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SILKS FOR THE CROWN: FIVE PARTNERSHIPS OF  
MERCHANT MANUFACTURERS IN  
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LYON

Volume 1

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## ABSTRACT

Silks were omnipresent in the eighteenth century: for dress or furnishing, they were used in everyday life. For many French royal palaces silk was a fundamental component of their furnishing. However, only a few of them are known nowadays. Similarly, only few of the manufacturers and suppliers of these silks are well-known within the field of textile history. Most of them came from the city of Lyon, which was the main silk-weaving centre of Europe. This dissertation investigate the place of five partnerships which supplied silk furnishing to the French Crown, from 1741 to the French Revolution, in the context of eighteenth-century Lyon. It intends to shed light on the lives of the 23 men who formed these partnerships, situating them into the economic and social context of Ancien-Régime France. It examines how these merchant manufacturers, who enjoyed the privilege of being official suppliers of the Crown, fit into the silk-weaving guild and the Lyonnais society. Their background, career and social evolution are considered, in addition to the characteristics of their production. This work suggests that the position of royal suppliers required no specific level of fortune or social status, but that a great variety of men, with diversified profiles, accessed this charge.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADR: Archives départementales du Rhône (Lyon)

AML: Archives municipales de Lyon

AN: Archives nationales (Paris)

Cie/Compe : *compagnie* (company)

#: *livre*

d: *denier*

s: *sol*

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the eighteenth century, the French Crown commissioned silks from merchants of the city of Lyon in order to furnish the interiors of royal palaces. Only a few of the Lyonnais merchant manufacturers, however, had the privilege of being direct suppliers of the Court. This dissertation aims to situate these merchants in their local and national context in order to understand who they were, but also what the status of supplying the Crown implied. Before addressing the argument and scheme of development of this dissertation, a brief history of the origins of silk manufacturing in France is necessary in order to place the eighteenth-century Lyonnais silk industry.

### The origins of silk manufacturing in France

In 1466, the French king Louis XI decided to develop an industry of silk in his country in order to avoid the expensive importations of Italian fabrics which were the most appreciated in Europe. He tried first to establish a manufacturing centre in Lyon, the city being an important commercial centre as it had royal privilege to host international fairs. This initiative was however rejected by the Lyonnais merchants who gained profits in the trade with Italy and were reluctant to take on the costs of such an initiative. He therefore turned to Tours, where workshops were established led by Italian weavers who developed French skills throughout the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In 1536, another chance was given to Lyon by Francis I who gave the permission to two Piedmontese merchants, Etienne Turquet and Barthélémy Naris, to establish weaving workshops in the city. Finally, Lyon ended up taking over from Italian production, and also that of all other French cities, the government playing once more an active role in this development. In 1540, a royal order named Lyon as the depot through which all raw material and finished fabrics were to pass before going to other French cities. A great number of other

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<sup>1</sup> The manufacture was supported by the presence of French court in the Val de Loire region. *La Soie en Touraine : une histoire, un métier, un art* (Tours: Association « Tours, cité de la soie », 2002), 13.

privileges was offered to the city, including the exemption from taxes on imports and exports.<sup>2</sup> The French government kept encouraging the development of the national silk industry: on the behest of Henri IV, the Vivarais and the Cévennes regions became involved in sericulture – though it was not ever extensive enough to free the country from imports of raw materials from overseas.<sup>3</sup> In 1667 Louis XIV's Prime Minister Colbert reformed the regulations governing the organisation of the guilds and the manufacturing of silks, considerably raising the level of requirements in terms of the quality of the production.<sup>4</sup> Silk weaving became the major industry of Lyon, and workshops developed all over the city, the whole being called *Grande Fabrique*.<sup>5</sup> Apart from Lyon and Tours, silks were also woven in Avignon, the presence of the Popes until the fourteenth century attracting many Italian weavers; manufacturing however declined in the sixteenth century. Paris produced silks from the seventeenth century, the famous manufacture of Marcelin Charlier supplying luxurious fabrics to Louis XIV. The city of Nîmes also saw the development of a manufacturing centre from 1498 thanks to a patent from Louis the XII.<sup>6</sup> But these cities never out-shadowed the supremacy of Lyon, nor produced the same wide range of fabrics.

In order to support the industry, a policy of royal commissions began in the reign of Louis XIV. Used in the royal palaces or stored in the warehouses of the Crown, a great number of luxurious silks were manufactured by various merchants and weavers, Parisian and Lyonnais designers being asked to create the designs. As a result, the productivity of the *Fabrique* increased. In 1730 particularly, a large number of sumptuous silks brocaded with gold and silver threads was commissioned from several Lyonnais merchants and was used throughout the century (**fig. 1**).

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<sup>2</sup> Henri CLOUZOT, *Les Métiers de la soie en France (1466-1815), suivi d'un historique de la toile imprimée (1759-1815)* (Paris: Devambez, 1914), 78.

<sup>3</sup> Frédéric SEGELL, *Le Fil de soie naturelle. Histoire de la production industrielle dans le midi de la France 1600-1900* (Paris: Société des Amis de la Bibliothèque Forney, 1986), 13; Geneviève DURAND and Michel WIENIN, *Au fil de la soie : architectures d'une industrie en Cévennes : Gard, Hérault, Lozère* (Montpellier: Inventaire général, Association pour la connaissance du patrimoine en Languedoc-Roussillon, 1991), 5.

<sup>4</sup> The production was mainly of plain fabrics, until the introduction by Claude Dangeon in 1605 of the *métier à la grande tire*, a weaving loom that enabled larger and more sophisticated designs. Marie BOUZARD, *La Soierie lyonnaise du XVIIIe au XXe siècle : dans les collections du musée des Tissus de Lyon* (Lyon: Editions Lyonnaises d'Art et d'Histoire, 1997), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Which can be translated as "Great Manufacture", but not Great Factory as has often been the case, as the organisation was in small workshops scattered around the city.

<sup>6</sup> Paul ACHARD, *Notice sur la création, les développements et la décadence des manufactures de soie à Avignon* (Avignon: F. Seguin aîné, 1874), 24.

Later, commissions continued to be made on a regular basis, although ordered from only a few merchants and many designs being made by the Crown's own designers.<sup>7</sup>

## Historiography

From social and economic historians to museum curators, the history of French silks and silk manufacturing has been written by scholars since the early twentieth century. Raymond Cox (1914) wrote an extensive history of silk, from Antiquity to the nineteenth century and its international scale, while Henri Clouzot (1914) focused on the French cities that were home to silk manufactures until the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Henri Algoud (1928) was also the author of a history of silks in which, like Raymond Cox, he included descriptions of the various styles and an analysis of the evolution of designs throughout the centuries.<sup>9</sup> He also wrote a volume on the former and modern techniques of silks manufacturing, including weaving, finishing and dyeing techniques.<sup>10</sup> Later, Peter Thornton, apart from his general work on interior decoration, dedicated a book to the study of European Baroque and Rococo silks (1965), looking at the evolution of the patterns and situating the textiles within their context of production, particularly by investigating their sale and use.<sup>11</sup>

Some social historians focused more specifically on the silk manufacturing of Lyon. Leaning on substantial research in the archives of the guild, Justin Godart established in his doctoral thesis (1899) the basis of the *Grande Fabrique*'s history from the fifteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century, revealing its organisation and regulations and elaborating on the social impact it had on the city.<sup>12</sup> He also stressed the social history of the manufacture in a

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<sup>7</sup> Pierre ARIZZOLI-CLEMENTEL (ed.), *Soieries de Lyon : commandes royales au XVIIIe siècle, 1730-1800* (Lyon: Musée historique des tissus, 1988), 51-52, and Jean COURAL and Chantal GASTINET-COURAL, "La fabrique lyonnaise au XVIIIe siècle : la commande royale de 1730", *Revue de l'Art*, no. 62 (1984): 49-64.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond COX, *Les Soieries d'art, depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours*. (Hachette et Cie: Paris, 1914); CLOUZOT, *Les Métiers de la soie en France*.

<sup>9</sup> Henri ALGOUD, *La Soie : art et histoire* (Paris: Payot, 1928).

<sup>10</sup> Henri ALGOUD, *Grammaire des arts de la soie* (Paris: J. Schemit, 1912).

<sup>11</sup> Peter THORNTON, *Baroque and Rococo Silks* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).

<sup>12</sup> Justin GODART, *L'Ouvrier en soie: monographie du tisseur lyonnais : étude historique, économique et sociale. Première partie, La réglementation du travail : le maître ouvrier en draps d'or, d'argent et de soie, de l'établissement de la manufacture à Lyon (1466) au décret des 2-17 mars 1791 portant suppression de toutes les maîtrises et jurandes* (Paris: A. Rousseau, 1899).

second publication devoted to Lyonnais weavers and their numerous revolts.<sup>13</sup> About the same time, Etienne Pariset wrote a social and economic history of the Lyonnais manufacture (1901), stressing its evolution and the many crises it experienced, until the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> It is only much later that economic approaches to the commercial activities of the Lyonnais merchant manufacturers were adopted by Jean Peyrot (1973), as well as by Carlo Poni (1998).<sup>15</sup> Carolyn Sargentson (1996) also worked on the commercial exchanges between the Parisian mercers and the Lyonnais manufacturers,<sup>16</sup> having collaborated with Lesley Miller on a paper on the way silks circulated between Paris and Lyon.<sup>17</sup> Lesley Miller has since 1988 carried out important studies on the designers and merchants of the manufacture, bringing together artistic and economic approaches, her work on Jean Revel, Philippe de Lasalle or Nicolas-Joubert de l'Hiberderie revealing significant examples of designers whose technical innovations and artistic creativeness contributed greatly to the Lyonnais *Fabrique*, and more generally to the French silk industry.<sup>18</sup> She also investigated partnerships such as Galy, Gallien et Compagnie, as well as the selling strategies of the merchants.<sup>19</sup> Her most recent work is a dictionary of the Lyonnais designers, bringing to light a great number of unknown artists.<sup>20</sup> Focusing on an artistic history of Lyonnais silks, Pierre Arizzoli-Clémentel (1990), as director

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<sup>13</sup> Justin GODART, *Travailleurs et métiers lyonnais* (Lyon: Cumin et Masson, 1909).

<sup>14</sup> Ernest PARISET, *Histoire de la fabrique lyonnaise : étude sur le régime social et économique de l'industrie de la soie à Lyon, depuis le XVIe siècle* (Lyon: A. Rey, 1901).

<sup>15</sup> Jean PEYROT, "Les techniques du commerce de soies au XVIIIe siècle à travers les documents commerciaux et comptables des fabricants de soieries", *Bulletin du Centre d'Histoire Économique et Sociale de la Région Lyonnaise*, no.1 (1973), 29-49; Carlo PONI, "Mode et innovation : les stratégies des marchands en soie de Lyon au XVIIIe siècle", *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 45-3 (juillet-septembre 1998), 589-625.

<sup>16</sup> Carolyn SARGENTSON, *Merchants and Luxury Markets. The Marchands Merciers of Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Londres: The Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Lesley MILLER and Carolyn SARGENTSON, "Paris-Lyon: Modes de distribution des étoffes d'or, d'argent et de soie au dix-huitième siècle", *Echanges et cultures textiles, Revue du Nord*, Université Charles-de-Gaulle-Lille III (October 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Lesley MILLER, "Jean Revel: Silk Designer, Fine Artist, or Entrepreneur? ", *Journal of Design History*, Vol.8, No.2 (1995): 79-96; "Representing silk design: Nicolas Joubert de l'Hiberderie and *Le dessinateur pour les étoffes d'or, d'argent et de soie* (Paris, 1765) ", *Journal of Design History*, Vol.17-1: 29-53; "The Marriage of Art and Commerce: Philippe Lasalle's Success in Silks", in *Between Luxury and the Everyday: The Decorative Arts in Eighteenth Century France*, eds. Katie Scott and Deborah Cherry (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 63-88.

<sup>19</sup> Lesley MILLER, "Mysterious Manufacturers: Situating L. Galy, Gallien et Cie. in the 18th Century Lyon Silk Industry", *Studies in the Decorative Arts* (Spring 2002): 87-131; "Innovation and Industrial Espionage in Eighteenth-Century France: an Investigation of the Selling of Silks through Samples", *Journal of Design History*, 12:3 (1999): 271-292; *Selling Silks. A Merchant's Sample Book of 1764* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Lesley MILLER, *Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century French Silk Designers*, Pasold Resource no. 2 (2016).

of the Musée des Tissus de Lyon, organised several publications on the Lyonnais *Grande Fabrique*, amongst them a study on the designers based on the design collections of the museum.<sup>21</sup> Marie Bouzard (1997) also published a history of Lyonnais silks, supported by the collections of the Musée des Tissus.<sup>22</sup>

The Lyonnais silks ordered specifically by the French Crown have been investigated by Pierre Verlet, who was the first to include furnishing textiles (other than tapestries) in studies on the royal palaces and furniture (1956). This introduced the matter of royal commissions, mainly examined by Chantal Gastinet-Coural (between 1984-1988), first in a paper in collaboration with Jean Coural on the great commission made by the Crown to several Lyonnais manufacturers in 1730,<sup>23</sup> and then in her pioneering work for an exhibition held in the Musée des Tissus de Lyon in 1988.<sup>24</sup> This research was based on both archival exploration and analysis of museum collections, and constitutes significant groundwork for the subject, as she revealed many aspects unknown until then, including biographical and professional information on several merchant manufacturers. Moreover, she also identified many fragments of silks kept in museum collections through references to written descriptions in the archives of the Crown. Finally, the author of this present dissertation has begun research in two previous papers: the first investigated the partnership of Jean Charton father and son as a case study,<sup>25</sup> while the second was dedicated to the different actors in the French silk industry that supplied the Crown.<sup>26</sup> This preparatory work has been a starting point for this current research.

## Present Research

Previous research by the author has clarified the importance of the Charton partnerships by establishing the number of silks commissioned and the length of time the partnership continued

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<sup>21</sup> Pierre ARIZZOLI-CLEMENTEL, *De Dugourc a Pernon : nouvelles acquisitions graphiques pour les musées, centenaire du Musée des Tissus de Lyon (1890-1990)* (Lyon: Musée Historique des Tissus, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> BOUZARD, *La Soierie lyonnaise du XVIIIe au XXe siècle*.

<sup>23</sup> COURAL and GASTINET-COURAL, “La fabrique lyonnaise au XVIIIe siècle”.

<sup>24</sup> ARIZZOLI-CLEMENTEL, *Soieries de Lyon*.

<sup>25</sup> Moïra DATO, “Les Fabricants Jean Charton père et fils : des soyeux lyonnais héritiers du privilège au XVIIIe siècle” (unpublished dissertation of first year Master, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Moïra DATO, “Les Soieries d’ameublement au sein des demeures royales françaises au XVIIIe siècle” (unpublished dissertation of second year Master, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2015).

to supply the Crown: from 1741 to 1784, and except for a single commission, Jean Charton father and son and their partners were the only suppliers from Lyon. Only after 1784 did the Crown direct its orders to other merchant manufacturers. Within the literature on the Crown's suppliers, only some of the latter, for various reasons, stood out and caught the interest of scholars. Manufacturers Camille Pernon and Olivier Desfarges (**fig. 2**) are nowadays known to the public as suppliers of the French Crown, but also as successful merchants who, in the case of Pernon, even delivered silks to the Spanish and Russian Courts (**fig. 3**).<sup>27</sup> However, the other suppliers are much less known. The work of Chantal Gastinel-Coural constituted a basis for the majority of them, but did not reveal exactly who these men were. Their names can be seen in exhibition catalogues or in general studies on the *Grande Fabrique* through mentions of the remaining textiles they manufactured for the Crown, but their role within the silk industry and trade overall is not yet known, nor their place within the city of Lyon. Yet, their role as suppliers to the Crown seems to suggest they were probably influential men within both their city and profession.

This dissertation aims to discover more about these other manufacturers in order to reveal more clearly how eighteenth-century silk weaving worked, and the intersections and relationship between production and consumption, and whether or not all of these men came from a similar background, followed the same professional path, a path that made them obvious candidates for patronage from the Crown. It is therefore dedicated to these men, who formed five partnerships: Charton et Compagnie, Gaudin et Compagnie, Sonnerat et Compagnie, Gros et Compagnie and Reboul, Fontebrune et Compagnie. They supplied silks to the French Crown between 1740 and the French Revolution. The members of each of these partnerships changed through the years. In total twenty-three men were involved. Jean Charton father and son formed several partnerships sequentially: the first was made with Antoine and Jean-Pierre Crozat from 1741 to 1743, then with Joachim Gras from 1746 to 1750, before a third partnership was made with the designer Joseph Barnier and his brother Emmanuel from 1754 to 1756, and finally a last one

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<sup>27</sup> They are also known for their businesses that survived and are still in activity today, with the houses Tassinari et Chatel for Pernon, and Prella for Desfarges. ARIZZOLI-CLEMENTEL, *Soieries de Lyon*, 65-76; *L'Art de la soie, Prella, 1752-2002 : des ateliers lyonnais aux palais parisiens* (Paris: Paris-Musées, 2002). For his silks sent abroad, Pernon worked in collaboration with the designer Philippe de Lasalle. See for instance Lesley MILLER, "Departing from the *Pheasant and the Peacock*: the Role of Furnishing Textiles in the Career of Philippe Lasalle (1723-1804)", in *Furnishing Textiles. Studies on Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Interior Decoration* (Abegg-Stiftung: Riggisberger Berichte, no. 17, 2009), 92-102. For his production for the Spanish palaces, see the work of Pilar Benito Garcia, such as "Camille Pernon y el tocador de la Reina Maria Luisa en el Palacio Real de Madrid", *Reales Sitios*, 116 (1993): 17-24.

with André Vial, Louis Montessuy and the designer Jacques-Gabriel Bridant from 1758 to 1760. Charton father and son also joined Gilles Gaudin with his nephew Jean-Baptiste Gaudin de Surjon, Charles-Claude Briasson and the designer René Michalet in their partnership active from 1761 to 1776. Similarly, Louis Reboul and Nicolas Jean-Louis Goussard Defontebrune formed a partnership with the designer Joseph Picard, as well as with a man named Beraye in 1788. Unfortunately, nothing about the latter is known. The activities of the partnership formed by Jean-Antoine and Joseph Gros are recorded from 1786 to 1790 (see appendix).

The dissertation will approach its subject through their link to the court. This connection immediately raises certain questions about their position: as suppliers of the Crown, were these men at the top of their profession and of society? Did they stand out from the other Lyonnais businessmen? In the first chapter, a portrait of the general context in which the royal commissions were made will be described, from the structure of the institution in charge, called the *Garde-Meuble*, to the different actors involved in commissioning and supplying silks. The silks delivered by the merchant manufacturers of this study will be analysed, and from this analysis several questions about their production will be raised. An analysis of the characteristics of the textiles described in the archives, such as their materials and manufacturing techniques, will indicate if they specialised in the production of a specific type of textiles. This will also suggest their attitude towards the technical innovations of the century. Lastly, the position of their production with regard to fashion will be questioned, as well as their capacity to adapt to different commissions and markets. In a second chapter, the merchant manufacturers' social background will be investigated. Information on their familial environment will provide a better understanding of their social and professional evolution, and what its impact on their career may have been. Information on the occupations and financial means of their close relatives will be used for this analysis. In the third chapter, their career path will be examined, first by considering how they entered and climbed through each position within the silk weaving guild. Then the issue of partnerships will be raised: how they were formed, and under which terms, as well as what the role of each partner was, and what impact those partnerships had on the individual career of each of these men. Finally, in a fourth and final chapter, their social evolution will be investigated within the wider context of eighteenth-century Lyonnais society, determining their environment and social standing, and its implications. The offices and titles that some of them obtained will be used to evaluate their social progress. Their social status will also be evaluated, when information is available on their income and belongings. As the situation of these men gradually emerges, the dissertation will

argue that, despite their apparently elevated connections with the Court, their profile was not very different from that of the guild as a whole.

