

ABSTRACT

LENZMEIER, RYAN JOHN. *Le Faux Tabac* : Northern French Tobacco Smuggling and Taxation in the Eighteenth Century. (Under the direction of Dr. K. Steven Vincent)

How the increasing interconnectedness of the Atlantic World affected the people around the Atlantic Ocean has been an important topic for historians. This thesis contributes to that conversation by investigating the connections between the French state and its subjects in the eighteenth century. The connection under consideration here is tobacco, and particularly how smuggling was part of a larger system of tobacco production and consumption. This system incorporated both legal and illegal components to span across the Atlantic Ocean and connect disparate groups. The tobacco consumed in Europe and in France in the eighteenth century was part of intercontinental systems of trade. These movements of people, goods, and ideas across the Atlantic Ocean facilitated the distribution of tobacco both legally and illegally. They were also changing governments and people in the places where tobacco was smuggled or consumed. One such location was Northern France which served as a cross-roads of commercial activity between France, the Netherlands, and England. Tobacco smuggling was one product related to these large-scale vectors of change in the eighteenth century. Tobacco connected the French king to his subjects through the royal tobacco monopoly, its enforcement by the General Farm, and the interactions between the General Farm and consumers or smugglers of tobacco. In this way, studying tobacco clarifies the history and connections between violence, taxation, and commerce throughout eighteenth-century France.

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Le Faux Tabac: Northern French Tobacco Smuggling and Taxation in the Eighteenth Century

by
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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

History

Raleigh, North Carolina

2018

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BIOGRAPHY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Simply put, I could not have completed this thesis without a variety of support networks. The first person to truly encourage me to pursue an advanced degree was Dr. Lynn Mollenauer at UNCW. Her support has been unwavering, even after I left Wilmington. Members of the History Department here at NC State have been vital in my progression through the program. I enjoyed my time as a TA to Dean Bruno, Dr. Frederico Freitas, and Dr. Craig Friend. Each has invaluable contributed to my development as an educator. The myriad discussions I have had with Dr. Freitas about music, history, and sports have been fascinating and instructive. I have also benefited immensely from my classes from Dr. Sirota, Dr. Vincent, Dr. Kasper-Marienberg, Dr. Bassett, Dr. Rudolph, Dr. Strote, and Dr. Freitas.

Members of my thesis committee deserve special thanks. Dr. Luria provided counsel and advice that was critical to how I eventually approached a variety of my research questions. His door was always open, which I continually appreciate. Dr. Rudolph has been an invaluable mentor in my professional and academic development. My experiences as both her TA and student have allowed me to develop the skills I believe I will need to be both a scholar and a professor. One chapter of the thesis originated as a paper for her 792 class which was crucial to the completion of this degree within two years.

Finally, Dr. Vincent has been a terrific advisor. He provided support at every stage of this project which has been invaluable. This work would have been infinitely worse without his comments, critiques, and suggestions. I remain in awe of his intellectual work and teaching abilities and have cherished my time spent learning from him. Thank you for everything.

I would be remiss to not mention the friends I have made here at NC State. My peers in the department have reassured me of my ability and place in this program. The myriad

conversations in the grad lounge, lunches at Mitch's, and time spent just talking about our lives staved off stress and got me through the rigors of this program.

Finally, I would not have completed this program without the support of those closest to me. My mother read over drafts and patiently listened to my ideas about history, politics, music, and life. She has instilled a zest for learning in me that has motivated me to pursue advanced study. My father has been a similar sounding board for my ideas and thoughts. He has continued to tell me to chase my academic or professional dreams, even when those dreams appear impossible or impractical. Very often, their searching questions over dinner forced me to clarify my own research questions or explanations. My brother and sister, Trevor and Megan, have also been entirely supportive throughout this entire process. I know French history is not as fascinating to you both as it is to me, so I thank you for listening to me ramble. Finally, I must thank Heather for her patience and support throughout these past two years. I know that my schedule has been busier than you or I would have preferred. Your flexibility was integral in getting through this program and I could not have done it without you. Thank you all.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction and Historiography

This work starts from the idea that it is possible to connect the history of smuggling in France with the history of tobacco consumption in eighteenth-century France and with an analysis of the social battles fought by the French state. A few historians have addressed the prevalence of smuggling along the northern border of France, as well as how that smuggling played an important part in shaping the monarchy's governmental policies. Few, however, have considered how smuggling was specifically related to tobacco consumption in eighteenth-century France. Scholars have highlighted the variety of ways tobacco intersected with French society, law, and culture during the period. Most historians have chosen either to analyze the institutions related to the tobacco monopoly, such as the General Farm, or the cultural role of tobacco in France. This study weaves together these approaches by connecting and investigating how peasants interacted with privileged elites either by purchasing tobacco through the General Farm's monopoly, or by avoiding that interaction through smuggling or purchasing contraband *faux tabac*. This study will investigate the economic stresses upon the French state and French people during the eighteenth century, and consider how both responded to these stresses.

Historians have approached the issue of tobacco smuggling in multiple ways. Some approaches emphasized the role of the General Farm, the tax agency that held a monopoly on the sale and importation of tobacco within France, in influencing how tobacco permeated France.¹ In this approach, preventing smuggling was one part of the General Farm's duties along with collecting taxes and the distribution of goods covered by the king's monopolies. Other approaches have focused on smuggling and the illicit consumption of the plant as a method of understanding the French crown's attempts to control its subjects throughout the eighteenth

¹ Yves Durand, *Finance et Mécénat : Les Fermiers Généraux Au XVIIIe Siècle*. Paris: Hachette, 1976.

century.² Still other approaches have attempted to link the sale and consumption of tobacco to the changes in consumer culture in the eighteenth century. These latter approaches argue that tobacco as a product can be utilized to understand the structural changes that preceded the French Revolution, and other broader changes across Europe and even throughout the globe at large.³ How tobacco interacted with, and often was affected by, these structural changes highlights the various economic and social forces in eighteenth-century France. The efforts of the crown to establish power through taxation in newly-acquired border regions, like the north of France, can elucidate the strains on the French state in the eighteenth century. Linking small-scale tobacco consumption and smuggling to the world historical event of the French Revolution offers insight into the overall struggle of the French state to establish sovereignty, control its subjects, and guarantee its own existence. The illegal movement and sale of tobacco, on the other hand, is an example of how common people reacted to the incursion of the French state into their lives. Smuggling and its repression exemplify how localized struggles over consumption were connected to global forces in the eighteenth century that brought people, markets, and goods together in novel ways.

The historiographic basis of the current study builds upon three areas of inquiry into eighteenth-century France. These areas are tobacco commerce, the General Farm's taxation policies, and smuggling. Starting with commerce, it is possible to see how tobacco was a part of the larger changes in commercial relationships that dated back to the seventeenth century. Following from there, it is important to understand how, through taxation, the French monarchy attempted to access the wealth being produced and exchanged by these new forms of commerce.

² Michael Kwass, *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014.

³ Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010.

This taxation was carried out through the tax farming tactics of the General Farm. Smuggling and the consumption of smuggled goods demonstrates how individuals worked against the impositions of the monarchy. By connecting these three historiographic threads, it is possible to understand how tobacco smuggling relates to larger issues in eighteenth-century France.

An important book for understanding the history of commerce in Northern France is *Un Mer Pour Deux Royaumes: La Manche, Frontière Anglo-Française* by Renaud Morieux.⁴ Morieux endeavors to show how the English Channel developed into a “borderland” that simultaneously separated and connected the English and the French. Throughout the book Morieux presents examples of the slow process, begun in the seventeenth century, between the English and French states to codify exactly where each state’s rights ended. This was a deliberate and laborious struggle to impose consistent and modern borders on a body of water. Morieux explains how merchants, sailors, and peasants constantly crossed the political and social “border” as imposed by the English and French crowns.

Here, Morieux’s work most clearly interacts with the history of tobacco in France and the work of this study. The majority of the tobacco consumed in France during the eighteenth century was produced in the English colony of Chesapeake. To get to France, that tobacco was transported first to England, then across the Channel into the Netherlands where the product made its way to France overland or more directly through ports like Dunkirk. Morieux’s work emphasizes that English and French people and goods were constantly moving across the Channel, both legally and illegally. England and France’s attempts to control that movement was based on a desire to limit the economic gain of their rival country. Morieux’s study provides a basis for understanding the general commercial context of French tobacco importation. It

⁴ Renaud Morieux, *Une Mer pour Deux Royaumes: La Manche, Frontière Franco-Anglais*. Rennes, France: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008.

demonstrates how international pressures affected quotidian mercantile exchange in England and France. He provides examples of how global strains and forces came to bear upon individuals in the eighteenth century through economic interaction. When understood this way, smuggling and its accompanying violence are examples of global pressures being expressed in decidedly local contexts and situations. Morieux's work is therefore useful in providing examples of economic transactions of struggles that extended far beyond the individuals engaged in those specific exchanges. These transactions are examples of the connections between economic life and the large structural changes of the eighteenth century that affected French people. This study will apply this approach to Northern France in order to demonstrate how smuggling was a product of the French crown's attempts to express sovereignty through monopoly and French criminals' attempts to avoid royal authorities.

One of the most important books for understanding the French tobacco monopoly, and its relationship with commerce in the eighteenth century, is *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674-1791, and of Its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades* by Jacob M. Price. Over the course of two volumes Price explains how the tobacco monopoly came to be established in France. Price provides extensive figures detailing the quantity of tobacco imported from the Chesapeake colony from the last quarter of the seventeenth century until the abolition of the monopoly by the General Assembly in 1791. Price's basic argument is that "the financial needs of the state determined the decision to establish the tobacco monopoly."⁵ It followed, therefore, that "the swelling yields of the monopoly strengthened the original resolution and led to the sacrifice of both French domestic

⁵ Jacob M. Price, *France and the Chesapeake; a History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674-1791, and of Its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1973), xix.

cultivation and colonial trade to the advancement of those ever mounting yields.”⁶ Price explores how the French desire for tobacco, which continued to grow over the course of the eighteenth century, and the crown’s desire to raise revenue from that desire, affected French and British economic life and activities. His book provides a comprehensive history of the tobacco monopoly in the eighteenth century and devotes chapters to specific regions or situations.

The significant role of the tobacco monopoly in the northern provinces of France as described by Price serves as a basis for much of the current study. Price discusses how the tobacco monopoly affected prices and distribution of tobacco over the course of the eighteenth century. This information is critical to understanding the economic situation within which smugglers operated. *France and the Chesapeake* demonstrates the vast increase in the eighteenth century of French tobacco importation as well as increases in England and the Netherlands.⁷ It was this increase, combined with the royal monopoly, which created the price differential between France and its northern neighbors. This differential was what enabled smugglers to make money from contraband products which is one focus of the current study. Price’s work is instrumental in demonstrating the development of commercial connections between France and the Americas through the English colonies in the Chesapeake. My work then builds upon those connections by extending the scope of investigation to the smugglers in France to show how international competition extended to individuals through economic production and trade. This focus reveals that the actual process of smuggling at the local and individual level became an integral part of a larger system of economic production that spanned the Atlantic Ocean. Price’s work facilitates the integration of my work into the larger history of Atlantic commercial competition.

⁶ Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, xix.

⁷ Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 111.

One of the major books to address the cultural role of tobacco and commerce in eighteenth-century France is Marc and Muriel Vigié's 1989 *L'Herbe à Nicot: Amateurs de Tabac, Fermiers Généraux et Contrebandiers Sous l'Ancien Régime*. This book is primarily interested in explaining how tobacco came to permeate French life as one of the first New World imports into Europe, predating even coffee and tea.⁸ To accomplish this task, *L'Herbe à Nicot* analyzes the various cultural and social roles of tobacco from its introduction into France in the late sixteenth century until the end of the Old Regime. Starting with the debates over whether or not tobacco held medicinal properties, the book looks at how tobacco was imported, how it was consumed, and how it was regulated by the General Farm. It also examines one of the significant results of the monopoly- smuggling and the attempted repression of smuggling.

The Vigiés' work is useful for understanding the material facts surrounding tobacco in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The tome argues that increases in smuggling can directly be attributed to increase in monopolistic regulation. Although not the sole focus of the book, *L'Herbe à Nicot's* argument that more rigorous enforcement of the royal monopoly contributed to increases in tobacco smuggling is of critical interest in the current thesis. The Vigiés' argument applies to the entirety of France. This study will apply this argument to northern France in order to understand the nuanced relationship between General Farm policies and the rates of smuggling. Following this line of argumentation, if there was a significant increase in monopolistic regulation and enforcement in the north during the eighteenth century, then there should have been a corresponding increase in smuggling. *L'Herbe à Nicot* also

⁸ Marc Vigié and Muriel van Wilder-Vigié, *L'Herbe À Nicot : Amateurs de Tabac, Fermiers Généraux et Contrebandiers Sous l'Ancien Régime*. (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 10. In fact, the title of the book hints towards where the English word "nicotine" comes from. Jean Nicot brought tobacco leaves back from the Americas via Portugal and introduced the plant to the French court, specifically giving some to Catherine de Medici in order to cure her of her migraines.

analyzes the cultural role of tobacco as it came to be a commodity in France. Tobacco's status as a relatively common product that was ingested by French individuals from a variety of economic backgrounds is meant to show the connections between the French government and the French populace. These connections would be obscured if tobacco sales and consumption were limited. *L'Herbe à Nicot* provides a basis for claiming that tobacco offered an example of the economic connections between social classes.

Taken together, these three books detail how tobacco was a part of significant economic changes in the eighteenth-century France. These changes affected much of French society, and most French subjects through their consumption habits. The present study demonstrates how the illegal movement of contraband tobacco was also a part of that economic transition. By focusing on northern France, it is possible to emphasize how these trans-oceanic and global changes produced real effects on the lives of local people. Smugglers and those who consumed their products were part of an economic system that was developing connections, and thereby changing French society, in subtle but powerful ways. The violence and repression that accompanied smuggling is a part of commercial history, which can be viewed through the emphasis on northern France. Commerce directly connected the French government and its subjects through taxation and monopoly. Tobacco smuggling is one such connection, and one that demonstrates the difficulty the French state and the French people had in dealing with the global economic pressures of international competition through commerce and warfare.

Thematically related to the question of French finances and tax management is *La Banqueroute de l'État Royal: La gestion des Finances Publiques de Colbert à la Révolution Française* by Marie-Laure Legay. This book develops an understanding of how French fiscal policy operated in the eighteenth century. Covering the course of a century and a half Legay

works to understand “the collapse of the royal administration.”⁹ Legay acknowledges that hers is not the first attempt to discern the financial origins of the French Revolution, but *La Banqueroute de l'État Royal* does synthesize the various explanations of that collapse of the French state. It was not that the French crown was blind to the fiscal problems that it confronted. These problems, especially over-taxation and a large royal debt, were done so that France would keep pace in the economic international competition of imperial expansion and the more localized political competition of warfare. Instead, as Legay suggests, the crown was stymied by a combination of the enormous size of the royal debt, the institutionalized system of financiers that delayed and halted reform, and the overall flaws of taxation that became too much to overcome when crisis came to bear in 1789.¹⁰ Legay demonstrates that many of these issues were not resolved by the French Revolution. This suggests that these systems had become so structurally ingrained into the French nation over the course of the eighteenth century that they could partially survive to continue to impact French citizens after the fall of the *ancien régime*. All of these issues were intimately connected to the geo-political struggling of European states in the early modern period. Wars were ubiquitous, unrelenting, and necessitated capital. The failure of fiscal management in France was one of the risks encountered by each of the nations that competed for overseas and European territory and power.¹¹

My work will apply to the north of France Legay's findings, as a way of understanding how the economic pressures felt by the French monarchy were expressed locally. The taxation policies of the General Farm were designed to extract the most revenue out of each province. The General Farm was one way of dealing with the financial pressure on the French crown

⁹ Marie-Laure Legay, *La Banqueroute de l'État Royal : La Gestion Des Finances Publiques de Colbert à la Révolution Française*. (Paris : Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2011), 7.

¹⁰ Legay, *La Banqueroute*, 8.

¹¹ Legay, *La Banqueroute*, 269.

during the eighteenth century. Legay's work demonstrates the necessity of the General Farm's revenue for the continuation of the French state's operations. The current study shows how those same economic stresses came to bear on local populations in the north of France. Although dictated from Versailles, the monopoly was enforced by the General Farm and its employees. Using Legay's work as a basis, it is possible to understand how the monopoly came to affect specific individuals who attempted to smuggle. The current study will investigate how northern France became a site where the French crown's representatives dealt with economic pressures by attempting to extract revenue from French subjects. This should extend Legay's conclusions into the lives of common French subjects.

The General Farm was a key way for the French crown to raise tax revenues. To understand French fiscal policy, one must understand the operations and composition of the General Farm. An important book in this regard is Yves Durand's *Finance et Mécénat : Les Fermiers Généraux au XVIIIe Siècle*.¹² *Finance et Mécénat* analyzes the lives of the men who made up the General Farm over the course of the eighteenth century. Durand examines many aspects of their lives, from how these men coordinated tax collection to their daily pleasures and activities. Particularly useful is his analysis of the importance of patronage for the continued function of the tax collection system. Durand is careful to demonstrate how the Farmers General shaped and often controlled the revenue capacities of the French monarchy in the eighteenth century.

