

First Impressions:  
The Prohibition on Printed Calicoes in France,  
1686-1759

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the French prohibition on both importing printed cotton from India and printing it in France between 1686 and 1759, an interdiction significantly longer than any other European country, and challenges the portrayal of the ban as a sustained protectionist measure for the *anciennes manufactures*. Although it was undeniably instigated for this reason, the ban was prolonged due to conflicting government policies, vested interests and an overriding fear for France's reputation for high-quality products. The study shows that attacking a fledgling, technically incompetent industry conveniently concealed that the textiles trades' loss of skilled workers and markets were the result of decades of a poor economic situation. The examination of primary sources has revealed how the government unwittingly handicapped the state-controlled French East India Company, whose main cargo was cotton, and the repeated granting of exemptions as appeasement negated the possibility of effective law enforcement and engendered perpetual confusion. Restricting the public's use of the fabrics only excited demand, and the challenges of enforcing the ban and eradicating the banned merchandise are explored through a case study of Nantes. The correspondence of officials has revealed the extent to which provincial application of the law was discretionary, and evidence from prosecutions has shown that women of lower social status were particularly vulnerable. Significantly, this study has also uncovered that enforcement was indeed frequent and widespread, and that the severest sentences have been masked in prosecutions for other types of contraband. The complex processes involved in imitating Indian techniques, and the widely accepted method of transfer of technology from Asia are re-examined, confirming that French cotton prints were technically inferior throughout the period, and concurrent development to other European nations should not be assumed. The study has also revealed that a greater amount of the *indiennes* were used as furnishings than imagined, that different qualities circulated, and also that covert printing was mainly carried out on linen, which has been greatly overlooked. French printing continued to be inferior for decades, and the conclusions made on prohibition-era products based on later samples must be questioned.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Commerce & Control

In the eighteenth century, the exquisite French *Toiles de Jouy* printed cottons gave their name to a whole genre of fabric prints, and today the name is still synonymous with classic floral designs for furnishings and clothing.<sup>1</sup> (Figures 1 and 2.) The history of this industry in France from 1760 onwards is well documented, particularly of the factory of German-born entrepreneur Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf at Jouy-en-Josas, near Paris, and his contemporaries in Alsace, which produced printed textiles on a grand scale.<sup>2</sup> The preceding seventy-three years, from 1686 to 1759, when importing patterned cotton from Asia was banned, and printing on all fabrics was prohibited in France, has been less studied. More than eighty rulings during that time vainly sought to hold back the fashion for the bright, light and highly coloured fabrics from India, which were imported into Europe in significant quantities from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards.<sup>3</sup> The prohibition is persistently defined as a protective measure for the long-established French textile industries. This was indeed a primary motivation for its initiation, however, this thesis challenges the supposition that it was also the unique reason the ban was maintained for such an excessively long period.

Against the background of the introduction of fabric printing techniques from Asia to Europe, the aim of this study is to establish the varied reasons and interlinked motives for the length of the prohibition in France, and the circumstances which led that country, the location of some of the earliest experiments with printing, to fall behind its neighbours and stagnate technologically. The thesis questions why, as well as terminating the importation of *indiennes* (as all printed cotton cloths from the Orient were designated) for the benefit of the economy, it was considered necessary to halt the nascent printing activity in France, at

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<sup>1</sup> French terminology and titles are used throughout this study, and italicised. The translations provided for all citations from French documents are the author's own. The original spelling from the manuscript or printed original documents has been retained in each case, rather than using the modern version. Accents and capitalisation in particular, were not used in the exact format they are today.

<sup>2</sup> In particular: Stanley Chapman & Serge Chassagne, *European Textile Printers in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Heinemann, 1981); Denis Chaigne, *Le Coton et l'industrie cotonnière* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996); and Serge Chassagne, 'Calico Printing in Europe before 1780', in David Jenkins (ed.), *Cambridge History of Western Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Vol. I, pp. 523-4.

<sup>3</sup> Although it is anachronistic, the name India is used here for the area that country covers today, for simplicity. The 'Indies' covered a wider area, including China and Japan, and in the seventeenth century was used in a vague way, similar to 'the East'.

a time when other European States opened their doors to processes which would revolutionise their economies. The objective was to discover, through a detailed examination of the many rulings, and the original French seventeenth- and eighteenth-century manuscript correspondence related to the subsequent prosecutions, other motives which combined to propel a minor matter of commercial policy into a complex political issue with economic, technical and social consequences.

A grounded theory method was used to direct the evolving evidence of multiple social and economic factors to new areas of study which could contextualise the decisions and offer alternative explanations for the extended ban. A cross-disciplinary approach was used, combining an examination of the techniques necessary to imitate textile printing in Europe with evidence from contemporary accounts, which together contradict the assumption that the skills to achieve satisfactory import-substitution had been attained. By these combined methods it will be shown that the constant governmental concern that inferior goods would destroy the country's reputation for high-quality products provides an alternative proposition for the length of the prohibition. Scrutiny of the defiance of the ban by people of all social strata, whether through the continued use, trade or smuggling of the fabrics, has uncovered significant inequalities in the application of the law, which also contributed to its prolongation.

Decorative Indian cottons had been growing in popularity as home furnishings (bed-hangings, wall-coverings and upholstery) since they were first imported to Europe early in the seventeenth century, but it was only when they were adopted for women's clothing that the traditional textile industries took exception. The proscription on importing *toiles peintes* as they were known in France, was declared in 1686, but this increased rather than diminished their desirability, and attempts at copying the prints flourished, leading to a total ban on printing on all fabrics as well as importing them.<sup>4</sup> Punishments escalated from fines, confiscation and the burning of fabrics, until simply wearing a printed dress in the street could result in it being stripped from the wearer's back. Inconsistent legislation over many years resulted in the interdiction never being successfully enforced and successive governments, incapable of halting the trade, followed a policy of imposing increasingly severe punitive measures which culminated, in 1726, in galley sentences for those found

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<sup>4</sup> *Toiles peintes* described many types of patterned cotton fabrics in France, both painted and printed. It is used here distinct from the English term *calico*, which denoted the plain cotton broadcloth fabric as well as printed goods, where *toiles peintes* did not. *Calico* is still used in English references. The term *indiennes* will be also used throughout this study as it was also specifically used to describe the fabrics, whatever their provenance. *Indiennage* was the trade of cotton printing.



printing and distributing printed cloths.<sup>5</sup> Even more harsh penalties awaited organised traffickers:

All persons who, being armed and in a band of three or more, introduce into our Kingdom painted or stained cloths... or whatever type, even cotton cloth and muslins other than those officially sanctioned... shall be punished by death and their belongings confiscated.<sup>6</sup>

These radical measures were the result of opposition to a fashion which caught Europeans' imagination, and which governments fought to halt, mostly ineffectively, in order to protect existing industries and vested interests. The severe penalties only increased the appeal of printed cottons, and a vast underground network of smuggling and clandestine workshops grew up to supply the demand for the forbidden products. The very number of orders passed during the prohibition period in an effort to suppress the distribution of printed cottons is evidence in itself of the products' popularity, and the extreme difficulty of enforcing the legislation.

It is indisputable that the ban was introduced as a protectionist measure to shelter the well-established French silk and woollen industries, but the research conducted for this study on the original manuscripts in French and Dutch archives has highlighted many other reasons for its prolongation. These include the conflict between the State-controlled *Compagnie des Indes* and the *Conseil de Commerce*, the vested interests of many of the Court in the issue, and concerns over France's reputation for high-quality textiles.<sup>7</sup> The government did not understand the processes and techniques involved in producing *toiles peintes*, and was nervous of new products which it would find impossible to regulate. France was not the only country to deplore the influx of these new exotic textiles, however, and nearly all European countries banned the new commodity for some period. In 1678, an anonymous pamphlet in England entitled *The Ancient Trades Decayed and Repaired Again*, had bemoaned the infiltration of the woollen market by 'painted and Indian-stained and striped calico... that is brought from India, both for linings to coats, and for petticoats

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<sup>5</sup> Sentencing to the 'galleys', the oared warships which France maintained as a functional fighting force until the mid-eighteenth century, was a punishment second only to the death penalty. It was imposed for a stated term or in perpetuity, and the criminal's possessions were also forfeited. Joël Hautebert, *La Justice Pénale à Nantes au Grand Siècle: Jurisprudence de la Sénéchaussée Présidiale* (Paris: Michel de Maule, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF), F- 21652. Acte royal du 26 Octobre, 1726. 'Édit... qui prononce des peines contre ceux qui introduiront dans le Royaume des toiles peintes ou teintes, écorces d'arbres ou étoffes de la Chine, des Indes et du Levant.' (Dijon: A.-J.-B. Augé, 1726).

<sup>7</sup> Abbreviated versions of the French names for these organisations will be used throughout. *La Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales*, known commonly today as the *Compagnie des Indes*, is hereafter called the *Compagnie*; the *Conseil de Commerce* is hereafter called the *Conseil*.

too...'.<sup>8</sup> The English enforced a partial ban on cotton imports from 1700 but, significantly, allowed the printing industry to develop, on condition that the goods were exported, although it is thought a great deal were indeed used in the country. After much debate, an injunction on selling or wearing the goods was passed in 1721.