## Methodology

The main primary sources that enable historians to answer questions on social and economic life in eighteenth century France have been used. These primary sources are all part Ancien Régime archives; no Revolutionary or post-revolutionary sources are used for this study (with the exception of few acts of baptism or marriage). French history has impacted on the organisation of public archives, which are divided in two parts: the pre-Revolutionary and the post-Revolutionary archives. The French Revolution constitutes the separation point of this organisation. Research into both pre- and post-Revolutionary archives is therefore difficult, and here the decision has been made to limit this research to the period before the French Revolution. Several reasons informed this choice. First, the Revolution suspended most of the political and economic activities of the country, and completely reorganised its institutions and functioning. Guilds definitively disappeared, and commercial life sought new forms of organisation. The political context led to a complete rejection of monarchy, but also of the social order of the Ancien Régime. All those changes therefore impacted on the lives and careers of most businessmen. Second, as the systems were modified, the state's method of commissioning silks from Lyon also changed. The style and purpose of fabrics evolved and adapted to new successive governments. Finally, this transition was followed by a modification of the archiving system of public activity. It is for these reasons that this study will focus on the sources of the Ancien Régime, prior to the French Revolution. They are found in public archives: the *Archives départementales* and the *Archives municipales* in Lyon offer sources for biographical information and professional environment, while the *Archives nationales* in Paris allow to look into the archives of the French Crown, as well as into the numerous notarial acts of the city. The new data supplied by this systematic trawling of relevant archives may then be compared with the findings in the wider literature by previous scholars, whose focus was generally wider and whose results therefore differ in some respects.

## CHAPTER I

### Supplying Silks: Luxury Production for a Specific Clientele

#### Introduction

To fully understand the work of the merchant manufacturers of this study, their silks and their material characteristics must be investigated. These products reveal where their suppliers sat within the system of consumption of fashion textiles. The evolution of patterns and the changes in fashion throughout time must be considered. The evolution of styles and designs has been studied by many scholars, such as Raymond Cox (1914) or Peter Thornton (1965). The role of designers and designs has been mainly investigated by Lesley Miller (since 1988), who also evaluated the place of silks within the commerce of fashion and demonstrated the diversity of production and, therefore, of consumption. This analysis was based on material evidence in various collections of textiles across the world: that of the Victoria and Albert Museum were mainly used by Natalie Rothstein (1990), Clare Browne (1996) and Miller; that of the Musée des Tissus were studied by Pierre Arizzoli-Clémentel (1988-1990) and Marie-Anne Privat-Savigny (2010), and were also the subject of a major work on the silks of the French Crown at the eighteenth century. The Crown's commissions of silks and their uses within the royal residences have been investigated by Chantal Gastinel-Coural (1984-1988) who used the collections of the Musée des Tissus of Lyon, of the Mobilier national and of various palaces such as Versailles or Fontainebleau.

Few sources of the production of these partnerships are available. The archives of the French Crown provide two kinds of information: in the *Journaux* (journals) of the *Garde-Meuble* are recorded all the deliveries of furnishing, as well as in many cases the destination and installation of the fabrics, at particular dates. Some of the deliveries at the end of the century also specified the price of the silks per ell. The *Mémoires* (invoices) of the suppliers detail the fabrics manufactured, the payment expected by the merchants and the final price agreed with them by the Crown (these two were not necessarily the same). All costs are usually detailed in such bills, from the manufacturing to the sending of packages, and the trips to Paris needed by the manufacturers in order to discuss with the designers or the upholsterers of the Crown. Unfortunately, they do not specify if or when payments were received, –the Crown often being

late in paying its debts. Furthermore, these sources do not give information on the relationship between the *Garde-Meuble* and its suppliers, and determining how it made contact with merchant manufacturers as well as how commissions were made is difficult. Nevertheless, these sources are invaluable as they record the consumption of silks. Unfortunately, there are rather fewer sources that record the production of those same silks. However, one inventory survives among the bankruptcy papers of Gaudin et Cie, an inventory that lists the fabrics and raw material stocked in the storeroom, as well as what seems to be the costs of weaving. Those two written sources of information need to be supported with the material evidence of surviving fabrics. Only a few of the silks produced by the manufacturers of this study have been identified, so this chapter will base its analysis on those textiles and make analogies with similar textiles in museum collections.

This chapter will first draw a portrait of the context in which the royal commissions of furnishings were made. This will clarify the status of suppliers of the Crown of the men in question here, investigating how they achieved this role and their evolution in that position. It will then examine the issue of their production, taking into consideration techniques of production and fashion characteristics. Finally, analysing the destination and use of these silks, in the light of their technical and stylistic features, will allow consideration of a hierarchy in their production. Lyonnais merchant manufacturers usually specialised in a single type of fabric, and that type was generally specified in the partnership agreement. Such mentions, however, are generalised: “silks brocaded in silk and gold”, for example in the case of Gaudin et Cie’s partnership contract,<sup>1</sup> encompasses a great variety of patterned silks. More details are needed in order to analyse the production of these merchants. Unfortunately, for most of them the only references to their production are to the fabrics they delivered to the Crown.

## I.1. Suppliers of the Crown

Suppliers to the Crown worked with the *Garde-Meuble* (which can be literally translated as “furniture supervision”), an institution founded under Louis XIV to take care and organise the furnishing of the royal houses. It mainly managed the everyday furnishings, but also occasionally took care of those for special events, such as religious ceremonies, outings to Paris,

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<sup>1</sup> ADR, 8B140, 15/07/1756, Acte de société Briasson, Audras, Gaudin et Michalet.

receptions of ambassadors, and coronations. Special events, however were always taken care of in coordination with the *Menus Plaisirs*, the main department which dealt with the furnishing of exceptional events such as balls, parties, theatre representations, receptions or burials and weddings ceremonies. The *Garde-Meuble* took care of all furniture, from items such as chairs, desks, furnishing textiles and carpets to silverwares and linen. It dealt with the commissions to suppliers and managed the arrivals of new furnishings. It took care of the organisation of the palaces' interiors and coordinated the movements of objects from castle to castle, with "entries" (*entrées*) and "exits" (*sorties*), and the ones in the storehouses. It was also in charge of their maintenance, and sometimes organised sales of old furnishings. It also managed the staff working on the furnishing of the palaces, such as the housekeepers or the upholsterers.

The *Garde-Meuble* was managed by the Intendant, a role often passed from father to son. In 1718, the title of Intendant and General Inspector of the Crown's Furnishings (*Intendant et Contrôleur général des Meuble de la Couronne*) was taken by Gaspard-Moÿse de Fontanieu, then from 1767 to 1784 by his son Pierre-Elisabeth de Fontanieu. In 1780 however, the office of *Intendant* and *Contrôleur général* was cut, and de Fontanieu took the title of General Superintendent (*Commissaire général*) as part of the new General Office of the Expenditures of the King's Household (*Bureau général des dépenses de la Maison du roi*). In 1784, Marc-Antoine Thierry de Ville d'Avray became the new *Commissaire général* and undertook an important reform of the department.<sup>2</sup>

The Intendant dealt directly with the royal family or with the tutors of the princes and princesses, giving afterwards orders to the different persons in charge, such as de Pommery, General Guard of the Crown's Furniture (*Garde général des Meubles de la Couronne*), or Joseph Savournin, Inspector of the Manufactures (*Contrôleur des Fabriques*), who were in contact with the suppliers.<sup>3</sup> The designs of textiles, as well as of other furnishings, were presented to the *Garde-Meuble* who designated the final ones. Many designs, however, were made by the official designers of the Crown, such as Alexis Peyrotte (1699-1769), Jacques Gondoin (1737-1818) or Jean-Démosthène Dugourc (born 1749) (**fig. 4-5**). The *Garde-Meuble* also held its own upholstery workshops. Each palace was under the supervision of a Housekeeper (*Concierge*). Although the Intendants rarely dealt directly with the suppliers, who were rather in contact with intermediaries, they certainly had a say in choosing to whom the

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<sup>2</sup> Stéphane CASTELLUCIO, *Le Garde-Meuble de la Couronne et ses intendants du XVIIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: CTHS, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> AN, O/1/3616 to O/1/3656, Maison du roi, bills of the suppliers.

commissions were directed. When Thierry de Ville d'Avray became Intendant, he engaged in an important reform of the *Garde-Meuble*'s organisation, in order to save money and to have better management of expenditure, and he decided to direct commissions to new suppliers. From 1741 to 1784, all commissions were made to Jean Charton father and son, with the exception of one commission made in 1764 to Pierre César Sonnerat. But when Thierry took up the position of Intendant and began the reform of the institution, commissions were no longer made to the Charton business. Several merchant manufacturers became suppliers of the Crown, including Camille Pernon and Olivier Desfarges, but also Gilles Gaudin, Gros et Cie, and Reboul, Fontebrune et Cie.<sup>4</sup> We can therefore conclude that the Intendant played a part in the choice of the suppliers, or even more, that the decision originated with him.

Looking at the number of fabrics delivered and the duration of deliveries (**Appendix table 1**), one aspect stands out: the pre-eminence of the Charton family. For more than 40 years and through all their partnerships, Jean Charton father and son supplied around forty-five orders to the Crown, between 1741 and 1784. Through time and the successive partnerships they formed, they were therefore the ones to whom the commissions were directed. The payments varied, but Jean Charton father and son received substantial sums of money: it has been previously estimated that in thirteen years, they received more than 1,299,895 *livres* from the Crown.<sup>5</sup> The other firms received commissions on a more irregular basis, often no more than one or two commissions. Gros et Cie delivered four series of fabrics from 1786 to 1790, while Reboul, Fontebrune et Cie were responsible for only one commission in 1785. Pierre César Sonnerat also received only one commission in 1765, the only one made to another Lyonnais merchant manufacturer during Charton's supremacy. The case of Gaudin et Cie is particular in several aspects. First, it is the only business for which the conditions of access to the position of Crown's suppliers are known: it is still uncertain how the others came in contact with the royal *Garde-Meuble*. But more importantly, these conditions are quite remarkable as it is after their bankruptcy that they received a commission from the Crown. The *Garde-Meuble* first entered in possession of furnishing silks produced by the firm through the intermediary Lenormand et Cie, a shopkeeper of luxury goods (*marchand mercier*) rue Saint-Honoré in Paris, who supplied a fabric in 1786. The Crown then bought in 1789 one of the silks sold at the liquidation of the firm, and ordered Savournin to complete what was then to be called the

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<sup>4</sup> AN, O/1/3313 to O/1/3321, Maison du roi, Journaux du Garde-Meuble, deliveries; O/1/3534 and O/1/3613 to O/1/3627, Maison du roi, bills of the suppliers.

<sup>5</sup> DATO, "Les Fabricants Jean Charton père et fils", 93.

“*meuble Gaudin*” for a use in the royal residences.<sup>6</sup> Savournin also bought from the merchants in March 1791 the sample of a fabric to be used, but he gave its manufacturing to other master weavers in Lyon. The weaving of the borders, however, was given to Gilles Gaudin, who therefore became, in an unexpected way, direct supplier of the Crown.<sup>7</sup>

## I.2. Types of Fabrics Produced: a Specialisation?

The merchant manufacturers of this study all specialised in patterned silks, as the deliveries that were made to the Crown indicate: in the case of Sonnerat et Cie, only one type of fabric is known; for the other partnerships, however, there is more information. Reboul, Fontebrune et Cie delivered one suite of silks, as well as several samples which were never used. Gros et Cie delivered four different types of patterned silks to the Crown. Charton et Cie’s production of furnishing fabrics, supplied over a period of 43 years, can also be analysed. Finally, the inventories of Gaudin et Cie record many fabrics, for both furnishing and clothing. Nonetheless, the term “patterned silks” comprised many fabrics made with various techniques and materials. This therefore raises the issue of a more specialised production: was their production specialised in a specific type of textiles, or did they broaden their market to a wide range of silks?

For the partnerships that provide the most information, production seems to have been diverse (*table 1*). Out of the four fabrics delivered by Gros et Cie for the royal residences, each is of a different weaving technique. Fabrics manufactured under the supervision of Gaudin et Cie are also varied: nine types of silks are mentioned in their inventory and deliveries. But the most diversified production is that of Jean Charton father and son and their successive partners: their range of products encompass eleven techniques of silk weaving. The silks of Reboul, Fontebrune et Cie are the less diversified: only two types of silks were recorded, fabrics that however were woven with metal threads. Beyond the bald statement of numbers, the weaving techniques reveal the versatility of such production and allow a better understanding of it. Some techniques were very complicated, incorporating processes other than weaving, and even necessitated the intervention of other skilled professionals.

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<sup>6</sup> ARIZZOLI-CLEMENTEL, *Soieries de Lyon*, 61-62.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 80 and 92.

**Table 1. Production: Types of Fabrics per Partnership<sup>8</sup>**

	Charton et Cie	Gaudin et Cie	Gros et Cie	Reboul, Fontebrune et Cie	Sonnerat et Cie
Taffeta	x	x			
Gros de Tours	x	x	x		
Gros de Naples	x				
Satin	x	x			
Lampas				x	
Damask	x		x		x
Brocaded damask	x			x	
Carrelé		x			
Cannelé	x	x			
Watering	x	x			
Velvet	x				
Gold and silver brocade	x	x	x	x	
Chiné	x		x		
Pékin		x			

Fabrics could be plain or patterned. As mentioned above, the merchant manufacturers of this study were producing mainly patterned silks. A great variety of weaving techniques could ornament a fabric. They can be divided into two main groups: one comprises a pattern created during the weaving process, either with the incorporation of additional elements or not; the other comprises fabrics decorated after their weaving via finishes. In the first group, ways of intertwining the main threads of the fabrics, the warp and the weft (**fig. 6**), produced various decorative effects. That is how the damask was created, with the use of two weave structures whose differences were visible when light fell on the fabric and revealed the pattern. Silks could also be brocaded, additional threads being incorporated in the weaving via supplementary wefts (**fig. 7 to 9**). These additional weft threads could be of silk or another material, the pattern being created by the variety of colours or textural qualities. Chenille threads were often used (**fig. 10-11**), but also silver and gold threads (**fig. 12 to 15**), in various forms. Once more, different effects of light and shade were a major component. Extra warp threads also allowed the making of velvet, which was characterised by its soft pile or by loops on the surface (**fig. 16-17**). Chiné was another effect produced both before and during weaving: the warp threads were painted or

<sup>8</sup> These data are taken from the deliveries of the suppliers to the Crown, their invoices and the bankruptcy papers of Gaudin et Cie: AN, O/1/3312 to O/1/3322, Maison du roi, Journaux du Garde-Meuble, deliveries; O/1/3616 to O/1/3656, Maison du roi, bills of the suppliers; ADR, 8B912, Bankruptcy papers, Inventory of 1776.

dyed before the weaving, and when the wefts were woven in the resulting pattern had a blurry effect round the edges (**fig. 18-19**). Dyers were therefore part of the patterning process. It was also possible to create patterns on the surface of fabrics after weaving, and these finishes were produced by different craftsmen, not by weavers. Embroidery was made with silk threads, but could also add ornamental elements such as sequins (**fig. 20**). Fabrics could also undergo through processes that altered their appearance. Watering (*moere*) was a finish made by specialist *moireurs*: the woven fabric was folded and put under pressure in a calendar that pressed the grain and gave a watered effect to the surface (**fig. 21**). Finally, silks could also be painted.

Among the merchant manufacturers in this sample, Gros et Cie produced damasks, brocaded and chiné fabrics. They therefore worked with the dyers who dyed the warp threads to create the chiné. Both Reboul, Fontebrune et Cie and Sonnerat et Cie manufactured damasks. The former, however, seem to have specialised in the specific type of brocaded damask, as well as in lampas, another brocaded silk. The two other partnerships were involved in the manufacturing of a much wider range of fabrics. Gaudin et Cie seems, however, to have specialised almost exclusively in brocaded silks. Only a white *gros de Tours* is indicated in the shop as being meant for a watering. All other silks were brocaded, either with silk threads, chenille or silver and gold threads. Some were also described as embroidered. The shop also contained *pékin*, a striped fabric. Due to a greater number of evidence, consequently to their position of only direct suppliers, it has been noticed that Charton delivered almost all types of silks to the Crown: from brocaded satin to chiné taffeta, as well as watered silk and damask, the firms of Jean Charton father and son do not seem to have had any specialisation. They did not however supplied any *pékin*, and only two velvets of green shades were delivered in 1756 and 1773 with bigger suites of *gros de Tours* and satin for furnishing.

From these data, it may be deduced that these partnerships were in possession of considerable means – material and financial. The more complicated the process was, the more workers it required and the later the returns on initial investment would have been: the chiné for instance required specialised dyers to dye the warps, then weavers to weave the fabric. Embroiderers or *moireurs* could also be employed to embellish a silk after its weaving. Furthermore, the more difficult the technique was, and the more colours a fabric necessitated, the longer the weaving process was. The merchant manufacturer therefore needed enough funds to be able to pay enough workers and on a sufficiently long period of work. But he also needed to be able to pay

for the raw materials and wait for returns on his investment. According to Jean Peyrot's study on the commercial practices of the Lyonnais merchant manufacturers, the delay between the selling of the silks and the payment was quite considerable: on average, between fifteen and eighteen months. The merchant manufacturer bought the raw silk and paid it eighteen months later, while he sold his silks and received the payment nine months later, or between twelve and fifteen months for the selling by commission. Purchases were therefore made on a credit cycle of nine months and sells on eighteen months.<sup>9</sup> Such delays in credits payments necessitated substantial funds.

Finally, the end purpose of the fabrics delivered is worthy of comment, as not all were furnishings. As suppliers of the Crown, all the partnerships seem to have only delivered furnishing silks. However, the inventory of the Gaudin et Cie's shop mentions waistcoats (*vestes*): this signifies their production included dress silks as well. The question of clothing and furnishing raises another issue: whether patterns and designs were processed completely differently according to the intended use of a silk.

### I.3. Designs and Fashion

The supremacy of Lyon came from the novelty of its fabric. By the early eighteenth century, the *Grande Fabrique* was renowned for the talent of its designers who created every season new designs for silks. Lyonnais silks were always in the latest fashion, sold all around Europe and beyond. A great secrecy was therefore held around the designers and the new designs, for fear of them reaching copyists before they had been made up in Lyon. The whole Lyonnais silk economy indeed revolved around those seasonal designs: Lesley Miller suggests that a fabric lost 25% of its value the season after its manufacturing, when it was not fashionable anymore.<sup>10</sup> She investigated this fear of designs falling into the hands of rival manufacturing cities, and the debate about the selling practices and the training of designers it led to.<sup>11</sup> Copyrights laws were implemented, and a differentiation was made between fabrics for clothing and fabrics for

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<sup>9</sup> PEYROT, "Les techniques du commerce de soies", 44.