His book contributes to the understanding of the legal system of the General Farm by providing information about how these men lived and exercised their power on a daily basis. This information is useful for understanding smuggling in the north. Durand's work is key to

¹² Durand, *Finance et Mécénat*, 15.

investigating how the General Farm responded to the pressures of maintaining the French state by collecting taxes. The analysis of how smugglers avoided and resisted the incursions of the General Farm is only made possible by understanding how the General Farm operated its tax-collection process.

Another book that addresses French fiscal policy is Michael Kwass' first book, *Privilege and Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité*. This monograph delves into the changes that occurred in French taxation during the eighteenth century. Kwass focuses on "arguably the most ambitious project of the eighteenth century monarchy: the attempt to levy direct taxes on tax-exempt privileged elites."¹³ Of particular interest to my own work is Kwass' central question, "Why would the crown weaken the privileges of the most powerful subjects in the kingdom and risk losing their loyalty?"¹⁴ For Kwass, the answer to this question lies in the military ambition of European states in the early modern period. Every European power constantly jockeyed for resources, land, and peoples. Kwass examines the attempt of the French crown to impose universal taxation on its subjects during the eighteenth century.

Kwass' work is fundamental to the current study because it attempts to answer for the nobility many of the same questions that are asked here of the peasantry. Taxes on consumed goods, such as tobacco, could be applied to anyone without risking abrogation of or encroachment on ancient noble privileges. The current study of the attempts to tax tobacco in France, therefore, builds upon Kwass' monograph in emphasizing the desire of the French crown to increase revenue, while also elucidating the various ways that this was done. Tobacco

¹³ Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13.

¹⁴ Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation*, 33.

smuggling and taxation were inter-related forms of activity that offer insight into the fiscal system in eighteenth-century France. By focusing specifically on the northern provinces of France, one can bring the claims of *Privileges and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France* away from the discourse of the French nobility and into the realm of peasants and commoners. Once focus shifts from the French nobility, it is possible to see how the loathing of the new taxes extended to peasants and merchants. Focus on the north is particularly important because the new taxes were especially enforced in this region. Building on Kwass' study of taxation, it is possible to see how the contestation of new taxes extended into the everyday lives of all French subjects- not merely the nobility.

The French crown's attempt to raise revenues in the eighteenth century was emblematic of the connected economic, political, and social stresses placed on the French state. The French subjects' resistance to these tax impositions demonstrates the ways common people reacted to those same forces, as mediated by the General Farm. Each of the previously-mentioned monographs discusses, in one way or another, the methods the French state developed to manage the economic and globalizing changes of the eighteenth century. The current study will supplement those conclusions by focusing on one specific region: the north. This emphasis allows for a more specific understanding of how the crown's representatives in the north, and the individuals who lived in the north, dealt with those representatives. Tobacco smuggling provided a means of avoiding the taxes imposed upon that product by the French state while also making money for oneself. Studying tobacco smuggling allows us to understand the ways the French state and its subjects interacted on a daily basis. That these interactions were fraught with conflict is indicative of the stress created by the increasing globalization of the eighteenth

century. To fully understand these interactions it is necessary to explore the historiography that has specifically focused on eighteenth century smuggling in France.

One such book is André Ferrer's *Tabac, Sel, Indiennes: Douane et Contrebande en France-Comté au XVIII^e Siècle*. Utilizing a variety of sources, Ferrer paints a picture of the southeastern region of Franche-Comté as the perfect area for smuggling. Conquered within the previous century by Louis XIV, mountainous, sharing opposite borders with both Switzerland and much of the main area of France, Franche-Comté was perfectly situated for smuggling. It was one of the most prevalent areas of smuggling in eighteenth-century France. Ferrer focuses on Franche-Comté as a case-study of a "country of contraband" to demonstrate the inconsistencies and complexities of France's tax system.¹⁵ Ferrer's emphasis on smuggling affords insight into how the various groups in eighteenth-century France responded to stimuli and stresses that were specific to that century.

Especially important is Ferrer's emphasis on the demographic information of smugglers in Franche-Comté, which is also applied to the north of France in the current study. He argues that smuggling was mostly carried out by young men with little opportunities for social or financial advancement within their locality. Smuggling was a means to make money and survive. My work expands on this information by demonstrating similarities in the north of France. The global economic situation was changing during the eighteenth century, and tobacco smuggling is indicative of how those changes came to affect French subjects in unpredicted ways. The demographic information is also useful in investigating the ways that individuals operated against the strictures set out by the General Farm.

¹⁵ André Ferrer, *Tabac, Sel, Indiennes: Douane et Contrebande En Franche-Comté Au XVIIIe Siècle*. (Besançon : Presses Universitaires Franc-Comtoises, 2002), 131.

Finally, the most recent work on tobacco and its role in elucidating the points of conflict in eighteenth-century France comes from Michael Kwass. His book *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground* as well as his article “The Global Underground: Smuggling, Rebellion, and the Origins of the French Revolution” both use one of the most famous criminals in French history, Louis Mandrin, as a window into how the French Revolution, smuggling, and the consumer revolution converged in France.¹⁶ His article argues that smuggling should be considered part of a more general history of tax revolts and rebellion which set the stage for the French Revolution.¹⁷ Emphasizing that most tobacco was produced on the North American continent and therefore had to be brought to Europe, Kwass hopes to demonstrate exactly how the French Revolution was tied to the encroaching forces that were connecting places across the Atlantic into one massive market system.

A study of the northern region of France offers insight into an important geographic area for smuggling in a way that should complement and deepen the information found in Kwass’ tome, as well as rounding out the field by not solely focusing on the southeastern section of France. In *Contraband* Kwass investigates local events to see how the “rise of global trade, the fiscal-military state, and European consumption....played out locally in France.”¹⁸ This approach is mirrored in the current study to see how a variety of groups responded to the rise of these large-scale problems. In doing so, Kwass’ work will be complemented through developing an understanding of how French subjects in the north dealt with the effects of these global phenomena. In addition, my work will expand upon the idea that the rise of global trade, and the

¹⁶ Kwass, *Contraband*, 4.

¹⁷ Michael Kwass, “The Global Underground: Smuggling, Rebellion, and the Origins of the French Revolution,” in *The French Revolution in Global Perspective* ed. Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt, & William Max Nelson. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press), 15.

¹⁸ Kwass, *Contraband*, 11.

French state's attempts to deal with that rise, was a process accompanied by difficulty and violence. These changes to French economic life led to tumultuous contestation before becoming accepted as the norm.

My thesis will extend Kwass' and Ferrer's approaches to provide an understanding of smuggling into the north of France during the same period. By doing so, the nature of French royal interference and taxation in the daily lives of northern subjects will be examined. Smuggling was one response to taxation, while accepting the taxation through purchase of the Farm's tobacco was another. Both responses were part of the globalizing changes of the eighteenth century. Using Kwass and Ferrer's works as a base, this study will argue that these issues were affecting all of France, but were particularly important in the north. Tobacco smuggling in that region was indicative of the global processes and forces that were coming to bear in the eighteenth century on the French crown and its subjects alike.

The current study will supplement the past work on French commercial development, fiscal policy, and smuggling during the eighteenth century. The northern region of France has important similarities to Franche-Comté, the most studied region in terms of French smuggling. The north of France experienced a large amount of tobacco smuggling and consumption in the eighteenth century. It did not, however, have a native son who became as famous as Louis Mandrin. As such, there is room to supplement and complement the work done by previous scholars by focusing on the north. Further, by understanding the globalizing forces at work in this region of France, it will be possible to understand how both rural and urban French subjects were affected by eighteenth century economic and social changes. Finally, a study of this subject allows us to peer into the complicated legal and tax systems of eighteenth-century France. I shall

argue that such a view permits us to understand the development of the fractures in these systems that would create the circumstances that allowed for the collapse of the French monarchy.

In order to answer these questions, a variety of sources will be consulted and analyzed. Important for this thesis are published legal records. Published trial transcripts, promulgations of royal law, and descriptions of legal punishments all offer insight into how the French legal system dealt with the problem of smuggling and smugglers. Particularly highlighted are the continued proclamations by the French kings in this period who repeatedly had to bolster support for the General Farm's enforcement of the tobacco monopoly as well as the published punishments of smugglers caught selling the *faux tabac*. The final chapter also utilizes *cahiers de doléances* as a way of investigating the concerns of the peasantry. Sources and publications from Hainault, Flanders, and Artois were consulted which comprise the most northern provinces of France in this period and saw significant amounts of smuggling.

The first chapter provides a general analysis of how the French state dealt with the increase in commercial exchange and activity. This is done by focusing on the operations of the main tax-collecting structure in France, the General Farm, and how the Farm established monopolies decreed by the crown. From there, the argument narrows to focus on the tobacco monopoly. The General Farm's increasing interest in raising revenue is shown to be intimately connected to royal concerns about financing the wars of the eighteenth century. The second chapter focuses on how the General Farm attempted to establish sovereignty in those regions through the monopoly. This allows us to analyze how peasants and elites interacted in a society with little social mobility. These interactions reveal some of the structural stresses that were developing in the eighteenth century. The third chapter focuses on the relationship of tobacco smuggling with other forms of tax evasion and resistance in eighteenth-century France. The

violence of smuggling demonstrates how the French government and its representatives faced increasing economic pressure over the course of the eighteenth century. That the crown was unable to solve these issues speaks to the complicated nature of those problems. Ultimately, these chapters combine to afford an insight into the political, legal, and social fractures in the final century of the *Ancien Régime*.

The increase in tobacco smuggling in the eighteenth century was a product of the globalizing economic shift that occurred throughout the Atlantic World. The French state's attempt to access the revenue produced by that shift often came through violent repression and certainly included the threat of police action and punishment. A study of tobacco smuggling and its intersections with tax policy and commercial change, offers a way to see how the increasing economic connections between distant people had inadvertent and sometimes violent effects. By focusing on how tobacco smuggling operated and was repressed in northern France, it is possible to see how global forces came to exert influence on decidedly local events between merchants, peasants, and tax collectors.

Chapter 2:***Le Paysan et le Roi: Royal Tax Policy in Eighteenth-Century France***

Under the reign of Louis XIV, France enjoyed one of its most illustrious periods. Massive construction projects, such as Versailles, were undertaken and completed while massive areas of land were added to the French kingdom through successful military campaigns. Of course, these projects meant an increased need for revenue. Soldiers needed weapons and arms, workers needed to be paid, and the king's lavish lifestyle needed financial support. In addition, newly acquired provinces often necessitated displays of power and force to demonstrate the majesty of the Bourbon monarchy. This had the dual purpose of impressing the peasants and European political rivals. One of the major ways that this pressure was dealt with was through taxation. The taxation of goods, especially mobile goods like tobacco or salt, represented one of the ways that the Bourbon kings and their representatives dealt with the increasing monetary pressures of the eighteenth century. The French crown's overarching problem of raising revenue to fund expenditures of state, particularly military expenditures, put immense pressure on its representatives throughout France. This caused a pursuit of two equally important and intertwined goals over the course of the eighteenth century: increasing tax revenue and increasing control of French subjects. In this way it is possible to understand the ways that large-scale concerns, such as military funding, were connected to interactions between tax collectors, merchants, and consumers.

The needs for increased tax revenue came from a variety of conflicts and needs of an expanding government. The failure to solve the discrepancy between monetary need and expenditures was an essential aspect of the crisis that led to the calling of the Estates General in

1789.¹⁹ Louis XVI's inability to pay off loans, many of which had been taken to finance French support for the American colonies in the War of Independence, was one example of the French crown's centuries-long reliance on borrowing. During Louis XIV's reign, the French had fought a number of wars against their European neighbors. Aside from the cost of merely fighting those conflicts, which quickly became substantial as military technology improved and became more expensive, these wars resulted in significant acquisitions of land along the northern, eastern, and southern borders.²⁰ The process of acquiring these territories was expensive, as the crown had to set up new administrative and fiscal networks to access the corresponding wealth and resources of the new areas. In addition, the crown had to fortify the new border areas which meant expensive military construction and outposts.

Places that had been under French royal jurisdiction for some time also had to be brought under the crown's power in the eighteenth century. The project of overcoming regional differences in language, taxation, and privilege first began in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²¹ This project took a variety of forms, including construction of monuments, buildings, roads, or attempts at policy reform. One such development was an overhaul of French taxation programs. It is not a coincidence that the General Farm expanded during the eighteenth century. Indirect taxes of the various monopolies affected almost every French subject. The French state employed new taxation methods, which affected more subjects, to exert its sovereignty over all of its people. Although not universally or entirely successful, it was often the aim of the crown to demonstrate the legal and administrative power of the French monarchy.

¹⁹ Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation*, 20.

²⁰ Roger Price. *A Concise History of France*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 71.

²¹ David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1.

Finally, the French government in the eighteenth century had to contend with the rise of commerce. The French crown attempted to access this rise in commercial wealth through taxation and monopolies. The French state attempted to simultaneously extract from its overseas colonies, such as the fantastically wealthy island of Saint Domingue, and to limit expenditures on foreign goods. Items such as sugar, tobacco, coffee, chocolate, cloth, salt, or indigo were understood to be integral pieces of the geopolitical maneuvering of states as sources of liquid revenue. Monopolies under the French crown not only guaranteed a stable source of cash, but also prevented subjects from contributing to rivals' coffers through trade. Smuggling often developed when these types of controls made purchasing products prohibitively expensive, and this in turn meant that the state spent more on military and police to combat and arrest smugglers. When taken together, the French crown's fiscal policy in the eighteenth century was a broad attempt to solve the disparity between rapid government growth and fact that revenue sources were not producing enough to keep pace with governmental expenditures.

French tax and anti-*contrebandier* policy was the continuity of that policy over the course of the eighteenth century. It is connected with the stabilizing influence of the Farmers General. The Farmers General was the organization responsible in eighteenth-century France for collecting a variety of indirect taxes on consumer goods.²² In addition to collecting unpopular taxes like the *gabelle*, which was the tax on salt, the Farmers General were responsible for securing the tax borders of the French kingdom. If this meant that employees of the Farm had to use violence, the full support of the French king was behind those employees. Armed with these monopolies on goods, and the king's approval to use violence to guarantee those monopolies, the General Farm became an exceptionally important method of raising revenue over the course of

²² Durand, *Finance et Mécénat*, 7.

the eighteenth century. From 1695 to 1788, between 51% and 41.7% of income for the French state was derived from the General Farm.²³ At the top of the organization sat forty General Farmers who bought offices from the French king to administer the various monopolies in specific geographic regions. These men were tasked with providing a set amount of capital to the crown, as specified by the terms of the sale of office. Any income in excess of that amount was free to be held by the Farmers General. The forty Farmers General and their employees therefore had an incentive to extract as much capital as possible from the people within their jurisdictions. They simultaneously wielded the representative power of the French crown.²⁴ The crown, in turn, had a vested interest in extracting significant amounts of cash in order to finance the war efforts of the eighteenth century. When those two pressures combined, it created an organization with a singular purpose to extract taxes with little in the way of checking it. All of this is to be related to procuring tobacco through the General Farm and therefore purchasing a product that was under a strict monopoly and heavy tax burden.

The Farm also incentivized the maintenance of the rule of law, for its members, as tax collectors, were dependent on respect for the application of the king's sovereignty. The wealthiest of these tax agents might make millions of *livres* over the course of their lifetime, while the agents responsible for the physical collection could also make extra income. The *Fermier Général* Pierre-François Bergeret died in 1771 and was estimated to have 8,044,944 *livres* at his disposal, while a contemporary *Fermier Général* Philippe Cuisy died in 1772 with a fortune of 5,074,540 *livres*.²⁵ For comparison, journeymen Parisian masons and stone-cutters in

²³ George Matthews, *The Royal General Farms in Eighteenth Century France*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 230.

²⁴ Durand, *Finance et Mécénat*, 28.

²⁵ Durand, *Finance et Mécénat*, 64.

this same period could expect to make around 400 *livres* over the course of a year.²⁶ The infrastructure of the period forbade the king from personally appointing and overseeing every individual tax agent throughout France. By purchasing the right to collect taxes for the king, the *Fermiers Généraux* solved this problem for the king while also frequently overcharging French subjects and keeping the difference between what was owed to the king and what they had actually collected.²⁷ Further, the amount of money that was to be made by the *Fermiers Généraux* created an important fund for credit for the crown as these men could afford to loan out twenty-four thousand *livres* to the crown, as a Parisian banker explained in a 1759 letter.²⁸ These factors made the Farm an integral part of the governance of the French crown, as well as afforded immense influence and power to its agents.

The relationship between the Farmers General and the French king meant that those Farmers had an intimate relationship with the expenses and finances of the French state. At the start of the French Revolution in 1789, the Farmers General were asked as a group to account for the massive expenditures from the Royal Treasury. The suspicion was that they had misappropriated funds that should have gone towards expenditures of state. Of the forty, Antoine Lavoisier penned a tract explaining the position of the General Farm which placated the representatives in the National Assembly for a time.²⁹ In 1792 Lavoisier produced another document entitled *De l'État des Finances de France* that attempted to describe the expenses and revenues of the newly formed Republic. The financial needs of the French state had not been

²⁶ Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wages: Natural Law, Politics, and the Eighteenth-Century French Trades*. (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), 204.

²⁷ Noel D. Johnson, "Banking on the King: The Evolution of the Tax Farm System in Early Modern France." (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington University in St. Louis, 2003), 12.

²⁸ François Véron Duverger de Forbonnais, *Lettre d'un Banquier à son Correspondant de Province*. (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 1759), 37.

