters transpired, however, some of these officials did not get their money's worth on account of the dire socio-economic conditions prevailing throughout the late 1620s and early 1630s. In this instance, too, the *Conseils du roi* proved themselves amicable and often accommodated the *fermiers,* at least partially, by reducing, for example, the amount that these tax collectors had to pay to the Crown.

Matters were somewhat more complex, however, for the numerous *officiers* in the service of the Crown who had purchased their *office* from the king. The *droit annuel* could have been particularly significant notably in times of crisis such as the late 1620s and early 1630s. For, during periods of increased mortality, the *droits annuel* opened a pathway for the potential inter-generational transfer of the *office* within the family concerned. There was no guarantee, however, either for the family of the deceased that the *office* would remain their prerogative, or for the Crown that the *office* would not revert to them. Indeed, in the latter scenario, the *office* could have been re-sold and thus monetised by the Crown. The fact, however, that the king's representatives would die in large numbers during such periods as the mortality crisis of 1629–1631 could scarcely have been in the interest of either Louis XIII or Cardinal Richelieu. While such *offices* were at times primarily prestigious in character, those holding them also occupied prominent positions in the functioning of the monarchy, as in the judicial sphere, for example. Perhaps, this consideration also came into play during those challenging years as the royal councils endeavoured to ensure that *offices* did not simply lapse, but rather continued to be manned.

To conclude, it is remarkable how, on one hand, the *Conseils du roi* reacted quite flexibly to the *requêtes* submitted to them across the years 1629–1631. On the other hand, the often uniform content characterising the *Conseils'* rulings following such questions and petitions is equally striking. Based on the evidence of the large number of copies of resolutions by the councils, we can draw the conclusion that the already severely strained royal finances were further overburdened at that juncture. To some extent, this was the result of the sometimes significant shortfalls in revenue, which occurred repeatedly in the field of taxation, for example, on account of the overall exceptional plight during those years characterized by epidemics, famine and wars. It could equally be explained, however, by the compensation the *Conseils du roi* granted to those individuals and institutions incurring financial damages as a result of the prevailing crisis or to those using their own financial resources in a bid to manage that situation. The councils' resolutions

per se, however, could indicate the purpose of the altogether quite extensive compensatory measures, for they repeatedly report on uprisings erupting over and again during those years of the Ancien Régime. Notwithstanding the prevailing circumstances, the French Crown did, to a certain extent, demonstrate responsibility in policing epidemics by contributing, albeit indirectly in most cases, to the financial costs incurred by its subjects in grappling with epidemics. The *Conseils du roi* neither ignored nor relativised the highly infectious diseases which were to claim the lives of hundreds of thousands in France during the late 1620s and early 1630s. Rather, they had reckoned with such an outcome.

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