<sup>10</sup> Lesley MILLER, "Paris-Lyon-Paris: Dialogue in the Design and Distribution of Patterned Silks in the Eighteenth Century", in *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in Ancien Régime Paris: Studies in the History of the Skilled Workforce*, eds. R. Fox and A. Turner (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1998), 159.

<sup>11</sup> MILLER, "Innovation and Industrial Espionage in Eighteenth-Century France".

furnishing in 1787: the regulation set the copyright at six years for clothing fabrics, and 25 years for furnishings.<sup>12</sup> This difference can be explained according to the use of the silks. Fashion for clothes changed seasonally, although the changes were quite limited and only slight alterations were made to the previous patterns. Fashion for furnishings, however, was much slower in its evolution, a pattern being fashionable for several years, the cost of rehangng a room being rather higher than that of buying a dress.

As the group of manufacturers in this study mainly supplied furnishings, they may well not have had to employ so many designers. On the other hand, Gaudin et Cie also made clothing silks and the documentation suggests their fashionability.<sup>13</sup> Several colours are mentioned, mainly white, but also yellow and green. Portraits and fashion plates of the same period as that of this inventory, that is 1776, show that yellow and green were very fashionable colours (**fig. 22-23**). Green, for instance, was a much appreciated colour for Lyonnais silks.<sup>14</sup> Striped fabrics were also in the latest fashion, such as the satin with green and white stripes that were then indicated in their storeroom (**fig. 24-25**). Several waistcoats are also listed, some with a silver ground and embroidered edges, whose characteristics can be linked to a silk waistcoat woven with silk thread and embroidered borders in the Victoria and Albert Museum collection (**fig. 26**). The inventory of the brocading threads and decorations used indicates the use of many metal threads, but also of chenille threads, which were very fashionable in the second part of the century. A white satin, described as striped and brocaded with silk and chenille threads, can also be compared with several fabrics whose vertical stems of flowers were brocaded on stripes, sometimes in chenille and silk (**fig. 27-28**).

The production of furnishing fabrics by the sample merchant manufacturers is easier to trace.<sup>15</sup> Most of them were brocaded silks, satins or *gros de Tours*, with floral patterns. This type of design was the most common in silk furnishing, throughout the eighteenth century, following the general Rococo trend: colourful flowers and stems on a white background were the most popular pattern, the disposition of flowers varying for each textile (**fig. 29 to 31**). The first chiné

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<sup>12</sup> Mary SCHOESER and Kathleen DEJARDIN, *Tissus français d'ameublement de 1760 à nos jours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), 19.

<sup>13</sup> ADR, 8B912, Bankruptcy papers, Inventory of 1776.

<sup>14</sup> SCHOESER and DEJARDIN, *Tissus français d'ameublement*, 30-31; Gilberte VRIGNAUD, *Vêtire et parure en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Editions Messene, 1995), 60. See also Daniel ROCHE, *La Culture des apparences : une histoire du vêtement, XVII-XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, Seuil: 2007).

<sup>15</sup> AN, O/1/3312 to O/1/3322, Maison du roi, Journaux du Garde-Meuble, deliveries; O/1/3616 to O/1/3656, Maison du roi, bills of the suppliers.

fabric was delivered by Jean Charton in 1746.<sup>16</sup> All of them were with floral patterns, as were most of the chinés at that time (**fig. 32-33**). They also delivered many damasks, most often of one colour, described with patterns of exotic plants. The most widespread pattern in royal residences, but also in private interiors, was the pineapple, in a very stylistic depiction (**fig. 34-35**). This type of designs was very close to the fabrics of the beginning of the century, demonstrating the durability of such pattern (**fig. 36**). Towards the end of the century, however, damask-lampas appeared, brocaded in several colours with more elaborate and realistic patterns (**fig. 37 to 40**). The lampas was a brocaded fabric that was very fashionable in the reign of Louis XVI, as is demonstrated by the numerous lampas created by Philippe de Lasalle for instance (**fig. 41**). Reboul, Fontebrune et Cie seem to have been the only manufacturers in the sample to deliver lampas. Most of them, however, were samples, but the patterns described exemplify a new fashion linked to a recent taste for Antiquity: the green and gold and blue and gold lampas sent in 1788 were patterned with Cyclopes and rivers, while the blue, grey and white damask lampas delivered a year before had a pattern of arabesques (**fig. 42**).<sup>17</sup>

These deliveries to the *Garde-Meuble* therefore indicate that production followed the general trends of the century. As suppliers of the Crown, however, they had to answer to a very specific operating mode of furnishing: royal residences and official apartments had to obey to the rules of etiquette, which codified very strictly every aspect of court life. This included the decor and furnishing of the palaces. Etiquette required a hierarchy of material whose location in the residences was highly controlled.

#### I.4. Hierarchy: from Sales to Use

According to the material used, to the time, means and men needed for the manufacturing, the price of these silks impacted on their sale and use. The more precious the raw material, the longer the weaving, the more numerous the workers, and the more expensive the fabric was. A hierarchy of fabrics is created by such characteristics. As has been demonstrated in previous research,<sup>18</sup> a hierarchy of fabrics was linked to a codification of public space within the royal

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<sup>16</sup> AN, O/1/3314, Maison du roi, Journaux du Garde-Meuble, delivery of the 28/03/1746.

<sup>17</sup> ARIZZOLI-CLEMENTEL, *Soieries de Lyon*, 75-76; AN, O/1/3322, Maison du roi, Journaux du Garde-Meuble, deliveries from 19/02/1787 and 14/04/1787.

<sup>18</sup> DATO, "Les Fabricants Jean Charton père et fils", 63-69.

residences. The fabrics on the walls and the furniture had to reflect the importance of a room. Public spaces in royal residences, open to everyone, were to reflect the power and richness of the French Crown. They also reminded the visitor of the tradition of the France's Great Century or *Grand Siècle*, when Louis XIV was building Versailles and promoting himself as an absolute monarch. These spaces at Versailles, called the *Grands Appartements*, were often decorated with silks brocaded with metal threads, whose luxury was displayed to everyone (**fig. 43**). In this way, the green *gros de Tours* and damask brocaded with gold threads supplied by Charton from 1757 to 1765 was used in the King's Apartment, in rooms such as the Council Chambre (*Salle du Conseil*) where his ministers held their meetings.<sup>19</sup> Damask and velvet were the two other traditional fabrics: their stylistic patterns were inspired from the beginning of the century. The crimson damasks patterned with palm leaves and pineapples delivered by Jean Charton from 1777 to 1780 for the King's and royal family's Apartments are an example of such fabrics.<sup>20</sup> The colour here is also of importance: crimson was the most common colour in the royal residences (**fig. 44**).<sup>21</sup> *Gros de Tours* were also used, such as the *gros de Tours* patterned with honeysuckle and convolvulus on a white ground, delivered by Charton in 1771 for the bedroom of Marie-Antoinette when she was still Dauphine (**fig. 45**).<sup>22</sup>

The royal family's private apartments did not need to conform to the rules of prestige and etiquette so much. Their occupants had more liberty to decorate them as they wished, and the changes in fashion were much more visible there than in the immutable *Grands Appartements*. More simplicity and lightness in the fabrics were sought by the various princes and princesses. It did not mean, however, less luxury. The *gros de Tours* brocaded with silk and gold, patterned with palm trees, flower bouquets and garlands, trophies and pastoral landscapes, delivered by Gros et Cie and used for the Apartment of the comte de Provence at Versailles, is an example of the sophisticated luxury some brocaded silks could have (**fig. 46**).<sup>23</sup> The complexity of the design and the diversity of colours sometimes made these fabrics as valuable as the rich gold and silver brocaded fabrics of the main rooms. The brocaded satin delivered by Charton for Marie-Antoinette's Interior Cabinet in Versailles is made of a great variety of colours

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<sup>19</sup> AN, O/1/3316 to O/1/3318, Maison du roi, Journaux du Garde-Meuble, deliveries from 28/09/1757 to 10/03/1764; O/1/3617, Maison du roi, bill of the supplier of 1765.

<sup>20</sup> AN, O/1/3626 and O/1/3627, Maison du roi, bills of the supplier of 1777-1778 and 1779-1780.

<sup>21</sup> Nearly half of the furnishing ensembles of the palace of Versailles, main residence of the monarchy and of the court, were made of crimson fabrics. *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>22</sup> AN, O/1/3319, Maison du roi, Journaux du Garde-Meuble, installation of the 30/04/1771.

<sup>23</sup> AN, O/1/3322, Maison du roi, Journaux du Garde-Meuble, deliveries of the 19/08/1786, 09/03/1787, 16/04/1787 and 08/06/1787.

composing sophisticated patterns (**fig. 47-52**).<sup>24</sup> Gaudin's furnishings, a satin brocaded with chenille and silk with musical trophies and pastoral scenes bought from the Gaudin partnership after its bankruptcy, was later used in the Empress Joséphine's bedroom in the palace of Fontainebleau in 1805, therefore in a parade bedroom, evidence of its aesthetic and monetary value (**fig. 53-57**).<sup>25</sup>

Prices of fabrics are the main indication of their place in the hierarchy. Only the invoices (*mémoires*) of the merchant manufacturers provide the price of the delivered silks. The inventory of Gaudin et Cie indicates prices as well, however most likely the cost of weaving rather than the retail price. These two different types of prices can provide an interesting comparison, as well as indications of the benefits the merchant manufacturers could perceive from their business. Following the prices established by Lesley Miller from the petition sent to Vincent de Gournay in 1751,<sup>26</sup> comparisons can be made (*table 2*).

The most expensive silks were the ones woven with metal threads, either gold or silver, or both. Called *brocarts*, their cost of production could be between 3 and 36 *livres* per ell, the cheapest retail price was 36 *livres* and could rise to 400 *livres*. The *brocarts* manufactured in Gaudin et Cie's shops, however, ranged in a cost of weaving between 13 and 86 *livres*. The *brocarts* sold to the Crown by the various manufacturers had a wide range of prices: they were valued between 55 and 330 *livres* the ell, the most expensive being the green *gros de Tours* brocaded of golden palms and pineapples for the King's Apartment delivered by Jean Charton.

Only a few velvets form part of this study, and none was stocked in Gaudin's shop. The cost of weaving for plain velvet was situated between 50 *sols* and 4 *livres* 10 *sols*. The only payment for a velvet indicated in the manufacturers' *mémoires* established it at 36 *livres*, that is higher than the maximum of 26 *livres* reckoned by de Gournay. Patterned fabrics, the most numerous to be delivered, are once more above de Gournay's estimate, for both their manufacturing and retail costs. The value of Gaudin's brocaded fabrics as indicated in the bankruptcy inventories is between 9 and 75 *livres*, while they were sold to the Crown between 12 and 82 *livres* 5 *sols*. The cost of the ell was therefore more than double the average prices. Damask seems not to have been taken into consideration by de Gournay; it was, however, one of the most common

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<sup>24</sup> AN, O/1/3320, Maison du roi, Journaux du Garde-Meuble, installations of the 20/12/1779 and 14/01/1780.

<sup>25</sup> ARIZZOLI-CLEMENTEL, *Soieries de Lyon*, 62.

<sup>26</sup> MILLER, *Selling Silks*, 17; "Paris-Lyon-Paris", 148.

silks used by the royal palaces. The prices at which the *Garde-Meuble* acquired them were quite steady and seem to have been established beforehand, with very few exceptions. Non-brocaded damasks were all bought at 20 *livres* the ell, while brocaded ones were sold by the merchants at up to 36 *livres*. Prices for the taffeta chiné were surprisingly quite low, given the difficult processes it involved: although no such fabrics were produced by Gaudin et Cie, Gournay estimated their cost of weaving as any other patterned silks, that is between 20 *sols* and 16 *livres*, while they were to be sold between 4 and 30 *livres*. The numerous Crowns chinés, however, were reckoned at a lower value, between 19 and 21 *livres*.

Finally, the lowest priced silks were the plain fabrics, such as taffetas, *gros de Florence* or *gros de Tours*. The Crown's purchases of such silks seem however to be once more above the average prices that established the cost of production between 8 and 22 *sols* and the retail price between 2 and 14 *livres*. The inventory of Gaudin et Cie indicates the taffetas manufactured in several colours at between 5 and 6 *livres* the ell, which is much higher. Similarly, the taffetas and *gros de Florence* sold to the Crown were valued at 10 *livres*, while the plain *gros de Tours* were supplied at a rate between 20 and 26 *livres* the ell, therefore the same value as the one of some patterned fabrics.

**Table 2. Comparative Prices of the Silks<sup>27</sup>**

Type of textile	Cost of weaving per ell according to Gaudin's inventory	Cost of weaving per ell according to de Gournay's estimations	Retail price per ell according to the merchants' Memoires	Retail price per ell according to de Gournay's estimations
Silks brocaded with metal threads	13#-86#	3#-36#	55#-330#	13#-400#
Plain velvet		50s - 4# 10s	36#	17#-26#
Lampas		20s-16#	64# 11s-82# 5s	4#-30#
Satin brocaded with silk threads	9#-75#		12#-140#	
Gros de Tours brocaded with silk threads	13#-17#		38#-80#	
Cannelé	18#-23#			
Carrelé	24#			
Brocaded damask said damas-lampas			20# 10s-36#	
Damask (non brocaded)			20#	
Taffeta chiné		20s-16#	19#-21#	4#-30#
Moire				
Plain Gros de Tours		8s-22s	20#-26#	2#-14#
Plain Taffeta/gros de Florence	5#-6#		10#	

Differences in retail prices can be explained by the destination of such silks: they were manufactured for the royal palaces and the court, and therefore had to be of the best quality. The value of the silks used by the Crown was most likely to be above that of most silks. Nevertheless, the cost of production detailed in Gaudin's inventory are situated well above de Gournay's estimates too; but the destination of these fabrics is unknown. According to the prices indicated, the clientele of the firm can however be deduced: such expensive silks for clothing and furnishing were most likely to be sold to wealthy customers, who could afford silks expenses almost similar to the court's commissions. The business's clientele was therefore probably from the nobility, or the high bourgeoisie. Furthermore, as seen previously, among the retailers of the firm were the mercers in the luxury trade whose shops were situated in the rue Saint-Honoré in Paris, such as Nau or Barbier. Barbier supplied the court and had "one of

<sup>27</sup> These prices were collected from the deliveries to the *Garde-Meuble* from 1778 (prices are not indicated before that date), the bills of the suppliers and the inventory of 1776 from the bankruptcy papers of Gaudin et Cie: AN, O/1/3320 to O/1/3322, Maison du roi, Journaux du Garde-Meuble, deliveries; AN, O/1/3616 to O/1/3656, Maison du roi, bills of the suppliers; ADR, 8B912, Bankruptcy papers, Inventory of 1776.

the most considerable shops of silks, plain, brocaded and enriched with gold and silver, of all fashions and every season” according to the *Almanach dauphin* in 1777.<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

The merchant manufacturers of this study therefore had to face two types of requirements. First, the demand of fashion which required a keen eye for the latest patterns and a great awareness of the needs of an aristocratic clientele. But they also had to provide the right silks for the royal palaces which required fabrics suitable for the etiquette and taste of the royal family. From the existing deliveries to the Crown, it seems that they were able to answer such requirements, though it is not clear for how long. Indeed, except for Jean Charton, all of the sample were suppliers of the Crown for only a short time. The reasons for such irregular commissions raises the question of how satisfactory to the Crown and court their silks were. Finally, the bankruptcy of the Gaudin business, although it was not unusual in this period and could be put down to a number of factors, including poor financial management, casts doubt on its effectiveness in following fashion and answering the requirements of a demanding clientele and challenging market.

In any case, it can be stated with little doubt that their production was in line with the famous Lyonnais silks which made the reputation of French textiles in the eighteenth century. They were therefore among the merchant manufacturers who produced the most luxurious fabrics of the market. This position, as well as that of suppliers of the Crown, suggests they belonged at the top of the professional hierarchy in Lyon, a matter to be investigated after delving into their family background and the starting point of their careers.

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<sup>28</sup> “*Un des plus considérables magasins d’étoffes de soyes unies, brochées et enrichies d’or et d’argent, de modes et de chaque saison*”. Natacha COQUERY, *L’Hôtel aristocratique : le marché du luxe à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998), 90.

## CHAPTER II

### The Backgrounds of the Merchant Manufacturers (*marchands fabricants*) supplying the Crown

#### Introduction

A picture of Lyonnais society in the eighteenth century has been drawn previously by the investigation of several scholars, and can be used for this case study in order to analyse the manufacturers and their family's social status, situating them within a solid existing framework. The various aspects of Lyonnais society have been studied by historians from different disciplinary backgrounds: its economic life, mainly that of the silk industry<sup>1</sup> and the powerful families of bankers;<sup>2</sup> its academies and masonic lodges;<sup>3</sup> its charitable institutions, such as the hospices and hospitals;<sup>4</sup> the everyday life of the population within the city.<sup>5</sup> A quantitative approach has been applied to the analysis of its inhabitants, their financial worth, patterns of immigration and the city's demographic evolution.<sup>6</sup> Different primary sources have been used in these investigations. For instance, Maurice Garden used the baptismal and marriage records in the parish registers in order to analyse demographic behaviour (through the number of births, age at marriage, etc.).<sup>7</sup> He also studied fiscal sources, such as the *Contribution mobilière* of 1791, and notarial sources (marriage contracts, inventories after death) to understand the social distinctions and organisation of the city through the occupations and financial worth of its

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<sup>1</sup> Among others: GODART, *L'Ouvrier en soie*, and Lesley MILLER, "Designers in the Lyon Silk Industry: 1712-1787" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Brighton Polytechnic, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> Françoise BAYARD, "Les Bonvisi, marchands banquiers à Lyon, 1575-1629", *Annales : Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1971): 1234-1269; Serge CHASSAGNE, "La Banque à Lyon au XVIIIe siècle", in *Lyon au XVIIIe. Un siècle surprenant !*, ed. Maria-Anne PRIVAT-SAVIGNY (Paris: Somogy, 2012), 186-191.

<sup>3</sup> Albert LADRET, *Le Grand Siècle de la franc-maçonnerie lyonnaise au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Dervy-Livres, 1976 ; Louis DAVID, *1700-2000 : l'Académie des Sciences, Belles-Lettres et Arts de Lyon : trois siècles d'histoire lyonnaise*. Lyon: Editions lyonnaises d'art et d'histoire, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Marius AUDIN, *Histoire du grand Hôtel-Dieu de Lyon, des origines à l'année 1900*. Lyon: M. Audin, 1924.

<sup>5</sup> Françoise BAYARD, *Vivre à Lyon sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Perrin, 1997), Kindle e-book, digital republication FeniXX, November 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Maurice Garden approached all these issues with a sample of the population selected from each classes in order to have a wide spectrum of social groups. Maurice GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1975).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-83.

inhabitants. As a method, he used samples of people, occupations or events such as marriages selected from the sources mentioned above, across specific periods of time, in order to illustrate and understand the various features of Lyonnais society throughout the eighteenth century, with the objective of bringing out general patterns.<sup>8</sup> Following his lead, Françoise Bayard focused on a broader quantitative and qualitative study of Ancien-Régime Lyon (mainly from the 16th to the 18th centuries), using public archives, such as judicial and police records to investigate the population's behaviour.<sup>9</sup> She also used documents related to family life, such as wills, parish registers or notarial acts to understand the daily life as well as the major stages of a Lyonnais' life.