No European prohibition was as protracted, as all-encompassing, or carried as excessive penalties as the French restrictions, which targeted not only Asian imports, but French-made imitations.<sup>9</sup> Activity in *indiennage* was developing by the 1680s:

The great quantity of painted cotton cloths from the Indies, or counterfeited in the Kingdom...has resulted not only in the conveyance of many millions [of livres] out of the country, but also caused the diminishing of the long-established French manufactures of fabrics of silk, wool, linen & hemp.<sup>10</sup>

A fundamentally pejorative view of the period exists in its historiography, defining it simplistically as, at best, a naïve hindrance to the French economy resulting from narrow-minded economic policies or, at worst, as an example of the folly (or implied stupidity) of the French State in halting the growth of an industry which would be at the heart of the explosion of economic and commercial development of the Industrial Revolution. This hindsight dominates the writings of authors from the early twentieth-century to the present date, which have disseminated, and continue to reiterate, the neat categorisation of the prohibition as a simplistic protectionist doctrine.

The rationale for this research is, therefore, to explore fully the variety of additional factors which influenced the long prohibition in their historical context. The extent to which the workings of the State affected the application of the ban will be considered, as will the effectiveness of contemporary attempts at enforcement. The declaration of successive prohibitive measures, while superficially appearing as sequential iterations of the same dictat, will be studied as an evolutionary set of reactive measures to both developing commercial competition and the rise of consumer demand. This will encompass the perception that the stagnation the prohibition imposed on French technological development (material and intellectual) hindered its growth in the proto-industrial period. The isolation of the French, as witnessed by the exploration of Indian techniques as late as the mid-eighteenth century, will be examined in the context of other

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<sup>8</sup> Edward Baines, *History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain* (London: H. Fisher & Co, 1835), pp. 16-17.

<sup>9</sup> For more details on other European bans, see Serge Chassagne, *Calico Printing in Europe before 1780*, pp. 513-527.

<sup>10</sup> Archives nationales de France (hereafter A.N.), F12, 1403. Arrêt du Conseil d'Etat, 26 octobre, 1686.

European development, and the repeal of the ban proposed not merely as an admittance of the futility of a dogmatic policy, but as part of a movement towards the liberalisation of commerce and industry, an increased laxity of legislation, and burgeoning demand for industrial freedom in pre-Revolutionary France. The ban will be contextualised in a brief overview of the French political and social situation pre-1686, and the regulation of trade and industry in seventeenth-century France under the *ancien régime*. In particular, the effects of the system of privileges and the pleas against them, which were central to the prohibition, are described.

### **Organisation of the thesis**

In the following chapters, this study aims to draw together the major themes during the period of illegal activity before 1759, including the stated reasons for the ban, and those more covert; the legislative labyrinth of the *ancien régime* and its contribution to the ineffectiveness of the prohibition; the technical challenges of reproducing the imported fabrics in France; and an analysis of the developments which led to the eventual repeal of the laws. The thesis is necessarily ordered chronologically to provide an overview of the development of the ban during its application, but is also organised thematically around the particular predominant influences of the three significant stages in the repression of *toiles peintes*. The first of these, starting with the initial prohibition of 1686, concentrated on controlling the presence of the forbidden fabrics in the kingdom by limiting their entry; then compiling inventories of the permitted goods and, supposedly, destroying the illegal imports which were found. In addition, nascent printing workshops were suppressed and their equipment ordered to be destroyed. The first twenty years of prohibitive legislation are examined chronologically in Chapter 2, it being the period of the greatest concentration of rulings and new measures. The context is explained through profiles of the *Compagnie*, which defended its vested interests against the textile manufactures, and the *Conseil de Commerce*, the royally appointed commission which judged matters of trade. The effect of the interests of individuals in the continuation of the policy is highlighted, with commentary on the contradiction of the rulings and their escalation over time.

Chapter 3 focuses on the challenges of provincial enforcement through a case study of the application of the ban in Nantes from 1705 to 1715, a period of intense repression concentrated on eradicating the sale and use of printed fabrics through ever more serious punishments. The Atlantic port of Nantes was the centre of the *Compagnie*'s operations and the site of its annual cargo auctions. The abundant surviving correspondence between

its *Maire* and *Intendants* has enabled a study of the dilemmas faced by administrators, while sworn statements of arrests and prosecutions have been used to demonstrate the suppression of individual rights which the prohibition represented. In particular, the susceptibility of women to punishment is discussed. Analysis of the clothes they were wearing when arrested on the street in several surprise clampdowns has been used to illustrate the popular patterns of cloth worn by ordinary women. For household furnishings, the analysis of more than a thousand affidavits of the belongings voluntarily declared in a year-long amnesty has provided insight into the goods owned by different levels of society. The result of these studies illustrate the prohibition's effect on the day-to-day lives of ordinary people. Nantes' role as an important point of entry for illegal goods is then examined through prosecutions of ships' captains for smuggling. Evidence of the insurmountable challenge of managing the vast quantities of impounded goods, and the opportunities this provided for corruption, are also delineated.

The fourth chapter examines the technical processes involved in cotton printing, in order to explain the challenges faced by the initial French workshops in imitating Indian fabrics. The techniques for dyeing and printing cotton used and perfected over hundreds of years in the Indian sub-continent are summarised and early European attempts at printing are outlined, along with contemporary travellers' accounts which attest to the types of fabrics imported via Persia and the Levant. The reports of French envoys in India, which aimed to improve the poor quality of French products once there was interest in developing techniques to other Europeans' standards, are used to support the hypothesis that Marseille workshops were producing an inferior product, which has largely been ignored.

Chapter 5 will examine how the demand for *toiles peintes* was fulfilled by contraband cloth; the criminal activity that this engendered; and the possibility that the State's very inflexibility was instrumental to the continued flouting of its laws. The importance of eliminating contraband activity cannot be underestimated. The sources are discussed, including the smuggling of Indian imports from other European countries, and the proliferation of copies made in states where printing was by this time legal. This constantly provoked new iterations of the proscription from 1715 to the mid-1730s, with particular emphasis on the prosecution of organised gangs of smugglers, for whom the lucrative illegal *indiennes* became an important part of their trade in banned commodities. An examination of the increase in clandestine printing in protected areas reveals how workshops were able to thrive despite their interdiction, while people's growing discontent with the ban is indicated by examples of social unrest at the enforcement of the penalties

for wearing and selling *indiennes*. Research shows this was partially fuelled by the disregard for the law demonstrated by the ruling elite, who continued to wear prints in public, and also offered protection to individuals facing prosecution. The pronouncements of the 1720s by a government exasperated by its lack of power are shown to have been constantly rendered impotent by its own contradictory policies.

Chapter 6 examines different types of printing activity during the prohibition. It includes a previously unstudied case of a request to print by an inventor and his aristocratic patron in the early eighteenth century, which emphasises the total repression of invention. It is proposed that the perfunctory techniques of the clandestine workshops were aimed only at replication and not innovation. Conversely, an example of an aristocrat whose experimentation with sophisticated processes in a private *atelier* was aimed at replicating high-quality Asian wares is considered. Technological advances in countries which were free to experiment saw the successful establishment of printing industries in many countries around Europe by the 1740s, and this engendered a lobby for the lifting of the French legislation, which is described in Chapter 7. The enforcement of the prohibition was gradually relaxed, but the debate for and against its preservation raged on throughout the 1740s and 1750s. Social and economic factors were used as arguments by both those who did not wish the legislation repealed, and those who viewed its potential relaxation as an encouragement to industrial development. This debate has fascinated many historians and is the area best covered by authors of both French history and industrialisation and, as such, will not be a major focus of the study. The end of the prohibition and the subsequent establishment of a multitude of small manufactures across France which swiftly followed the repeal in 1759 are outlined.

The concluding chapter summarises the evidence presented which confirms the hypothesis that there was not one, but multiple reasons for the ban, and these worked in concert to reinforce the call for prohibition every few years. The first of these was the need to encourage the business of the state-protected *Compagnie*, a policy which worked directly against eradicating printed fabrics; the second was the vested interest of individuals who were benefiting from the situation; and a third was the government's fear of its potential inability to control the new industry and the quality of its products, which was anathema to a state whose economy relied heavily on the reputation of its luxury textile products. Added to these hindrances was the impossibility of effectively policing the prohibition and eradicating printed fabrics from the kingdom. The government's blinkered inability to recognise the benefits of encouraging innovation, and its dogmatic insistence on the

regulation of both enterprise and individual autonomy combined to make it impotent. Finally, it will be proposed that the evidence of two vastly different products in circulation exposes the contradiction noted in current authorship: that *indiennes* were popular because they were cheap, yet simultaneously are described as desirable luxury textiles the West could not emulate; and that due to a lack of extant fabric samples, recent assumptions over the nature of French products and their methods of production must be discounted.

### **Previous authors' work on the ban**

The principal sources for this study have been the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rulings and decrees issued for the regulation of the textile industries by the French national and provincial governments, as a method of controlling the production and commerce of industries which were vital to the export economy. From a social standpoint these documents represent the monitoring of the activities of individuals through their professions, and of their personal habits through sumptuary laws. Extensive use of French unpublished primary manuscript sources has permitted new discoveries and different interpretations of their content. These were studied in their original language, with the author's English translations provided in the thesis.