²⁹ Antoine Lavoisier, *Rapport sur la Caisse d'Escompte, 1776-1793 fait à l'Assemblée Nationale, le 4 Décembre par ses Commissaires, et Imprimé par son Ordre*. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1793), 3.

drastically altered since 1789 and were in fact quite similar to *Ancien Régime* France in terms of the need to raise money to engage in war. Lavoisier estimated that, in the year of 1792 alone, the French treasury spent 109,548,267 *livres* on warfare.³⁰ That total made up just over one sixth of the total estimated expenditures for that year. Lavoisier's authorship speaks to the connection between the General Farm and the financial needs of the French state. Put simply, the financial and military pressures of the French state were connected to the lives of peasants and urban dwellers through the General Farm and this fact was recognized by contemporaries.

The connections between warfare, finances, and smuggling affected more than just those Frenchmen affiliated with the crown. War was expensive. Peasants and nobility alike sought to profit from incredible royal spending. Louis Mandrin, the most infamous smuggler of eighteenth century, turned to smuggling only after a disastrous military contract. In 1740 Mandrin had a contract to supply French troops fighting in Italy during the war of Austrian Succession. Unfortunately for Mandrin, the conflict ended while he was en route, rendering his supplies worthless now that peace had been declared. As Mandrin had staked almost the entirety of his fortune on this venture, his options were limited and he turned to smuggling and robbery.³¹

Although Mandrin achieved a fame and notoriety greater than most eighteenth century *contrebandiers*, the transition from war profiteering to smuggling was not atypical. Official documents from throughout the eighteenth century often mentioned the increased punishments for soldiers who were caught smuggling products back from war zones. Put into effect in 1703, French law dictated that soldiers caught smuggling salt while carrying arms would be put to

³⁰ Antoine Lavoisier, *De L'Etat des Finances de France, au Premier Janvier 1792 par un Député Suppléant à l'Assemblée Nationale Constituante*. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1792), 15.

³¹ Kwass, *Contraband*, 77.

death, in addition to paying a heavy fine.³² By 1763, the fine for merely possessing *faux sel*, or salt not sold and taxed by the Farmers General, was set at 100 *livres*.³³ For comparison, a daily unskilled laborer in Lyon earned around 5.32 *livres* per week.³⁴ A fine of 100 *livres* was therefore worth several months' labor and was a steep fine. Should the soldier be unable to pay that fine, his commanding officer was obligated to pay the fine in full to the Treasurer of Wars.³⁵ This was more than just an attempt by Versailles to control the soldiers in its employ. These types of edicts acknowledged the reality that the mobility, skills, and connections of soldiers uniquely suited them to smuggle goods. André Ferrer's demographic work in *Tabac, Sel, Indiennes* shows that 6.3% of people caught smuggling in eighteenth-century Franche-Comté were employed by the French crown as soldiers. He notes that although this number seems insignificant, it actually obscures the fact that many soldiers turned to smuggling after being discharged. Some, like Nicolas Choux and Charles-Louis Javard, used their experiences to organize other *contrebandiers* into organized and armed gangs which terrorized the *Comtois* repeatedly in the 1760's.³⁶ Military labor often generated individuals and situations suited for smuggling, which the crown had a vested interest in curtailing.

The concern about soldiers and former soldiers turning to smuggling was not solely limited to desires for military discipline. Rather, the cost of war was ever increasing in the early modern period. Any event or action that made military operations more expensive was seen as acting against the wishes of the king. Smuggling by soldiers and former soldiers was therefore not only a symbolic threat of these men disobeying the proclamations of the crown. It also

³² Buterne, *Dictionnaire de Législation, de Jurisprudence, et de Finances sur Toutes les Fermes Unies de France*. (Avignon: Chez Louis Chambeau, 1763), 416.

³³ Buterne, *Dictionnaire de Législation*, 418.

³⁴ Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, 198.

³⁵ Buterne, *Dictionnaire de Législation*, 416.

³⁶ Ferrer, *Tabac, Sel, Indiennes*, 215.

threatened the French state as these actions cut into the lucrative tax revenues produced through the various monopolies that the crown commissioned and possessed.

The French government and its representatives recognized that smuggling had a negative financial impact that was related to the French crown's ability to fight. This is supported by the fact that merchants trading with a belligerent nation during a period of war were occasionally considered traitorous. Renaud Morieux, in *Une Mer Pour Deux Royaumes*, explains how commerce was viewed as inextricably linked to warfare for both the French and English in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Morieux, the protectionist laws of France and England in this period had "a triple function" of augmenting national revenues to meet military needs, protect national manufacturers, and to keep domestic capital from heading across the Channel.³⁷ Following the absolutist approach to commercial relationships, commerce across the English Channel was especially threatening to the French crown because England was a political and economic rival. In addition, England was the most frequent belligerent in the many seventeenth and eighteenth century wars in which France participated. Commerce, even of goods like tobacco or sugar, was so connected to military power and capacity that merchants who traversed the English Channel were thought to be supporting the English war effort merely through continuing to trade during bellicose periods. This understanding was not limited to the crown's representatives. Merchants earned the epithet "*les anglais*" for simply walking through port towns like Dunkirk.³⁸ This situation was further complicated, especially in trading ports along the coast of the English Channel, as there were many foreign merchants trading in these areas during peace time, and many foreign smugglers during periods of war. To the tax collectors

³⁷ Morieux, *Une Mer Pour Deux Royaumes*, 242.

³⁸ Morieux, *Une Mer Pour Deux Royaumes*, 242.

of the French crown, this economic exchange meant a constant siphoning away of capital that should be going into Louis' coffers.

The attitude of the crown's representatives in relation to trade was not limited to the border areas near England. The southern and eastern borders of France also experienced a significant volume of trade which was accompanied by significant amounts of smuggling. Even if merchants in these areas were not specifically identified as traitorous or foreign, the attitude was such that any capital leaving France was seen as detrimental. The secondary literature surrounding tobacco smuggling in eighteenth-century France frequently makes this case. As Ferrer's and Brunet's work have shown, France's eastern and southern borders experienced significant amounts of smuggling of their own. Particularly, Michel Brunet's *Contrebandiers, Mutins, Fiers-à-Bras* makes a point of explaining how high taxes were imposed by the General Farm in an effort to discourage merchants from venturing into Spain for products.³⁹ The tax policies of the General Farm in all of these regions centered on suppressing international trade. This suppression was founded on the notion that international trade was an economic affront to France's ability to wage war.

Edicts published and distributed from Versailles point to the understanding that commerce needed to be controlled by the French crown. One 1711 ordinance was published "to arrest the vagabonds and people without profession who will be found smuggling in the generalities of Amiens, Soissons, Orléans, Rouen, Alençon, and Caen."⁴⁰ It specified that smuggling salt would not be tolerated within Louis' kingdom and that crown officials would be

³⁹ Michel Brunet, *Contrebandiers, Mutins, Fiers-À-Bras : Les Stratégies de la Violence en Pays Catalan au XVIIIe Siècle*. (Canet, France: Trabucaire), 24.

⁴⁰ Louis XIV, *Ordonnance du Roy pour Faire Arrester les Vagabons et Gens sans Aveu qui Seront Rencontrez Faisans le Faux-Saunage dans les Généralitez d'Amiens, Soissons, Orléans, Rouen, Alençon et Caen*. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1711), 1.

making a concerted effort to arrest smugglers. Aside from specifying fines on communities and villages found harboring or otherwise abetting smugglers, the ordinance described how merchants found selling fraudulent goods would be faced with a fine only a few *livres* less than that levied on the smugglers themselves.⁴¹ This problem of merchants selling contraband goods did not go away, as evidenced by a subsequent publication in 1729. In this ordinance, Louis XV gave power to the lieutenant general of police, M. Hérault, to combat merchants who sold smuggled goods and the *contrebandiers* who transported the goods. The ordinance specified that M. Hérault would be presiding over the “sovereign process” of investigating and judging those accused “for reason of commerce and contraband.” Specific items known to be sold and trafficked in Paris included “painted canvasses, fraudulent tobacco, false salt, and other prohibited merchandises.”⁴² The change of focus between 1711 and 1729 speaks to the steady increase in the variety of goods that were being smuggled, and to the ability of smugglers to penetrate the interior of France. In 1711 salt was the primary product being smuggled. By 1729 salt and tobacco were the major products being smuggled, but the crown was also concerned with other goods making their way into Paris. Despite these increased efforts by the crown and its representatives in policing France’s borders and interiors, smuggling grew during the eighteenth century.

It should also be noted here that the concept of *faux tabac* or “false tobacco” applied to any tobacco consumed within France that had not been taxed by the General Farm. In fact, a royal proclamation intended to be distributed to the employees of the General Farm in 1743

⁴¹ Louis XIV, *Ordonnance du Roy pour Faire Arrester*, 4.

⁴² Louis XV, *Arrêt du Conseil d’État qui Commet M. Hérault, Lieutenant Général de Police, et les Conseillers au Présidial du Châtelet pour Instruire et Juger le Procès en Dernier Ressort non Seulement à Ceux qui Introduiront dans le Royaume des Marchandises de Contrebande de Toiles Peintes, Tabac, Faux Sel*. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1743), 1.

made this concept absolutely clear. “It is permissible for the civil servants responsible with ensuring their conservation, to arrest those who are found to have introduced, carried, driven, or escorted prohibited merchandise or contraband, untaxed salt or untaxed tobacco, to have entered or exited the kingdom.”⁴³ In essence, the civil servants tasked with ensuring a steady stream of revenue for the king of France were to take any possible action to fill the king’s coffers. It mattered little whether the tobacco was grown in a Flemish farmer’s plot, and then sold at market as a way of making a little extra money, or grown in Virginia, transported across the Atlantic to England, then brought into France through Dunkirk or another French port. To the King of France, and therefore the General Farm which derived both authority and direction from the king, any such sale violated the law of the land and therefore was a threat to the stability of the tax system they enforced.

The case of the merchant Jean Lasseur in Caen is instructive. It elucidates both the French state’s attempts to tax and control commerce as well as individual efforts against that control.⁴⁴ In 1772, the Commission of Caen published a summary of Lasseur’s conviction. The publication had a double purpose, both related to power and sovereignty in the French kingdom. The first reason was to demonstrate the Commission’s ability to control the tobacco trade. For this reason, the judgement was specifically “printed, read, published and displayed” in sixteen surrounding villages and towns, while more generally it was suggested that the ruling be distributed in some form throughout the dominion of the Commission which extended

⁴³ Louis XV, *Déclaration du Roy, Donnée à Versailles le 9 Avril 1743. Registré en la Cour des Aydes le 24 May Suivant. Avec une Instruction aux Commis des Fermes Pour l’Execution d’Icelle et un Etat des Paroisses comprises dans les trois lieuës de l’Artois, du Cambrésis, & du Hainault, limitrophes à la Picardie ou au Soiffonois.* (Paris : Imprimerie de G. Lamesle, Imprimeur des Fermes du Roy, au Bureau General Des Aydes, 1743), 4.

⁴⁴ *Jugement Souverain Rendu en la Commission Établie pour Juger les Crimes de Contrebande et Faux-Saunage qui condamne Jean Lasseur, dit Mareige, aux Peine du Carcan et de Neuf Ans de Galères, pour Avoir en Récidive Vendu de la Poudre de Tourbe et de tan pour du Tabac.* (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 1772.) 102.

throughout much of Normandy.⁴⁵ In the late eighteenth century, royal representatives across the kingdom attempted to exert control over their respective jurisdictions. This, of course, meant dissuading individuals who might be tempted to smuggle or those who wanted to purchase smuggled goods. The second reason that the “sovereign judgement” was published and distributed was to serve as a type of warning to smugglers themselves. The full force of the French state’s power came down upon Lasseur for having five pounds of a powder made of illegal tobacco, bark, and peat and then selling that powder without the General Farm taking their customary cut. For this transgression Lasseur was sentenced to spend three consecutive market days in the stocks under a banner that said “Relapsed Imposter and Public Menace,” according to the custom of Caen.⁴⁶ Once that was completed, Lasseur was to be branded with the letters “G.A.L.” on his right shoulder and send to the galleys to labor for nine years. He was also fined five hundred *livres* by the representative of the General Farm in his area.⁴⁷ The permanent scar of the brand and the public display in the center of Caen speak to the resort of the authorities to public humiliation in the punishment of smugglers. In addition, nine years in the galleys was essentially a death sentence anyway as the harsh conditions and labor requirements of the galleys suppressed survival rates.

Lasseur’s case also has an interesting component that speaks to the interminable struggle between merchants, the French state, and smugglers in eighteenth-century France. Lasseur’s conviction was harsh in part because of his recidivism. Lasseur was a merchant who evidently travelled between towns in the region. Four years prior to his conviction, Lasseur had been caught selling illegal tobacco in the town of Beauvais. After that conviction he had been

⁴⁵ *Jugement Souverain Rendu en la Commission*, 103.

⁴⁶ *Jugement Souverain Rendu en la Commission*, 102.

⁴⁷ *Jugement Souverain Rendu en la Commission*, 104.

sentenced to several days in irons in the town square and banished from the town.⁴⁸ Lasseur chose to again make his living by committing a crime and risking a subsequent punishment. This choice exemplified a continuing problem for the General Farm. Merchants, when faced with an unstable market or dwindling options, confronted the difficulty of making a living. One way to do this was to avoid the taxes put on goods by the royal authorities. Royal authorities, in turn, were tasked with extracting the most revenue out of those same goods and markets. Lasseur's case also speaks to how goods moved in the eighteenth century. Caen and Beauvais were separated by a journey of a few days overland in the eighteenth century. Although formidable, this was not too great a distance for French police or merchants to travel. That Lasseur chose Caen, where he was presumably known to the representatives of the General Farm, is an example of the types of networks that merchants moved within in the eighteenth century. Merchants and smugglers stayed within the environs they knew, even when this meant risking increased punishment.

The royal conceptions about control of commerce and trade also extended to French colonies away from Europe. Paul Cheney's work *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* elucidates the increasing role of global goods in eighteenth-century France and how those goods fit into the general economic view of the French. Although his work mostly focuses on the debates between educated elites in France, the very fact that these conversations were taking place speaks to the changes wrought by the introduction of these products. Even merchants in French colonies like Saint-Domingue were pressured to serve the interests of the French state. The argument of certain Physiocrats was that foreigners should not only be excluded from trading with French people and merchants, but that French colonies should not

⁴⁸ *Jugement Souverain Rendu en la Commission*, 103.

have any foreigners at all.⁴⁹ The exception to this stricture against commerce was, of course, export of highly profitable goods to other countries. In this manner, Haitian sugar resulting from slave labor produced enormous profits for the French crown for most of the eighteenth century.⁵⁰ The example of French investment of human resources and capital in Louisiana, explained in *France and the Chesapeake* by Jacob M. Price, also speaks to this point. The French crown sent thousands of settlers to the Louisiana territory in the early eighteenth century and invested significant amounts of capital in that area. An important reason for this investment was the belief that the French colony in the Americas would be able to provide many of the American products in high demand in France at the time without trading with foreign merchants, particularly the English.⁵¹ The mercantilist understanding of commerce, that any money flowing away from those affiliated with the nation negatively impacted the crown, applied wherever the French traveled and conducted business. From the location of production in the Americas to the French consumer in Europe, the crown's representatives attempted to control all money associated with those products so that it all headed to the royal coffers. This approach towards commerce demonstrates how the entirety of French holdings were viewed as central to the issues of warfare and control in the eighteenth century.

Of course, tobacco was not the only product making its way into France over the course of the eighteenth century. This can be seen in records relating to quotidian commercial engagements. One such record was the *Gazette du Commerce*, published in Paris. The purpose of this broadsheet was to inform Parisian merchants about goods that had recently entered into the kingdom. One publication, from October 1763, notes the variety and quantity of goods entering

⁴⁹ Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce*: 175.

⁵⁰ Paul Cheney, *Cul de Sac: Patrimony, Capitalism, and Slavery in French Saint-Domingue*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 3.

⁵¹ Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 310.

and leaving France on a monthly basis. Outside of France, thousands of pounds of sugar were heading for Spain, Ireland, and Holland while Dunkirk and Holland received 330 and 5073 gallons of rum respectively. Cotton cloth, iron, wheat, enamels, pepper, tobacco, and porcelain were also headed to places as diverse as the Caribbean and the Levant.⁵² Imports to France for that one month, on the other hand, included 10,000 ounces of silver, over 220 pounds of finely wrought iron, as well as sizeable shipments of tobacco and pepper.⁵³ The General Farm collected taxes on nearly all of these products as they entered into France, especially at customs posts on the outskirts of cities. These types of interactions demonstrate the types of commercial connections between France and the rest of the world through intercontinental exchange. Of course, an individual could also make a tidy profit if he could import the same products without paying taxing. Hence the need for sustained efforts to combat smuggling of all types.

The French crown's definition of "*Contrebandier*" was specific and developed by 1780, but was based on a century of struggle against tobacco smugglers since the founding of the tobacco monopoly in 1674 by Louis XIV.⁵⁴ The French state had dealt with smuggling of other goods, primarily salt, for centuries. Salt had been smuggled in certain areas of France with a large difference in the severity of the *gabelles*, which was the term for the salt taxes levied upon the people of France. A holdover from the long consolidation process of the French kingdom, the *gabelle* in any region in France was determined by historical precedent. This led to intense levels of smuggling from regions of the *petite gabelle*, such as the province of Lyon, to regions of the *grand gabelle* where salt prices were higher, such as the province of Bourgogne.⁵⁵ A similar

⁵² *Gazette du Commerce, de l'Agriculture et des Finances*, (Paris: Imprimerie de Knapen, 1766), 244.