Both historians divided the population into different occupational categories. Garden divided Lyonnais society according to the occupations of its inhabitants, ranking them by taking into account professional, financial and social characteristics. Unskilled labourers (casual labourers and servants), female occupations (such as seamstresses or laundrywomen) and skilled workers (the most numerous being silk weavers) were at the bottom of this social hierarchy. Above them, with a better fortune, were the artisans and merchants who had to undergo training and belonged to a guild (bakers, butchers) and businessmen (*négociants*), then the liberal professions (artists, teachers, lawyers or doctors), and the bourgeois to whom were linked ecclesiastical positions. Some artisans, such as cobblers, proved to be as poor as labourers, but the majority of businessmen were wealthier.<sup>10</sup> Then focusing more on the silk industry, his study demonstrates that most of the men who became silk merchant manufacturers were sons of merchants and bourgeois, often members of families linked to the silk industry. They were generally following their father's path, sometimes working on the loom from childhood. With a professional environment linked or not to the silk market, they therefore entered the guild with the aim of becoming merchants themselves.<sup>11</sup> A minority of merchant manufacturers were sons of artisans, who rose socially and professionally within the guild's hierarchy. Intending to clarify and synthesize Garden's analysis, Françoise Bayard divided the Lyonnais occupations in three sectors. The first one being the primary sector of agriculture, the second being all forms of craftsman, generally attached to a guild, including the building trades, the food occupations,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 127-157.

<sup>9</sup> BAYARD, *Vivre à Lyon sous l'Ancien Régime*, Chapter 2 – “Vivre dans une ville”; Chapter 3 - “Vivre dans une grande ville”; Chapter 5 - “Vivre dans une ville sous tension”.

<sup>10</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 129-135.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 218-219.

the clothing and the luxury goods industries. The third sector is that of commerce and banking.<sup>12</sup> Such simplification, however, does not measure completely the nuances of Lyonnais society, and it is difficult to position individuals such as *bourgeois* in such a scheme. Bayard also estimated that the length and fees of apprenticeship allowed the entrance to the guild only to a particular profile of apprentices: sons of masters or of their friends, from a similar social background. Such conditions assured them access to the title of master.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the general situation revealed by both researchers was that the social background of a merchant manufacturer corresponded to one of three patterns: mostly, it was a similar professional and social environment to that of close relatives who were already merchant manufacturers, the son often taking on the business of his father; secondly, the social environment was the same, but the sector changed; thirdly and less commonly, the social and professional background was entirely different, merchant manufacturers being, for instance, the sons of labourers or artisans.<sup>14</sup> Family background was a determining factor in a man's career and had a strong impact on its evolution, and suggests that the suppliers to the Crown were likely to come from a familial environment that somehow influenced the development of their career.

The position of these men and their families may now be evaluated using similar sources, as they did not necessarily feature in the large samples of data collated by Garden: the record of their baptisms in parish registers, their apprenticeship and marriage contracts, where the occupation of the parents and close relatives are sometimes available, and also insights into their financial worth, as dowries for marriages were constituted by the families of the spouses. All sources do not survive consistently, so what is available for each man is not necessarily the same. The indications of the father's occupation or social status are sometimes elusive: the label of *bourgeois*, for example, is vague as it comprises many different social conditions and does not indicate professional activities.<sup>15</sup> The term of *négociant* is also problematic as it indicates a business-related profession, but does not give any precision on the branch of commerce concerned. Apprenticeship contracts give useful information but are only representative of a small number of merchants, as none will survive for the sons of master who could enter the guild without training at a certain age. The inventories after death of some family members are valuable sources as they list the estates owned by the deceased, as well as all other possessions

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<sup>12</sup> BAYARD, *Vivre à Lyon sous l'Ancien régime*, Chapter 3 – “Vivre dans une grande ville”, Part 1: “Fonctions urbaines”.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 5 – “Vivre dans une ville sous tension”, Part 3: “L'exclusion et le mépris”.

<sup>14</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 253.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

and their monetary value. This source, however, is variable in the information it contains, only evidence of one moment in the life of a man, and moreover was not legally required for everyone, tending to be the result of a contested inheritance or a death intestate.<sup>16</sup>

The majority of the sample grew up in a trade-related family; few came from a family of different social standing or occupational environment. A first division can be made between the merchants who originated in the city of Lyon, and those who came from outside Lyon, either from the provinces which allowed entrance to the guild, or from other provinces (*table 3*). Indeed, guild regulations permitted entry only to men from particular provinces surrounding the city. Secondly, the men born in Lyon may be categorised according to the professional environment: by parental occupations directly linked to the silk industry, but also by those from other trades, while others were not part of any business-related activities. Six categories of parental occupations emerged from this sample (*table 4*).

**Table 3. Geographical Background<sup>17</sup>**

	Number of merchants/designers
Originated from Lyon	16
Originated from the permitted provinces	3
Originated from outside the permitted provinces	1
Unknown	3
Total	23

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<sup>16</sup> Inventories after death have been used by several scholars, such as Garden. He mentioned their utility as taking stock of merchandises of some merchants, although he also stressed they are not perfectly representative of a fortune, some elements being, voluntarily or not, omitted. (GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 155-156). Moreover, as a document required only in specific cases and therefore made occasionally, it may be questioned if this source is actually representative of society.

<sup>17</sup> Data collected from the suppliers' apprenticeship contracts: ADR, Minutes et répertoires des notaires du Rhône, 3E 5159, Jean-Antoine Gros ; 3E 6446 A, Jean Charton; 3E 6446 B, Louis Reboul; 3E 6914 B, Joseph Gros; 3E 9596, Gilles Gaudin.

**Table 4. Familial occupations<sup>18</sup>**

Categories of familial occupation	Number of merchants/designers with parents concerned
Merchants manufacturers in silks ( <i>marchands fabricants</i> )	9
Businessmen (others than silk trade) ( <i>négociants</i> )	3
Artisans ( <i>maîtres artisans</i> )	2
Bourgeois	2
Liberal professions ( <i>professions libérales</i> )	1
Nobility ( <i>noblesse de robe</i> )	2
Unknown	4
Total	23

## II.1. Merchant Manufacturing Families

For the sample of suppliers to the Crown, the results are very close to Garden's observations on the socio-professional origin of merchants in general: from a sample of 500 marriage contracts between 1728 and 1788, he noted that 40% were sons of merchants of the same trade.<sup>19</sup> Among the men in question here, 39% were sons of merchant manufacturers of silks. Overall, the fathers of most of these men were already members of the *Grande Fabrique*; and not only were they master weavers, but also merchants. They were therefore following in their fathers' footsteps, becoming active in the manufacturing and selling of silks. These prominent families were often built on business partnerships between father and son, the latter joining the business created by his parent in order to take it over, but there were also partnerships between siblings.

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<sup>18</sup> Data were collected from the previous apprenticeship contracts and from various notarial acts and parish registers: ADR, 3 E Minutes et répertoires des notaires du Rhône; AML, GG Parish registers. See following footnotes for each references.

<sup>19</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 253.

Among the case study partnerships, it is therefore not surprising to see brothers following the same path and later joining in partnerships, just as the Crozat brothers did. Jean-Pierre Crozat, born on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1696, and Antoine Crozat, born on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1702,<sup>20</sup> were the sons of Simon Crozat, merchant manufacturer, and Jeanne Colombet. The Crozat brothers grew up among merchants. As sons of a merchant manufacturer, they were involved from childhood in the manufacturing and selling of silks. Members of a family of five children, they followed the same path as their father. The godparents of the Crozat children were all merchants, or wives or daughters of merchants. The importance of business in this family seemed also to extend to the national market with merchants in Paris working closely with the Crozats. Indeed, Antoine's godfather, Antoine Nicolas, was a merchant *bourgeois* of Paris, while his godmother, Marie Colombet, was the daughter of the late François Colombet, merchant.<sup>21</sup> Jean-Pierre, similarly, had as godfather Jean-Pierre Nicolas, merchant *bourgeois* of Paris (probably from the same family as Antoine Nicolas), and as godmother Françoise Barbier, widow of François Lombes, merchant. However, the family relatives did not only come from the business sphere: the proxy for Jean-Pierre Nicolas at the baptism of Jean-Pierre Crozat, was Gérard Constant, vicar of Saint-Michel and a doctor at the Sorbonne (*docteur de Sorbonne*). This suggests that the Crozat family was not only moving in business circles, but was also connected to the capital's lettered and erudite circles.

Like the Crozat, Joseph and Emmanuel Barnier became masters then merchant manufacturers before going into partnership. Joseph, born on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1723, and Philippe Emmanuel, born in 1730, were the sons of Philippe Emmanuel Barnier and Françoise Fevre. Their father was a successful merchant manufacturer and designer, partner in Monlong et Barnier frères, a partnership that was among those who wove the ciselé velvet that the Consulat promoted between 1728 and 1731 in order to encourage the Lyonnais to compete with the famous Genoa velvets (*velours de Gênes*). He was also probably one of the manufacturers who supplied the royal order of 1730 (**fig. 58**).<sup>22</sup> The Barnier family was closely related to the Monlong family, one of the dynasties that produced three generations of merchant manufacturers who remained significant members of the city's institutional hierarchy. Professional links were first made by their father who was in partnership with the designer Jean Monlong from 1715 up to the late 1720s, they evolved into personal relationships as the latter married Gabrielle Barnier, sister of

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<sup>20</sup> AML, Saint-Nizier, 1GG050, 05/06/1696; 1GG056, 12/11/1702, Baptêmes.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 1GG056, 12/11/1702, Baptême.

<sup>22</sup> MILLER, *Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century French Silk Designers*, 28-29.

Philippe Emmanuel Barnier father in 1709, thus becoming the future Joseph and Philippe Emmanuel's uncle by marriage.<sup>23</sup>

The Crozat and Barnier brothers were therefore among the aspirant merchants who conformed to the general tendency of following their fathers into business, remaining in the exact same social and professional environment. Their family background already attached them to a strong tradition of commerce in the city's silk industry. This environment dedicated to the silk trade was with no doubt helpful for the career of a man, starting with the privileges offered to sons of masters, making the access to the guild easier. In addition, bonds of kinship reinforced their commercial environment, through the judicious selection of godparents and marriages. All merchant manufacturers did not, however, grow up in a silk trade-related family.

## II.2. Sons of Craftsmen and Merchants

Among the men who grew up in an environment that was not related to silk manufacturing and commerce, a differentiation can be made between two types: first, the sons of merchants or artisans with a different specialism in business, and secondly those who were not involved in any business. Following the sample of 500 marriage contracts of merchants from all sectors analysed by Garden, 14.3% were sons of businessmen, yet active in a different sector. It is however not always possible to determine the sphere of activity of these men simply designated as *marchands* with no other indications. Nonetheless, analysis of the men in the present sample reveals exactly the same pattern: 13% of the merchant manufacturers were sons of tradesmen of other types of commodities. The proportion of sons of craftsmen also concurs, at 8%.<sup>24</sup>

According to Garden's categorization, Jean-Antoine Gros, who grew up in a family of craftsmen, was among the few merchants who came from an entirely different environment, both professionally and socially.<sup>25</sup> Born on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1737, he was the son of Jean Pierre Grosjean, a master cobbler, and Marie Antoinette Chollet, the youngest and only boy of the couple's eight children.<sup>26</sup> The cobblers were amongst the poorest of the artisans: based on the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 28 and 325-327.

<sup>24</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 253.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>26</sup> AML, Saint-Irénée, 1GG225, 28/05/1737, Baptême.

*Capitation* of 1788, cobblers paid an average tax rating of 3 *livres* 4 *sols*, against the average of 12 *livres* in the city (but that was still about 50% more than what silk weavers (*ouvriers en soie*) paid). Garden also showed, based on the *contribution mobilière* of 1791, that cobblers paid an average rent of 30 *livres*, while in contrast businessmen and bourgeois paid 340 and 365 *livres* respectively.<sup>27</sup> However, the Gros family seems to also have had relatives who were in business in Lyon: two of the godfathers of Jean-Antoine's sisters, Antoine Boudard and Mathieu Trouillet, were merchants. Jean-Antoine's godfather, Antoine Boudard, was also a *bourgeois*, while his godmother, Jeanne Arbout, was a merchant. But more importantly, they were also related to the silk trade: one of his other sister's godmother, Marie-Antoinette Danton, was the wife of Jean-Claude Danton, merchant manufacturer of silks. Their social circle also broadened into the liberal professions, another sister's godmother being Marie Delord, wife of Merle, a master surgeon. Nevertheless, they were mainly related to the poorer trades, such as men who hired out horses (*loueurs de chevaux*) or transported goods (*convoyeurs*).

Pierre Audras is a distinctive example of a merchant born into a family background that evolved only with time towards the silk trade. Born on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1722, he was the son of André Audras, merchant on the river Saône (*marchand sur la riviere de Saone*, or *voiturier*), then merchant master dyer (from 1728), and Françoise Genet.<sup>28</sup> At the marriage of his parents on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1714, several other merchants on the river were amongst the witnesses, such as the bride's father Germain Genet or his kinsman Jean Audras, but also artisans of other professions, such as Louis Illeugnier, master cobbler.<sup>29</sup> The family was therefore part of the artisanal class. An evolution is however noticeable in André Audras' professional situation. He is first recorded as a *voiturier*, and thus belonged to the city's casual labourers. He then entered a guild and became merchant master dyer, thus aspiring to a better standard of living because of a skilled profession. Both merchant and artisan, a merchant dyer was likely to have an income closer to that of a skilled rather than the unskilled workers who were dependant on them.<sup>30</sup> The improvement in his situation was then evident by the birth of Pierre, whose godparents were Pierre Marc, merchant draper (*marchand drapier*), and Jacqueline Bouteille, wife of Jean Jomard, merchant master dyer on silk (*marchand et maître teinturier en soie*). It indicates that his parents were becoming more closely involved in the textile industry, through the dyeing of

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<sup>27</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 131 and 142.

<sup>28</sup> AML, Saint-Nizier, 1GG071, 14/10/1722, Baptême.

<sup>29</sup> AML, Saint-Georges, 1GG546, 29/09/1714, Mariage Audras/Genet.

<sup>30</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 91 and 141.

silks in particular: this could have been a factor that pushed Pierre towards silk manufacturing. André Audras's other sons also followed a career in the silk industry. Louis became silk throwster (*moulinier de soie*), Jean-Baptiste businessman and King's councillor (*conseiller du roi*), and André Antoine became, like Pierre, a merchant manufacturer while Germain became a cleric (*révérend*).<sup>31</sup>

However, Garden's proportion of men coming from a non-business-related environment does not entirely accord with the investigation conducted here. He noted that more than 24% of the merchants were sons of bourgeois, 10.6% came from liberal professions and only 0.2% were sons of nobles. As Garden stressed, although the title of *bourgeois* was vague, it mainly designated an elderly man, retired from its profession.<sup>32</sup> *Bourgeois* was a title that could be applied for and granted after ten years of residency in Lyon and the completion of certain civic duties.<sup>33</sup> It was therefore suggestive of a certain social status and income. This title, however, is not precise enough to determine the fortune of a person. Called the noblesse de robe, the title of noble could be gained in two different ways: through merit, through the purchase of offices or through municipal positions such as that of magistrate (*échevin*), or through heredity if the father was already a noble. In any case, a substantial fortune was necessary to obtain nobility.<sup>34</sup>

Despite a small amount of available information on the sample which limits its analysis, it has been noticed that the merchant manufacturers supplying the Crown have quite a different profile from the picture drawn by Garden. Only 8.6% of them have a father designated as bourgeois, and 4%, that is only one, have a father active in a liberal profession, while 8.6% were sons of a noble family.<sup>35</sup> Gilles Gaudin, born on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1726, for example, was the son of noble Jacques Gaudin, *bourgeois de Lyon*, and Catherine Ganey. The term *noble* already supports further the hypothesis of a well-to-do situation. Gilles' godfather, Gilles Gaudin, also used the title of *bourgeois* of Lyon. However, it does not give indications on the profession of these men. It is unclear whether his family was connected to the merchant population of the city: only his godmother, Suzanne Boucharlat was known to do so, being the wife of Jean Villette, a merchant goldsmith (*marchand orfèvre*).<sup>36</sup> It is therefore not possible to state if his father, and other

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<sup>31</sup> AML, Saint Pierre Saint Saturnin, 1GG617, 06/09/1740, Baptême.

<sup>32</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 154.

<sup>33</sup> MILLER, "Mysterious Manufacturers", 128.

<sup>34</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 261 and 285.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>36</sup> AML, Sainte-Croix, 1GG416, 24/04/1726, Baptême.

members of his family, were merchants or tradesmen. Nonetheless, the social and professional background of these men, sons of bourgeois, nobles or lawyers disconnected from the trade sphere, differs from the pattern drawn by Garden. Such difference, however, finds its explanation in the geographical background of this last category.

### II.3. Immigration and Integration: Outsiders in Lyon

Lyonnais attitudes to men born outside the city (*forains*), was ambivalent: Lyonnais were suspicious of them, and implemented regulations regarding their access to apprenticeship, limiting, and sometimes barring, their entry to the *Grande Fabrique*. The guild, however, needed immigration to renew its workforce, the birth rate in the city decreasing over this period: more than half of the apprentices came from the provinces, mostly from the Lyonnais, the Dauphiné and the Bugey, situated around Lyon.<sup>37</sup> The guild regulations of 1737 forbade access to the guild and apprenticeship to men born outside the Lyonnais, which encompassed the Forez and the Beaujolais. Later in 1744, a new regulation broadened the authorised provinces to the Auvergne, Bourbonnais, Bresse, Bugey, Dauphiné and Vivarais.<sup>38</sup>

From both Garden's and Bayard's observations, the search for a better life in the city by young people from poor rural background is what stands out the most. Theirs was not, however, the only profile for immigrants. Garden noted that bourgeois from towns in nearby regions sometimes sent their children to Lyon in order for them to learn their trade.<sup>39</sup> Immigrant apprentices could therefore come from wealthy families, in particular because sending a child to Lyon required substantial financial outlay.<sup>40</sup> This pattern, different from the usual scheme of poor country dwellers coming to the city to find a better situation, is embodied in several men in this study. Four out of 23 were not born in Lyon and came only later to the city, most probably at the beginning of their apprenticeship (table 1). Their background corresponds to the specific pattern drawn by Garden.