The Edicts and the rulings passed under the auspices of the *Conseil de Commerce* were studied in their manuscript form in the French National Archives: fortunately, an impressive quantity of these have survived the French Revolution. The vast collection of extant papers, however, is only classified by its overall topic, and the individual documents are not arranged by date, providing a challenge which may have forced previous researchers to be selective rather than exhaustive in their choices of sources. These papers have been supplemented by further manuscript correspondence in provincial and municipal archives, and private collections. Collected anthologies which summarise other contemporary documents have also been important, particularly Boislisle's work, which collates the vast correspondence of the Ministers and their *Intendants* between 1683 and 1715 into an edited overview. This, however, is not exhaustive on the prohibition, and has been complemented by study of the surviving personal correspondence between the *Intendants* and their sub-delegates.<sup>11</sup> Secondary sources were used to support the themes

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<sup>11</sup> The Bruyard Archive (hereafter B.A.) in the International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam, has been useful as a complement to the manuscripts in the Archives nationales. It contains both the official documents and correspondence that Pierre Bruyard (1707-1793), chief clerk of the *Bureau du Commerce* and later director of the *Balance du Commerce*, and his son Charles-Jean-Baptiste (ca.1753-1817), who was affiliated with the *Inspection des Manufactures*, collected over the course of their careers. The documents

derived from the study of the original manuscripts, rather than being relied upon for information.

Unfortunately, the serious lacuna of this subject is the lack of textile samples from the prohibition period, but an object-focused material culture approach was nonetheless used, examining surviving cloth and garments from the post-prohibition period for comparison. To supplement this, cargo lists, auction inventories and the statements of confiscated goods have been used to provide valuable contemporary information throughout the research. When combined, these sources provided the possibility of disputing the assertions constantly made on the nature of prohibition-era prints from later textiles.

Central to the study has been the examination of the rulings of the *Conseil de Commerce*, which includes the petitions of those who wished the prohibition of printed textiles enforced, and the pleas to the same authority of those who did not. All are interested parties with a biased view based on their vested interests, and there is no surviving disinterested contemporary commentary. Therefore, erroneous assumptions may have inadvertently been made by historians, based on the available documentation at their period of study, and their conclusions have sometimes been superseded by later discoveries. Equally, contemporary suppositions made regarding the nature of the textiles produced in France during the prohibition may still be rendered inaccurate should a new set of documents or a previously unknown archive be published. As well as the dearth of remaining samples of fabrics and unbiased commentary on the prohibition, the contraband nature of the commerce adds an additional impediment. Few records would have been made of illegal transactions.

Texts related to the prohibition period published since the early twentieth century fall into several categories. They are either chronological but not analytical; examine only one individual aspect of the prohibition (political or technical); or view it through the prism of the developments in textiles manufacturing techniques after the prohibition was lifted. It is usually included as a preface to studies of the cotton industry in the Industrial Revolution, in order to underline the importance of the invention of superior techniques (mechanised copper-plate printing) by emphasising the amateurish nature of the prior practices, and defining the goods which were replaced as being of baser quality.<sup>12</sup> Even the seminal work

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relate mainly to the French trade balance in the second half of the 18th century, in particular the textile industry.

<sup>12</sup> For example in Mélanie Riffel & Sophie Rouart, *La Toile de Jouy* (Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 2003), pp. 13-14.

by Stanley Chapman and Serge Chassagne, *European Textile Printers in the Eighteenth Century*, which compared the successful factories of Peel in Lancashire and Oberkampf at Jouy-en-Josas, included little examination of the preceding period in France. In the 1980s, with access to the Oberkampf papers, Chassagne expanded upon the work by early twentieth-century authors on Oberkampf's factory, primarily from a socio-economic viewpoint. In addition he greatly increased the understanding of the proto-factories in France founded upon the repeal of the ban, through studies of all the early legal establishments.<sup>13</sup> However, all statements on the quality of seventeenth-century processes in France must be mitigated by the fact that, without samples of the products themselves, their nature cannot accurately be presumed, nor the exact method of their production confirmed irrefutably. In particular, it is a flawed assumption they were similar to surviving post-1730 fabrics.

Works which describe the early French cotton industry focus on the production of the goods, in particular the processing of the raw cotton (spinning and weaving), rather than the application of decoration. The only work entirely dedicated to the history of the ban on *indiennes* is Edgard Depitre's *La toile peinte en France au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècles* of 1912.<sup>14</sup> In the following decades his contemporaries elucidated various aspects: Henri Clouzot on printed cotton manufacture in France after the legalisation of printing in 1759, particularly the manufacture at Jouy, which includes a brief summary of activity during the prohibition; and Hyacinthe Chobaut on the early workshops in Marseille, Avignon and Orange. Several other histories of the beginnings of the printing industry in specific provinces exist.<sup>15</sup> Depitre's work is encyclopaedic on cataloguing the chronological events of the prohibition, through the rulings and correspondence available. It is, however, naturally limited to the discoveries made at the time he was writing. For example, he considered printing on fabric to be a European invention derived from paper

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<sup>13</sup> Serge Chassagne, *Le Coton et ses patrons: France 1760-1840* (Paris: EHESS, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> Edgard Depitre, *La toile peinte en France au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1912).

<sup>15</sup> Henri Clouzot, *Histoire de la manufacture de Jouy et de la toile imprimée en France* (Paris: G. Van Oest, 1928); Hyacinthe Chobaut, *L'industrie des indiennes à Marseille avant 1680* (Vaison-la-Romaine: Macabet Frères, s.d.); and Hyacinthe Chobaut, *L'industrie des Indiennes à Avignon et à Orange (1677-1884)*, Extrait des mémoires de l'Académie de Vaucluse (Avignon: s.n., 1938). The most useful provincial studies have been Dardel, *Les Manufactures de toiles peintes et de serges imprimées à Rouen et à Bolbec*; Victor-Louis Bourrilly, 'La Contrebande des Toiles Peintes en Provence au XVIIIe Siècle', in *Annales du Midi*, Vol. XXVI, (1914), pp. 52-75; Louis Morin, 'Recherches sur l'impression des toiles dites 'indiennes' à Troyes (1766-1828)', in *Mémoires de la Société académique de l'Aube* (Troyes: P. Nouet & J.-L. Paton, 1913); and Maurice Garsonnin, 'La manufacture de toiles peintes d'Orléans' in J. Hayem (ed.), *Mémoires et documents pour servir à l'histoire du commerce et de l'industrie en France* (Paris: Hachette, 1913), pp. 1-36.



printing.<sup>16</sup> This is curious, as he had studied a 1734 manuscript by a ship's officer, Antoine de Beaulieu, which described only dyeing and hand-painting fabrics in south-east India.<sup>17</sup> It was definitively disproved in the 1950s by P.R. Schwartz, a textile dye chemist and historian of the development of the printing industry in Mulhouse, based on his studies of additional manuscripts which came to light in the mid-twentieth century, long after Depitre was writing. These included the observations on printing in Gujarat made by a *Compagnie* employee, Georges Roques, in 1678; the processes described in the letters of Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux, a Jesuit missionary, written in 1742 and 1747; and the 1795 report of the English botanist William Roxburgh; all of which were studied by Schwartz in collaboration with John Irwin of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, an expert on Indian textiles.<sup>18</sup> Schwartz concluded that some of the high-quality *indiennes* exported to Europe from the Coromandel Coast outposts had a wood-block outline stamped upon them before the fields of the design were dyed with the reserve method, with additional colours sometimes later applied by hand.

Depitre pointed out that the interchangeability of the terms '*toile peinte*' and '*toile imprimée*' led nineteenth-century historians to confuse the types of fabric which were in circulation, but there could not have been any confusion between the actual fabrics. The early European products were poor, hastily produced and not colour-fast. They were in no way comparable to the brilliant Indian '*chints*', which were described as only becoming brighter when washed, a fact subsequently disproved, but which nonetheless illustrates the impression the imported fabrics made. Nor were the Indian fabrics popular because they were cheap, as the high price of goods noted in cargo lists in this study attests. Prasanan Parthasarathi has shown that in fact wages were not significantly cheaper in India than in the countries to which the goods were exported, indicating that it was the high quality of *indiennes* which made them covetable.<sup>19</sup> The imports were beautifully crafted and decorated to a standard unequalled in Europe, either stylistically or technically, and the cloth was more finely spun and skilfully woven. It is a fallacy therefore to believe that the imported *indiennes* became a successful commodity simply because they were cheap and

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<sup>16</sup> Baines had remarked in 1835 that printing had been practised in India 'for thousands of years', which, although an exaggeration, suggests the misconception that printing originated in Europe was not shared by the English. Baines, *History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain*, p. 81.

<sup>17</sup> Antoine de Beaulieu, *Manière de fabriquer les toiles peintes dans l'Inde, telle que Mr de Beaulieu, capitaine de vaisseau, l'a fait exécuter devant luy à Pondichéry* (S.n.: s.l.). Muséum national d'histoire naturelle, Ms 193 (1, 2).

<sup>18</sup> The content of these manuscripts and their relevance is discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>19</sup> Prasannan Parthasarathi, 'Rethinking wages and competitiveness in the eighteenth century', in *Past and Present*, no. 158 (1998), pp. 79-109.

colourful. Although this may have been the case elsewhere, those imported by the French were expensive and prized for their technical brilliance and innovation. If French products had resembled those worn by the privileged, the vogue may have lost its cachet among those who imitated them, rather than continuing for a seventy-three year period.