⁵³ *Gazette du Commerce*, 246.

⁵⁴ Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 3.

⁵⁵ Françoise de Person, *Bateliers : Contrebandiers du Sel XVIème-XVIIIème siècle*, (Paris: Ouest France, 1999), 25, 136.

situation existed for the tobacco monopoly where certain regions -notably Artois, Alsace, and Franche-Comté- retained privileges of some tobacco distribution and sale. The General Farm in these regions still sold tobacco and collected taxes to continue to extend their financial reach and power.⁵⁶ This, of course, meant that regions prone to smuggling would generally be border areas with other kingdoms.

It did not take long before laws were crafted that specifically gave orders to fight against tobacco smugglers. The first few decades of the eighteenth century saw a number of *ordonnances* aimed at giving power to employees of the General Farm in the hope that they could stop *contrebandiers*. A 1713 *ordonnance*, referencing a precedent established in a previous *arrêt du conseil* of 1707, confirmed the right of the General Farm to issue official warrants for suspected smugglers and to initiate the process of prosecuting those individuals.⁵⁷ The new powers, essentially extensions of the king's sovereignty to employees of the organization of the General Farm, did not solve the fundamental economic opportunities or problems that made smuggling enticing. Individuals continued to smuggle, prompting declarations in 1720, 1723, and 1734 that confirmed the power of the General Farm to enforce the tobacco monopoly in France.⁵⁸ The continued existence of large numbers of *contrebandiers* posed an intractable problem for the General Farm throughout the eighteenth century.

To the General Farm, *contrebandiers* were defined as “those who themselves interfere to sell or distribute tobacco, however stamped or sealed by the mark of the Farmer, without having

⁵⁶ Kwass, *Contraband*, 62.

⁵⁷ *Nouveau Code des Tailles, ou Recueil des Ordonnances... et Arrêts, Rendus tant sur cette Matière que pour les Privilèges des Officiers des Cours des Aides, des Élections, etc., depuis 1270 jusqu'à Présent, avec les Ordonnances.* (Paris: Chez Prault pere, Quay de Gêvres, au Paradis, 1740.), 1439.

⁵⁸ *Muyart de Vouglans, Les Lois Criminelles de France dans leur Ordre Naturel. Dédiées au Roi.* (Paris: Chez Merigot le jeune, Libraire, Quai des Augustins ; Crapart, libraire, rue d'Enferprès, la Place Saint-Michel ; and Benoît Morin, Libraire, rue Saint Jacques. 1780), 427.

an order or power in writing from the latter, or his attorneys & Clerks.”⁵⁹ Although the punishment of banishment to the galleys was applied less and less frequently after Louis XV’s ruling in 1749, attempts to control the foreign imports via smuggling remained relatively constant over the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ This continuity was the result of the continued efforts to control the tobacco trade, as well as the continued frustration of those efforts by groups and individuals who sold, traded, and carried the product in ways contrary to the wishes of the French administration. That desire for control was, in turn, ultimately connected to the financial needs of the French kings to fund the costs of ruling the kingdom.

These diverse attempts at economic control were the way that large impersonal pressures, particularly the pressures of state development, came to affect large groups who otherwise were isolated from the court at Versailles. Consumers, merchants, General Farm employees, and smugglers were connected in a vast web of economic production and contestation. The burgeoning costs of war, as well as the expenses of the material expressions of royal power, meant that the economic needs of the French crown were immense in the eighteenth century. The pressure to provide sufficient tax revenue to supply those needs then fell on the Farmers General which consisted of those men who purchased the offices associated with collecting the king’s taxes. These men, in turn, delegated their responsibility to a legion of employees who undertook the actual process of selling the officially regulated and controlled products. Finally, the consumers of salt, tobacco, or cloth then could choose to purchase those goods, or could choose to circumvent the entire system by either purchasing smuggled products or smuggling products themselves. Either way, consumers were exposed to the power of the French state, either through taxation or through the risk of punishment should they be caught with contraband material.

⁵⁹ De Vouglans, *Les Lois Criminelles*, 427.

⁶⁰ Ferrer, *Tabac, Sel, Indiennes*, 298.

These various connections are the focus of this study. By making these connections visible, it is possible to demonstrate the links between national concerns and the daily lives of common people. At times we shall see the consequences often turned violent.

Places prone to those violent consequences were the areas in eighteenth-century France that saw a significant volume of trade, as this trade exposed consumers and merchants to the power of the French state more frequently. Chief among these were the northern provinces of the French kingdom in regions like Flanders, Picardie, and Normandy. The close proximity of these regions to the Netherlands and England, nations with significant overseas commercial activity, meant that a variety of products produced or transported by Dutch and English ships made their initial incursion into France through the North. This geography made the North the crossroads through which France traded with its northern and wealthy neighbors.⁶¹ This area experienced a high volume of commercial activity which meant it was an area filled with potential cases of state or individual violence. The interactions between smugglers and representatives of the French king, particularly the armed customs officers of the General Farm, were most often the moments when the stresses of international trade came to bear in the form of violence.

⁶¹ Morieux, *Une Mer Pour Deux Royaumes*, 237.

Chapter 3

Les Bandes Armées de Contrebandiers: Extending Sovereignty in Eighteenth-Century

France

“The king having decided, sirs, to enable an effective method of stopping the armed bands of smugglers who daily penetrate into the kingdom...authorized the Farmers General to put into action able cavalry units, uniformly armed and mounted, composed of elite subjects.”⁶²

So began the 1762 letter of a French administrator, monsieur D’Haffrengues, in the northern French city of Lille. The letter itself was meant to be circulated to the surrounding area, informing the populace of the countryside and towns around Lille that there would be new efforts to curb movements of smugglers who evidently crossed the border at will. In the letter, monsieur D’Haffrengues granted a variety of powers to the armed agents of the General Farm including the right to accommodation in peoples’ homes, and forgiveness in advance for any violent overreaches made by these armed men in the pursuit of curtailing smuggling. What is surprising is that these powers were granted to the General Farm, a corporation under the French crown that was ostensibly a tax collection agency. Further, D’Haffrengues laid out a series of punishments for anyone caught selling illicit tobacco, harboring a smuggler, or otherwise facilitating the sale of non-General Farm products. A minimum punishment would be a fine of 500 *livres*, which was an enormously large sum, and stipulated “even some more serious penalties, according to the demands of the case.”⁶³

⁶² C.M.J. D’Haffrengues, *Lettre Circulaire pour Prévenir les Maires et Échevins que Sa Majesté a Autorisé les Fermiers Généraux à Mettre sur Pied des Troupes de Cavaliers Habillés, Armés et Montés Uniformément pour Réprimer les Bandes Armées de Contrebandiers qui Pénètrent Journallement*. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1762), 1.

⁶³ D’Haffrengues, *Lettre Circulaire pour Prevenir*, 1. Also, before progressing any further, it would be useful to explain the different forms of money in use in this period in France. Although there were other forms of currency both larger and smaller, the *livre* was the standard unit of currency for a variety of transactions in eighteenth-century France. Descending from largest to smallest, one *louis* equaled two *écu*. One *écu* equaled three *livres*. One *livre* equaled twenty *sous* or *sols*. One *sous*, in turn, equaled twelve *deniers*. It is little wonder that the monetary reforms of the French Revolution were seen as necessary to allow for more expedient commerce.

This might seem a harsh penalty, but it is indicative of a number of trends in eighteenth-century France. The proliferation of tobacco consumption reflected a change. It also pointed to an increase in the distribution of colonial products. The expansion of powers that D'Haffregues extended to the General Farm agents represented French crown's attempts to deal with problems of revenue raising and policing of its populace. Finally, the fact that the smugglers' activities were apparently a quotidian part of life in northern France points to tensions in how tobacco was perceived by disparate French people in the eighteenth century. Was tobacco a luxury product to be consumed only after basic necessities had been guaranteed? Or was tobacco an integral part of many French people's lives? Agents of the French crown were attempting to extend their claims of legal power into the daily lives of the king's subjects. New products from the Americas like tobacco were becoming a part of French society while the powerful, in this case the king's representatives in the General Farm, moved to control those same products. The legal precedent for the tobacco monopoly built on earlier monopolies, particularly the one on salt, to enforce state power in northern France in the eighteenth century.

Tobacco in eighteenth-century France affords an important insight into how the French in that century dealt with a changing global economic system. Specifically, the interaction between smugglers, customs agents, and consumers of tobacco demonstrate how the French in the eighteenth century attempted to understand and contend with a world that was changing around them. Tobacco also affords insight into how the authority and power of the French crown was extended throughout France. Tobacco consumption and the legislation designed to control illicit distribution of tobacco are connected to the various debates over what has subsequently been called by some scholars the "consumer revolution."⁶⁴ The continuing tension between

⁶⁴ Amalia D. Kessler, *A Revolution in Commerce: The Parisian Merchant Court and the Rise of Commercial Society in Eighteenth-Century France*. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007), 2.

representatives of the French legal system, particularly the agents of the General Farm, and the variety of consumers of tobacco reveals some of the increasing tensions in eighteenth century French society. The specific extension of sovereignty, understood here as the French crown's attempt to extend the reach of its legal power through the enforcement of the tobacco monopoly, was met with compliance or smuggling. The French state's project of establishing sovereignty was therefore predicated on the enforcement of the French legal system. By analyzing how different groups in eighteenth-century France interacted through tobacco consumption and legislation, it is possible to understand how increasing tensions between assertions of authority by tax agents on behalf of the king conflicted with the concerns, both commercial and social, of a variety of peoples in eighteenth-century France.

In the fall of 1632, Louis XIII established a "*Tariffe Général*" that heavily taxed the importation of foreign tobacco, while lightly taxing tobacco grown in France domestically or in French colonies. The lack of significant domestic production of tobacco until the mid-eighteenth century meant that effectively all tobacco consumed until just before the French Revolution was heavily taxed and regulated.⁶⁵ There were some exceptions to the application of the monopoly but the area of the *cinq grosses fermes*, which encompassed most of the population and wealth in France, was subject to the new tariff.⁶⁶ However, it was only in 1674 that the French crown implemented the monopoly on tobacco that would become the purview of the General Farm to enforce. Implemented to offset the costs of the Franco-Dutch War, the monopoly meant that from that moment forward only representatives of the French crown could legally sell, import, and distribute tobacco throughout most of France.⁶⁷ The justification for this monopoly came

⁶⁵ Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 19.

⁶⁶ Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 15.

⁶⁷ Buterne, *Dictionnaire de Législation*, 264.

from the crown's assertion of authority over all lands and inhabitants of France, while the practice of taxation and control was based on the older monopoly on salt which was called the *gabelle*.⁶⁸ These types of indirect taxes on goods were especially unpopular, even prompting the slogan "Long live the King without the *gabelle*!" (*Vive le Roi sans Gabelle*) that became popular across rural France in the eighteenth century and was popular earlier in seventeenth century revolts.⁶⁹ For regular tobacco users, this particular form of taxation appeared to intrude too far into their quotidian existence.

It was from this moment in 1674 forward that the conflict between French tobacco consumers and their government began. Although the French crown attempted to avoid this issue through a quick period of experimentation of tobacco cultivation in the French colony of Louisiana in the early years of the eighteenth century, it was quickly discovered that the best quality tobacco was produced in the English colony of Virginia.⁷⁰ Despite the continual hostilities between the French and English crowns over the course of the eighteenth century that caused temporary interruptions in supply, the English tobacco comprised a major source of the tobacco smoked by the French in this period.⁷¹ These facts meant that there existed a large distribution network that connected most areas within France to the Americas via England.⁷² This network was connected to the increasing global connections of France in the eighteenth century. Agents of the French crown raised the prices of this tobacco, which led to the conflicts exemplified by tobacco smuggling and the violence necessary to repress smuggling. The use of law and lawful punishment was a way for the French state, through the individuals who

⁶⁸ René Favier, "Une Province Face à la Contrebande dans la Première Moitié du XVIII^e Siècle." *Musée Dauphinois. Mandrin. Malfaiteur ou Bandit au Grand Cœur ?*, Musée dauphinois (2005): 13.

⁶⁹ Brunet, *Contrebandiers, Mutins, Fiers-À-Bras*, 15.

⁷⁰ Vigié and van Wilder-Vigié, *L'Herbe à Nicot*, 122.

⁷¹ Vigié and van Wilder-Vigié, *L'Herbe à Nicot*, 124.

⁷² Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 17.

comprised the General Farm, to exert the king's sovereignty. The reticence of smugglers to submit to the legal dictums of the French king points to the fact that there existed major conflicts within France about how these new products from the Americas might be integrated into French society. How tobacco was interpreted from a legal and social standpoint, therefore, reveals the underlying stresses of this European nation entering into a new economic and social situation characterized by increasing connections across the globe.

Tobacco consumption was not limited to just one class or group in the eighteenth century. Aristocrats at Versailles consumed tobacco through the form of snuff, keeping their snuff in elaborate silver boxes that would eventually become collectibles in their own right.⁷³ The less affluent also consumed tobacco regularly as can be seen in a detailed engraving by Nicolas Guérard from the middle of the eighteenth century.⁷⁴ In the scene, the beggar Jean is beseeching a stranger Paul to share some tobacco with him. Jean, who has his pipe "and nothing more," merely asks Paul to expel smoke into his overturned pipe so that he can breathe in the second-hand smoke of Paul's pipe. What is particularly striking about this image is how it points to tobacco's reach across French society as aristocrats and the poor alike enjoyed consuming the product. One of a beggar's only possessions is a tobacco pipe, which demonstrates the wide diffusion of tobacco throughout French society in some form- smoking, snorting, or even drinking tobacco infused concoctions- by the end of the eighteenth century. Further, the engraving points to the social aspect of tobacco consumption. Sharing a pipe or a snuffbox was a way to open a conversation, and the psychoactive properties of tobacco were understood to make individuals "*honnêtes gens*" who were more open to conversation and honest.⁷⁵ Tobacco was a

⁷³ Kwass, *Contraband*, 26.

⁷⁴ Nicolas Guérard, *Charité Fraternelle*. (Paris : chez Nicolas Guérard, Graveur Rue St. Jacques proche St. Yves, 1711), 1.

⁷⁵ Vigié and van Wilder-Vigié, *L'Herbe à Nicot*, 55.

way for people to connect with each other, which was one of the few Native American cultural understandings of tobacco consumption that crossed the Atlantic.⁷⁶ This cultural aspect of tobacco usage coincided with other American products such as coffee and chocolate as they were adopted into European cultures in similar ways, even being consumed together in the coffee shops that started to spring up in the last half of the eighteenth century.⁷⁷ However, neither coffee nor chocolate were policed or taxed in the same way as tobacco was in France. Accordingly, neither coffee nor chocolate were smuggled as tobacco was.

Tobacco's introduction into France came as a part of the larger changes brought by the new interactions between Europe and the Americas in the sixteenth century. This was a period of exploration for Europeans as they attempted to map, classify, and interact with a new continent world of flora and fauna. Tobacco was one of the first American products to be introduced into Europe, as Spanish mariners brought back the addictive plant after watching the native peoples of the Americas, particularly the Aztecs and Maya, ingest tobacco regularly. When Jean Nicot introduced tobacco to the French court in 1560, he wrote excitedly about tobacco: "I have recovered an Indian herb, of marvelous and experimental properties." With this introduction, tobacco entered into early modern France's pharmacopeia. Medicine in this period was centered on the ancient humoral theory that contended the body was made up of four essential humors that needed to be in balance in order to maintain one's health. These humors- consisting of black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood- corresponded to the four ancient elements of earth, fire, water, and air. If a person was sick, the individual's humors were out of balance. The method of treating such an imbalance was to either add one substance, such as tobacco, or remove a

⁷⁶ Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World*. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press), 183.

⁷⁷ Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures*, 247.

different substance, such as the removal of blood through bloodletting. As tobacco was often consumed through smoke, it is perhaps not entirely surprising that it was widely understood to be choleric, having hot and dry properties, and therefore tobacco was seen as useful combating diseases known to be phlegmatic. As these diseases were caused by an overabundance of phlegm, which was cold and wet, tobacco was viewed as the perfect method to counteract this imbalance.

In fact, of those who wrote about tobacco from the start of the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century “only three authors did not cite a medical use of tobacco.”⁷⁸ Perhaps most confusingly to modern readers, tobacco was purported to have particular use in aiding respiration. One physician, Buchoz, wrote that one might insert small pellets of tobacco “in the nostrils” which he argued would “produce such marvelous effects” because the tobacco “attracts much water and phlegm, clears the head, . . . and makes breathing easier.”⁷⁹ This advice actually mirrored the preferred form of tobacco ingestion in eighteenth-century France, which was to snort a finely ground compound of the plant, although smoking and chewing tobacco were common.⁸⁰ It is not surprising, therefore, that many French individuals developed an affinity for the noxious American weed as a readily available, and medically justified, relief from ailments. Of course, modern research has explained the addictive power of the active agent in tobacco, nicotine, which certainly contributed to the rapidly expanding popularity of the plant. But the belief in health benefits no doubt contributed to the quick spread of tobacco consumption.

⁷⁸ Vigié and van Wilder-Vigié, *L'Herbe à Nicot*, 34.

⁷⁹ Buchoz quoted in Vigié and van Wilder-Vigié, *L'Herbe à Nicot*, 37.

⁸⁰ Kwass, *Contraband*, 30.