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<sup>37</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 90-91 and 98.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

Joseph Picard was born outside of the city, in Louhans, baptised on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1750. Son of Claude Antoine Picard, land intendant and magistrate (*commissaire à terrier* and *échevin*), and Françoise Beaume, he came from the lower provincial nobility.<sup>41</sup> He arrived in Lyon in 1766 when he was 16 years old.<sup>42</sup> He was thus one of the 1.58% young boys coming from Franche-Comté to become an apprentice in silk weaving, according to Garden's calculation for the period 1740 to 1769.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Nicolas Jean-Louis Goussard Defontebrune was an exception in terms of geographic background: he was born on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1735 in the Dauphiné, a region in the vicinity of Lyon from where 20.50% of the apprentices came on the same period.<sup>44</sup> He was the son of Jacques Goussard de Fontebrune, *écuyer*, and Marie Ferdinande Elisabeth Joseph Deraner de Chavanne.<sup>45</sup> His name, with the aristocratic particle 'de', and his father's office of equerry indicate that he was also part of the provincial nobility, the *noblesse de robe*. It is however difficult to determine how wealthy these families were, and a specific investigation of their financial worth is now needed in order to understand what were the standards of living of these merchant manufacturers during their youth.

#### II.4. Standard of Living: the Early Years

The socio-professional background and its impact on the career of a man is crucial, and it must be remembered that men who were not sons of masters had to go through apprenticeship as well as pay full fees in order to enter the Lyonnais guild of silk weaving.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, to become an apprentice required financial outlay, since the apprentice had to live five years without any salary. His parents' contract with the master usually stipulated that the latter would provide food and lodgings in his family home.<sup>47</sup> The apprentice's family had also sometimes to take care of extra-costs, such as the laundering, during the son's training. Such costs were not within the means of poorer families, who could only live from day to day and had no possibility of saving towards an apprenticeship for their children.<sup>48</sup> These mandatory requirements were

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<sup>41</sup> As Garden explains, immigrants coming from the provinces to the city to begin their apprenticeship were not all sons of farmers, but could also be part of the bourgeoisie or trade professions. *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>42</sup> MILLER, *Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century French Silk Designers*, 369.

<sup>43</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 98.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>45</sup> AML, Registre de la Communauté, HH601.

<sup>46</sup> GODART, *L'Ouvrier en soie*, 146.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

real obstacles for many aspirant masters. However, the integration of some of them was probably easier due to their family environment. Garden demonstrated that sons of merchants and bourgeois generally entered the guild in order to become merchant manufacturers themselves, and not surprisingly, this tendency is evident among the men in this case study: the majority were either sons of merchant manufacturers in silk, or of tradesmen in other sectors.<sup>49</sup> This domestic situation, without doubt, was beneficial when it came to the payment of fees. The wealth of the parents was therefore very significant.

The financial worth of a family can be determined through three types of sources: inventories after death, unfortunately too rare to be used as the main and only source; apprenticeship contracts which sometimes contain financial arrangements between the master and the apprentice's family, though not systematically; and the contributions at marriage, such as dowries which were mainly constituted by the parents and family-in-law. These sources can give some indications on the standard of living of these merchants' early years when they were still the responsibility of their parents.

Jean-Baptiste Gaudin de Surjon was born into a family that seems to be a branch of the Gaudin family and that gained letters of nobility, which were then inherited by their children. Born on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1744, Jean-Baptiste was the son of Hugues Augustin Gaudin de Surgeon, lawyer at the Parliament and judge of the Jurisdiction of Lyon (*avocat en parlement et juge en l'élection de Lyon*), and Jeanne Marie Louise Sorat. Hugues Augustin was Gilles Gaudin's brother. At the time of his death, Hugues Augustin seems to have been a wealthy man. His inventory after death indicates that he was living in *place de Noëllard maison du Sr de Berin* in eight rooms distributed across two floors. He also possessed a large house in the country, in Taluyers, about 20 km to the south-west of Lyon: it had eighteen rooms, an adjoining chapel, and stables. There were other smaller buildings on the estate, one of which had a flat that was rented out. To own an estate in the country, of this size, signified a certain material comfort. Moreover, Hugues Augustin owned a great number of paintings, mostly portraits but also of historic or religious themes. In his closet (*cabinet*) in his house in Lyon he had 320 books about religion, history and law. It therefore seems that this family possessed enough money to be used for goods of high cultural value.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 219.

<sup>50</sup> ADR, BP 2273, 25/04/1780, Inventaire après décès de Surjon.

Louis Reboul, born on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1727, was the son of a *bourgeois*, Bazile Joseph Reboul, and Louise Thérèse Debert. Louis Reboul's family belonged, without doubt, to the bourgeoisie,<sup>51</sup> and most likely the business bourgeoisie. His grandfather, Bazile Reboul, was a merchant. His grandfather's inventory after death indicates that he owned a vineyard in La Piementé, to the north-west of Lyon, and a shop in the city, at the 16 rue de l'Enfant qui pisse, near the flourishing commercial centre of place des Terreaux.<sup>52</sup> Like the Gaudin de Surjon family, he was in possession of a secondary residence in the country and so of a certain social and financial status. According to Françoise Bayard, however, owning lands used for vine growing was even more suggestive of important financial worth.

As Lesley Miller expressed in her work on the Lyonnais designers, parents could contribute to the apprenticeship costs, in proportion to their financial means. Moreover, free time needed to learn additional skills, such as design or the art of commerce, required financial support mainly provided by parents.<sup>53</sup> This support can be found in some apprenticeship contracts (*table 5*). Of the five known apprenticeship contracts for this study, only two have a financial arrangement, one of 150 *livres* and the other of 200 *livres*. They are therefore not considerable, and do not presume great additions to the usual apprenticeship terms. However, due to the lack of apprenticeship contracts, mainly because most of these merchant manufacturers were sons of masters of the guild and did not have to do such training, no conclusions can be drawn about this group of men and the financial terms of their training.

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<sup>51</sup> His godfather, his uncle Louis Debert, was also *bourgeois*, and his godmother, Louise Charvet, was the widow of Ignace Galli, *bourgeois* as well. AML, Saint-Paul, 1GG467, 29/07/1727, Baptême.

<sup>52</sup> ADR, BP 2077, 27/09/1714, Inventaire après décès Reboul.

<sup>53</sup> MILLER, "Designers in the Lyon Silk Industry", 138-139.

**Table 5. Financial arrangements in apprenticeship contracts<sup>54</sup>**

Contracts and sum paid	Proportion of apprenticeships
Contracts between 150 and 200 <i>livres</i>	2
Contracts with no financial arrangements	3
Unknown	5
No apprenticeship contracts because sons of masters	9
Total	23

Finally, marriage settlements are a useful way of evaluating a family's financial worth. As seen previously, merchant manufacturers generally came from bourgeois circles, belonging to the rich and ruling classes of the city. However, according to Maurice Garden, merchants present a particular pattern when their marriage settlements are considered: their fortune was average, 25% of them making a settlement below 2,000 *livres*, 45% between 20,000 and 50,000 *livres* and about 23% between 50,000 to 100,000 *livres*. Only 10% had dowries between 100,000 and 200,000 *livres*, about 2% between 200,000 and 500,000 *livres*.<sup>55</sup> Owners of offices or members of the nobility were above them, with settlements equal or above 100,000 *livres*.<sup>56</sup> However, the merchant manufacturers in this study do not correspond exactly to this overarching pattern. Out of the 23 men of this case study, only eight marriage contracts have been found, and they therefore cannot be representative of a specific pattern for all the merchants in question here. Among these marriages, only one is above 20,000 *livres* (table 6). Most of them are under 10,000 *livres*, three being under 4,000 *livres*.

Two men represent the top and the bottom of the spectrum: Charles-Claude Briasson and Ennemond René Michalet. At the top was Charles-Claude Briasson, who married Catherine Geneston, daughter of Gaspard Geneston, merchant manufacturer, and Marguerite Seguin on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1729. He brought to the union 9,000 *livres*, while she brought a dowry of 11,000

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<sup>54</sup> Data collected from the suppliers' apprenticeship contracts. See footnote 17.

<sup>55</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 251 and 367.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

*livres*.<sup>57</sup> They therefore entered married life with 20,000 *livres*, a sum that exceeded what most of Garden's sample received. More typical of this case study's sample was the designer and merchant manufacturer Ennemond René Michalet. He married twice, and the contracts of both unions are known. He married first in 1748 with Marie Pollidor, daughter of Charles Pollidor, *bourgeois* in the parish of Digneville in Normandie, and Marguerite Lebrix.<sup>58</sup> The bride brought a dowry of 3,000 *livres*, while he declared 495 *livres*.<sup>59</sup> A year later, he married Elie Chady, daughter of Jean Antoine Chady, merchant, and Magdaleine Nalet: he now declared 1,000 *livres* and the bride brought a dowry of 1,800 *livres*.<sup>60</sup> His contribution to his second marriage was therefore higher, which may result from money he could have saved. These two sums however remain well below the numbers given by Garden. His family's fortune, as well as his own, may therefore have been lower than the average businessmen's worth.

As Garden has revealed, the financial contribution to the marriage from the groom was not declared in the contract, or at least not entirely, as his assets were often tied to a business and thus not directly available.<sup>61</sup> It is therefore not surprising that out of the eight marriages, only the three above had the groom contributing to the dowry. For all the others, it was constituted by the family of his future wife, and the groom did not declare any income. The marriage contract of Pierre César Sonnerat with Claudine Jeanne Marie Claire Villion, for instance, was the highest settlement of all, amounting to 81,113 *livres* and 4 *sols*;<sup>62</sup> however, the bride's dowry coming from her family was the only declaration, there being no mention of a contribution from the Sonnerat family. Their willingness to provide this sum of money suggests that the groom and his family had comparable assets, though they are not itemised. In brief, this very small sample of marriages does not conform entirely to the value of those of the majority of the city's merchants, and is surprisingly situated lower in terms of financial contribution from the parents, although it is typical of the dowry system whose declared contribution was mostly from the family of the bride.

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<sup>57</sup> ADR, 3E 6153, notaire Levet, 19/11/1729, Mariage Briasson/Geneston.

<sup>58</sup> MILLER, *Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century French Silk Designers*, 315.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 315-316.

<sup>61</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 249.

<sup>62</sup> ADR, 3E 7647, notaire Roche, 28/01/1761, Mariage Sonnerat/Villion.

**Table 6. Marriage contracts<sup>63</sup>**

Contribution to marriage	Proportion of marriages
Between 1 000 and 10 000 livres	4
Between 10 000 and 20 000 livres	3
Over 20 000 livres	1
Unknown	16
Total	24

## Conclusion

This brief overview of the social and financial status of the 23 partners involved in supplying the Crown with silks reveals that, overall, a majority came from wealthy families, part of the bourgeoisie or the nobility, most were already connected to the commercial sphere in the city. It was characteristic of Lyonnais society, where business circles and merchant families prevailed over a population of workers. An improvement in social and occupational category was rare,<sup>64</sup> although four of the merchants in this study rose considerably in the social order and the hierarchy of the *Grande Fabrique*.

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<sup>63</sup> Data collected from marriage contracts of the notarial acts: ADR, 3E 6583, Michalet/Pollidor, 1748; 3E 9602, Defontebrune/Gaulne, 1760; 3E 6818, Audras/Perrin, 1765; 3E 7392, Barnier/Charmi, 1777; 3E9554, Barnier/Rival, 1756; 3E 6153, Briasson/Geneston, 1729; 3E 7647, Sonnerat/Villion, 1761; and from MILLER, *Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century French Silk Designers*, 315-319.

<sup>64</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 255.

## CHAPTER III

### Apprentices to suppliers of the Crown: the professional path of merchant manufacturers

#### Introduction

To understand the work and career of merchant manufacturers, their journey into the *Grande Fabrique* and the silk trade must be investigated. Justin Godart's work of 1899 is the basis for all subsequent historical studies, and still valid for its systematic account of how the silk-weaving guild was organised. Using the guild's archives and regulations as well as judicial records, he broke down the organisation of the guild, layer by layer, revealing its history, actors and system of production. He did not, however, follow the career paths of any individuals through the guild, nor carry out quantitative research to establish the extent to which the rules were observed, nor consider the commercial aspects of production. This last economic aspect of the silk industry and its trade was however subsequently researched by Jean Peyrot and Carlo Poni in the 1970s and 1980s, when they investigated the commercial behaviour and techniques of the silk merchants. Lesley Miller also evaluated the place of samples in marketing strategies, analysing the advantages and disadvantages of such practices, supporting her work with both archival and material evidence. She also investigated the commercial relationship of Lyon and Paris, in particular the exchanges between the Lyonnais merchant manufacturers and the Parisian mercers and businessmen (*négociants*).<sup>1</sup>

Using these existing frameworks, this chapter will trace the career and professional evolution of the 23 partners identified for this study, from the early years of their training to their activity as merchant manufacturers. An examination of the partnerships, of their formation and their practices, will also be conducted. Finally, their commercial activities will be analysed, taking into consideration their business networks (**fig. 59**).

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<sup>1</sup> PEYROT, "Les techniques du commerce de soies au XVIIIe siècle"; PONI, "Mode et innovation"; MILLER, "Innovation and Industrial Espionage in Eighteenth-Century France"; MILLER and SARGENTSON, "Paris-Lyon: Modes de distribution des étoffes d'or, d'argent et de soie".

Several sources make it possible to trace the professional path of Lyonnais merchant manufacturers. First, the archives of the *Grande Fabrique*, comprising the guild's registers of apprenticeships and the corresponding contracts in notarial archives, provide dates, situating chronologically the career stages of these men. Partnership agreements indicate how businesses were constituted and under which terms, while bankruptcy papers often contain inventories of shops and stock, as well as lists of tradesmen and clients with whom the business was working. However, such sources are rare as they were the result of bankruptcies that reached the courts. Some of the guild's registers as well as contracts disappeared, leaving gaps that cannot be filled. And, detailed and precious as the partnership agreements can be, the poor state of preservation of the registers often makes them impossible to read, providing only incomplete information.

### III.1. The *Grande Fabrique* and its Aspiring Masters

To become merchant manufacturers, the men of this study had first to undergo training in order to obtain the title of master and to enter the guild (**fig. 60**). This section will analyse the time that their training took and their route to the status of master. The path to become master, then merchant manufacturer, was long and difficult. For many men, ten years of apprenticeship were mandatory, and substantial fees had to be paid. First, five years of apprenticeship, under the supervision of a master weaver, had to be completed. An examination consisting in the weaving of a sample of silk had to be successfully passed for the completion of the apprenticeship to be recognised. The apprentice then became journeyman, and had to work for a master to complete his training for five more years. A last examination, if successful, finally gave him the title of master. He could also, if he had the funds available to pay the fees, register as merchant afterwards. The time taken in training, however, differed from one person to another. Being son of a master weaver of the silk guild helped entrance into the community. First, apprenticeship was avoided, and masters' sons could become directly journeymen. They usually learned weaving in their family business or home, assisting their father at a young age. But if the father could not afford to keep his children with him, they were put into another master's workshop before becoming journeymen. Sons of masters could access the title of master at a younger age: the minimum age to become apprentice was established at 13 years old in 1678, and 14 years after the regulation of 1737. At the end of a successful ten-year apprenticeship, apprentices who were not the sons of masters would therefore register at the age of 23 then 24 years old. Sons

of masters, however, could register at 15 from 1667, 19 after the consular order of 1737, and 21 after 1744. A further incentive to masters' sons was the fact that the fees paid to enter the guild were lower than for other apprentices and journeymen.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, despite the assumption that he had from his childhood learned from his father, it is difficult to determine exactly when a son of master began his training, and how much time was needed to perfect his skills.

Of the twenty-three future suppliers to the Crown, in the period 1725 to 1760 in which they obtained the title of master, not many sons of guild masters took advantage of the early age for registration: the majority of them became masters several years after the minimum age (*table 7*). Only two of them became masters at 19 years old, while all the others were between 22 and 25 years old. This could be explained by further education or training they could have undertaken beforehand, in particular commercial skills as their intention was usually to enter the guild in order to become merchants.

**Table 7. Sons of master - Age when obtaining the status of master<sup>3</sup>**

	1725-1737	1737-1744	1744-1760
19 years old	1	1	
20-21 years old			
22-23 years old	1		1
24-25 years old			3
Unknown	2		
Total	9		

The fourteen merchant manufacturers of this study who were not sons of a master and therefore had to become apprentices had various lengths of training (*table 8*). Some of them, although a minority, had a training that lasted less than the mandatory ten years, while the majority of them took more than ten years to become master weavers. On the whole, only one seems to have

<sup>2</sup> GODART, *L'Ouvrier en soie*, 102 and 165-168.

<sup>3</sup> Data collected from the merchants' apprenticeship contracts (see footnote 17 of Chapter II), apprenticeship certificates and registrations as masters in the guild's registers, and baptism records: ADR, 3 E Minutes et répertoires des notaires du Rhône; AML, HH 500-624 Registres de la Corporation; AML, GG Parish registers.

followed the usual path and been through the expected ten years of apprenticeship. The training of the merchant manufacturer and designer Jean Charton is among the longest: eighteen years in total. He first became apprentice on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1715. He then moved on (*remis*) the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1717, which means that he left the service of one master and moved on to another, and was registered again on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1718. He then became journeyman on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1720, and master weaver on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1733, before being registered merchant on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1745.<sup>4</sup> He had to pay 76 *livres* in order to become a master, and 300 *livres* to obtain the title of merchant. If it took him the usual five years to become a journeyman, he became master weaver only thirteen years later. Active as a designer from at least 1741, the length of his trajectory can also be explained by further training he may have undertaken to master the art of drawing as well as to gain business skills. Indeed, not being born into a family related to the silk industry, he did not grow up in an environment that prepared him from his childhood for this profession, and had to learn the techniques of both weaving and drawing. Financial difficulties could also be a reason of this late registration as a guild master, although there are no evidences to support this hypothesis.

The case of Charles-Claude Briasson is different as his length of training, in contrast to that of his counterpart, was much shorter: only eight years. He became an apprentice on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1721, and therefore had to pay the 16 *livres* 10 *sols* fees required to be registered. He was then *remis* on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1725, being put in the hands of a different master, and had to pay 5 *livres* 10 *sols*.<sup>5</sup> His marriage then allowed him to leave the usual route to the status of master, because on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1729 he married Catherine Geneton, the daughter of Gaspard Geneton, who was merchant manufacturer.<sup>6</sup> By marrying the daughter of a master, he essentially became the son of a master and was allowed to become master himself on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1729 before the end of his five-year period as journeyman, and to pay a reduced fee of 36 *livres* instead of 70 *livres*.<sup>7</sup> Although the fees were higher than the ones the sons of a master had to pay (15 *livres*), the advantages offered by the marriage with the daughter of a master were much sought after by journeymen.<sup>8</sup> Briasson became master weaver at 22 years old instead of 24. But equally

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<sup>4</sup> On the whole, it was therefore thirty years that separated his entrance into the guild as apprentice from its registration as merchant manufacturer. AML, Registres de la Communauté, HH577 and HH621.

<sup>5</sup> AML, Registre de la Communauté, HH598.

<sup>6</sup> AML, Notre-Dame-de-la-Platière, 1GG325, 22/11/1729, Mariage Briasson/Geneston.

<sup>7</sup> AML, Registre de la Communauté, HH577.

<sup>8</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 217.

importantly, this marriage allowed him to enter the community of merchant manufacturers, not only through his training but also thanks to family connections.