In terms of a historiography of textiles, this category of product was not considered worthy of study until the nineteenth century, and then only as the sector which developed the earliest mechanical forms of mass-production and introduced the grouping of labour in proto-industrial factories from which major industry developed. Histories of the enormously successful luxury industries have been particularly prevalent, particularly French silk, from its earliest artisanal European production to the development of mechanical looms and the first incorporation of both accurate, repeatable pattern and an outpouring of creativity.<sup>20</sup> Prior to these economic studies, writing on textiles and clothing was limited to practicality: instructions on the spinning and weaving of cloth; pattern books and technical manuals; and sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuals for dyeing indigenous textiles. Any studies related to printing during the prohibition had to be published abroad.

Another section of the historiography of textiles relates to their decorative nature as objects of sensory pleasure. An appreciation of their inspirational design also began in the nineteenth century, before which neither fashion nor textile design was considered to be an ‘art’ on the level of painting or sculpture. This developed throughout the twentieth century through museum collections, both for study and for general interest. The communication of design through textiles has today resulted in a large body of attractively illustrated literature intended for the general public, with a smaller number of academic texts. A current focus of interest is on the economic importance of the global trade of cotton and cotton textiles, which has resulted in recent scholarly collaborations of an international nature, collected into conference papers and compendiums of individual research, as well as books for a wider audience. In particular the Global Economic History Network (GEHN), a ten-year project associating scholars from around the world, produced many working papers which

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<sup>20</sup> Early works include E. Pariset, *Histoire de la fabrique Lyonnais* (Lyon: A. Rey, 1901); and J. Godart, *L'ouvrier en soie, etc.* (1899) (Geneva: Slatkine, 1976). More recent studies include Lesley Miller, *Silk Designers in the Lyon Silk Industry 1712-87* (unpublished PhD thesis, Brighton Polytechnic, 1988) on the practices and context of artistic creation in the Lyon silk industry; Lesley Miller, *Selling Silks: A Merchant's Sample Book* (London: V&A Publications, 2014); Natalie Rothstein, *Silk designs of the Eighteenth century in the Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990) on the designs themselves; and Liliane Hilaire-Perez, *L'invention technique au siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000) on technical innovation.

have evolved into publications that have created a new genre of learned studies which are at the same time general-interest publications, decoratively illustrated.<sup>21</sup> The reach of these new publications has been extended by the collaboration of historians of Asia with Western economic historians, who have added the perspective of the history of goods and consumption, particularly in the eighteenth century.

### **The Development of Commerce with Asia**

The popularity of printed cotton, which drove the development of substitution industries, was a result of the development of commerce with Asia in the seventeenth century, which offered the possibility of acquiring ‘exotic’ goods to the mercantile nations of Western Europe. Curiosities at first, the refined design and high quality of Oriental goods, based on long-established and specialised techniques unknown in the West, made them objects of desire and status.<sup>22</sup> Portuguese merchants brought ‘painted’ fabrics (*pintadoes*) from India to Europe at the end of the sixteenth century as packaging material for porcelain wares, lacquer-work and silks, and even as ballast. Interest in the curiously decorated and brightly coloured cotton grew, and it is thought that the Dutch were the first nation to import it as a commodity in its own right. Their success, along with that of the English East India Company, saw the trade multiply exponentially. In France, Indian textiles were listed in a few inventories after death in Marseille early in the seventeenth century, however these ‘*palampores*’ were destined for wall hangings and bed-chamber curtains in domestic interiors due to their large-scale designs.<sup>23</sup> (Figures 3 and 4.) By the 1630s a regular trade route for these rare and extremely expensive decorative textiles had been established from India via the Levant, resulting in them being called ‘Levantine Cloths’ (*toiles du Levant*) or ‘Persians’ (*toiles perses*). Their mysterious provenance gave them an added attraction, and their exact origin was neither questioned nor of importance to French customers. By 1658,

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<sup>21</sup> Including: Beverly Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: the Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1600-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Giorgio Riello & Prasanna Parthasarathi (eds), *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Giorgio Riello & Tirthankar Roy (eds), *How India Clothed the World: the World of South Asian Textiles, 1500-1850* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); and Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> On the development of the European market for luxury Asian goods, see Maxine Berg & Helen Clifford (eds), *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> Chobaut, *L'industrie des indiennes à Marseilles avant 1680*, p.1.

when the journalist and poet Loret listed them among the merchandise being offered at the St-Germain Fair in Paris, they had already become known *indiennes*:

Antiques, trifles,  
Bonbons, silks and laces,  
*Indiennes*, in screens.<sup>24</sup>

Dependent upon other European East India Companies for the exotic textiles until the mid-century, printed cottons began to arrive directly at Nantes and Saint-Malo in quantity after the founding of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* in 1664.<sup>25</sup> By the second half of the seventeenth century a vogue had been created in all European countries for informal home attire, dressing gowns and housecoats for men, women and children.<sup>26</sup> (Figures 5 and 6.) By 1670, they were a sufficiently *à la mode* for Molière to poke fun at the pretentious Monsieur Jordan in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* by dressing him in the latest fashion, a ‘*banyan*’ or Indian-printed robe:

If I have made you wait a little, it is because I have dressed myself today as the people of quality do. My tailor has sent me silk stockings... and you see me, decked out in finery from head to toe... I had this *indienne* made for me.<sup>27</sup>

At the cutting edge of fashion, court ladies began to have fashionable dresses made in the new fabrics around the same time, and before long wealthy women began to emulate them: the fashionable diarist Madame de Sévigné gave one to her daughter in 1672. (Figures 7 and 8.) Historians have repeated Edgard Depitre’s assertion that the ‘vogue’ for *indiennes* began when the Siamese embassy visited the court of Versailles in 1680, but this

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<sup>24</sup> Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 3. ‘*Dès 1658, Loret, le gazetier-poète, leur fait place à la foire Saint-Germain, si bien fournie “En antiquailles, bagatelles, Confitures, draps et dentelles, En indiennes, en écrans”.*’

<sup>25</sup> The English and Dutch Companies were established in 1600 and 1602 respectively: other nations which established early Companies were Denmark (1616) and Portugal (1628). A royal charter to unite three existing trading organisations had been granted in 1629, but it was unsuccessful and abandoned.

<sup>26</sup> A predominance of children’s clothing in a survey of cotton stocks in Spain is noted by James J. K. Thomson, ‘Marketing Channels and Structures in Spain in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century: Two Contrasting Cases’, in J. Bottin & N. Pellegrin (eds), *Échanges et cultures textiles dans l’Europe Pré-Industrielle*, Revue du Nord, Hors Série, Collection Histoire, no. 12, (1996), pp. 335-357. He notes that they perhaps appear as such a high proportion of sewn goods because adult clothing would have been made-to-measure. This may have led to misjudgements on the number and type of calicoes imported, and their distribution and use.

<sup>27</sup> Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (Molière), *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, 1670 (Paris: Hachette, 1972), Act I, Scene II. ‘*Je vous ai fait un peut attendre; mais c’est que je me fais habiller aujourd’hui comme de gens de qualité; mon tailleur m’a envoyé des bas de soie... vous me verrez équipé comme il faut, depuis les pieds jusqu’à la tête... je me suis fait faire cette indienne-ci.*’ As silk was the clothing of status for the middling classes, this denotes the luxurious nature of the robe, and that *indiennes* were high-status goods in France. In contrast, John Irwin concluded that in England prior to the 1680’s, ‘Indian chintz was worn only by the menial classes... The earliest mention of fashionable women in England adopting the chintz fashion for dresses appears in the Company’s records of 1687.’ John Irwin & P.-R. Schwartz, *Studies in Indo-European History* (Ahmedabad: Calico Museum of Textiles, 1966).

event is clearly too late, as it is unfeasible that a new fashion would be so widespread in six years that a ban would need to be enforced by 1686.<sup>28</sup> It actually refers to other textiles, known as *siamoises*, which may have contained gold or silver threads to imitate the richness of the foreigners' gowns. (Figure 9.) These were described in 1751 in the *Encyclopédie* as 'a silk and linen fabric seen for the first time in France when the ambassadors of the king of Siam came here in the reign of Louis XIV' but noted that by that date they were woven from a linen and cotton mixture which was 'more successful'.<sup>29</sup> Although some were 'made with large and others small stripes of many colours', plain versions must have been used for the experimental printing which was carried out during the prohibition. Compelling evidence of the earlier popularity of *indiennes* is the 'Damoiselle de Toile' a satirical cartoon engraving for the frontispiece of the *Almanach* for 1681 entitled, 'The Regrets of the Lady of *Toiles peintes* for the departure of the fashion.' The lady, dressed head-to-toe in printed fabrics, begs, 'Lovely fashion for prints, stay in Paris, do not run away to other countries'. The Fashion for *Toiles peintes* (represented by another figure similarly dressed) replies: 'Against my nature since four or five years, I have distributed *toiles* to the rich and poor, but now I must run quickly to other places and make ladies with my garments'.<sup>30</sup> (Figure 10.) This demonstrates that the mode took hold at least five years before the first restriction, which coincides with the documented rise in the fabrics as a percentage of the *Compagnie*'s cotton cargoes in the 1680s.<sup>31</sup> It suggests that the government had been considering a protectionism-inspired ban to halt the '*mode des toiles peintes*' and appease the textile guilds at that time, and appears to refer to an undiscovered order pre-dating the prohibition, presumably to the *Compagnie des Indes*, to

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<sup>28</sup> Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 2, citing R. Forrer, *Die Kunst des Zeugdrucks vom Mittelalter bis zur Empirezeit* (Strasbourg: s.n., 1898). 'Suivant R. Forrer, c'est l'ambassade siamoise, venue en 1680 à la cour de Louis XIV, qui "aurait fait remarquer du grand monde" des toiles peintes à fleurs et le goût s'en serait répandu soudain.'

