

THE KING AND THE TOWN OF LYONS IN THE 17TH C.

TOPIC

ROOM 12: THE TOWN AND THE KING, 17TH-18TH C.

Lyons beneath the watchful eye of the king

The disloyal member of the league

Between 1589 and 1594, Lyons' strong involvement in the catholic league – violently opposing the development of Protestantism in France, even going so far as to threaten the monarchy on one occasion – distanced Lyons from the crown. In the 17th c., the town had to rebuild its relationship with the king in order to keep its privileges. Henry IV (1589-1610) and his successors, Louis XIII (1610-1643) and Louis XIV (1643-1715), kept the town under their watchful gaze....

Restriction of municipal powers in the king's interest

The monarchy continued to reduce local powers. In the late 16th c., Henry IV removed the provincial States from the three provinces of Forez, Beaujolais and Lyonnais, subjecting them more directly to the wishes of the monarchy. In 1595, after his royal visit to Lyons, the political aim of which was merely to gain the town's submission following the excesses of the League, the king kept his promise to the aldermen to "look after the town". In fact, by the Edict of Chauny dated 13 December 1595, he equipped Lyons with a Provost of Merchants who presided over a depleted Court of Aldermen and suppressed the gathering of notable figureheads. Under royal tutelage, virtually all of the citizens of Lyons were removed from the Consulate, thus facilitating the control of the town: this system continued throughout the 17th c. During the reign of Louis XIV, the development of the role of intendants – royal representatives in the provinces who took charge of the police, justice and finance – further increased the authority of the crown at local level.

Taxes... to the delight of the king!

The monarchy decided to tighten the financial reins on Lyons. Although the town enjoyed the privilege of not having to pay the *taille* (direct land tax)*, the citizens of Lyons paid all of the indirect taxes on the merchandise and the distribution thereof (entry and exit). Taxes imposed upon craftsmen also found their way into the royal treasury. At the end of the century, the town's inhabitants were subjected to *capitation**. All these taxes continued to rise, doubling during the 17th c. Furthermore, from time to time, the king delighted in the

unjustified collection of huge sums of money from a town that he considered to be rich: Lyons was thus crippled by the collection of 350,000 pounds in 1637 and 405,000 pounds in 1659. On a more subtle note, at the end of the century, the king introduced offices undermining the responsibilities and competence of the consulate, which the latter strived to regain: between 1696 and 1699, Lyons paid a total of 1 470 000 pounds to the royal treasury (64 % of its extraordinary expenditure)!

Lyons under the watchful gaze of the king

Henry IV's royal visits

In 1594, Lyons was the first town in France to recognise Henry IV, a Protestant recently converted to Catholicism. In return, the king granted privileges to the town and appointed his son, César Vendôme, then aged one, as governor. The king made two visits to Lyons. On 4 September 1595, he ceremoniously entered the town via the suburb of Vaise (**N.3219.2 - The two biggest, most famous and memorable celebrations of the town of Lyons**), acclaimed by the townsfolk on an enthusiastic, grandiose scale that was in turn greeted by the king waving a palm symbolising victory. In 1600, Lyons regained the affection of Henry IV who went there to celebrate his marriage on 25 April in Florence to Marie de Médicis: Following the Queen's visit on 3 December (**Inv. 57.29 - The town of Lyons goes before the Queen**), the marriage was



View from the Pierre-Cise Fort and the celebrated arrival of Henry IV in Lyons in 1595, drawing by Béjer, Fortis, Piringer and Benedict, late 16th c., Inv. N 103 b

celebrated on 17 December 1600 in Saint-Jean Cathedral, paving the way to lavish festivities: feasts, plays, balls and fireworks!

In 1601, the strategic support of Lyons allowed part of the Duchy of Savoie (Bresse, Bugey and pays de Gex) into the Kingdom of France: The town henceforth entered into a close relationship with the king, which was unique in France, thereby forging its original political niche.

A Lyons deception: the insensitivity of Louis XIII

On 11 December 1622, the ceremonious arrival of Louis XIII in Lyons (**Inv. 180 - Arrival of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria in Lyons**) upset this close relationship between the town and the king. The people of Lyons looked upon Louis XIII as a king of Lyons origin. This unfounded collective thought was fuelled by the town's close links with the Bourbons. The town therefore spent huge sums of money on ceremonies to welcome the conqueror of Protestantism, the crowned heads of Spain and the Habsbourg family!



Visit of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria in 1622, detail, engraving, anonymous, Inv. N 112 c 1 and 2

However, Louis XIII remained insensitive to such devotion! Whilst it was customary for the town to make the most of royal visits to highlight its grievances to the king, the latter did not grant any new dispensations. From this point onwards, the relationship between Lyons and the king fell to a cold and purely administrative level. This was the era of the Richelieu and Marazin ministeries.

The royal visit of Louis XIV

The only visit of Louis XIV to Lyons and the last visit of a French monarch to this city took place on 25 November 1658. Mazarin organised a meeting here between the families of France and Savoie to arrange a Savoyard marriage for Louis XIV. But this was merely a ploy to encourage Spain to offer the hand of Marie-Thérèse to the King of France - which worked a treat!

The town council continued to pay deference to the king, paying homage to him in the hotel where he was staying at place Bellecour. It was here that a statue of the king on horseback was erected in 1713.



Louis XIV and Mazarin place Bellecour in 1659, photograph of the recreation of the théâtre des Célestins, 8 to 11 February 1932, Inv. N 2186.1

"Sire il serait bien difficile d'exprimer par des paroles toute la joye qu'apporte dans nos cœurs la présence de votre Sacrée Majesté, nous tacherons de mieux la faire paroître par la continuation de nos obéissances, de nos respects et de nos soumissions et de mériter la conservation de tous nos privilèges par l'inviolable fidélité dans laquelle nous protestons de vivre et mourir pour le service de sa majesté(...)" ["Sire, it would be difficult to put into words all of the joy we feel in the presence of your Sacred Majesty. We intend to show this by continuing to obey, respect and honour you, and by continuing to deserve all of the privileges bestowed upon us as a result of our unstinting loyalty and our dedication to live and die in the service of Your Majesty (...)]"

Extract taken from the account given by the Consulate of the homage paid to the king by the town council.

glossary

Taille: direct land tax on the French peasantry and non-nobles based on their presumed income and collected by tax officials appointed by the "l'assemblée des paysans" (Peasants' Assembly).

capitation: a tax per head/per individual, introduced between 1695 and 1697, which affected all French people, except for the poorest, based on the 22 social classes. and Initially temporary, this was reintroduced during the 18th c.