**Table 8. Non-sons of master - Time of training within the Grande Fabrique<sup>9</sup>**

	Apprentice to Journeyman	Journeyman to Master weaver	Total duration of the training (Apprentice to Master weaver)
5 years	8	1	
Between 6 and 9 years		3	2
10 years			1
Between 11 and 14 years		1	3
Between 15 and 20 years		1	2
Unknown	6	8	6
Total	14	14	14

### III.2. Partnerships

Once registered, a merchant could begin to work for himself or go into partnership. Partnerships were created between different merchant manufacturers and designers, most partnerships having between two and four partners. Usually such businesses were established for several years, generally between three and ten.<sup>10</sup> Most of them, however, ended earlier than the expected duration. The reasons for those premature separations are unfortunately difficult to determine as they are not always stated. Partnership agreements were recorded in registers of the *Sénéchaussée* in the form of contracts stating the role of each partner and details of the firm: the capital invested, the management of the capital and of the shop. Alterations could be made within the life of the partnership, with another partner joining the existing partners, for instance. The name of the firm might change as a result.

<sup>9</sup> Data collected from the merchants' apprenticeship contracts (see footnote 17 of Chapter II), apprenticeship certificates and registrations as masters in the guild's registers: ADR, 3 E Minutes et répertoires des notaires du Rhône; AML, HH 500-624 Registres de la Corporation.

<sup>10</sup> MILLER, "Designers in the Lyon Silk Industry", 44-45.

To start a business, capital investment was needed. An initial investment was of about 10,000 *livres* per partner, and a business of medium proportions started its activities with about 50,000 *livres*. Each of the partners received each year a salary, ranging from 1,200 to 7,500 *livres*, as well as a share from the profits of the business.<sup>11</sup> The amount differed according to the capital investment, as well as to the work, talent and experience of each individual. But if the partners were on the same level, profits and risks were to be shared equally. These partnerships were called *sociétés générales*. If a partner contributed only to the firm in term of capital invested, but had no responsibilities in its operating, it was a joint-stock business (*société en commandite*).<sup>12</sup>

The partnerships in this study embrace these different characteristics. Jean Charton senior was involved in several different forms of partnership. His first business with Antoine and Jean-Pierre Crozat in 1741 was originally set up for six years, with an initial capital investment of 40,000 *livres* made only by the Crozat brothers, while Charton was to supply the designs. Profits were equally divided among the three partners, in addition to each receiving a yearly salary of 2,000 *livres*.<sup>13</sup> The partnership was then dissolved on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1743, the act ending the partnership in the registers indicating that the liquidation had to be taken care of by the Crozat brothers, and that “all the utensils and items of the shops” (*tous les ustanciles et ageancemens des magasins*) belonged to them.<sup>14</sup> Jean Charton then entered into partnership with Joseph and Emmanuel Barnier in 1754 under the name Barniers frères. It seems the two brothers were already working together in partnership. It was a *société en commandite*: Charton was the sleeping partner in this business. Although he was the one investing most capital, he was not benefiting most from the profits. He invested 20,000 *livres*, while the two brothers invested the same amount, but he received one fifth of the profits, the rest being equally divided between the brothers.<sup>15</sup> He was not, however, less experienced than them as he had been a master weaver for twenty-one years and merchant for nine years. As a designer, his activities were, however, probably more focused on the creation of designs than the trading aspect of the firm. Of the three partners, only one, Emmanuel Barnier, was not a designer but only a merchant manufacturer. The

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 43-44.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>13</sup> ADR, 8B138, 16/03/1742, Acte de société Charton et Crozat.

<sup>14</sup> “*tous les ustanciles et ageancemens des magasins*”. ADR, 8B138, 02/09/1743, Dissolution de société Charton et Crozat.

<sup>15</sup> ADR, 8B140, 24/01/1755, Acte de société Charton et Barnier.

business was then dissolved in 1756.<sup>16</sup> Afterwards, Jean Charton joined in partnership with André Vial and Jacques Bridant in 1758 for seven years under the name André Vial et compe. Once more, Jean Charton was the sleeping partner. He and André Vial invested 20,000 *livres* each, while Bridant invested his “talent”. Bridant was in charge of supplying the designs.<sup>17</sup> In 1759 Pierre Montessuy joined them and the business became Vial, Montessuy et compe then Vial et compe until it was dissolved in 1760.<sup>18</sup>

This short overview of Jean Charton’s path within these partnerships, although not necessarily the only ones he had, demonstrates the way a man might move from one partnership to another throughout his career: from a partner with no experience, who invested no money but only his designs skills, he became the sleeping partner bringing most of the capital invested, but less and less directly involved in the firm’s management.

The analysis of a single partnership agreement can give more details on the way the business was operating and therefore on the role of each partner. On 15<sup>th</sup> July 1756, Charles-Claude Briasson, Pierre Audras, Gilles Gaudin and René Michalet created a firm under the name Audras, Gaudin et Compe. The partnership agreement comprised twenty-seven articles, giving numerous details.<sup>19</sup> First, the initial capital investment of 40,000 *livres* was made by Briasson, while the others supplied their work. The silks that Briasson possessed in his storeroom (*magasin*) before this partnership began were valued, as that value constituted his investment fund account (*compte de fond*). The leftover was for his current account (*compte courant*). He had the possibility to do what he wanted with the silks already woven and with the designs that were not from Michalet. He could also have a free current account (*compte courant libre*) from which he would earn each year 7% of the firm’s profits. Each partner received a salary of 1,500 *livres* every year on their salary account (*compte de paye*), as well as 5% of the business’ benefits for their current account. The partnership also gave 50 *livres* each year to charity. The firm was located in Briasson’s shop. The rent of this shop and of a room on the fourth floor of the same house (which seems to be entirely owned by Briasson) was 1,000 *livres* per year.

The business manufactured silks brocaded in silk and gold. The manufacturing was managed by Audras and Gaudin, but always with the opinion of Briasson. Michalet was in charge of all

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<sup>16</sup> MILLER, *Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century French Silk Designers*, 30.

<sup>17</sup> ADR, 8B140, 04/02/1758, Acte de société Charton, Vial et Bridant.

<sup>18</sup> MILLER, *Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century French Silk Designers*, 71.

<sup>19</sup> ADR, 8B140, 15/07/1756, Acte de société Briasson, Audras, Gaudin et Michalet.

the designs, and when it was required to employ other designers he was in charge of them, the firm supplying the funds needed, on a budget of 450 *livres* per year. Gaudin was also in charge of the books: the account book (*grand livre de raison*), the book of transactions (*journal d'achat et de vente*), the cash book (*livre de caisse*) and the stock book (*livre de marchandises*). Audras was in charge of the main funds (*grande caisse*) while Gaudin was taking care of a smaller funds (*petite caisse*). The latter also made every year an inventory of the shop and of the debts of the business, as well as a general statement of the accounts (*état general*). Each year one of the partners went to Paris for thirty days, with a budget of 500 *livres*, and 4 *livres* per day if the stay exceeded the expected thirty days' duration. Briasson, however, was free to make this trip to Paris whenever he wished. The partnership was eventually dissolved in 1761,<sup>20</sup> Briasson withdrew from the firm, and a new business was settled between Gilles Gaudin, René Michalet and Jean-Baptiste Gaudin de Surjon, his nephew, on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1772. On 15<sup>th</sup> May 1772, Jean Charton junior joined the partnership.<sup>21</sup> This partnership thus seems to have been constituted mainly on Briasson's capital, the partner with the most resources, both financial and material (with his stockroom), at the creation of the firm. He therefore had the most influence in terms of decision-making power. The role of each partner was clearly laid out, and indicates the skills the merchant manufacturers possessed and used in their profession: Michalet, as a designer, was in charge of the designs and everything that revolved around it, while Gaudin and Audras put their managing and commercial skills at the service of the business.

### III.3. Commercial activities: between fortune and misfortune

To sell their products, Lyonnais merchant manufacturers used several commercial practices. Jean Peyrot divided them in two types: the selling by commission and direct selling with no intermediaries. For selling by commission, a commission agent, who was a businessman himself, was in charge of selling the production of the merchant manufacturers to the retailers in Paris or other cities. When the silks were sold to them, the names of the merchants were then registered as debtors of the business. Direct selling, with no intermediaries, was made through exchanges by letters and sending of samples: the merchant manufacturers sent samples to clients who could decide to order similar fabrics or modify them, particularly the colour.

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<sup>20</sup> ADR, 8B141, 28/07/1761, Acte de dissolution Gaudin, Audras, Michalet et Briasson.

<sup>21</sup> ARIZZOLI-CLEMENTEL, *Soieries de Lyon*, 61.

Samples were then sent back to the merchant manufacturers with instructions. Books of samples could also be carried by commission agents (**fig. 61**).<sup>22</sup> The selling by commission allowed the merchant to send at one time a great quantity of silks: 1,000 ells or more, while direct selling to the clients was generally between 100 and 300 ells. Payments were most often made in credit with bills of exchanges, while upfront payments were exceptional and generally for private individuals.<sup>23</sup> For firms of average size, sales could go up to 100,000 *livres* per year, and profits of the firm were between 10 and 15% of the turnover.<sup>24</sup>

Peyrot classified the clientele of Lyonnais merchant manufacturers in three geographic categories: Lyon, Paris, other French cities and other countries. Clients in Lyon were generally businessmen in the city, not members of the silk guild, who sold raw silk and bought woven fabrics.<sup>25</sup> But they were also in contact with businessmen from other cities. The most important niche of the market was the capital. Indeed, Bayard reckoned that Paris constituted 45% of the Lyonnais trade.<sup>26</sup> It was the largest city of the country, and was considered the centre of European fashion where the most eminent clientele gathered, including the nearby royal court. Connections with the Parisian market were a fundamental part of business strategies. Miller demonstrated that selling their production through different Parisian mercers was a way for Lyonnais merchants to spread business risk (in case of the bankruptcy of the retailer) but also a mean to reach as many customers as possible.<sup>27</sup> Lyonnais merchants also had commercial trade with other cities in France: Toulouse, Besançon, Clermont-Ferrand, Perpignan, Montpellier, Marseille and Grenoble were the main cities that had trade connections with Lyon.<sup>28</sup> Carlo Poni also noted that the most powerful Lyonnais merchants could own spinning mills in southern regions such as Languedoc.<sup>29</sup> Finally, business activities were also carried out with merchants from other countries. According to Bayard, more than half of the businessmen had foreign clients across Europe, in countries such as Germany, the Netherlands or Spain. The most powerful of these merchants were often in relation with merchants from Italy, particularly

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<sup>22</sup> MILLER, “Innovation and Industrial Espionage in Eighteenth-Century France”, 274-276; SARGENTSON, *Merchants and Luxury Markets*, 102.

<sup>23</sup> PEYROT, “Les Techniques du commerce des soies au XVIIIe siècle”, 39-43.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37.

<sup>26</sup> BAYARD, *Lyon sous l’Ancien Régime*, Chapter 3 – “Vivre dans une grande ville”, Part 2: “Lyon dans l’économie mondiale”.

<sup>27</sup> MILLER, “Paris-Lyon-Paris”, 150.

<sup>28</sup> BAYARD, *Lyon sous l’Ancien Régime*, Chapter 3 – “Vivre dans une grande ville”, Part 2: “Lyon dans l’économie mondiale”.

<sup>29</sup> PONI, “Mode et innovation”, 601.

Milan and Turin. There, they sold their production but also bought raw silk, Italian silk being of the best quality.<sup>30</sup> Carlo Poni demonstrated that numerous communication tools and networks were used by Lyonnais merchants in order to sell their production on the wider market possible: samples, commission agents, commercial correspondence, fashion dolls and fashion press (after 1780) were all marketing strategies to reach the widest possible customer base all over Europe.<sup>31</sup>

Business activities were not always successful however, and cases of bankruptcy were numerous throughout the century. The political context – wars but also deaths in the royal family – were very prejudicial to the silk market.<sup>32</sup> Bad harvests were also responsible of a disadvantageous economic context. Bad management of the business, or even bad luck, could also precipitate the financial ruin of a firm. Peyrot demonstrated that commercial practices were risky, due to various delays. There were generally between four and six months of delay between the sending out of the silks and the payment sent back by the retailer. Moreover, the commission agent was also selling his own silks he bought from merchant manufacturers, and it was therefore in his own interest to sell his own merchandises before that of others. The longer it took for silks to be sold, the more their value decreased, and along with it the payment the merchant manufacturers received in the end. Therefore, the problems a firm could encounter were numerous: too much delay in the selling of the silks by the commission agents and retailers, or no sales at all; lateness in the payment of credit and bills of exchange; but also bankruptcy of retailers.<sup>33</sup> Bayard noted, too, that businessmen often had banking activities on the side, a statement also made by Garden who specified that their activities were often extended to other branches of trade and not only restricted to the silk market.<sup>34</sup>

Tracing the trade activities of a business in the eighteenth century is difficult due to the lack of surviving sources. Infrequent references can be found in the guild archives, enabling the partial construction of some partnerships. Some notarial acts can reveal contracts between businessmen and give more details on the nature of their activities. The most valuable sources,

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<sup>30</sup> PEYROT, “Les Techniques du commerce des soies au XVIIIe siècle”, 34 and BAYARD, *Lyon sous l’Ancien Régime*, Chapter 3 – “Vivre dans une grande ville”, Part 2: “Lyon dans l’économie mondiale”.

<sup>31</sup> PONI, “Mode et innovation”, 609.

<sup>32</sup> BAYARD, *Lyon sous l’Ancien Régime*, Chapter 3 – “Vivre dans une grande ville”, Part 2: “Lyon dans l’économie mondiale”.

<sup>33</sup> PEYROT, “Les Techniques du commerce des soies au XVIIIe siècle”, 40-41 and 47.

<sup>34</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 251.

however, remain the ones left by cases of bankruptcy. Some evidence is available for the ups and downs in the fortunes of the merchant manufacturers supplying the Crown.

Sonnerat et Cie was a business created by César Sonnerat. Little is known about it, but information gathered from various sources establishes a brief overview of his work. The guild registers indicate in 1745 that César Sonnerat worked for himself in rue Buisson at the corner of rue Gentil.<sup>35</sup> This is where he was living with his family and where all his children were born. The same guild registers of 1745 indicate that Pierre César Sonnerat was working as a merchant manufacturer with his father in rue Buisson.<sup>36</sup> The son therefore joined the father in his partnership, forming a family business. He probably began to work officially with his father as soon as he obtained the title of master in 1742,<sup>37</sup> and it is also possible that he worked with him earlier than that. The link between family and business was greater as César Sonnerat had as apprentice Aimé Sonnerat (obviously someone of his family, maybe his brother) from 1698.<sup>38</sup> Aimé later became a merchant manufacturer, and was a witness at the marriage of César in 1715,<sup>39</sup> as well as the godfather of Charlotte, first child of César in the same year, and in 1727 godfather to Marie Anne, his eighth daughter.<sup>40</sup> All this therefore indicates a close relationship between the two men, both domestically and professionally. The partnership seems to have employed the designer Claude Ainé from 1752 to 1753 for a salary of 4,000 *livres*, as a bill among Ainé's possessions attests. It was in that same year that the designer decided to enter into apprenticeship at the age of 32 years old.<sup>41</sup> It is however impossible to determine the extent of his work within the business. But from the short duration of his collaboration with the Sonnerats, it can be deduced that the firm employed other designers.

A contract for an addition (*accession*) was made in 1765 by Durdilly, Cœuille et Bussod, businessmen in Lyon, proxy of Piscatory et Compagnie, businessmen in Paris, in which is mentioned an agreement made the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1764 between Sonnerat et Cie and their creditors.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, no more information is available, but it can be deduced from this contract that

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<sup>35</sup> “*fait fabriquer pour son compte*”. AML, Registres de la Communauté, HH578.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately, no partnership agreement has been found to ascertain this hypothesis. A.M.L., Registres de la Communauté, HH577.

<sup>38</sup> AML, Registres de la Communauté, HH597.

<sup>39</sup> AML, Saint-Nizier, 1GG152, 05/03/1715, Mariage Sonnerat/Mayet.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 1GG68, 04/12/1715; 1GG74, 25/10/1727, Baptêmes.

<sup>41</sup> MILLER, *Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century French Silk Designers*, 19.

<sup>42</sup> ADR, 3E 6818, 24/10/1765, Accession Durdilly, Cœuille et Bussod/Sonnerat.

the Parisian businessmen Piscatory et Compagnie were amongst the creditors of the business, and therefore that the firm was trading with them. This implies a link with the Parisian market, possibly the sending of silks to be sold in the capital's shops. The Sonnerat family also knew two bourgeois of Bagniol in Languedoc, Alexandre and Guillaume Marechalle. They were godfathers of Louise and Marie Anne, César's children, and were therefore close to them, either professionally or personally, and most likely collaborated with them to the extent that they wished to retain good relations.<sup>43</sup> However, how the three men made contact for the first time is unknown: it may be through family connections, or through trade activities. The latter option would mean they were also in professional connection with the Languedoc region, maybe for the sale of fabrics through retailers but also the purchase of raw material.

More is known about the partnership Gaudin et Cie as it went bankrupt. Several lists of their debtors and creditors (table in appendix) give indications on their trade network, and the markets in which they were involved.<sup>44</sup> Like Sonnerat et Cie, Gaudin et Cie employed designers without having them as partners. Several of them are known, although it is not possible to know if they worked for them on a regular basis or just for occasional commissions. The designers Jean Devarenne and Almeras worked for them as the partnership owed them money in 1764 and 1765 respectively, while the designer Devarenne owed them 152 *livres* in 1765. The designer Razy is in their inventories for both 1764 and 1765, which probably means he created designs for them several times on a length of more than one year.

Gaudin et Cie was working with several tradesmen based in Paris, and among the most renowned. Among their debtors were the merchants Nau, who was the main Parisian mercer selling Lyonnais silks,<sup>45</sup> Buffault, Barbier, Le Normand and Lorauza, Gibert et Cie, also recorded as Gibert, Piquetis et Cie;<sup>46</sup> Martin, Billon, Clarin et Cie, Felix, Cagnard freres, and Doutet were also their debtors. They were also connected with tradesmen from other cities in France: in Toulouse, Poly Fulganel, most probably member of the partnership Pauli et Attari, are also recorded in the inventories, owing them 180 *livres* in 1765 and 617 *livres* 16 *sols* in 1772. Finally, they were working with tradesmen from other countries, evidence of the

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<sup>43</sup> AML, Saint-Nizier, 1GG70, 09/02/1719; 1GG74, 25/10/1727, Baptêmes.

<sup>44</sup> ADR, 8B630, Inventories of 1764, 1765, 1772, and one inventory of unknown date.

<sup>45</sup> SARGENTSON, *Merchants and Luxury Markets*, 102-103.