<sup>29</sup> Denis Diderot & Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Paris: Briasson, 1751). Tome XV, p. 153, article *Siamoise*: 'Étoffe mêlée de soie & de fil qu'on a vue la première fois en France, lorsque les ambassadeurs du roi de Siam y vinrent sous le règne de Louis XIV. Les siamoises de fil & de coton ont été plus heureuses; il s'en fait toujours un assez grand commerce. Les unes sont à grandes, & les autres à petites raies de diverses couleurs; leur largeur est de demi-aune, ou de près d'une aune: quelques-unes se savonnent.'

<sup>30</sup> Anon., *Almanach pour l'an de grace MDCLXXXI*. 'Les regrets de la Damoiselle de Toile pour le départ de la mode des toiles'. (Paris: Chez Habert, 1681). La Damoiselle de Toile: '*Belle Mode des toiles demeure a Paris, et n'alez pas troter dans les autres pais*'. La Mode des Toiles: '*Contre mon naturel depuis quatre ou cinq ans, J'ay débité des toiles aux petit et au grans, Il faut que aux autre lieux je cour promptement, Faire des damoiselle par mes habillemens.*'

<sup>31</sup> The *Compagnie* imported a much smaller quantity of cotton textiles than its English equivalent, but painted or printed fabrics constituted a larger portion. Haudrière found the percentage of chintzes in the *Compagnie*'s cargoes of cotton to be 34 % in 1681, 43 % in 1682, 44 % in 1683, 57 % in 1684, but then the growth halted as a result of the prohibition to less than 20%. (Philippe Haudrière, private correspondence, June 10, 2014.)

re-export the fabrics which had become so fashionable. In addition, a 1702 complaint by the silk workers of several leading French cities stated that, ‘The use of Indian cloths, the consumption of which has been prodigious for thirty years has halted the use of silks of cloth or silver made in France’, which also puts the date firmly in the 1670s.<sup>32</sup>

Historians have surmised that it was the Armenian immigrant population of Marseille which transferred the knowledge of textile printing techniques from the East to Europe via the Levant, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. There is evidence that the first import-substitution workshops started in that city, which Depitre dated to around 1660. In a later extensive study of the Marseille archives relating to the businesses of that port, Hyacinthe Chobaut attributed it to 1648, and recent work by Olivier Raveux has expanded upon this and shown the trade was flourishing by the 1660s.<sup>33</sup> This indicates that a mix of French goods and imported fabrics had been circulating widely for at least twenty-five years before the ban. This is a more realistic timeframe for the fashion to have diffused to all areas of the country, and be perceived as a threat by the other textile manufacturing industries. Once the fashion started on a significant scale, the *Compagnie*, noting the fabrics’ growing popularity and potential value, augmented the volumes it imported, soon provoking outrage among the textile trades. The catalyst for the first act of prohibition seems to have been a strike of the wool workers in the winter of 1685, when a shipload of printed cottons ‘ruined the market for woollen goods’ increasing those trades’ demands for protection.<sup>34</sup> The resulting Edict of October 26, 1686 banned all sources of *toiles peintes*, both ‘painted in the Indies and counterfeited in the Kingdom’, as well as ordering the destruction of all printing blocks and equipment.<sup>35</sup> (Figure 11.) This clearly identifies that there were already two sources of the popular printed *indiennes* circulating in France at that date: Asian fabrics, and the products of French workshops which imitated them.

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<sup>32</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘Recueil des mémoires 1701-1702.’

<sup>33</sup> Chobaut, *L’industrie des indiennes à Marseilles avant 1680*; Olivier Raveux, ‘Spaces and Technologies in the Cotton Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: The Example of Printed Calicoes in Marseilles’, in *Textile History*, 36, no. 2 (2005), pp. 131-145. It is assumed this knowledge was also disseminated by the Armenians to Holland, where the first workshop was established in 1670, and from there to England (1676). For further discussion of Marseille and the Levantine trade see Katsumi Fukasawa, *Toilerie et Commerce du Levant: d’Alep à Marseille* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1987).

<sup>34</sup> Arthur-Michel de Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux des Finances avec les Intendants des Provinces, 1683-1715* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1894-97). Vol. I, article 165, ‘M. de Marillac, intendant à Rouen, au Contrôleur-général, 20 février, 1685.’

<sup>35</sup> A.N., F12, 1403. ‘Arrêt du Conseil d’Etat, 26 octobre, 1686.’

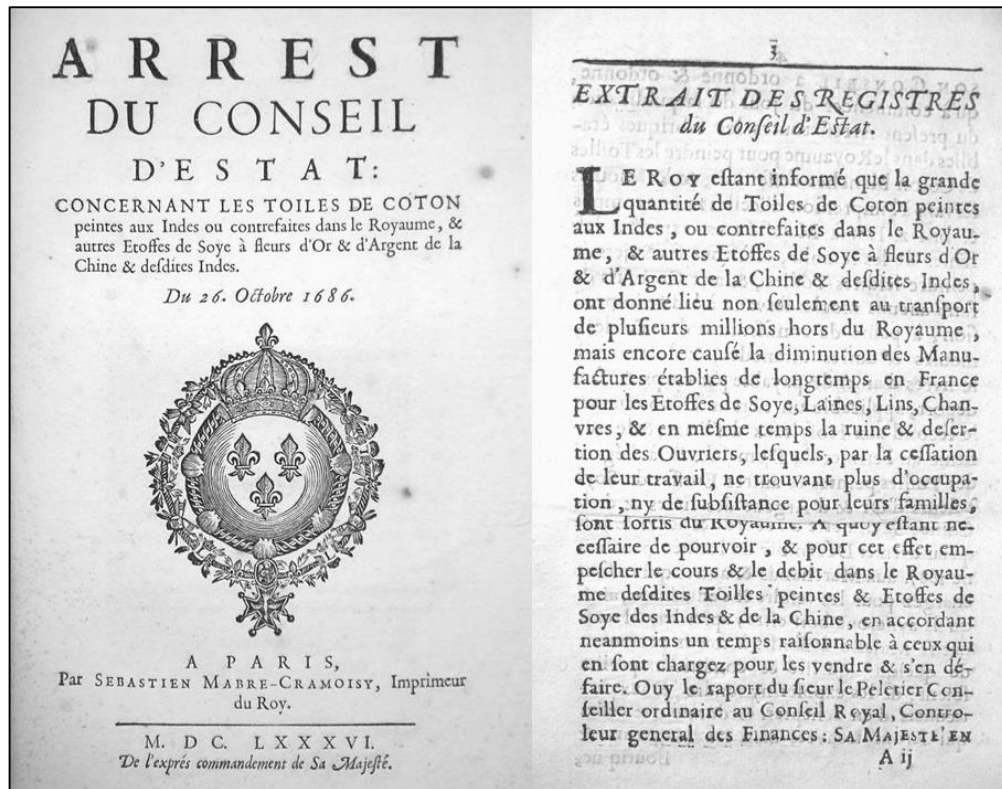


Fig. 11. The Edict of Prohibition of October 26, 1686.

The original *palampores* which were imported depicted large scale *tableaux* of exotic and Oriental subjects, particularly processions and other narratives featuring elephants, people and scenery. (Figure 12.) The English East India Company correctly anticipated the frenzy of acquisition which could be created by producing versions adapted to the European market. These integrated elements familiar to consumers, particularly European flowers, retaining the Indian colours and patterned backgrounds, but eliminating the elements considered too ‘foreign’.<sup>36</sup> (Figure 13.) In France, the *directeurs* of the *Compagnie* began to commission the desirable painted cloths for their personal use. In 1675, the first Governor of the French trading post of Pondicherry in India reported that he ‘thought it would be possible to set up such a manufacture to cater exclusively to European tastes, including printing cloths with armorial crests and porcelain for the table’.<sup>37</sup> (Figure 14.) Their popularity drove the *Compagnie*, like its English and Dutch

<sup>36</sup> G.P. Baker, *Calico Painting and Printing in the East Indies in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (London: Edward Arnold, 1921); Beverly Lemire, ‘Domesticating the exotic: Floral culture and the East India Calico Trade with England, c. 1600-1800’, in *Textile*, 1, no.1, (2003), pp. 65-85.