Although these uses existed from the beginning of tobacco's entry into France, as evidenced by the various seventeenth-century doctors writing on how tobacco might be used, it was not until the early eighteenth century that tobacco became a daily product for a variety of French peoples.⁸¹ With this explosion of popularity, driven in part by the psychoactive and addictive properties of the plant, the reputation of tobacco as a useful panacea expanded. Over the course of the late seventeenth century, in response to the increase in demand throughout France, the French state attempted to incentivize farmers in France and in France's overseas colonies to produce tobacco. It was in the first few decades of the seventeenth century that the French crown first noticed the immense demand for tobacco among the French populace and implemented the first tobacco duties that would eventually be the basis of the tobacco monopoly.

To acquire the product, a French man or woman in the eighteenth century went to a tobacco vendor. These vendors, located in French towns, were required to have paid an onerous tax on the tobacco to the General Farm. Although there were some variations in the amount of the tax, it was usually several *livres* per pound of tobacco. This doubled the price of tobacco for consumers.⁸² If the tax was not paid then these vendors would be guilty of selling fraudulent tobacco and required to pay a significant fine.⁸³ Should the vendor be unable to pay the sum, the vendor would be placed in debtor's prison. Further, if the vendor was caught, he or she could be subjected to judicial torture. This was intended to extract information deemed crucial to the functioning of the law.⁸⁴ In the case of smugglers, this line of questioning often focused on whether the smuggler had any accomplices in bringing the *faux tabac* across the border and into

⁸¹ Vigié and van Wilder-Vigié, *L'Herbe à Nicot*, 125.

⁸² Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 498.

⁸³ *Loi Relative aux Assignats Suspectés de Faux. Donnée ... le 1er. Août 1791*. (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 1791), 2

⁸⁴ Lisa Silverman, *Tortured Subjects: Pain, Truth, and the Body in Early Modern France*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 42.

the territories controlled by the General Farm. These threats meant that the majority of vendors and consumers were careful to not be caught selling or consuming fraudulent tobacco. If smugglers were confronted by the agents of the General Farm, there is evidence that many were quick to resort to violence to escape and continue to smuggle.⁸⁵

In juxtaposition to this, however, was the attitudes of some wealthy Frenchmen. Jean Louis Moreau de Beaumont, an important member of Louis XV's finance council, believed that the tax on tobacco was "purely a voluntary tax for the people. If [tobacco] has in some way become a need, then they are themselves the authors of this new necessity."⁸⁶ This idea that tobacco was a luxury unfortunately taken on by the less wealthy in the kingdom, expressed by de Beaumont, could be used to support the high taxation levied upon tobacco. For comparison, salt was also taxed and smuggled at high rates in the eighteenth century. However, as a recognized necessity for food preservation, the duties placed upon salt were lower and smuggling was pursued less intensively.⁸⁷ It was assumed by some that because tobacco was a luxury item, the king was justified in levying heavy taxes on the product.

Beaumont's argument was in conflict with the actions of smugglers and consumers, who bought the cheaper tobacco brought to their village or city by smugglers. The people who traipsed across the hinterlands of France to make a few extra *sols* by selling fraudulent tobacco relied upon the demand of many French peasants and urban dwellers who found tobacco to be part of their daily life and not a luxury at all. Whether that quotidian importance came through tobacco as an ingested product or as a way to provide extra income, this reliance demonstrates the strong desire to ingest tobacco for many French subjects in the eighteenth century. The

⁸⁵ Brunet, *Contrebandiers, Mutins, Fiers-À-Bras*, 62.

⁸⁶ Moreau de Beaumont, *Mémoires Concernant Les Impositions et Droits en Europe*. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1769), 4, 680.

⁸⁷ Matthews, *The Royal General Farms*, 103.

wealthy classes of France, however, viewed tobacco as a relaxing stimulant that was not vital to life in the slightest. What this disagreement betrays is a conflict in the conception of tobacco; a disagreement rooted in class structure and played out in the legal system of eighteenth-century France.

The General Farm itself was a seemingly ubiquitous part of French life, collecting almost all of the indirect taxes levied on peasants, which amounted to approximately 50% of the crown's annual revenues during the eighteenth century.⁸⁸ The connection between the General Farm and onerous taxation became increasingly important over the course of the eighteenth century as the ballooning debt of the French monarchy necessitated continuously increased revenues.⁸⁹ The need for reliable income for the crown, combined with the personal financial interests of the General Farm, meant that the tax-farmers themselves had a vested interest in maintaining the rule of law throughout France. Without the rule of law the collection of taxes that financed the crown's operations, and that made the *Fermiers Généraux* wealthy, would be impossible. In contrast, the French subjects whose material goods and wealth were being taxed had a vested interest in contesting the application of that rule of law, as they frequently did over the course of the eighteenth century through consuming or smuggling fraudulent tobacco.

The smugglers who risked severe physical or monetary punishment by illegally carrying tobacco across the expansive borders of France in the eighteenth century acted against the rule of law. For most of these individuals, the trafficking of fraudulent tobacco was not the only source of economic activity; rather, smuggling was a method of supplementing income. Based on arrest records, some information can be gleaned about these men and women. Approximately eight of

⁸⁸ Durand, *Finance et Mécénat*: 21.

⁸⁹ Jean Nicolas, *La Rébellion Française: Mouvements Populaires et Conscience Sociale 1661-1789*. (Paris, France: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), 56.

every ten caught transporting illegal tobacco was a male, though the distribution of sex was more balanced when considering the sale of *faux tabac*. Smugglers were tavern-owners, day laborers, gardeners, farmers, foresters, miners, soldiers, and artisans. Ninety percent of these smugglers were rural peoples who knew the overland routes necessary to evade agents of the Farm. As rural people in the eighteenth century, smugglers were almost entirely illiterate. Finally, sixty-one percent of smugglers were between the ages of twenty and forty.⁹⁰ Smuggling required long treks on foot over difficult terrain with the threat of violence should a smuggler encounter customs agents. These figures suggest that the majority of smugglers needed to be young enough to carry heavy packages long distances and be prepared to defend themselves and their product if challenged by representatives of the General Farm.

Smugglers frequently engaged in violence when confronted by the agents of the Farm. This obviously restricted the effectiveness of the General Farm in a region, as Michel Brunet has shown.⁹¹ There is some evidence that French subjects connected precarious economic situations with the decision to smuggle and the corresponding risk of violence. Addressing his work to the Estates General in 1789, writer Ange Goudar used the famous case of Louis Mandrin's life as an indictment of the legal power of the General Farm. Goudar argues that Mandrin was not a common criminal, but should rather be considered an "extraordinary man who predicted and proved that the system of the General Farm will end to impoverish and ruin the State and the Sovereign."⁹² In Goudar's telling, General Farm was a "company of greedy and barbarous traitors, who, under the name of the Monarch, exercise the most tyrannical monopoly on the

⁹⁰ Ferrer, *Tabac, Sel, Indiennes*, 212-215.

⁹¹ Brunet, *Contrebandiers, Mutins, Fiers-À-Bras*, 66.

⁹² Ange Goudar, *Analyse du Testament Politique de Mandrin. Ouvrage dans lequel cet Homme Extraordinaire a Prédit, Prouvé que le Système de la Ferme-Générale Finiroit par Appauvrir, Ruiner l'Etat, le Souverain*. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1789), 1.

people.”⁹³ When his own economic prospects dried up, Mandrin acted against the corrupt system set up by the General Farm. These actions, Goudar argues, should have been understood as a critique of the lack of economic opportunities in France for which he blamed the General Farm.⁹⁴ The injustices of the system extended to all people in France as “the majority of men in France have lost the trace of their first professions. All groups have been emptied without sense one over the others. That of the laborers above all has diminished in proportion to the jobs of the Farms have increased.”⁹⁵ Mandrin was just the most visible example of an individual whose lack of opportunities greatly incentivized smuggling. For Goudar, the greed and excesses of the General Farm meant that the crime of smuggling was a result of economic desperation.

Smuggling was, for those less famous than Mandrin, a method of temporarily alleviating the strains of poverty especially in the countryside of France that periodically experienced intermittent famine or fiscal crisis. The contestations between smugglers and employees of the General Farm are examples of how an expanding and changing international economic situation came to affect the daily lives of individuals. Before tobacco and other products were introduced to France as a result of French colonial efforts, the opportunities for smuggling were mostly limited to salt. With the introduction of these products, particularly tobacco, individuals now had an other options should their economic situation become dire. This choice was accompanied by the risk of violent encounter with the General Farm, whose agents also risked danger by enforcing the king’s monopoly. These moments of contestation were examples of how new economic connections between France and the rest of the Atlantic world were changing lives in the eighteenth century.

⁹³ Goudar, *Analyse du Testament*, 11.

⁹⁴ Goudar, *Analyse du Testament*, 19.

⁹⁵ Goudar, *Analyse du Testament*, 32.

The amount of money to be made smuggling tobacco was also a large incentive for individuals. Depending on location and the smuggler's legal occupation, a smuggler could easily double or triple his or her daily wage in one single trip across France's borders into a neighboring country if the taxation of the General Farm had sufficiently driven up the price of tobacco. The north was one such location in the eighteenth century, which accounts for it being an area that saw a disproportionate amount of smuggling.⁹⁶ Of course it is hard to make concrete generalizations about the amount made by the average smuggler as most smugglers were never caught by French tax collectors or their employees. The serious nature of the crime discouraged leaving a documentary record. However, based just on the records of those caught selling or smuggling tobacco, one can point to how lucrative this particular endeavor was. It was not uncommon for smugglers to make a profit of one-hundred percent over the course of one trip, as one group did in 1721. Buying their tobacco across the border for a price between 9 *sous* and 11 *sous* 3 *deniers*, the group resold the smuggled tobacco for 18 to 20 *sous* in a neighboring province.⁹⁷ This group utilized the changing economic situation produced by differences in price between France and its neighbors to quickly make significant amounts of money.

Another example is provided by the documents related to the June 1747 arrest of a couple for the sale of fraudulent tobacco. In the raid "around four ounces of minced or shredded tobacco" were seized as well as "around fifteen ounces of grated or crushed tobacco." The couple was sentenced, as described in the *procès verbaux*, to pay a thousand *livres* in recompense.⁹⁸ That the man and woman were required to pay the full amount possible under the

⁹⁶ Matthews, *The Royal General Farms*, 125.

⁹⁷ Ferrer, *Tabac, Sel, Indiennes*, 218.

⁹⁸ *Arrests du Conseil d'État du Roy, des 11 Juin et 8 Octobre 1748. Le Premier Casse une Sentence de l'Élection de Bordeaux, du 22 juin 1747, et un Arrêt de la Cour des Aides de la Même Ville du 14 Février Suivant, Confirmatif d'icelle, pour avoir Annullé un Procès-Verbal de Saisie d'Environ Quatre on. 1748.* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1748), 7

law for just over a pound of fraudulent tobacco points to how seriously the General Farm perceived their crime. Further, it also points to how it was assumed, perhaps correctly, that this couple had been continuously smuggling for a period of several years. It was unlikely that the couple could have paid the full amount of one thousand *livres*. The failure to pay the fine would have made them liable to sentencing to the harsh galleys often populated by those caught smuggling and unable to pay fines in full. This capacity for profit is an example of how globally sourced products offered economic opportunity, but also exposed individuals to state violence and punishment.

The assertions of authority made by the customs agents of the General Farm, who often invoked the will of the king, were done in two ways. The first form was through economic sanctions and fines for smugglers and vendors of fraudulent tobacco. Of course, should those individuals be unable to pay the fine they would be forced to labor in the galleys, so there always existed the threat of violence even when the punishment was, ostensibly, non-violent.⁹⁹ Although the fines varied with time and place, ranging from one hundred *livres* to one thousand *livres*, the legislation concerning the enforcement of the tobacco monopoly always provided for a specific amount to be paid in recompense for violating the monopoly.¹⁰⁰ These figures would have been astronomical for the poor of eighteenth-century France, demonstrating both the serious nature of the crime to the Farm as well as the power of the French crown's agents to affect the lives of others. If caught, it would take all of a family's resources to pay the sum back and avoid sentencing to the galley. That situation was, however, dependent upon actually being arrested by customs agents. Smugglers employed violent means to avoid capture. Contemporaries even

⁹⁹ Silverman, *Tortured Subjects*, 48.

¹⁰⁰ Louis XV, *Déclaration du Roy*, 10.

talked of the recurrent conflicts between smugglers and agents of the Farm as a “small war.”¹⁰¹ Smugglers were known to use their fists, blunt weapons, and firearms in order to evade arrest. Smugglers’ resorts to violence dramatically raised the stakes of the moment because resisting arrest through violence could merit the death penalty under the law.¹⁰² Aside from potentially dying in the process of being arrested by the General Farm, the threat of the death penalty demonstrates how integral violence was to the enforcement of the monopoly and therefore the assertion of the king’s authority in this realm. As agents of the Farm were given power to use whatever violent measures necessary in a moment of confrontation to counteract the smugglers, this also points to how violence pervaded the entire system of stopping the distribution of fraudulent tobacco.

It is under this threat of violence to smugglers, and to those who consumed smuggled tobacco, that D’Haffregues’ 1762 letter becomes entirely comprehensible. This was an attempt to extend the king’s authority into his subjects’ daily lives through force. The circulated letter combined the economic sanctions common throughout the eighteenth century with giving broad powers to the mounted agents of the Farm tasked with stopping the smuggling. It also points to the frequency of these cases around Lille, the regional capital of French Flanders. Aside from the punishment of 500 *livres* in payment, D’Haffregues spelled out all of the ways that the authority of the French crown could be asserted; after all, it was “the will of his Majesty” to control the borders and the people of the kingdom. These soldiers were meant to receive “all the security and all the protection of which they shall need” wherever they went in pursuit of a band of smugglers. Inhabitants of the region were to provide lodging to them and feed the soldiers’ horses wherever they decided to spend the night. D’Haffregues even stipulated that some

¹⁰¹ Brunet, *Contrebandiers, Mutins, Fiers-À-Bras*, 146.

¹⁰² Carolina Spence, “Smuggling in Early Modern France.” (Master’s Thesis, University of Warwick. 2010), 80.

money was to be provided to soldiers who were hurt or who had fallen sick, so that they might recuperate quickly and rejoin the defense of the region against smugglers.¹⁰³ The extent of authority that this particular letter spelled out to maintain law and order, and therefore establishing the authority of the king vested in these men, is particularly important for understanding the interactions between French law and French subjects in the eighteenth century. The indirect taxes of the monopoly were a way for the crown to access the wealth related to tobacco consumption. This letter, however, allowed for armed representatives of the crown to intrude into the homes, businesses, and lives of subjects in northern France. It permitted representatives of the crown to help themselves to the physical sustenance of these people, so long as smugglers were being pursued. As king, Louis legally had the power to reach anywhere within his kingdom and attempt to enforce his will. Representatives of the king exercised this extension of sovereignty in order to maintain the rule of law, while smugglers and consumers of fraudulent tobacco attempted to subvert this same rule of law as it was deemed unfair or unnatural. The fact that D'Haffregues had to circulate a letter articulating the rights and prerogatives of the General Farm is indicative of the difficulties the French state had in curbing the distribution and consumption of *faux tabac*.

Tobacco was not the only smuggled good in eighteenth-century France. Salt, brightly-painted fabrics imported from India called *indiennes*, and books were also trafficked across France's borders in this period. Of these, the two most smuggled goods were salt and tobacco, as these were the cheapest and used the most regularly.¹⁰⁴ Salt was needed for preserving food, while tobacco helped peasants get through the day, providing a distraction as well as tending to some hunger pangs. The similarities between the two products in terms of portability, cost, and

¹⁰³ D'Haffregues, *Lettre Circulaire pour Prévenir*, 1

¹⁰⁴ Ferrer, *Tabac, Sel, Indiennes*, 131.

relatively consistent demand by users made for important parallels in the amount of smuggling of the two goods.¹⁰⁵ In fact, as these were the most smuggled goods, Louis XV addressed their introduction into specific regions of France. In 1743 Louis XV issued a decree that was intended “to prevent the introduction of prohibited merchandises, of fraudulent salt & fraudulent tobacco, within the provinces bordering Picardie and Artois.” Among other authorizations, Louis XV called for the seizure of all fraudulent tobacco found within a home or city, even if the men or women had merely purchased smuggled goods rather than actually smuggled the goods themselves. Louis also required that *porteurs*, the men and women who cheaply carried goods or packages from place to place, bear certificates for what they carried. Finally, the letter set limits for how tavern-owners should run their businesses, while simultaneously recognizing, as establishments that primarily served food and entertained strangers and guests, that they would need higher amounts of salt and tobacco than a normal family home. Each of these requirements were to be strictly enforced by the General Farm and its agents.¹⁰⁶ That tobacco and salt are grouped into one group for the purposes of Louis hints at how salt and tobacco were smuggled by people experiencing similar circumstances and in similar areas.

The variety of ways that Louis XV extended claims of sovereignty, including setting specific limits on how much salt or tobacco might be reasonably found within a house, shows how tobacco consumption was a site of contested authority. The tobacco and salt monopolies were not universally adhered to in eighteenth-century France merely because the king decreed their existence; rather, the king’s agents in the General Farm had to threaten violent enforcement

¹⁰⁵ Anne Montenach, “Le Faux-Saunage en Haut-Dauphiné au XVIII^e Siècle : Entre Économie Parallèle et Pluriaactivité.” *Histoire des Alpes* 14 (2009): 153.