<sup>46</sup> As Gastinet-Coural presented in her work, these men were the most eminent silk tradesmen of the city and "windows" of the Lyonnais production in Paris. ARIZZOLI-CLEMENTEL, *Soieries de Lyon*, 31-32 and 49.

international scale of their business: they had amongst their debtors Gayotty, Ferrary et Cie from Turin, Joseph Pierre Ignace fres. Durelas of Naples, Berne freres of Mainz, Duvigneau freres of Leipzig, les freres Joannot in Frankfurt, Galatesi Fabri Menet et Cie of Strasbourg, and Cormier of Nancy in Lorraine. Networks of commerce were thus established between the partnership and businessmen from various cities in Italy and Germany, as well as from the Duchy of Lorraine.<sup>47</sup> Frédéric Robert Meuricoffre, of the famous family of Swiss bankers living in Naples, also owed them 1330 *livres* 12 *sols* in 1765. Their activities therefore reached the international trade, positioning them amongst the tradesmen of the city who had commercial exchanges across Europe. According to Bayard's pattern of international business networks, this means that with their trade connections, Gaudin et Cie were amongst the few merchant manufacturers who dominated the silk commerce of the city. The connection with merchants based in Italy, from where raw silk of the best quality was imported, raises the issue of where the manufacturers of this study bought the raw material: as suppliers of the Crown, we can assume they must have sought the best quality, and therefore imported raw silk from Italy. The presence of Italian tradesmen among Gaudin et Cie's debtors could confirm this hypothesis.

Such lists give an idea of the amount of money involved in Gaudin et Cie's trading transactions, as well as what was the extent of their financial difficulties. The inventory of 1764 estimates they owed to their debtors about 542,000 *livres*, while they owed 396,296 *livres* in 1765, and 404,421 *livres* in 1772. The amount their creditors owed them indicated in the same inventories, however, was in the three cases roughly the same. In another inventory of an uncertain date is noted that they owed more than 545,000 *livres* to various silk merchants, and that their debtors owed them nearly 660,000 *livres*. It therefore seems that one of their main problems was the payments of the counterparts and tradesmen they were in commercial relation with, the amount of their debts being overall the same what they were owed by their debtors. Still, the firm went into bankruptcy. As demonstrated by the previous studies on that subject, the reasons for bankruptcy were numerous, and unless they are clearly stated, it is only possible to speculate. The dates of the inventories correspond to a bad economic context, first because of royal mourning, but also of failure of silk harvest. As a result, mercers went bankrupt and were unable to pay their debts to the merchant manufacturers.<sup>48</sup> According to Bayard and Garden and considering the distribution of their finance, the issue of the delays in payments is more than

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<sup>47</sup> Until the duchy was annexed by France in 1766.

<sup>48</sup> SARGENTSON, *Merchants and Luxury Markets*, 104-111

plausible: numerous merchants who acted as their retailers (in particular the Parisian mercers) owed them money. Moreover, as the two authors stated, it is also a possibility that the firm was involved in other activities such as banking. It is therefore possible that the bad management of activities that required to have a talent for finance and comprised many risks may have been responsible of the bankruptcy.<sup>49</sup>

## Conclusion

Thus, the majority of these men started as every new comer to the guild, as apprentices or sons of master, before rising in the social and professional hierarchy of the city. Entering various partnerships, they succeeded through their commercial activities across Europe to enter the close circle of the wealthiest businessmen in Lyon. Their careers did not stop there however, and they obtained the title of official suppliers of the Crown, although not all of them were entirely successful, and a case of bankruptcy shows the risks of this business. Professional success did not seem, therefore, to have been a mandatory requirement to become official supplier of the Crown. It was, however, essential for those who desired social advancement.

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<sup>49</sup> No further information, however, can ascertain here the hypothesis that most of the silk tradesmen were also bankers. BAYARD, *Lyon sous l'Ancien Régime*, Chapter 3 – “Vivre dans une grande ville”, Part 2: “Lyon dans l'économie mondiale”.

## CHAPTER IV

### Social Evolution: the Success of a Minority

#### Introduction

Often in eighteenth-century Lyon, along with a professional aspiration for success as a merchant manufacturer came the hope of a rise in social status in the hierarchy of the city's elites. Against the framework previously established by Maurice Garden and Françoise Bayard, it is possible to consider the position of this sample within Lyonnais society. Garden divided the wealthiest population of the city between the business bourgeoisie and those who had recently acquired letters of nobility, and noted that businessmen were the majority in this group.<sup>1</sup> The most successful Lyonnais families involved in commercial activities usually followed a path that took them from the bourgeoisie to nobility of the robe, a status bought with their fortune, and over time accessed by more and more members of the family. Through generations, business activities usually became less prominent and the family moved towards a career in city and national politics, through official posts or military careers, although some families kept their business activities active.<sup>2</sup>

Many men used their fortune to climb the ladder of social hierarchy, and founded family dynasties of powerful and wealthy businessmen. Their familial environment was determining for their social and professional development. First, it provided them with connections in their professional sphere, possibly helping them to achieve their career goals. This also very likely enhanced their social situation. Their strategies with regard to marriage could also be decisive. As Garden stressed, the choice of a bride was often made carefully, the dowry being a way to acquire the capital needed to invest in a business, and could be linked to social status.<sup>3</sup> Miller noted as well that the bride's family could be a social springboard, important networks of businessmen being established through marital unions.<sup>4</sup> The choice of the godparents for the children was also meaningful, as they could be chosen as "prestigious sponsors or future

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<sup>1</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 243 and 245.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 259-262.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>4</sup> MILLER, "Mysterious Manufacturers", 97 and 103.

patrons” who would support the career and social evolution of their godchild.<sup>5</sup> Considering their familial environment will therefore help to understand the social milieu and networks of these merchant manufacturers.

A number of official posts, within the guild or the city, also allowed merchants to climb the ladder of Lyonnais society, in particular municipal posts as some of them gave access to letters of nobility. Within the silk guild, the office of *maître-garde* could be held for one to two years. It involved responsibilities in the management of the guild and in the settling of disputes between guild members.<sup>6</sup> However, the position usually obtained by the most successful merchant manufacturers was the charge of *échevin* (magistrate). The status of magistrate was a municipal position, there being two elected each year. Most of the magistrates came from the richest business families in the city. The reward for taking on this post was automatic receipt of letters of nobility upon leaving the charge. It was therefore a very sought after position.<sup>7</sup> To obtain it, one had to hold the title of bourgeois, or have lived in the city for at least ten years. But the path to the position could only be made gradually, one step after another: the man who sought the office of magistrate first had to serve one of the two hospices (*hospitaux*) by becoming rector (*recteur*) for at least two years, and then enter the major business court, the *Tribunal de la Conservation*.<sup>8</sup> It was, according to Bayard, the “ultime étape d’un véritable cursus honorum moderne”.<sup>9</sup> As both Garden and Bayard stressed, most of the *échevins* and *recteurs* came from the business sphere, a merchant manufacturer accessing those charges was therefore a very usual pattern in eighteenth-century Lyon. Furthermore, Garden specified that many posts and offices were to be bought, and that the fortune of the candidates was very often a determining factor in the choice of the occupants of these charges, when they were elected. He went as far as to suggest, for instance, that in order to become a magistrate, the only actual requirements were not interest in the city’s affairs, but rather familial relations and fortune.<sup>10</sup> The requirements for becoming the *recteur* of the hospital were also mainly financial: 4,000 *livres* had to be given immediately for the administration of the institution, then during the term of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>6</sup> GODART, *L'Ouvrier en soie*, 58 and 196.

<sup>7</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 261.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 285, and BAYARD, *Lyon sous l'Ancien Régime*, Chapter 5 – “Vivre dans une ville sous tension”, Part 3: “L’exclusion et le mépris”.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 285.

office and according to the services, some 50,000 to 120,000 *livres* might be donated.<sup>11</sup> The office of *maître-garde* also required a certain wealth: as Miller noted from Jacques-Charles Dutillieu's comments, this position was very time-consuming and therefore a burden financially.<sup>12</sup> Such fortune was usually achieved through an advantageous marriage and success in business activities, both therefore contributing to social accomplishment in both the silk guild and the city.

In this chapter, the impact of the career of the suppliers of the Crown on their social standing will be considered, examining whether and when they rose within the social hierarchy in Lyon, remained at the same level, or dropped in status. The offices or posts they obtained and their financial worth will contribute to understanding of these men's positions. To determine their social standing and financial worth, merchant manufacturers' personal environment, their family and friends have been sought in parish registers, as well as in notarial acts such as marriage contracts and wills. Their contribution to the city's taxes will also allow an approximation of their wealth. As seen in the previous chapter, these sources are, however, not always complete and accurate, and need to be exploited with caution.

#### IV.1. Position within the City and the Guild: Family and Offices

Several sources give indications of the offices and posts obtained by the men of the city. First, the archives of the silk guild indicate the names of the *maîtres-gardes* and provide information on the affairs they were involved in. Second, the various printed guides of the city named the most eminent personalities of Lyon, along with their profession and offices. The *Indicateur alphabétique des curiosités [...] de la ville de Lyon*,<sup>13</sup> for instance, or the successive *Almanachs de Lyon*,<sup>14</sup> list their names, also indicating their addresses. The *Liste des citoyens éligibles aux places municipales de la ville de Lyon* of 1790 provides the same information but for a later period.<sup>15</sup> These sources, however, have the drawback of providing only surnames, omitting the

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<sup>11</sup> BAYARD, *Lyon sous l'Ancien Régime*, Chapter 5 – “Vivre dans une ville sous tension”, Part 3: “L'exclusion et le mépris”.

<sup>12</sup> MILLER, Lesley, “Manufactures and the Man: A Reassessment of the Role of Jacques-Charles Dutillieu”, *Textile History*, 29:1 (Spring 1998): 24-25.

<sup>13</sup> *Indicateur alphabétique des curiosités [...] de la ville de Lyon pour l'année 1788*, Lyon, 1787.

<sup>14</sup> *Almanach de Lyon*, Lyon, 1788.

<sup>15</sup> AML, 1C362, *Liste des citoyens éligibles aux places municipales de la ville de Lyon*, 1790.

first names, which causes uncertainty about the identity of the person recorded, especially in the case of common family names.

Sonnerat was not, for example, a particularly common name, so the place of Pierre César Sonnerat within the guild can be investigated easily thanks to indications found in several sources. He was a guild official between 1762 and 1764 and as a result signed as a guild representative a document expressing the mistrust and disapproval of guild members towards Joubert de l'Hiberderie's projects.<sup>16</sup> The latter, a designer, asked the State to grant him a pension, stressing his contribution to the industry as writer of a now famous treatise on the profession of silk designer, as an inventor with the creation of the brocaded watered silk (*moire brochée*), and as a teacher of many younger designers. The members of the guild did not favour this request, and were completely against the publication of his treatise, seeing it as a threat leading to the dissemination of design ideas. This signature is significant for it raises two issues. First, Sonnerat's participation and place within the guild meant that he was eminent enough amongst his co-workers to assume this role. Second, it demonstrates his opposition to the publication of Joubert de l'Hiberderie's book, and therefore his position within this burning debate on the designs' dissemination.<sup>17</sup> The career of Pierre César Sonnerat however took an unexpected turn when he was accused by the guild of having taken advantage of his position as *maître-garde*, between 1762 and 1763, to steal money from the community for his own use. A trial was held in 1765, files reporting this affair, indicating that Sonnerat owed to the community 22,642 *livres* 18 *sols* and 2 *deniers*. He also had to pay a fine.<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that the date of the trial coincided with the commission he had from the Crown. His position as a *maître-garde* may have impressed the Crown in the first place, but it is possible that he may then have fallen from grace as this matter could have coloured the views of the *Garde-Meuble* in their decisions about making any further commissions to the merchant manufacturer. This event was probably highly prejudicial to Sonnerat's career, and his reputation as merchant manufacturer, but also as a Lyonnais citizen.

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<sup>16</sup> AML, HH158, *Almanach de Lyon*, Lyon, 1763.

<sup>17</sup> MILLER, *Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century French Silk Designers*, 259-260. The issue of the dissemination of designs, providing information to foreign and rival manufactures, has a long history within the Lyonnais silk industry, and led to numerous protests from the merchant manufacturers. For more information on this subject, see the work of Lesley Miller, such as "Innovation and Industrial Espionage in Eighteenth-Century France".

<sup>18</sup> AML, HH 539, Grande Fabrique de soie. 1741-1752, Procès de la communauté contre Pierre César Sonnerat.

The example of Charles-Claude Briasson, who never served as a *maître-garde*, is representative of a social evolution that a merchant manufacturer could experience, thanks to his background and network and to his fortune. As was mentioned previously, he rose to the status of master faster than usual thanks to his marriage with the daughter of a master. This marriage, however, did not bring him only that. The dowry constituted by the bride's family, a substantial sum of 11,000 *livres*, was to be invested in the partnership he would form with his father-in-law. This marriage therefore constituted a significant stepping stone in his career. As for all carefully chosen unions, this event influenced greatly his professional, but also social rise. It introduced him further into the merchant sphere of the city, in particular the silk trade, and provided him with contacts that might prove useful for his social development and his career. Briasson became *échevin* (magistrate) of Lyon at 50 years old, in 1757 and 1758, and went through the different steps specified by Garden and Bayard in order to obtain this charge: he became *recteur* of the Grand Hôtel-Dieu, then of the Hôpital Général de la Charité, in 1745, 1747 and 1748. He then became a judge in the commercial court (*juge* of the *Conservation des Foires de Lyon*) in 1750, before reaching the position of city magistrate (*échevin* of the *Hôtel de Ville*) in 1757 and 1758. He was also described as a "king's man" (*Homme du roi*) in 1754 and 1755. Two records of Briasson's magistracy have been found: first, a handbill for the silk guild that published the names of the elected magistrates.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, a token, nowadays in the collections of the Musée Gadagne in Lyon, bears the engraving "*Charles-Claude Briasson echevin de Lyon 1757*" (**fig. 62**). Tokens were offered to the officers of the Consulat upon leaving their charge: it was, as indicated by Jean Tricou in his work on the consular tokens of Lyon, a honorific testimony that Briasson had fulfilled this role.<sup>20</sup> His social rise does not seem to have stopped at the office of *échevin*. The *Almanach of Lyon* of 1788 also indicates he was an ex-consul, a charge he seems to have obtained in 1765.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast, Jean Charton and his sons are representative of the familial social rises that occurred during the century, a case of what Bayard called "familial strategy". Jean Charton, son of a master butcher, was registered merchant on the 19<sup>th</sup> May 1745,<sup>22</sup> thirty years after the beginning of his apprenticeship. Just six months later, on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 1745, at the age of 43, he married nineteen-year-old Marianne Gras.<sup>23</sup> Marianne, twenty-four years his junior, was the daughter

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<sup>19</sup> AML, BB 374-2, Syndicats, 1704-1757.

<sup>20</sup> Jean TRICOU, *Les Jetons consulaires de Lyon* (Paris: Emile Bourgey, 1955), 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Almanach de Lyon*, Lyon, 1788.

<sup>22</sup> AML, Registres de la Communauté, HH621.

<sup>23</sup> AML, Saint-Pierre Saint-Saturnin, 1GG619, 24/11/1745, Mariage.

of Joseph Gras, officer of the Hôtel de Ville, and Anne Charlotte Grassot.<sup>24</sup> He had been a master for twelve years, and he was a mature man so this late marriage was carefully chosen. Jean Charton waited to be settled professionally before marrying a young woman, whose youth promised many descendants. His new father-in-law was a member of the nobility of the robe and of the elite that managed the city. Although no additional information is available, his in-laws' wealth and high social status were probably beneficial to Jean Charton. Marianne, however, died at a young age, after having giving birth to three sons: Joachim, Thomas, and Jean.<sup>25</sup>

The lives of his three sons demonstrate the social evolution of the family. As Garden stated, the wealthiest Lyonnais families rarely stayed linked to the business sphere only, but diversified their activities, and their resulting professional and social environment.<sup>26</sup> Joachim entered the military (the *légion de Soubise*) in 1768, became a sub-lieutenant in 1769 and captain in 1772. He then became captain of the king's dragoons in 1777, and Provost of the Constabulary (*Grand Prévôt de la Connétablie*) in 1778. He was commandant of a battalion of the National Guard (*Garde nationale*), and aide de camp of General Lafayette in 1789. He became Colonel in chief (*Colonel Chef de brigade*) of the 5<sup>th</sup> regiment of dragoons in 1791, and general of the brigade in 1792. After being imprisoned during the Terror, he returned to the army under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte in Italy in 1797. He therefore rose greatly into a military career, accessing high positions.<sup>27</sup> Thomas became Knight Treasurer of France (*Chevalier Trésorier de France*) in 1774, then President of finances (*Président des finances*) in 1787. The charge of *Trésorier de France* was bought for 40,000 *livres* and given to him by his father at his marriage with Anne-Marie Grassot, as part of the marriage settlement.<sup>28</sup> The third son, Jean (**fig. 62**), followed his father's path into the silk guild. He seems to have been above all a businessman, working with his father.<sup>29</sup> He also accessed the positions of Head of division, colonel of a regiment (*Chef de division, Colonel du 102e régiment de Ligne*), and second Commandant General of the National Guard (*Commandant Général de la Garde Nationale*) in 1791.

Therefore, the evolution described by Garden is visible in the Charton family, one of them entering the army, and another making a career in municipal offices. Only one of the three sons took after

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 1GG611, 04/12/1726, Baptême.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 1GG620, 28/08/1746; 1GG621, 20/08/1747; 1GG621, 13/03/1749, Baptêmes.

<sup>26</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 251.

<sup>27</sup> MILLER, *Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century French Silk Designers*, 89.

<sup>28</sup> ADR, 3E 4370, notaire Delhorme, 02/09/1774, Mariage Charton/Gras.

<sup>29</sup> ADR, 3E4370, notaire Delhorme, 04/12/1775, Testament Charton.

the father and pursued a career in the silk trade. Moreover, Garden indicated that those families also rarely remained entirely in Lyon,<sup>30</sup> a pattern once more confirmed here with two sons, Joachim and Jean, leaving Lyon to live in Paris: Jean married Angélique-Catherine Chauchat the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1780 in Paris (parish Saint-Côme), and was guillotined at the Barrière du Trône in Paris in June 1794.<sup>31</sup> Joachim also lived in Paris, rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin.<sup>32</sup>

The five suppliers of the Crown who achieved a considerable social rise therefore seem to follow the pattern described by Garden: from the bourgeoisie whose fortune got bigger thanks to their business activities, they accessed the nobility by the acquisition of municipal offices. As was demonstrated in the case of Sonnerat, this success was however not always permanent. Furthermore, to access such positions the merchant manufacturers had to buy their offices, for themselves or for their family, as Jean Charton senior did for his sons. Their fortune was therefore a determining factor in their social ascent. This raises the question of the financial worth of those men who needed a substantial fortune to rise in the Lyonnais hierarchy.

#### IV. 2. Financial Worth

In his study on a hierarchy of incomes in the eighteenth century, Jean Sgard reckoned that the annual income of a bourgeois, earning income from business or land rents, ranged from 5,000 to 20,000 *livres*, while a member of nobility could receive between 40,000 and 100,000 *livres*.<sup>33</sup> It is however difficult to estimate the fortune of the men of this sample, who sat between bourgeoisie and new nobility. The worth of a man can be estimated based on sources already mentioned previously, such as wills and inventories after death. Unfortunately, wills are a rare source: for this sample, only three have been found, and comparison is therefore limited.

The will of Joachim Gras for instance, who became Knight Treasurer of France at the Finances Office of the Generality of Paris (*Chevalier Trésorier de France au bureau des Finances de la Généralité de Paris*) and Surveyor of the Generality of Paris (*Grand Voyer de la Généralité de*

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<sup>30</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 251.

<sup>31</sup> MILLER, *Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century French Silk Designers*, 89.