<sup>37</sup> Cited in H.-R. d’Allemagne, *La Toile imprimée et les Indiennes de Traite* (Paris, Gründ, 1942), p. 65. ‘Il serait possible de mettre en place une fabrique pour répondre exclusivement aux goûts européens, y compris les toiles peintes, avec des devises armoiries et la porcelaine pour la table.’ Modern-day Puducherry, on the Coromandel Coast of south-western India, was a region known for its fine painted cottons.

rivals, to continuously increase its quantities, until this incidental consignment became its primary cargo. The English East India Company imported more than one million pieces of calico in 1684.<sup>38</sup> The French were not importing on the same scale as early as their rivals. The English Company had a significantly stronger presence in India, having established its factories more than half a century before the French, who found it difficult to secure territory from which to trade. Quantities significantly increased from the third quarter of the seventeenth century onwards, however, due to consumer demand for these wares.<sup>39</sup>

Most authors credit the demand for cotton fabrics to the comfort provided by their lightness, as the home-grown staples of wool, linen and hemp could not be spun into anything so fine as the new Indian cotton percales and muslins. (Figures 15 and 16.) This ignores that as outer garments they would only have been sufficiently warm for those living in a Southern European climate. It was their potential to replace linen as under-garments which actually created the huge market. People wore a linen shift or shirt next to their skin, which was changed as frequently as they could afford. The arrival of cheaper plain cotton fabrics enabled all but the very poorest to own multiple items, and this familiarity with the fibre would have hastened the acceptance of patterned cottons as clothing. The visual impact of these new printed fabrics on the wider population must have been tremendous. Washability was another very important factor. Society ladies could perhaps afford to dress in a painted fabric and then discard it after a few uses, but the vast majority of the population had few clothes and the notion that something practical like a kerchief, or *mouchoir*, could be as decorative as a dress worn at court was infinitely appealing. (Figures 17 and 18.)

At the time, the average person's clothing would have consisted entirely of coarse cloth woven in solid colours, some in its natural undyed state. Deep and bright colours were more costly to dye, and pure white linen also required the additional cost of bleaching. The limited amount of clothing owned meant that garments were worn for a very long time, many already second-hand, and their longevity would also have reduced their attractiveness. Hand embroidery was the only way of embellishing one's own clothing, but this was time consuming, and the embroidery silks were so expensive that it was limited to small areas of the garment and usually to special-occasion wear. In fact, the

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<sup>38</sup> K.N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 96-7. This however may include plain as well as printed cottons. See n.51.

<sup>39</sup> Philippe Haudrère, *La Compagnie française des Indes au XVIIIe siècle*, 4 vols (Paris: Librairie de l'Inde, 1989), Tome I, p. 293. Haudrère estimates the cotton cargo increased from 100,000 pieces at the end of the seventeenth century to 200,000 in the early eighteenth century and 300,000 a few decades later.



only patterned wide fabrics available in the seventeenth century were prohibitively expensive woven silks, but these were only for the wealthy. Broadly, representative images of figures or flowers were not reproduced on textiles for clothing.<sup>40</sup> Thus the widespread use of pattern on clothing was the immediate result of the arrival of printed cottons: these light, brightly decorated textiles democratised the use of the image.

For all these reasons the bright new prints were greatly prized, and entrepreneurial Frenchmen saw an opportunity to imitate the luxury items at home, cutting out the costs of transportation from India. With no French cotton industry, printing was attempted either on imported plain calicoes or on home-grown linen, but without technical success. As French copies were clumsily executed and, most importantly, were not colour-fast, they were no competition for the beautifully decorated painted goods imported from India. Chapter 4 discusses the required techniques and how attempts were made to uncover the secrets of colour-fast dyeing. While there are no known surviving samples from these mid-seventeenth century workshops, much later swatches which can be dated to the 1730s in Marseille show simplistic floral and geometric prints, suggesting that, 80 years earlier, the initial workshops would have produced technically inferior products.<sup>41</sup> (Figure 19.) Thus, the idea is explored that the local imitators were not in fact trying to reproduce anything as complex as the multi-coloured high-status Indian painted cloths, but rather lower quality fabrics to sell to the mass market.

Therefore this study explores the possibility that for almost a hundred years from the founding of the first workshops in the late 1640s, the French *ateliers* were producing coarser, simple wood-block prints and resist-dyed cloths which were limited to one or two colours due to fastness problems. Once the *Compagnie* started to import superior quality *indiennes* in the 1660s there were several distinct categories of fabrics circulating: high-status hand-printed Indian designs; cheaper, but infinitely technically superior Indian cloths; and home-produced inferior imitations. All of these types of cloth were known as *indiennes* or *toiles peintes* in France, and as such have been wholly confused in the history

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<sup>40</sup> John Styles, 'Indian Cottons and European Fashion 1400-1800', in G. Adamson, G. Riello, & S. Teasley (eds), *Global Design History*, (London: Routledge, 2011). pp. 39-40. Styles notes a rapid development of the desire for patterned cloths in England in the seventeenth century including lighter silk or wool 'stuffs' which were worn by a wider section of the population. These patterns, however, would not include the decorative floral designs synonymous with Indian calicoes.

<sup>41</sup> The Bibliothèque Nationale de France holds swatches of cotton textiles printed in Marseilles from 1736, and reserve-printed swatches from the Arsenal manufacture in Paris dated 1755, both of which are very simple prints. What the patterns from a hundred years before were like is unknown, but it is improbable they approximated the true *indiennes*.

of the period of prohibition. The ban was a catch-all sumptuary law which intended to remove all these competing products which challenged the existing balance of textile trade.

### **The textile trades in seventeenth-century France**

Steeped in traditions and patterns of trade which had survived virtually intact since mediaeval times, under what was later dubbed the *ancien régime*, France was, as Goubert noted, ‘a patchwork of rural provinces with traditional attitudes, archaic techniques, chronic shortage of currency and poor communications, where the struggle for daily bread remains the over-riding consideration and every human grouping strives to be self-supporting.’<sup>42</sup> In this climate, any threat to livelihood, real or potential, had to be vigorously defended.

Despite having more than twice as many inhabitants as any other European state, a large taxable base which had brought extraordinary prosperity in the seventeenth century, by the end of that period France was in a parlous state, both financially, from decades of war, and physically, as a result of catastrophic climatic conditions.<sup>43</sup> The cold winter of 1691-1692 began a period of not only excessively low temperatures and prolonged frosts in winter, but periods of heavy rain in spring and even summer which were previously unknown. As crops failed and hardship increased, Louis XIV, embroiled in the War of the League of Augsburg, had few allies from whom he could purchase grain to help with the famine, and these years became known as *les années de misère*.<sup>44</sup>

The effect of these human disasters on commerce was devastating, but while the generally accepted view among twentieth-century historians has been that the final years of Louis XIV’s reign were ones of unmitigated economic disaster, more recently it has been suggested that this picture of desolation did not affect the economy, nor the entire country, as severely over the longer term as was imagined. ‘Whether or not one should speak of

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<sup>42</sup> Pierre Goubert, *The Ancien Régime: French Society 1600-1750* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London, 1973), p. 68. The *ancien régime* or ‘Old Regime’ is a blanket term used today for the period of the rule of the House of Bourbon (1589-1792), and more generally, its institutions, and the political and juridical structure of government of that time. This study briefly introduces those concepts in order to preface the period of the prohibition, 1686-1759.

<sup>43</sup> According to Vauban’s 1707 census, *Projet d’un dixme royal*, there were 19 million people. It is now considered this figure may have overestimated by as much as 2 million, but even so this was more than double that of its neighbouring countries. The many works of the renowned historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie cover this subject in detail. A useful summary can be found in *L’Ancien Régime, 1610-1770* (Paris: Hachette, 1991).

<sup>44</sup> Marcel Lachiver, *Les années de misère: La famine au temps du Grand Roi* (Paris: Fayard, 1991). Although the winter of 1709 (*le grand hiver*) and its resulting famine is remembered as the worst in French history, the famine of 1693-94 actually saw more deaths, with an estimated loss of 1,300,000 lives.

prosperity or utter devastation often depends on the year and the locality which one is studying,' noted Thomas Schaeper.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, the peasantry was so heavily taxed by seigneurial dues, tithes and State war levies that even in prosperous times it could not survive on agricultural labour alone, and many relied on artisanal textile production to supplement their income. Some supplied the early proto-industrial organised workshops in the large towns, for example, woollen cloth production in Amiens and Rouen, and silk in Lyon and Tours. The silk, woollen and linen trades were the foundation of France's economy: woven cloth was the country's primary export, which gave its producers tremendous influence, disproportionate to its financial value (5% of GDP) or workforce (5% of the population) because it brought much needed currency into the realm.<sup>46</sup>

The silk and woollen manufactures in particular were renowned for their high quality and guarded their industries jealously. According to Peter Robert Campbell their organisations were 'oligarchical groups determined to prevent competition from other merchants and keep out newcomers'.<sup>47</sup> The guilds, fostered by Louis XIV's first minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert as a means of encouraging quality and policing output, were subject to seemingly limitless regulations.<sup>48</sup> This protectionism has been traditionally viewed as having discouraged innovation and free enterprise, while encouraging counterfeiting and black market production. Recent works have questioned this accepted line of reasoning, refuting the assumption of the system's stagnating effect on commerce, and showing that guilds were more flexible and able to incorporate change than previously thought.<sup>49</sup> In the

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<sup>45</sup> See the discussion in Thomas J. Schaeper, *The Economy of France in the Second Half of the Reign of Louis XIV* (Montreal: ICES, 1980).

<sup>46</sup> Ernest Labrousse, Pierre Léon, Pierre Goubert, et al. (eds), *Histoire économique et sociale de la France moderne, Volume II : Des derniers temps de l'âge seigneurial aux préludes de l'âge industriel: 1660-1789* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1970).