¹⁰⁶ Louis XV, *Déclaration Portant Règlement pour Empêcher l'Introduction des Marchandises Prohibées, du Faux Sel et du Faux Tabac, dans les Provinces Limitrophes de la Picardie et de l'Artois*. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1743), 1-7.

of the law against smugglers and anyone who purchased smuggled goods. Of course, the continual presence of smuggling in France throughout the eighteenth century also demonstrates that this suppression was never complete and that the king's authority could be rejected if one was willing to risk violence and punishment. This was especially true for products deemed necessary by segments of the French population, such as salt. Tobacco's role as a major smuggled good was due to the high demand for the product borne out of addiction. Together, these products demonstrate how the legal authority wielded by the General Farm in the name of the French king might be contested.

The fact that Louis XV specified that this letter was targeted at regions neighboring Picardie and Artois suggests how prominent smuggling had become by the middle of the eighteenth century. Picardie and Artois were northern border areas far from Versailles, which meant smuggling had become enough of a public problem to necessitate the king publishing an official edict. Of course, the crown's revenue needs meant that the General Farm continued to control and tax tobacco. The deployment of force into these regions made more concrete links between the enforcement of the General Farm's monopolies and the extension of the crown's ability to enforce its will.

All of this is not to say, however, that the tobacco and salt monopolies were exactly parallel. Although the French crown and the General Farm generally treated the traffic of the two products as essentially two aspects of one larger problem of smuggling, the realities of how the products were smuggled points to important differences. Tobacco, when smuggled, afforded much greater profits than salt did, because smaller amounts of tobacco could be sold at higher prices than comparable quantities of salt.¹⁰⁷ This potential for profit meant that while salt was

¹⁰⁷ Ferrer, *Tabac, Sel, Indiennes*, 132.

exclusively smuggled by individuals, tobacco occasionally attracted large armed groups that were even more disposed to employ violence to protect themselves and their tobacco.¹⁰⁸ Further, the fact that tobacco was a global product, intimately connected to production chains that spanned the Atlantic Ocean, posed some problems of enforcement for the General Farm. Salt was produced inside France's border which allowed the General Farm to control sites of production should smuggling become too obvious. Tobacco, however, was produced in countries and colonies far outside of the General Farm's jurisdiction. This limited the General Farm's effectiveness because smugglers, who operated mostly in border regions anyway, could easily retreat outside of the General Farm's jurisdiction. The possibility of escape, combined with the fact that tobacco was more likely to be smuggled by armed and organized groups, meant that the tobacco monopoly was much more difficult to enforce than the salt monopoly.

The propensity of smuggling groups towards violence in protecting their illegal goods so threatened the General Farm's agents that tobacco smugglers were executed for their crimes when caught working in large groups, a much more severe punishment than would be expected for smugglers working alone. One leader of such a group that had terrorized agents of the Farm in the 1750's "received eight blows on the arms and thighs while living, one upon the stomach" before being "strangled after eight minutes in between blows" by the noose.¹⁰⁹ The men of the Farm who had caught this leader wanted to make it absolutely clear to the assembled crowd that similar actions would be met with harsh reprisals should others follow the executed man's example. As these smugglers had been brazenly operating for several months prior to their capture in 1755, it was imperative for the Farm to demonstrate its ability to enforce the law and

¹⁰⁸ Brunet, *Contrebandiers, Mutins, Fiers-À-Bras*, 65.

¹⁰⁹ Michel Forest, *Chroniques d'un Bourgeois de Valence au Temps de Mandrin*. (Grenoble, France : Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1980), 44.

the king's authority. This, then, was the main difference between the salt and tobacco monopolies in terms of taxation and enforcement. Tobacco's high potential for profit meant that the trade had to be controlled much more strictly and enforced more severely. These reprisals towards tobacco smugglers also demonstrated the ways the expansion of France into the Atlantic World created new problems in the eighteenth century that had to be addressed.

Tobacco also interacted with important debates about consumption in eighteenth-century France that were spurred by France's foray into a rapidly globalizing world. Amalia Kessler has demonstrated that in the seventeenth century France commerce became valorized and legitimized in a new way by its ability to operate under the auspices of royal power, as opposed to commerce in England or the Netherlands, where it received intrinsic respect. Commerce throughout the eighteenth century was accompanied in France by moral expectations and reasoning.¹¹⁰ The commerce of tobacco, therefore, was limited to the commerce done under the monopoly of the Farm; to purchase and distribute the good otherwise was viewed as a serious threat to French society. To the agents of the General Farm, tobacco smuggling was particularly treacherous as it operated to deny the crown's ability to produce revenue, as well as promoting avarice and greed which were viewed as dangerous side-effects of unrestrained commerce.

This anxiety over consumption, particularly consumption of goods that were deemed to be luxuries, was called the "problem of luxury" (*la querelle du luxe*). Luxurious consumption was considered by many to be "inherently excessive and morally dangerous."¹¹¹ Although this issue of luxury was eventually refined into conceptions of good luxury and bad luxury, the main counterpoint in terms of commerce and consumption was the idea of "sweet commerce." "Sweet

¹¹⁰ Kessler, *A Revolution in Commerce*, 15.

¹¹¹ Michael Kwass, "Between Words and Things: 'La Querelle du Luxe' in the Eighteenth Century." *MLN* 130 (2015): 773.

commerce” (*doux commerce*) was an idea held and developed in eighteenth-century France that some types of commercial trade could be both morally and economically beneficial to the people that engaged in it.¹¹² All of these ideas were developed as Europe experienced a revolution in production and consumption in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The revolution was partially brought on by the discovery of markets and resources in the Americas, of which tobacco was a part.

The trade in tobacco reflected the anxiety over trade reflected in the debate over *la querelle du luxe* and *le doux commerce*. The agents of the Farm held that unrestrained commerce in tobacco was one such problem of luxury. Consumers of tobacco in rural France who smuggled or consumed fraudulent tobacco appeared to regard open commerce of tobacco as beneficial. As a contested good, tobacco was a site of conflict over sovereignty, particularly when it came to maintaining the rule of law within the regions belonging to the French crown. To members of the French royal court at Versailles, tobacco was not a necessity, despite claims to the contrary by merchants and consumers.¹¹³ As tobacco was neither a food nor a liquid that might sustain life, tobacco deserved to be taxed and dealt with as a luxury product. It was this conception of tobacco that allowed for sudden impositions of taxes that doubled the price of tobacco.¹¹⁴ By contrast, laborers’ common legal defense of necessity suggests their belief in the daily role of tobacco in their lives. This defense was based on the idea that extreme need might remove culpability when a person was convicted of a crime. It was commonly used throughout France.¹¹⁵ The idea that tobacco was necessary was a prominent complaint in many of the *cahiers de*

¹¹² Anoush Fraser Terjanian, *Commerce and Its Discontents in Eighteenth-Century French Political Thought*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 89.

¹¹³ De Beaumont, *Mémoires Concernant Les Impositions*, 680.

¹¹⁴ Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 264.

¹¹⁵ Jean-Marie Carbasse, *Histoire du Droit Pénal et de la Justice Criminelle*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006), 370.

doléances that preceded the meeting of the Estates General in 1789.¹¹⁶ This inclusion reveals how the changing global economy had come to permeate much of French society. The *cahiers* were a rare opportunity for common subjects to express grievances directly to the king. The widespread inclusion of tobacco taxation as a complaint in the *cahiers de doléances* of northern France in particular demonstrates that point. Here, one can see the result of the attempt by the Farm to enforce the king's authority through defining what was a luxurious product and what was a vital product for daily life. Specifically, the Farm did not consider tobacco to be a necessity which, in part, justified harsh enforcement of the tobacco monopoly. It was in this way that the Farm attempted to extend the king's sovereignty into the purchasing and consumptive habits of French lives during the eighteenth century.

Tobacco was a product that entered France as part of the Columbian exchange and was connected to production chains that extended across the Atlantic Ocean. Various people throughout France defined how they might use tobacco, whether that be as a relaxant, a medicinal product, or merely as a stimulant. Tobacco was consumed by an array of French people in the eighteenth century, from the nobility to the humblest peasant. Tying all of those consumers together, however, was the tobacco monopoly and its enforcement by the General Farm throughout the eighteenth century. The period when the tobacco monopoly was extended by the French monarchy was also the period when smuggling became an urgent problem for the General Farm. The driving conditions of smuggling, particularly the economic opportunities afforded by smuggling, offered a way for rural peoples to survive in a century punctuated by

¹¹⁶ Henri Lorient ed., *Les Cahiers de Doléances de 1789 dans le Département du Pas-de-Calais*. (Arras, France: Imprimerie Répense-Crépel, 1891), 165. Some *cahiers* even specified a specific price that tobacco should or would return to without the interference of the General Farm. Most frequently, a reduction of a *livre* per pound of tobacco or a return to prices of approximately 1778 were asked for. These were, essentially, the same request just phrased in different ways.

famine and riots. Further, the fact that the General Farm held monopolies on other goods, notably salt, demonstrates how this group relied upon defining the extent of the authority of the French monarchy could be applied.

The smuggling of tobacco intersects, in many ways, with many of the grand debates about eighteenth-century France. The consumer revolution, the reach of the crown's authority in France's provinces, the extent of legal power, and the roles of state and individual violence in French history all have vectors that interact with the illegal importation of the *faux tabac*. The General Farm attempted to control how tobacco entered France and how that tobacco was taxed. This attempt was a source of conflict between these representatives of the king collecting taxes and the French subjects who were obligated to pay. The fact that tobacco had important cultural and social meanings for these laborers in eighteenth-century France, particularly its use within the daily lives of these people, meant that an agreed upon use for tobacco was not forthcoming. The General Farm, by contrast, viewed tobacco as a luxury product. To them, raising taxation rates on tobacco or vigilantly enforcing the tobacco monopoly were justified because tobacco sated neither hunger nor thirst and was therefore not a necessity. The violence of smuggling and repression of smuggling was therefore the consequence of the inability of French people in the eighteenth century to reconcile these conceptions of the role of tobacco. It was through the legal power of violence and punishment that the agents of the General Farm attempted to use the power of the throne of France to enforce their will. Those practices of enforcement and punishment were driven by the revenue needs of the French state that the General Farm was reacting to in this period. The violent encounters between agents of the Farm and smugglers were therefore different but connected reactions to shifting economic and social stresses produced by the needs of the French state as well as the needs and desires of individuals.

Chapter 4

Les Contrebandiers: Tobacco Smuggling and Violence in Northern France, 1717-1795

The previous chapters have looked at how the French state and the General Farm dealt with tobacco consumption and taxation generally in France as well as in Northern France. These issues were related to global changes that were connecting distant peoples and locations. Northern French subjects, of course, also contended with those same pressures in their lives and quotidian decisions. This chapter will look at how a certain subset of individuals, smugglers, reacted to those same pressures in dealing with the General Farm. Although not the majority of the French population, the actions taken by smugglers provides insight into the global pressures, both economic and social, that contributed to the breakdown of the French regime and therefore to the causes that precipitated the Revolution. This is particularly analyzed here in the actions of individuals to exploit the changes wrought by globalization in the eighteenth century through smuggling and the accompanying risk of personal or state violence.

However, when placed in the history of a “consumer revolution” that transformed how people the globe over purchased and consumed products, tobacco emerges as a product both with a dynamic history of its own and that connects it to a broader history of eighteenth-century France. Northern French tobacco smuggling in particular elucidates how individuals responded to those Atlantic-wide changes. Tobacco was one of these desired products that were frequently exchanged as part of the Atlantic economy. And, as has been seen, it was heavily taxed and controlled by the French crown, creating an economic situation that enticed individuals in northern France to smuggle. Smuggling, of course, was not a practice invented with the introduction of tobacco into France, as it was one part of the commodity chains that connected

the entirety of the Atlantic world.¹¹⁷ However, given the material gains provided by the smuggling of tobacco, as compared to the less profitable smuggling of salt in Old Regime France, tobacco smuggling was intimately connected to the economic and social origins of the French Revolution. Individuals, when choosing to smuggle or purchase smuggled tobacco, were interacting with global forces through the consumption of a globally-produced product. In addition, the pressures of the French kingdom came to bear on these individuals through taxation and punishment. The violence related to the illegal movement of contraband, carried out by both the General Farm and by smugglers, elucidates how individuals in Northern France were connected to the pressures of the eighteenth century.

Tobacco consumption and smuggling are related to some of the economic and social origins of the French Revolution, particularly when looking at how individuals in Northern France interacted with those pressures by smuggling. It is important to look at how violence and resistance factored into individual's consumption of tobacco through smuggling, sale of fraudulent tobacco, and attacks upon tax collectors in northern France during the eighteenth century. By taking this approach, it becomes possible to demonstrate the wide-ranging connections of the rural peoples of northern France with people, markets, and goods far from that region. Specifically, the connections between tobacco smuggling and the French Revolution are most noticeable when analyzing how individuals responded to the pressures of economic change. Making a profit through the illegal movement of tobacco was only possible because the General Farm imposed strenuous taxes on tobacco, among other goods. When individuals made the series of decisions to smuggle, they were participating in a nation-wide struggle over how to deal with a changing economy and world. The decision to smuggle was one connection between tobacco

¹¹⁷ Paul Butel, "L'Espace Atlantique au XVIII^e Siècle." *Revue Historique des Armées* 4 (1996): 60.

consumption and the large-scale stresses on France and the French monarchy that preceded the French Revolution.

Across France, there was a marked increase in the consumption and importation of commercial products over the course of the eighteenth century. Writing generally, scholars have termed this intense period of growth and change “the commercial revolution” and have pointed to how the forces that contributed to the commercial revolution’s development connected disparate geographic regions in novel ways. One consequence of this “revolution” was increased wealth, although this wealth was not equally disseminated to poor or rural populations.¹¹⁸ New products from across the globe were produced and transported across oceans, to be sold in markets that just a century earlier would have only heard sailors’ stories about the spices of India or the bitter chocolate drinks of the Americas.¹¹⁹ Tobacco was one of the products, driven by individual demand, which was part of this commercial explosion. Tobacco saw a marked increase in both production and consumption throughout France in the eighteenth century. Individuals in Northern France took advantage of that increase, which exposed them to the forces driving and affecting the Atlantic economy.

French Flanders is an excellent example of the intense growth in importation over the course of the eighteenth century. According to Jacob Price’s work in *France and the Chesapeake* from 1719 to 1720 England exported 671,623 pounds of tobacco just to this northern French region. Thirty years later in 1750, England would export 6,811,983 pounds of tobacco to the same region, over ten times the 1719 figure.¹²⁰ As the population of French Flanders certainly did not increase at such an exponential rate over this period, these figures point to the dramatic

¹¹⁸ Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce*, 3.

¹¹⁹ Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures*, 224.

¹²⁰ Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 497.

change that had occurred concerning tobacco at the halfway point of the eighteenth century. This was a phenomenon experienced across France and across social classes. Urban or rural, noble or common, rich or poor, by the end of the eighteenth century tobacco had created consumers that cut across France's divides. By 1777 one writer wrote a treatise on how the indirect taxes on salt and tobacco actually cost the king more money than they raised for him in revenue due to the sale of offices and responsibility to the General Farm. He, correctly, argued that many employees of the General Farm collected far more in taxes than the office was worth. As proof, he suggested that at least four pounds of tobacco were purchased per year by tobacco users in France. He then continued that, using the conservative estimate of only five million tobacco consumers in France, the General Farm should sell approximately twenty million pounds of tobacco. The author asserts that between one quarter and one half of the tobacco actually consumed in France was fraudulent and smuggled.¹²¹ Jacques Necker, in his 1784 *De l'Administration des Finances de la France*, estimated that approximately twenty-four million people lived in France, while the cities of France only held about two million people.¹²² As the number of estimated tobacco users easily outstripped the number of people living in cities, one understands that tobacco usage was spread throughout France. Each eighteenth century tobacco consumer, of which there were many, was therefore part of that global economy that was affecting France.

The northern provinces of France were not exempt from an affinity for tobacco. The demand for tobacco continued even when jurisdiction over people living in Flanders or Hainault changed. Much of this region was a part of the Netherlands until the Franco-Dutch War in the

¹²¹Guillaume-François Le Trosne, *Examen de ce Content au Roi et à la Nation la Gabelle et le Tabac*. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1777), 248.

¹²² Jacques Necker, *De l'Administration des Finances de la France*. (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 1784), 262.

1670's and was only ceded to the kingdom of France as part of the 1678 Treaty of Nijmegen.¹²³ In consequence, some parts of the northern regions that had formerly been under Dutch control remained exempt from the monopoly of the General Farm. This lasted until 1743, when Louis XV declared that the north would have to pay the same uniform tax rate on tobacco under the General Farm as the French regions.¹²⁴ Dunkirk, however, continued to exist as a free port outside of the reach of the king's tax collectors and so brought in large quantities of tobacco to be processed and then distributed to cities like Lille and St. Omer, and also to the countryside surrounding these cities.¹²⁵ French merchants in the north even had a history of resisting royal incursions into their economic life. Merchants and consumers in Flanders and Hainault had even resisted an attempted tax on tobacco of ten *sols* per pound of tobacco sold in the 1730's.¹²⁶ The crown imposed an additional tariff of thirty *sols* on every pound of foreign tobacco imported into and through a many regions of France, including the north.¹²⁷ While ostensibly being protective of the local cultivators of tobacco in the north, the true aim of the edict was to increase revenues for the crown. This made the importation of the preferred Chesapeake tobacco prohibitively expensive except for the wealthiest strata of French society.¹²⁸ Such a rapid increase in price, without a comparable increase in income, therefore necessitated either a decrease in consumption or, procurement of tobacco in other ways.