<sup>32</sup> AN, MC/ET/XXX/453, notaire Pierre Lormeau, 29/03/1777, constitution de rente Charton.

<sup>33</sup> Jean SGARD, "L'échelle des revenus", *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, 14 (1982): 427-428.

*Paris*), indicates that at his death, he left to the poor of his parish 300 *livres*, to the hospitals of the Hôtel Dieu and of the Charité 1,000 *livres* each, and to the Confraternity of the Penitents of the Misericord (*Compagnie des Pénitents de la Miséricorde*) 300 *livres*. He left to his two porters (*porteurs*) 100 *livres* each, to his cook Madame de Biolle 1,200 *livres* and her husband also doorman 600 *livres*, on top of their wage. He left to Elisabeth Jonquet, widow of the businessman Goudart, a diamond worth 6,000 *livres*, or this sum directly – but if she died before him, so it was to be given to her sons, Goudard frères; to Marie Thérèse Piquet a life annuity of 50 *livres* in consideration of the help she brought to his aunt Madame Jourdan Desgarinnières. He left to his nephew Joachim Charton a life annuity of 600 *livres*, and to Jean Charton 6,000 *livres*. He also gave them 5,000 *livres* from the sum he gave to his niece Marianne Gras at her wedding with Jean Charton father, at the time of his death, that is 10,000 *livres*: the first 5,000 *livres* of it were given, at the wedding, to Jean Charton father for his fund account, taken from the profit account of Joachim Gras, of the partnership formed by the two men. At the end of the partnership the 5,000 *livres* were kept by Jean Charton father. All his other possessions were given to his universal heir, his nephew Thomas Charton, or his children if he were to die before him (**fig. 63-64**). He left to Dame Grassot, Thomas' wife, his two little silver terrines with their lid and tray; to Angélique Chaussat, wife of Jean Charton son, his big silver terrine with its lid and tray, worth around 1,200 *livres*.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the marriage contract of Thomas Charton indicates in 1774 that Joachim Gras gave him 10,000 *livres* to be paid at his death.<sup>35</sup>

From his will, it can therefore be deduced that Joachim Gras never married, or that his wife died him without bearing any children. Most of his fortune was thus left to the family of his nephew-in-law and partner in business, Jean Charton. This will does not give, however, a complete account of his fortune as the value of his bequest to Thomas Charton, his universal heir, is not indicated. The rest of his legacy was valued at 30,200 *livres*, in addition to two life annuities of a total of 650 *livres*. Therefore, he must have earned a sufficient amount of money during his life, but not enough to give outright in cash substantial sums such as 10,000 *livres*, but he may have needed several years to save money. Despite his office of Treasurer (*trésorier*) which granted him with letters of nobility, his fortune does not seem so considerable in comparison with the estimates of Sgard on the incomes of nobility (between 40,000 and 100,000 *livres*). It is also not a large amount in comparison with the fortune left by some of his famous counterparts, such as Jean Revel who left about 137,000 *livres* in 1751, or Jacques-Charles

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<sup>34</sup> ADR, 3E 3875, notaire Dallier, 10/08/1780, Testament Joachim Gras.

<sup>35</sup> ADR, 3E 4370, notaire Delhorme, 05/09/1774, Mariage Charton/Grassot.

Dutillieu, whose fortune was estimated at his death in 1782 at about 144,000 *livres*.<sup>36</sup> Yet, the amount he left to charities, 2,600 *livres*, may indicate otherwise, as it is a substantial sum to donate. In comparison, the merchant manufacturer Louis Galy, whose fortune was average (estimated at 51,271 *livres*), left to charities 350 *livres* at his death in 1783 – therefore three years later.<sup>37</sup> However, information on Gras’ worth at his death is not complete enough to make a conclusive comparison. Furthermore, such documents are too rare and not sufficiently accurate to be used as only sources. Others can indeed also give indications on the wealth of these merchants.

Tax contributions are valuable sources for investigating the fortune of the Lyonnais. The limitations of such sources, however, have been raised many times by scholars: in the case of the *Rolle de Capitation* of 1758/1759 for instance, only 40% of the population paid this tax, and records only survive for 14 districts out of 35.<sup>38</sup> But for this study, it only proves further the wealth of the merchants: their indication within the tax records means that they were eligible for such a levy. Other than the *Rolle de Capitation*, the *Tableau des déclarations pour la contribution patriotique* of 1790 also records financial contributions. Finally, the *Vingtième de maisons* also indicates taxes paid by the inhabitants, along with their address. It however has the same problem as some of the books recording offices mentioned above: only family names are indicated, making the identification of these men very difficult.

The *Rolle de Capitation de la Grande Fabrique* of 1758-1759 records the names of seven of these men.<sup>39</sup> The majority of them had to pay between 50 and 90 *livres*, while two paid more than 90 *livres* and only one paid less than 10 *livres* (*table 9*). This situates them within the wealthiest merchant manufacturers who were paying between 40 and 300 *livres*.<sup>40</sup> Only Sonnerat and Briasson have been identified in the *Vingtième de maisons* of 1788, paying respectively 272 *livres 5 sous* and 660 *livres*, Briasson having therefore the most substantial amount.<sup>41</sup> In the *Tableau des déclarations pour la contribution patriotique* only four men have been identified.<sup>42</sup> Their contributions are variable (*table 10*): two of them gave a contribution

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<sup>36</sup> MILLER, “Mysterious Manufacturers”, 102.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> BAYARD, *Lyon sous l’Ancien Régime*, Chapter 5 – “Vivre dans une ville sous tension”, Part 2: “La hiérarchie des fortunes”, and GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 127.

<sup>39</sup> AML, CC178, *Rolle de Capitation de la Grande Fabrique*, 1758-1759.

<sup>40</sup> MILLER, “Paris-Lyon-Paris”, 146.

<sup>41</sup> AML, CC185, *Vingtième de maisons*, 1788.

<sup>42</sup> AML, 1C360, *Tableau des déclarations pour la contribution patriotique*, 1790.

situated between 500 and 800 *livres* (500 for Bridant and 750 for Defontebrune); Jean-Antoine Gros had a lower contribution of 120 *livres*, while only one, Briasson, paid a much more important sum, that is 5,400 *livres*. This last tax of 1790 can lead to further estimates on their worth and standards of living. Following the figure developed by Lesley Miller in her study on the partnership L. Galy, Gallien et Compe,<sup>43</sup> it is possible to calculate approximate annual incomes from the amount paid by Bridant, Defontebrune, Gros and Briasson in 1790. The amounts paid, calculated on the basis of a ten days' income, confirm important differences between these men. On the assumption that they worked about 300 days per year, it can be estimated that Jean-Antoine Gros had the smallest earnings, with about 3,600 *livres* per year. It was still a good amount, as 1,000 *livres* were enough to live decently, but with no excess in Paris in a bourgeois environment.<sup>44</sup> Bridant and Defontebrune, however, earned much more: about 15,000 and 22,500 *livres* respectively. This situates them within the wealthy bourgeoisie, or in the case of Defontebrune in the lower nobility. But then, Briasson is well above this level with an annual income estimated at about 160,000 *livres*. According to Sgard's pattern, this considerable amount surprisingly situates him even above average noble incomes. This confirms that Charles-Claude Briasson was among the wealthiest merchant manufacturers of the city, and probably had the most substantial fortune of this sample.

**Table 9. Contributions of the *Rolle de Capitation de la Grande Fabrique (1758-1759)*<sup>45</sup>**

Sum paid	Proportion of merchant manufacturers
Under 10 <i>livres</i>	1
Between 10 and 50 <i>livres</i>	0
Between 50 and 90 <i>livres</i>	4
Over 90 <i>livres</i>	2
Unknown	16
Total	23

<sup>43</sup> MILLER, "Mysterious Manufacturers", 103 and 129.

<sup>44</sup> Moreover, 90% of the population lived with less than 1,000 *livres* per year. SGARD, "L'échelle des revenus", 427.

<sup>45</sup> Data collected from AML, CC178, *Rolle de Capitation de la Grande Fabrique, 1758-1759*.

**Table 10. Contributions of the *Tableau des déclarations pour la contribution patriotique (1790)*<sup>46</sup>**

Sum paid	Proportion of merchant manufacturers
Under 200 <i>livres</i>	1
Between 500 and 800 <i>livres</i>	2
Over 5 000 <i>livres</i>	1
Unknown	19
Total	23

Finally, marriage contracts give, as seen previously, valuable indications of financial worth as dowries were usually indicated. Men in this study whose families made a substantial contribution to their marriage, received from their spouse’s family a significant amount. Even when the groom’s financial worth is not stated, it is evident from the bride’s dowry that the groom at very least had prospects of inheriting or earning similar amounts.

The marriage of Pierre Cesar Sonnerat is the most important one in term of financial contributions. On 29<sup>th</sup> January 1761, at the age of 38, he married Claudine Jeanne Marie Claire Villion, daughter of Pierre Villion *bourgeois* and Marie Françoise Comormond.<sup>47</sup> It was a late marriage, the groom having established himself in business over a period of almost twenty years. He had made a careful choice of bride. Inheriting her mother’s possessions, the bride brought a very substantial dowry of 81,113 *livres* and 4 *sols*.<sup>48</sup> This sum was above 50,000 *livres*, a sum that Garden demonstrated was only reached among the richest marriages of merchants of the end of the century.<sup>49</sup> Some 6.6% of marriage contracts were above 44,000 *livres* in the second half of the century, according to Lesley Miller.<sup>50</sup> It can therefore be deduced that Pierre César’s marriage settlement was situated amongst the richest merchants of the city, well above the average marriages of merchants.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Data collected from AML, 1C360, *Tableau des déclarations pour la contribution patriotique*, 1790.

<sup>47</sup> AML, Saint-Nizier, 1GG189, 29/01/1761, Mariage Sonnerat/Villion.

<sup>48</sup> ADR, 3E 7647, notaire Roche, 28/01/1761, Mariage Sonnerat/Villion.

<sup>49</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 251.

<sup>50</sup> MILLER, “Mysterious Manufacturers”, 102.

<sup>51</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 254.

The marriages of merchant manufacturers' children are also an indication of their financial status, the dowry reflecting parental means. Only two marriage contracts have been found for this sample. Pierre Audras's son, Robert, who became a merchant manufacturer like his father, married Antoinette Angélique Combe, daughter of Gilbert Combe, *négociant*, and Catherine Bachot on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1798, when he was 31 years old.<sup>52</sup> The groom and the bride brought 3,000 *francs* each, both in clothing and movable properties. Pierre Audras was already dead at the time of his son's wedding, but he constituted enough to leave a certain amount for his son's marriage settlement, although of an average amount.<sup>53</sup>

The family of Thomas Charton, son of Jean Charton father, gathered a substantial amount of money for his marriage with Anne Marie Charlotte Grassot in 1774: he received from his father 120,000 *livres*, including 40,000 *livres* for the office of *Trésorier de France* and 80,000 *livres* in cash, while his uncle Joachim Gras gave him 10,000 *livres* to be paid at his death.<sup>54</sup> This marriage, complemented by a dowry of 70,000 *livres* from the bride, was therefore very substantial financially. Most of it came from the groom's family, and therefore testifies to the wealth of both the Charton family and Joachim Gras. As seen previously, Garden reckoned that only 10% of businessmen gathered dowries between 100,000 and 200,000 *livres* and about 2% between 200,000 and 500,000 *livres*, and owners of offices contributions of above 100,000 *livres*.<sup>55</sup> Members of the new nobility, the Charton family and Joachim Gras fit this pattern. With this marriage, Jean Charton father positioned his family among the richest trade families of Lyon.

## Conclusion

Along with professional success came wealth, and a rise in social status for some of the suppliers to the Crown. A minority apparently rose to the highest positions in the city's ruling institutions. Climbing the ladder of society was faster or slower for different men, as well as more or less permanent: the ascent of some was the result of real familial strategies in order to secure the social power of their descendants. Through such achievement, they followed the

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<sup>52</sup> AML, Division du Midi, 2E89, 06/06/1798, Mariage Audras/Combe.

<sup>53</sup> ADR, 3E 11138, Durand, 06/06/1798, Mariage Audras/Combe.

<sup>54</sup> ADR, 3E 4370, 02/09/1774, Mariage Charton/Gras.

<sup>55</sup> GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, 245, 251 and 367.

evolution pattern of the Lyonnais trade sphere whose successful merchants were holding the reins of the silk industry. For most of them, this ascent preceded the commissions from the *Garde-Meuble*. This means their professional and social rise may have supported their fame as merchant manufacturers and helped them to stand out from others, eventually making them known to the Crown.

## CONCLUSION

The five partnerships of this study had in common a specific position: they obtained the privilege of being official suppliers of the Crown and delivering silks to the Garde-Meuble for the furnishing of the royal residences. Each of these partnerships comprised different partners, from different backgrounds and with different career trajectories. Not only were they suppliers of the Crown, position that makes them stand out from other merchants, but studied as a group, they also constitute a relevant and diversified sample of a particular professional and social category. This dissertation therefore questioned whether, as suppliers of the Crown, these men were all at the top of their profession and of Lyonnais society; whether they stood out from other Lyonnais businessmen; or whether they were merely representative of most Lyonnais merchant manufacturers of the eighteenth century. An important question was whether the position of official supplier to the Crown had an impact on their careers and their domestic circumstances.

To answer this, their trading activities and production were first analysed to see whether they were manufacturing and selling both furnishing and clothing textiles, and who their clientele was, other than the Crown. Also considered was whether they were able to follow the many changes in fashion that occurred throughout the century, as well as meeting customers' demands. Although the sources of information were limited, it has been possible to determine that their production was of high quality, at the top end of the textile hierarchy. The cost of their production commanded above the average prices established by the economist Vincent de Gournay, and the techniques employed were complex. This information suggested they had a wealthy clientele who were able to buy the most expensive silks. Although they all specialised in brocaded silks, the production of some of the partnerships, such as Charton et Cie, was diverse. However, these merchant manufacturers had to adapt to the specific demands of the Crown whose commissions corresponded to a very specific codification of the decor. Some of them, such as Jean Charton father and son and their partners, were able to provide both silks with traditional patterns and colours, as well as textiles matching the fashion of the moment. Others, such as Reboul, Fontebrune et Cie, supplied only silks in the latest fashion, with patterns following the general trend of the neoclassical style, while Sonnerat et Cie only delivered crimson damask, a quite traditional and common fabric in terms of furnishing silks.

The path of these men from their childhood to their position as suppliers of the Crown, was then investigated in order to determine if it was different from the usual professional and social route followed by Lyonnais merchant manufacturers. First, information on their family background revealed a more comprehensive view of their social environment. An investigation of their background showed that, following the general pattern in Lyon, the majority came from families of merchant manufacturers involved in the silk industry. They therefore grew up in a business-related environment that most likely influenced their career choice and development. Sons of merchants, they followed the path of their father, generally joining them later in business. Indeed, as fathers, sons or brothers, several merchants from this sample went into partnership with a member of their family: Jean Charton father and son, César and Pierre César Sonnerat, Joseph and Emmanuel Barnier, Jean-Pierre and Antoine Crozat. This strong professional link between members of the same family was an important characteristic of Lyonnais merchant families, in which business and domestic circumstances were almost always linked. This tendency was therefore evident in the men in this study.

Their careers were then investigated, from their beginnings as apprentices to their registration as merchants: how their careers evolved, where they were situated within the silk market, and how important their trade was. The nature of their partnerships was considered, how their partnerships were formed and dissolved, and what the role of each partner was. This investigation demonstrated that tasks were divided very precisely between the different partners, and according to their own skills, whether design, management or sales skills. It revealed that not all of them were on the same level and each had different skills to offer, some of which changed during their careers with time and experience. The examination of business network then indicated the market in which they were involved in, which included, for instance, dealings with Parisian mercers, but also with merchants and customers from outside France. Such extensive networks suggested an important position within the silk industry. Finally, it has been possible to determine differences in the career paths of these men, some of whom were successful, while others experienced failure at some stage in their career. Such differences seem surprising, given their position of suppliers of the Crown. For example, despite their bankruptcy, Gaudin et Cie received commissions from the royal *Garde-Meuble*, as it may have been their liquidation that made their production known to the institution and its representatives. Therefore, the status of suppliers of the Crown was not automatically a sign of professional achievement, as it did not seem mandatory in order to obtain this position.

Finally, the dissertation has considered how their careers impacted on their social status. This sample suggested a variety of experiences. Social achievement was linked to their professional success, and some men experienced difficulties that had an impact on both. Sonnerat's trial, for example, seems to have put a stop to his career as supplier to the Crown, and Gaudin's bankruptcy seems to have prevented him from acquiring other offices as he was not able to rise above the position of *recteur* of the hospitals – possibly because of his financial circumstances. Others, however, were successful enough in their business activities to gather the necessary fortune to buy important municipal positions within the city, and eventually obtain letters of nobility for themselves and their families. Charles-Claude Briasson and the Charton family are very good examples of the social rise that successful Lyonnais merchant manufacturers and bourgeois businessmen could experience. Their ascent was however different, and the impact of the Crown's commissions was uneven. The position of suppliers of the Crown seem to have been beneficial to some of them, as the Charton family, whose position ensured them professional and social success. Jean Charton senior experienced a long and steady progression throughout his life, which accelerated from the moment he became official supplier of the Crown. Others however rose independently from such a privilege: Charles-Claude Briasson, who left the partnership of Gaudin et Cie before they began to supply the *Garde-Meuble*, obtained letters of nobility, the most eminent positions within the municipal institutions of the city, and gathered the most substantial fortune of the sample.

This dissertation, however, has some limitations. The same information was not available for all of the sample merchant manufacturers. Further research is therefore necessary in order to fill the blanks. Because of the interruption of French Revolution and the changes it brought, investigation of the post-Revolutionary period has not been possible, and should therefore be conducted next. Analysis would then revolve around the impact of the Revolution on their lives and careers. This would include information on the last years of their lives, as well as more data on the lives of their children, which would confirm the evolution of their social status. Did they survive to the Revolution? Were they still merchant manufacturers after that? Or did the Revolution completely interrupt their activities? More information on their commercial activities would allow a more complete picture of these men's businesses. Furthermore, some

of them, such as the designer Joseph Picard,<sup>1</sup> supplied the new governments, especially under Napoleon Bonaparte. This raises the questions of how they adapted to the political changes and were able to respond to new state's orders. How they adapted to the new social order which saw the fall of nobility and the triumph of the bourgeoisie should also be investigated.

In conclusion, the merchant manufacturers of this study were not all consistently successful, despite their link to the royal *Garde-Meuble*. They were not necessarily the best or most successful in Lyon, nor the perfect illustration of social and professional achievement. If four of them (Jean Charton father, Joachim Gras, Charles-Claude Briasson and Louis Reboul) did succeed quite extraordinarily, and can be positioned among the wealthiest and most renowned merchants of the city, the rest did not share such success and did not rise in the Lyonnais professional and social hierarchy. This study therefore demonstrated that this sample of merchants, suppliers to the Crown, is more diversified than it seems at first sight.

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<sup>1</sup> Xavier PETITCOL, "Joseph Gaspard Picard (1748-1818), dessinateur de la Grande Fabrique (Lyon)", *Bulletin du CIETA*, no. 84-85 (2007-2008): 41-42.



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