<sup>47</sup> Peter Robert Campbell, *The Ancien Régime in France* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Historical Association Studies, 1998), p. 24.

<sup>48</sup> Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683) served as *Contrôleur-général des finances* from 1661 to 1683. The French appellation is used throughout as the office does not correspond exactly to any English equivalent. The role was created for Colbert at the start of Louis XIV's personal reign, combining several previous posts to centralise the administration of the financial system, but constituted more than that of a Minister of Finance, including the supervision of the *Intendants*, the Treasury and commerce, and thus giving the individual enormous power. Additionally Colbert, as *Secrétaire d'État de la Maison du Roi* was responsible for the many functions of the Royal Household, and as *Secrétariat d'État de la Marine* (after 1669) he also wielded control over the navy, naval construction and the colonies and thus held unrivalled influence over matters of State. The posts were divided after his death.

<sup>49</sup> Joël Mokyr, *The Gifts of Athena: Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). Mokyr argued that it was the 'knowledge economy' which drove the revolutions in technological and scientific development over the past two hundred years, that is, it was the access to intellectual ideas through widening social and institutional networks which enabled the Industrial Revolution and continued developments up to the present day. The recent thinking on guilds and innovation is well summarised in S.R. Epstein & M. Prak (eds), *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy, 1400-1800*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

French textile industry, Liliane Hilaire-Pérez has shown that within the particularly well-organised Lyon silk-workers guild the *Grande Fabrique*, a milieu of intense internal rivalry between master craftsmen fostered invention in design and technology and was rewarded through a support network which provided collective management of new processes.<sup>50</sup> This was unique, and overall the way in which rules and regulations were piled one on top of the other created a morass of legislation designed to restrict new inventions and competing imported products.

Trade in the *ancien régime* worked on the basis of *privilèges*, which granted specific authorisations, or exemption from decrees, at all levels of society. The system of privileges and dispensations radiated out from the monarch through layers of aristocracy appointed to posts of government and tax levying.<sup>51</sup> Privileges, or *lettres patentes*, should not be confused with the more recent concept of the patent, which grants exclusivity to a process or design. They were frequently withdrawn or superseded by dispensations to rivals and, having made its income from the initial sale of the privilege, the Crown and its representatives had little incentive to intervene if it was abused. After securing the perquisite, the recipient therefore had to be eternally vigilant that others would not usurp the advantage: the ‘policing’ of the privilege only occurred after a complaint to the appropriate authority. Additionally, the levels of government overlapped and it was possible to pursue an embargo with different authorities, but having a privilege revoked or an injunction enacted against a competitor did not mean that action would be taken. Privilege, therefore, was an unenforceable concept which led to bitter disputes that were ultimately unsolvable. In the case of printed cotton restrictions, Floud noted that, ‘In many cases the public authorities that granted privileges and exemptions legitimised the peculiar status of the new trade’.<sup>52</sup>

As the ancient textile guilds believed they had a royal monopoly to produce fabrics, they understandably contested the importing of cotton and cotton prints. To keep the textile weavers pacified in such difficult times, it was simple to acquiesce to their demands for a

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<sup>50</sup> Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, ‘Inventing in a World of Guilds: The case of silk fabrics in eighteenth century Lyon’, in S.R. Epstein & M. Prak (eds), *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 232-263.

<sup>51</sup> Hilaire-Pérez, *Inventing in a World of Guilds*, pp. 243-244. The situation within the technologically innovative silk industry in Lyon was slightly different. The municipality could grant exclusive local privileges (usually for the invention of an improvement to a silk loom or a related implement), but the inventor still had to apply to the Crown for a national privilege, and these were rarely granted. The *Grand Fabrique* preferred to offer the inventor a fee to make his invention public for the greater good of the silk workers, rather than allowing a monopoly.

<sup>52</sup> Peter Floud, ‘Origins of English Calico Printing’, in *Journal of the Society of Dyers and Colourists*, 76, (May 1960), pp. 278-281. While referring to the English situation, this comment is also relevant to the French trade.

ban. It was not seen as contradictory to concomitantly give permission to import the disputed fabrics: as a new commodity, the cottons did not strictly infringe on the guilds' rights, so the two issues could be dealt with separately. Understanding this duality of thought is vital in order to comprehend why exemptions swiftly followed every pronouncement of the ban, and the apparent contradiction of the State granting favours to the *Compagnie* at the expense of the established trades. To do so, the composition of the body which heard the arguments and adjudicated the disputes, the *Conseil de Commerce*, will be examined in the next chapter.

While the interdiction on printed cottons in France was unusual in its long duration, and the volume of legislation it generated was remarkable, the imbroglio produced by the attempts to control the import of *indiennes* was by no means unique. Similar long-running disputes took place over other exotic textiles, notably over importing Chinese and Bengal silks between the Lyon silk weavers and the *Compagnie*, and there were comparable conflicts over other commodities. For example, a set of regulations which also created a maze of contradictions and fuelled a contraband market existed concurrently for another a new product, coffee, which was introduced to France in 1657. The problem was that the government legislated against *toiles peintes* identically, as if they were a perishable commodity which would cease to exist if no more were imported. Unfortunately, as fabrics have a longer life, without burning all the existing garments in the country, they would not disappear in an ordained timeframe.

This policy of protecting older industries by prohibiting the development of new ones had been a feature of the French textile industry in the seventeenth century and was not unique to *toiles peintes*. For example, the importing of indigo for dyeing was embargoed to protect France's woad growers until 1737, while the dressmakers' innovation of fabric-covered buttons was outlawed in 1694 to protect the existing horn and metal button trades. New technology was constantly constrained, for instance, stocking-knitting frames were limited to certain towns in 1700, to protect hand-knitters' livelihoods. However, the banning of printed cotton fabrics was unlike any prohibition which had preceded it, outlawing both a *product* and a *process*. The intention of shielding the essential export revenue by maintaining France's reputation for high quality products was sincere, but regulation could only restrict access to new and desirable products for a limited time.

In 1686 *toiles peintes* were not the only textile goods targeted: the Edict prohibited the introduction of pure silk fabrics, silk and cotton mixes, gold and silver weaves and

'*écorce d'arbres des Indes*'.<sup>53</sup> The classification of *toiles peintes* with other fabrics which were luxury items signals their perceived competition to the Lyon silk manufactures.<sup>54</sup> It reinforces the theory that initially the textile lobby was aimed only at high-end hand-painted products which threatened the market for expensive silks, worn only by courtiers and the very wealthy.

The demand for protection from competition by the *anciennes manufactures* was the reaction of a textile industry which had been threatened for at least fifty years: the effects of continual war and periodic famine on the workforce; the continual devaluation of currency; the increasing loss of foreign markets; and the usurping of the exclusivity of their techniques to quality goods from other countries, had all affected their success. To combat these dire circumstances, from the late 1660s the government promoted the centralisation of the silk industry around Lyon, to the detriment of the silk-weaving centres of Tours and Nîmes. Lyon's industry then experienced extraordinary growth, with production tripling by 1690. The silk weavers, who were the initial petitioners for a prohibition, had a reputation for complaining about hardship: Colbert wrote to the *Intendant* of Tours in 1682 that he felt that weavers' accounts of the decline were exaggerated.<sup>55</sup> Thus the weavers aimed to protect their livelihoods against future, rather than current, threats.

The wool industry was in a period of stagnation in the late seventeenth century in terms of production: the number of looms steadily dropped and output was reduced as the French weavers struggled to compete in international markets, and faced mounting prices for raw wool. Nonetheless there were pockets of success: Languedoc wool sales, for example, actually increased significantly at the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth.<sup>56</sup> Production of the other indigenous fibres, linen and hemp, was declining by the 1680s. England and Holland had begun their own manufactures, cutting off those markets, and war effectively severed access to others for long periods between

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<sup>53</sup> Jacques Savary des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire universel de Commerce, contenant tout ce qui concerne le commerce qui se fait dans les quatre parties du monde* (Paris: J. Estienne, 1723-1730), Vol. II, p. 1074, article 'Escorce d'Arbre'. A cloth made from the bark of a tree whose long filaments could be spun like hemp fibre, which was 'not as soft and lustrous as silk, but not as hard and matte as hemp'. Which exact Asian tree is not detailed. Tree bark was also imported in great quantities for dyeing.

<sup>54</sup> The French term *manufacture* is used throughout, to signify not *manufacturers* in the modern sense of factory production, but rather the bodies (similar to chambers of commerce) which organised themselves to represent centres of production. They are often referred to as the *anciennes manufactures*, denoting both their longevity and status, and distinguishing them from the new competition.

<sup>55</sup> Pierre Clément, *Lettres instructions et mémoires de Colbert publiés par Pierre Clément, Vol. II: Industrie, commerce* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1861-62), p. 742. Regarding the post of *Intendant*, see n. 48.

<sup>56</sup> T.J. Markovitch, *Histoire des Industries françaises: les industries lainières de Colbert à la Revolution* (Geneva: Droz, 1976).