Smuggling was one other way that individuals chose to respond to the changes imposed by the crown, and was part of the immediate impact the tariff had in the northern regions consisting of Flanders, Artois, Hainault, and Cambrésis. The tariff of thirty *sous* effectively

¹²³ Morieux, *Une Mer pour Deux Royaumes*, 201.

¹²⁴ Louis XV, *Déclaration du Roy*, 1.

¹²⁵ Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 499.

¹²⁶ Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 500.

¹²⁷ Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 500.

¹²⁸ Kwass, "The Global Underground," 18.

increased the price of tobacco by six hundred percent overnight. To put this in perspective, a journeyman locksmith in 1709 in Bordeaux received 6 *sous* a day for his services.¹²⁹ Individual workers, of course, did not buy pounds of tobacco at once, but the substantial increase in price did cause dramatic reactions throughout Northern France.

One response, particularly for those who had been making a living from selling tobacco in these regions, was emigration to other regions in Europe, such as the Austrian Netherlands, that would not be so restrictive. In fact, the marquis of d'Argenson and former *intendant* of justice in Hainault noted that this tariff had caused 1,500 families to flee Flanders alone around 1750.¹³⁰ Describing the exodus, the marquis wrote "They [the families] had many plantations there, making the tobacco and sending it abroad." He continued to write that, once the tax was implemented "the families who plant [the tobacco] and make it, having only this trade in order to live, send themselves abroad."¹³¹ This points to the how one group of individuals reacted to the imposition of the new tax on the sale of tobacco. Although connected, emigration to other regions, such as the Netherlands, stands as a direct counter-point against the decision to smuggle. Smugglers and immigrants both had their livelihoods connected to tobacco production and consumption. Those who emigrated chose to continue making their livelihood through tobacco cultivation but, priced out of the market in Northern France, chose to avoid the risk of state violence by moving to a region with a more advantageous legal situation. Smugglers chose instead to stay in Northern France and risk punishment if caught. Both emigration and smuggling demonstrate that individuals had multiple choices in dealing with the pressures of the eighteenth century. Although the farmers of tobacco were disproportionately affected by the new

¹²⁹ Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, 189.

¹³⁰ René-Louis Marquis d'Argenson, *Journal et Mémoires du Marqui d'Argenson*. ed. E.J.B. Rathery, 9 volumes. (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 1859-1867), VI, 173.

¹³¹ René-Louis Marquis d'Argenson, *Journal et Mémoires*, 173.

taxes, this example points to the ways that individuals might react to changing situations and circumstances without breaking French law.

What thereafter developed in Northern France in terms of tobacco consumption is what is today colloquially called a “black market.” This was an integral part of what Michael Kwass calls a “massive, transcontinental shadow economy.”¹³² Essentially, due to tobacco’s psychoactive properties, which guaranteed a consistently high demand from the individual, many people in northern France desired to continue purchasing the product on an extremely regular basis. By the middle of the eighteenth century, France was in the middle of undergoing an “agricultural revolution” that would drastically increase the productivity of French agriculture especially in Flanders.¹³³ However the amount of capital available to agricultural workers did not immediately rise with the increase in the price of tobacco. Therefore, those who wanted to smoke, snort, or chew the plant were forced to either reduce their daily consumption or find other, cheaper methods of supplying their habit. This created the ideal situation for expansion of the parallel economy of illicit tobacco sales.

One French thinker estimated that at minimum ten percent of all tobacco that was sold every year was produced, transported, and sold without the General Farm being able to apply the appropriate tax.¹³⁴ Such a significant disruption to the revenue stream produced by tobacco taxation was unacceptable to the agents of the Farm. After the imposed duty of 1749, domestic production in the area surrounding Lille exploded as the costs of importing tobacco from the Americas increased by up to six hundred percent. Over the period of 1773-1790 this area produced, on average, 7,956,166 pounds of tobacco every year. Due to the difficulty in policing

¹³² Kwass, “The Global Underground,” 30.

¹³³ Marc Bloch, *French Rural History: An Essay on its Basic Characteristics*. Translated by Janet Sondheimer. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1966), 216.

¹³⁴ Le Trosne, *Examen de ce que Coûtent au Roi et à la Nation*, 248.

the expansive border of France's northern region, much of this French product was then mixed with smuggled Virginian tobacco and either consumed or smuggled again to different areas of France.¹³⁵ Even a loss of a tenth of this trade, which is most likely less than the actual amount lost due to smuggling, represented a loss of millions of *livres* of revenue. In addition, the actions of smugglers here demonstrates how individual actions could have deleterious effects on the French monarchy years before the French Revolution. The major loss of tax revenue, as has been previously demonstrated, was a motivating factor in increasing taxes throughout eighteenth-century France.

Another case from 1770 further demonstrates the immense potential for profit to be found in illegal trafficking. A group crossed the border and bought tobacco at a price of 10 *sols* per pound, before reselling that same tobacco for between 45 to 60 *sols* per pound.¹³⁶ At minimum, this was an increase of 35 *sols* per pound of tobacco sold, or almost equivalent to what a journeyman might make in Paris for a day's labor.¹³⁷ As these prices between 45 to 60 *sols* were still far below what legal merchants offered on similar quality tobacco, there was an extremely strong monetary incentive for smuggling. This incentive, when combined with periodic periods of wage stagnation or dearth of opportunities to earn capital, made smuggling an attractive method of providing for one's family, provided the smuggler had the skill to avoid capture and punishment.

An earlier example in a town north of Reims called Rethel explains other ways that smuggled tobacco could be used to make money. The example also demonstrates how French interactions with smuggled products took a variety of forms. What connected this illegal sale of

¹³⁵ The figure of 9,774,000 is from Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 505.

¹³⁶ Ferrer, *Tabac, Sel, Indiennes*, 218.

¹³⁷ Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, 204.

tobacco to the clandestine movement of tobacco by individuals and groups was that all forms of tobacco were centered on avoiding official detection. In this particular case from 1747, a Capuchin monk was arrested by the General Farm for possessing sixteen pounds, ten ounces of *faux tabac*. The large amount of tobacco seized suggests that tobacco was regularly moving through this monastery either as a stopping point for smugglers or an illegal location to sell tobacco. Either way, in this instance tobacco was being utilized as a method of remaining financially afloat. In punishment for this enterprise, the monk and his order were fined one thousand *livres*, the full amount possible under the law at the time.¹³⁸ These are the global connections between tobacco smuggling, individual choice, and the French state. Individuals could choose to either acquiesce to the impositions of the French state or not. Smuggling was one way that individuals used the changing economy to create opportunities for themselves.

Individuals continued to smuggle tobacco as the eighteenth century progressed. The General Farm responded to the revenue needs of the French state by more strictly enforcing the tobacco monopoly. In Northern France particularly, the agents of the General Farm attempted to institute a stricter police system that emphasized capture and punishment in order to dissuade potential smugglers from committing the crime. That system also acknowledged the fact that, when facing capture and arrest, smugglers often resorted to violence. In 1729, the crown promulgated a law that said any smuggler who used force in “cities, villages, or in the countryside” against “the guards of our Farms, will be punished by death, even though they may not have any contraband merchandise.”¹³⁹ The law continued to say “in the case of rebellion on

¹³⁸ *Sentence de l'Élection qui Confisque 60 livres 10 onces de Faux Tabac Saisi Chez les Capucins de Rethel-Mazarin, et les Condamne en 1000 livres d'Amende.* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1748), 1.

¹³⁹ *Ferme Générale, Tarif des Droits d'Entrée et de Sortie, des Cinq Grosses Fermes, Ordonnés Être Perçus par l'Édit de 1664, sur Toutes les Marchandises. Tome 2 / . Augmenté de Notes & Observations sur les Mutations des Droits Depuis Ledit Tarif.* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1758), 412.

the part of smugglers against the clerks of the General Farm, we order that the clerks start their prosecution in the field.”¹⁴⁰ The law was clear that throughout France the representatives of the French crown had immediate power to exact violence. The application of state violence through attacks on smuggling individuals or groups was done with the apparent goal of making the prospect of punishment so terrifying that individuals would forego the potential economic benefits of the practice. In addition, the fact that the crown specified the power of employees of the General Farm to use deadly force in these confrontations hints at how violence was a common course of action for smugglers. The potential immediacy of retribution on the part of General Farm agents paralleled their stated position in relation to tobacco smuggling. Tax farmers stated that, in their opinion, “tobacco fraud is much less excusable than salt fraud” because of their understanding that tobacco was a luxury while salt was not.¹⁴¹ The movement and sale of fraudulent tobacco represented a serious financial blow to the revenues of the tax farmers. This conception of the serious nature of the crime of smuggling, in addition to the violence smugglers used against the General Farm, was made clear throughout northern France through letters like the one by D’Haffregues or the laws collected and distributed in book form by the General Farm.¹⁴² Smugglers who continued to smuggle in the North chose to run the risk of violent confrontation or severe punishment every time they attempted to make a sale or transport tobacco.

The punishments themselves ranged from heavy fines to execution, although the actual execution of smugglers was rare. For the most part those caught smuggling or selling fraudulent tobacco were fined or sentenced to punishment in the galleys.¹⁴³ Before they could be punished,

¹⁴⁰ Ferme Générale, *Tarif des droits*, 412.

¹⁴¹ Kwass, *Contraband*, 218.

¹⁴² D’Haffregues, *Lettre Circulaire pour Prévenir*, 1.

¹⁴³ Kwass, *Contraband*, 86.

however, a conviction needed to be reached which often relied upon the use of judicial torture to receive confirmation of a suspected crime. Although taking a variety of forms, such as *le question d'eau* which consisted of forcing copious amounts of water down the accused's throat, this was an integral part of the legal system of eighteenth-century France to both determine guilt and determine a person's accomplices in a crime. The findings of this process of judicial torture would then be published and distributed in the form of a *procès verbal*.¹⁴⁴ Once guilt had been determined by the court, the convicted individual was either given a punishment or was told to pay a heavy fine.

Punishment of smugglers in northern France was taken seriously by the General Farm. The figures from a court in Reims are instructive. Only four percent of sentences resulted in death, nineteen percent were fined, thirty-four percent were sentenced to the galleys, while thirty-six percent of cases were either dismissed or the defendants were released after a short time in prison. Another seven percent would eventually probably end up in the galleys as they were unable to pay the onerous fines of up to 1000 *livres*.¹⁴⁵ An individual being forced to pay the maximum fine of 1000 *livres* was not unheard of either. One such individual was Jean Bleu. He was condemned to pay the fine of 1000 *livres* for having thirty-six pounds and eleven ounces of fraudulent tobacco in his possession.¹⁴⁶ Although this sentence was eventually repealed after a successful petition by Monsieur Bleu that the General Farm had violated an aspect of the local law in arresting him, the case itself is indicative of the propensity that tax farmers had for vigorously enforcing their monopoly.

¹⁴⁴ Silverman, *Tortured Subjects*, 46.

¹⁴⁵ Kwass, *Contraband*, 230-231.

¹⁴⁶ Cour des Aides de Paris, *Arrest de la Cour des Aydes qui Infirme une Sentence des Élus de Guise du 8 juin 1740 en ce qu'elle Avait Annullé un Procès Verbal de Saisie Faite le 24 May Précédent de 36 livres 4 Onces de Tabac de Fraude et Renvoyé Absous le Nommé Jean Bleu, sur lequel le Tabac Avait Été Saisi, sous Prétexte*. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1740), 1.

If an individual was unable to pay the exorbitant fines associated with being caught with *faux tabac*, either in smuggling or in the sale of the product, the person would be sentenced to serve time in the galleys. The galleys themselves were a serious punishment in their own right. Such a sentence meant an individual was to be branded with the letters GAL on the right shoulder, wear an iron collar and chains, march extreme distances shackled to his fellow convicts to the location of the galleys. Once there, the labor required of prisoners was back breaking and consisted of rowing while chained to the bench of a ship or any other labor that was seen as particularly lowly, such as cleaning up after plague victims in Marseille in 1721¹⁴⁷ The legal system of punishment surrounding illicit tobacco was designed to discourage anyone from engaging with the product through a series of purposely prohibitive punishments and fines. These were the risks that smugglers exposed themselves to when carrying or selling fraudulent tobacco. Although impossible to tell how many smugglers were never caught versus those who were, the General Farm's pursuit of smugglers did result in approximately 44% of Marseille's galley population in the first half of the eighteenth century consisting of smugglers.¹⁴⁸ That high number is suggestive of how dangerous smuggling might be in this period.

Within this context of a harsh legal system in terms of the illicit distribution and sale of tobacco in eighteenth-century France, the continued insistence of French men and women to smuggle tobacco must be understood. In essence, the risks were tremendous in that a smuggler's life could be ruined if caught and forced either to labor in the galleys or pay the heavy required fines. The tremendous amount of risk that smugglers endured in this period points to how seriously the General Farm took the threat posed by smuggling. This was not an easy decision to make as it carried severe consequences for the smuggler and their family if caught with

¹⁴⁷ Silverman, *Tortured Subjects*, 48-49.

¹⁴⁸ Kwass, *Contraband*, 232.

fraudulent tobacco. By taking on these risks, the actions of smugglers demonstrate how enticing the potential for financial gain could be. When discussing smuggling, French law mentioned that fines and length of punishment in the galleys increased in cases of recidivism.¹⁴⁹ In cases of recidivism, individuals had already been branded and spent time working in the galleys or had paid significant fines, and so presumably they were familiar with the punishment that awaited them if caught again. The inclusion of this provision hints at the continued attractiveness of the profit to be made through smuggling as individuals continued to transport, sell, and buy fraudulent tobacco in defiance of the law. By transporting or selling tobacco, these people exploited gaps in the French state's ability to control its borders and people through a globally sourced product.

The movement of fraudulent tobacco is connected to the history of tax revolts in seventeenth and eighteenth-century France. The economic and social conditions that made smuggling compelling could also make tax rebellion appear as a viable option to express displeasure should those conditions continue to deteriorate. In his book on the subject of these revolts, Jean Nicolas demonstrates that, contrary to the traditional narrative that the eighteenth century was a calm period mostly devoid of insurrection, the eighteenth century was marked by periods of rebellion against the French crown and its agents. However, these rebellions took on a decidedly different character in the eighteenth century from the previous century. Instead of outright armed insurrections, like the Fronde in the time of Louis XIV, individuals expressed their displeasure with regal policies through smaller scale uprisings or riots. In fact, Jean Nicolas found that there were 8,528 events of small-scale armed rebellion across France from a period of

¹⁴⁹ Ferme Générale, *Tarif des Droits*, 412.

1660 until the French Revolution in 1789. To Nicolas, these events were when groups made up of four to approximately twenty-five people violently attacked representatives of the crown.¹⁵⁰

Understanding the chronology of these rebellions also points to how closely these rebellions were tied to the shifting economic circumstances of the eighteenth century. After a spike in 1709 which corresponded with the economic crisis of 1709 during the War of Spanish Succession, tax revolts slowly trended upwards until the 1760's. During the two decades before the French Revolution, these revolts spiked in both intensity and frequency until the greatest of these revolts, the French Revolution itself, fundamentally changed the societal and cultural organization of France.¹⁵¹ The tax on tobacco was just one tax among many that the General Farm levied on the French people. However, the increase in tax-related uprisings mirrors the continued presence of smuggling in Northern France during the same period. These conflicts exemplify the conflicts that were a part of French life in the late eighteenth century. In addition, the general trend of tax revolts increased in intensity over the course of the eighteenth century. The increase in intensity reflected the growing distaste French subjects had for the crown's tax policies. Those policies, as discussed before, were part of the French state's attempts to fund the increasing costs of government in the eighteenth century. When brought together, these disparate events come together to sketch a picture of global changes coming to bear on multiple levels of French society. This is not to say that tobacco smuggling caused the French Revolution, but to point to the fact that people in northern France were feeling the pressure of an unstable economic and social situation which could be expressed both through smuggling and rebellion.

Individuals organized and committed or threatening violence towards administrators or other representatives of the king's power. Nicolas only cites rebellions that included four or more

¹⁵⁰ Nicolas, *La Rébellion Française*, Tableau I.1, 30.

¹⁵¹ Nicolas, *La Rébellion Française*, Figure 2, 34.

individuals.¹⁵² Smuggling could often, however, employ fewer persons than four. Therefore, the inclusion of tobacco smuggling in this historical narrative makes it clear how frustration with the onerous tax system of the General Farm might be expressed in different ways. Smuggling was a daily occurrence that only entered into the historical record when participants were caught and then punished. Further, as most smuggling was done by individuals or small groups walking with whatever tobacco they could physically carry, the trade in fraudulent tobacco supports the assertion that resistance to the French monarchy's agents was an underground affair in the eighteenth century. That individual concerns over tax policy or the reach of the crown into daily life were to be taken seriously and confronted in the context of the French Revolution should therefore not be surprising. It is in this manner that the connections between tobacco and the events of 1789 become clear. The economic and social frustrations that plagued individuals throughout the eighteenth century and then manifested themselves in the French Revolution can easily be understood when the history of tobacco smuggling is understood. Conceived as a monumental event in the Atlantic world, the French Revolution was a release of monumental tension that had been building in the late eighteenth century. Smuggling was one symptom of that tension as individuals exploited the price differentials created by royal needs to increase and sustain revenue. They faced the prospect of violence in making that decision, and employed violence themselves. That a large number of people in northern France made this decision suggests the tensions building in France in the eighteenth century. Further, connecting tobacco smuggling with tax revolts more generally points to a variety of tax-related forms of resistance that an individual in the eighteenth century might take part in. The spectrum ranged from

¹⁵² Nicolas, *La Rébellion Française*, 35.

individuals rebelling individually or in groups, which consisted of smuggling or the sale of fraudulent tobacco, all the way to more organized and armed bands of smugglers.

Because tobacco cut across geographic or social limits, the study allows for general insights into how global economic and social changes like the consumer revolution were affecting French subjects in the eighteenth century. Both rural and urban *cahiers de doléances* in Northern France have similar incidence rates of complaint about the tobacco monopoly at approximately forty percent. An additional ninety-seven *cahiers* address taxes and tax collection in general without mentioning either the General Farm or tobacco, which means that over one half of the *cahiers* from Northern France were directly concerned with taxation immediately prior to the French Revolution.¹⁵³ Further, both rural and urban groups in the French Revolution attacked customs gates and the houses of prominent agents of the Farm.¹⁵⁴ These parallels suggest that the Farm was a common point of animosity for disparate French peoples. The parallels also elucidate that individuals chose to react to globalizing forces in multiple ways. While some smuggled, others adapted to the increased taxes of the General Farm and only expressed frustration when an opportunity presented itself in the form of the *cahiers* before the Estates General.

The *cahiers de doléances* have received an abundance of scholarly attention in the centuries following the French Revolution. They are unique as an eighteenth century source because they were an opportunity many people throughout France on the eve of the French Revolution to express their grievances and complaints directly to Louis. This makes them invaluable in understanding not only the national concerns of the urban and rural peoples just before the Revolution, but also more generally what people were concerned with in their daily

¹⁵³ Lorient, *Les Cahiers de Doléances*, 118-146, 410, 471-475, 303-369, 696.

¹⁵⁴ Kwass, *Contraband*, 329.

lives. One scholarly analysis described the *cahiers* as documents wherein “the people of France expressed their dissatisfactions with the state of their society and their hopes for a better future.”¹⁵⁵ Within these lists, the various and disparate concerns of a diverse populace were written down and brought to an organization that was meant to address them directly. The most common subject within the *cahiers de doléances* that needed redress were the tax privileges of the nobility.¹⁵⁶ Seventy-two percent of all *cahiers de doléances* across all of France took issue with the tax system and specifically called for reform. However, there was not a consistent accord over how this reform might take place. Certain *cahiers* mentioned the tax advantages of the clergy or nobility as unfair, while others called for abolition of specific tax privileges, while others still called for a general reform of the tax system that would equalize or standardize taxes for all subjects of Louis XVI.¹⁵⁷

In this regard, the *cahiers* produced Northern France are not different. Taken up in the winter of 1788-1789, the inhabitants of northern France hoped that the Estates General would address the issues that plagued these people. One specific theme of these was tax grievances, and central here was tax grievances related to tobacco. One hundred and forty-two of the four hundred and twenty-six *cahiers* took issue with how tobacco was taxed, or just over one third.¹⁵⁸ These *cahiers* spoke of the health benefits of tobacco, the expansive power of the General Farm’s agents, and the increasing price and decreasing quality of tobacco.¹⁵⁹ As evidenced by the importance of claiming health benefits, many of these claims harkened back to the first

¹⁵⁵ Gilbert Shapiro and John Markoff, *Revolutionary Demands: A Content Analysis of the Cahiers de Doléances of 1789*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1.

¹⁵⁶ Shapiro and Markoff, *Revolutionary Demands*, 258.

¹⁵⁷ Shapiro and Markoff, *Revolutionary Demands*, 258.

¹⁵⁸ Loriguet, *Les Cahiers de Doléances*, 692.

¹⁵⁹ Loriguet, *Les Cahiers de Doléances*, 696.

introduction of tobacco and demonstrated how important tobacco had become to a significant subset of the French populace over the course of the eighteenth century.

Further, these *cahiers* often specified that the price of tobacco recently had increased intolerably. Many specifically identified a period ten years earlier when tobacco was at a more reasonable price.¹⁶⁰ Some were even specific enough to blame the General Farm for the increase in price, saying there was a “necessity to give orders to the General Farm to sell tobacco...at the same price that they sold it at nine years ago; the price was at 32 *sols* per pound in the month of January 1781, they increased it and made it 3 *livres* 12 *sols*, this causes much fraud and results in misfortune.”¹⁶¹ The inhabitants of Northern France connected an increasing cost in tobacco with the deliberate attempt of the General Farm to squeeze out more and more taxes. The choice to include suggestions of fair tobacco prices in the *cahiers de doléances* was another way that individuals responded to the shifting economic and social situations of late eighteenth-century France.

The discussion of tobacco taxation reform in many of these *cahiers* demonstrates the recognized connections between price increases and the smuggling that was discussed earlier in the paper. It also demonstrates how connections with the larger Atlantic world were coming to bear in northern France. The General Farm, responding to the need to increase tax revenues imposed progressively heavier taxes in the region. Some individuals responded by smuggling. Others, as evidenced by the *cahiers*, simply dealt with the higher prices by legally addressing the issue when the opportunity presented itself. It is possible that there existed an overlap between those who smuggled and those who expressed grievances in the *cahiers*. This is the continuity between smuggling and the economic origins of the French Revolution. Tobacco smuggling is a

¹⁶⁰ Loriquet, *Les Cahiers de Doléances*, 368.

¹⁶¹ Loriquet, *Les Cahiers de Doléances*, 228.

useful window to grasp the frictions underlying the often unwieldy tax system of eighteenth-century France. Tobacco smuggling also points to other frictions in French society that were expressed during the French Revolution.

Perhaps the most enduring image of the early days of the French Revolution was the storming of the Bastille, the state fortress that held political prisoners in 1789. The storming marked, for many French men and women in and around Paris, the beginning of a new period in the revolution when the people would seize control over their own lives and over the state. However, the storming of the Bastille was not the beginning of the events of July 1789. Although some scholars seem content to skip over the “day and a half” between the seizure of arms and the storming of the Bastille, it was this same period thirty-six hours that held a defining moment that elucidates the interconnectedness of tobacco taxation to other contributing factors to the violence of the French Revolution.¹⁶² The first target of crowd action and violence in July of 1789 was against the customs gates in Paris, before eventually moving to attack the Bastille.¹⁶³ One official even said about the crowds that “we could not contain the people’s fury; if we had gone too far, they would have exterminated us. It is not the moment to reason with them.”¹⁶⁴ In that first moment of unbridled emotion and aggression the crowds of Paris attacked the customs gates. These gates were the symbols of the significant taxes on a variety of goods that entered into Paris. Tobacco was one major good that passed through these gates. Tobacco was a part of the system of taxes that the crowds symbolically attacked in this moment.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Micah Alpaugh, “A Self-Defining ‘*Bourgeoisie*’ in the Early French Revolution: The *Milice Bourgeoise*, the Bastille Days of 1789, and Their Aftermath.” *Journal of Social History* 47 no. 3 (2014): 696.

¹⁶³ William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 109.

¹⁶⁴ P. Ruault quoted in Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 109.

¹⁶⁵ Kwass, *Contraband*, 118.

Finally, the famously violent period in the French Revolution, the Terror, also had executions that were clearly connected to tax collection and tobacco. During the Terror, a large number of high-ranking members of the General Farm were executed, even though these men had actually supported the efforts of the revolution for the most part up until their deaths. Although the French populace would eventually grow weary of the constant killing of the Terror, the use of the guillotine was a fairly constant feature of life for many French people for two years.¹⁶⁶ Further, at the time there was a current of thought among many French people that the Terror would cleanse France of its undesirable and unpatriotic citizens and that the guillotine was a useful political tool in the revolutionary project.¹⁶⁷ Over two dozen Farmer's General were executed on May 8th, 1794 (19 floréal An II).¹⁶⁸ In addition to the National Assembly reducing the General Farm's monopoly on tobacco sales, Lavoisier and the other Farmers Generals were accused in 1793 of hoarding tax revenues to the tune of several million *livres*.¹⁶⁹ Although these men were not found guilty of hoarding those millions, the impulse to accuse the top administrators of the General Farm is suggestive of the suspicions held against members of the General Farm.¹⁷⁰ There was still enough of a concern among the people of France, even after the king had been killed, that Old Regime financial structures were still conspiring against the ambitions of the revolutionaries. When given the opportunity afforded by the Terror, some individuals turned the power of state violence against visible symbols of the Old Regime.

¹⁶⁶ Ronen Steinberg, "Terror on Trial: Accountability, Transitional Justice, and the Affaire Le Bon in Thermidorian France." *French Historical Studies* 39 (2016): 419

¹⁶⁷ Alastair Wright, "Guns and Guillotines: State Terror in the Russian and French Revolutions." *Revolutionary Russia* 20 (2007): 175.

¹⁶⁸ Marco Beretta, "Chemists in the Storm: Lavoisier, Priestley, and the French Revolution." *Nuncius* 8 (1993): 90. Included in this group of men was the individual considered by many to be the father of modern chemistry, Antoine Lavoisier.

¹⁶⁹ Beretta, "Chemists in the Storm," 89.

¹⁷⁰ Jean-Pierre Poirier, *Lavoisier: Chemist, Biologist, Economist*. Translated by Rebecca Balinski. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 376.

Starting with the introduction of tobacco to France as part of the commercial revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this paper has attempted to situate both tobacco and tobacco smuggling as one option for individuals when faced with the pressures of the eighteenth century. That violence often accompanied these choices in the form of arrest, punishment, or the state violence of the French Revolution suggests the ways that large-scale forces came to bear on individuals in France during the eighteenth century. As a crossroads of trade between France and northern Europe, northern France enjoyed a particular position in French history that demonstrates the connections between individuals, commerce, and violence. Tracing tobacco's development in Northern France, in terms of who consumed this product and how it was taxed, demonstrates how tobacco came to be a dynamic part of the region's history and also how tobacco was part of various other, larger historical movements that affected France and Europe generally. One such movement was the generalized increase in prices for most products in France in the eighteenth century while wages themselves remained mostly stagnant. This problem incentivized smuggling, which promptly increased the amount of smuggled tobacco in the region over the eighteenth century. The accompanying harsh punishment of smugglers is also part of this history, as it demonstrates how seriously the General Farm took their charges of collecting tax revenues from the people of Northern France. The violence that accompanied many smugglers' arrests made this type of work dangerous, which in turn increased the severity of the crime for the General Farm. Simply put, smugglers represented a grave risk to an extremely profitable product and to those who wished to collect taxes on that product. In the end however, individual frustration with the tax increases brought by the General Farm could take a variety of forms in the eighteenth century including smuggling, revolt, or official complaints in the form of the *cahiers de doléances*.

The economic and social frictions that preceded the French Revolution were connected to the economic conditions of eighteenth-century France that are illuminated through the historical lens of tobacco smuggling. Consumers and merchants of tobacco had global processes come to bear on their lives and livelihoods. These processes stretched from the crown to the individuals purchasing, transporting, and selling tobacco through the tax collection of the General Farm. Smuggling was one way in which individuals interacted with those large-scale processes to achieve their own goals. The possibility of violence that accompanied smuggling, whether in the form of state punishment or as a method of avoiding arrest, was also an expression of those forces. Violence, in this understanding, was a highly visible expression of the tensions in eighteenth century French economic life. Using tobacco smuggling as a specific lens to investigate these often obscured processes allows for a nuanced understanding of the frictions that developed in France in the late eighteenth century and how French subjects responded to those tensions. Individuals in Northern France made a variety of decisions, whether that be smuggling or accepting the higher prices mandated by the General Farm, that were related to these encroaching changes. Contraband tobacco in eighteenth century Northern France, in this historical lineage, was connected to the rupture of economic and social conditions across France that preceded the French Revolution.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Tobacco consumption, legal and illegal, was tied to globalizing forces arising throughout the Atlantic world that created increased connections between disparate groups through commercial activity. How these forces affected *Ancien Régime* France is an oft discussed problem in French history. This thesis contributes to this knowledge by analyzing how tobacco commerce, both legal and illegal, was connected to large scale forces coming to bear on French society and peoples through taxation policy and individual reaction to that policy. By focusing on how tobacco related to these vectors of change and stress, one can see both the globalized and localized effects of a shifting economic and social situation. The French kings, their representatives across France, and the royal subjects living in the kingdom all had to contend with these changes on a daily basis. How they did contend, through taxation, violence, or smuggling, offers a window into how a globalizing world was starting to affect and connect disparate peoples and groups in the eighteenth century. These changes, particularly the commercial revolution and the increasing costs of state maintenance, produced a myriad of responses at different levels of historical scale. Tobacco, because of its unique role in early modern France, allows for analysis and investigation of how these different responses were linked together by commerce, violence, and taxation.

Tobacco was an area where people had negative experiences with the agents of the General Farm. Tobacco, via smuggling and taxation, was one way that the globalizing changes of the eighteenth century came to affect the French state and French people. Of the forty men who made up the upper echelon of the General Farm's administration, twenty-eight would die on May 8th 1794. Even the Terror at its most violent did not kill almost seventy-five percent of all French people; that seventy-five percent of these men were killed suggests how individuals used

the violence of the French Revolution against former symbols of the Old Regime. What that number says, therefore, is that the General Farm was detested among the revolutionaries, and association could condemn one to death. As the General Farm was primarily known and detested for indirect taxation of consumer goods, including tobacco, this exceedingly violent event in the middle of the Terror points to how tobacco was one connection of the forces that led to and culminated in the French Revolution. The state-sponsored and organized violence of the French Revolution, the state-sponsored violence of police action in the Old Regime, and the random violence that accompanied smuggling arrests were all connected by tobacco consumption.

This work is not the first to investigate tobacco's historical role in eighteenth-century France, nor the first to consider tobacco smuggling during that period. This thesis expands upon the works that have preceded it. Much of the historiography discussing smuggling has focused on the southern and eastern provinces. This thesis expands this geographic focus to give a more complete view of eighteenth century smuggling and tobacco exchange. The geographic reality of the northern stretches of France facilitated the majority of trade between France, the Netherlands, and England. The region was an important crossroads for illegal economic exchange that often ran parallel to or in conjunction with legal trade. The chapters above have focused on different aspects of tobacco exchange in France.

The first chapter takes a broad view of the French state's relationship with tobacco commerce in the eighteenth century. International competition, especially the rising costs of sustaining military spending and expanding the foreign empire, was a major stress on the fiscal solvency of the French kingdom during this period. The French crown responded to this by increasing taxation and commercial monopolies, both designed to increase state revenue. Tobacco, being one such monopoly, affords us insight into how that process worked. In addition,

this chapter analyzed the methods undertaken by the French crown to facilitate these increases in revenue. Specifically, the crown delegated the General Farm to raise taxes and enforce monopolies across France. The actions of the General Farm in Northern France should be understood as an example of the royal response to fiscal pressures. How those pressures were felt outside of Versailles as a result of the crown's policies is key to this analysis.

The second chapter is an analysis of how royal representatives attempted to establish royal sovereignty in the northern provinces of France. Although this was a kingdom-wide project starting in the eighteenth century, the north enjoyed a special role in this process. Much of the region was joined to the French kingdom in the seventeenth century. The process of annexation and control led to significant resistance in these areas. Tobacco in particular makes for an interesting case study, as it was one of the products of contention between representatives of the French state and the subjects of the king. Crucial to the problem of assimilation into the king's sovereign domain was the use of violence to force subjects into accepting dominion. The General Farm and its employees used their taxation abilities to exert royal control over these areas, which speaks to the relationship between the economic concerns of the state and the operations of its tax collection methods.

The final chapter looks at individual responses to the tobacco monopoly and taxation. In particular, it contends that the various forms of rebellion in eighteenth-century France and the economic and social situations that created an increase in smuggling were linked to the economic tensions that preceded the French Revolution. These acts of rebellion, ranging from an individual packing a small package of tobacco and carrying it across provincial lines to more organized tax revolts and attacks against customs officers of the General Farm, were connected by the similar pressures that suggest interesting connections between smugglers and revolutionaries. Although

not every individual faced with these circumstances engaged in illegal activity or revolted, enough did that it became apparent that French subjects did not universally accept the imposition of French absolutism. Considering these responses as a part of a spectrum of violent and rebellious action against the crown, it is possible to understand how French subjects responded to large scale economic forces that came to bear on their lives. Violent responses against the king's representatives, the General Farm, were one way that these individuals reacted to these forces. One begins to see the ways a global product and a quickly globalizing world were connecting and creating conflict for people and groups in France.

In the end, however, this is a story about the interconnectedness of people, goods, economies, and ideas around the world. How people interact with each other is often indicative of the environmental or societal stressors they confront. The same is true of governments and their representatives. With the expansion of European nations to other continents in the early modern period, European peoples and monarchs came to be connected to peoples and vectors of change largely outside of their control. Tobacco must be seen as related to this context. Tobacco illuminates the links between different, but contemporaneous, aspects of eighteenth century French history. The use of violence by the General Farm or by armed smugglers is indicative of one type of response to these stresses. The crown's desire to raise tax revenues by instituting a monopoly was mirrored by individuals' attempts to increase their own incomes by smuggling. Tobacco affords insight into the economic and occasionally violent connections between French subjects and the monarchy that claimed dominion over them.

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