1683 and 1717. In addition, the French continued to import increasing quantities of goods from the Levant over this period, which left an imbalance of trade as wool exports declined, and discontent mounted at the amount of specie leaving the country to purchase Oriental imports.<sup>57</sup> Fear of increased competition in the home market from *indiennes* provoked an extreme reaction. Schaeper points out that in the *Conseil*, the ‘almost rabid hatred of the *deputés* of trade for *toiles peintes* was surprising, as few of them came from regions which would have been seriously affected by the new industry, and many from cities which would have doubtless benefitted from the growing trade.’<sup>58</sup>

The manufactures’ other complaint, that the new industry would steal their skilled workers, was not only unfounded, but also nonsensical. Wood-block printing was not labour-intensive, the labourers were relatively unskilled and not well paid. It is unlikely therefore, that members of the silk and woollen guilds, who had served long apprenticeships, would leave their skilled occupations, unless there was a serious shortage of work. Rather, the people who set up printing workshops have been shown to be those excluded from the elitist guild system, such as Protestant workers who could not meet the guilds’ religious entry qualifications, immigrants and individuals unable to find an apprenticeship with a Master. The exodus of Protestant workers from the textile industries was actually due to religious oppression over several decades, culminating one year before the prohibition in the 1685 signing of the Edict of Fontainebleau, now known commonly as the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. This definitively removed all the rights granted to Protestants ninety years earlier, requiring them to convert to Catholicism on pain of death, and thus effectively outlawing the sect. Unusually for an act of religious persecution, Protestants were also forbidden to leave the country, a recognition of their value to the economy, but this did not stop vast numbers deserting, many of whom were skilled textile workers, in particular silk weavers.<sup>59</sup> The exact numbers of Huguenots involved in cotton printing is unknown. Their presence among the *émigrés* may have been assumed from those involved in the trade after it became legal, but often this was because of the faith of

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<sup>57</sup> Warren C. Scoville, *The Persecution of Huguenots and French Economic Development 1680-1720* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), p. 193. This increased from 6 million livres in 1683 to 13 million by 1717, according to Scoville.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas J. Schaeper, *The French Council of Commerce 1700-1715: a Study of Mercantilism after Colbert* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983), p. 176.

<sup>59</sup> Scoville, *The Persecution of Huguenots*, pp. 211-219. It is now estimated that between 200,000 and 300,000 Protestants fled abroad between 1685 and 1715. The diaspora of silk workers is well documented, particularly those settling in the Spitalfields area of London.

the entrepreneurs who established the manufactures.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the importing of *indiennes* and the growing imitation industry provided a convenient scapegoat for the damaging results of the King's repressive policy.

The manufactures repeatedly obtained the protection they requested, but it did not result in the desired eradication of the competition, mainly due to the problems of enforcing the rulings. The country was poorly policed and the administration was beset by poor communication which meant news could take several weeks to reach the remoter areas, making court rulings difficult to disseminate, and problematic to impose. This fostered a kind of semi-isolation in the regions which encouraged independence of action among officials at the provincial level who implemented the decrees, with varying degrees of effectiveness, to suit their own situation. The Governor of each province was a court-appointed position and many incumbents were absent from their regions for the majority of the year. Enforcement of the law relied upon the *Intendants Commissaires*, and proclaiming the multitude of bans and edicts was entirely dependent upon the vagaries of their will.<sup>61</sup> The *Intendants*, or King's Stewards, were offices initially instituted to observe the fiscal administrative processes in the provinces and report to the Crown, but by the 1670s were permanently established as royal administrators at the local level, with ever-increasing areas of jurisdiction.<sup>62</sup> They became the eyes and ears of the administration, writing copious reports for the King's Council (*Conseil d'État*), but while they held significant power and influence in their spheres, they had little manpower to physically enforce the law, relying on private companies of guards. Indeed, they had insufficient resources to implement all but the most urgent decrees, and their subordinates had little financial motivation to do so, as the brunt of the cost of such action was at their own expense, in the hope that the treasury would reimburse them. Thus, officials could ignore the rulings of the *Conseil de Commerce*; take only the most cursory of steps to enforce them; or interpret them to their own advantage. With the experience of multitudinous and yet unenforced regulations, the populace could wait to see which laws would be enforced.

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<sup>60</sup> For example, Pierre Dardel, in *Les Manufactures de toiles peintes et de serges imprimées à Rouen et à Bolbec aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Rouen: A. Desvages, 1940), noted that all the workers in that region of Normandy were Protestants in 1760. This is not evidence of Huguenot cotton printers in the 1680s.

<sup>61</sup> Hereafter called *Intendants*.

<sup>62</sup> For a discussion on the roles of the *Intendants* and *Fermiers-généraux*, see Peter Robert Campbell, *The Ancien Régime in France*, pp. 4-6 and 49-51. *Intendants* were nobles and the roles were often dynastic, with several generations holding an Intendancy, and some held the role successively in several provinces during their ascendancy to great power. There were *Intendants* for major towns as well as provinces, and specific duties such as Commerce, Manufactures, and so forth.



All of the judicial and fiscal posts were venal offices which provided vital income for the royal coffers.<sup>63</sup> Although selling the offices may have ultimately short-changed the administration on the amounts it could have collected, the system had its advantages, as income was received without the expense of administering its collection. Forty *Fermiers-généraux* benefitted from the authority to literally ‘farm’ money, lending it to the Crown in return for the right to collect taxes.<sup>64</sup> The *fermiers* accrued vast wealth and, in many places, a status of near-nobility. Their jurisdiction over the avoidance of taxes by smuggling gave them authority in cases of illegal activity associated with the distribution of *indiennes*, but as with other areas of law enforcement, there was little consistency of application between different regions.

Selling *indiennes* had been a lucrative business long before the prohibition. The huge distribution network began at the great fairs such as Beaucaire, at the mouth of the Rhône, where a great variety of international goods, sold without duties, attracted more than 100,000 people each year. This commerce continued after the ban: 8,000 pieces of prohibited fabrics were seized at the La Rochelle autumn fair in 1700.<sup>65</sup> As well as the banned fabrics imported directly from ‘the Indies’ (which could cover a variety of provenances), as the interdiction became entrenched, merchants sold contraband printed fabrics imported through England, Holland and other European states. Policing this trade was time consuming and was further complicated by the favours and exemptions granted to certain cities or regions. This had produced a world of exceptions and widespread confusion over the rights of the towns and ports. In addition, many private enclaves enjoyed a protected status which had persisted since mediaeval times, while the existence of foreign-owned territories within France (most notably the Papal City of Avignon and the Principality of Orange) added to the complexity of governing the country with uniformity.

Trading rights were equally convoluted. Marseille had a particular status granting it exemption from many laws, including those related to importing textiles, due to its long-established and pivotal role in trading with the Levant, which was vital to French

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<sup>63</sup> Purchasing offices required both wealth and connections at Court. It was usually possible to transfer the appointment to a descendant, producing family dynasties who continued their roles with little intervention. See William Doyle, *Venality: the Sale of Offices in Eighteenth-century France* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

<sup>64</sup> Le Roy Ladurie, *L’Ancien Régime, 1610-1770*, p. 553. See also Chapter 5, n. 7.

<sup>65</sup> A huge quantity, estimated at between 160,000 and 240,000 metres. While the width of a piece of fabric was limited by the breadth of the loom itself, the length depended on how long the warp threads could be spun and managed on the loom. This was variable between different fibres and types of cloth, and was regulated in France like all other aspects of textile production. For cotton there would have been a difference between the French and Indian products, but they were probably between 20 and 30 metres long per piece.

trade.<sup>66</sup> Thus, however successful the *Conseil de Commerce* could be in preventing the *Compagnie* from importing *indiennes*, it was a monumental task to control the goods entering Marseille, which could then trickle into France. Marseille's merchants had a highly effective lobby at Court, and in an edict of July 10, 1703 reconfirming its status as a free port, the trade in Levantine *toiles peintes* was allowed to continue, even though the importation of Indian textiles was banned.<sup>67</sup> Doubtless the merchants had no difficulty interchanging goods from the two sources for their profit and supplying the well-established smuggling route across France. Chapter 5 will discuss the complexity of subjugating the activities of individual and organised smugglers in order to suppress the distribution network.

### **The Social Relevance of the New Materials**

Sumptuary laws on the wearing of luxury fabrics still delineated the grades of cloth which could be worn by each rank, and which were forbidden to other sectors of society. Sartorial restrictions were a way of protecting industries through limiting the choices of the customer: in 1669, the French were forbidden from wearing collars made of foreign lace.<sup>68</sup> It was not unprecedented then, for the government to decide that the new cottons could not be worn by the public, and neither was it unusual for the *Compagnie*, with its attachment to the Court, to wish to keep importing lucrative foreign cloths. The problem was that by 1686, printed cottons of some type had been worn for up to forty years, and constituted part of the wardrobes of the middling and poorer citizens as well as the rich. Alongside the practical implications of banning the textiles, the prohibition did not take into account the public affection for printed cottons, nor the increased desire which would be created by making them unlawful.

The fascination with the intricate patterns and the visual gaiety of sprigs of flowers made *indiennes* desirable to all strata of society, which was destabilising: fashions

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<sup>66</sup> In theory, three cities in France were allowed to trade with the Levant, but in practice Marseille enjoyed a monopoly, as Rouen and Dunkirk were obliged to pay a twenty per cent duty on the imports.

<sup>67</sup> The Bruyard Archives, 376. '*Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy, qui ordonne que les Habitans de la Ville Marseille, & les Marchands & Negocians... jouïront ... des Exemptions, Privileges & Franchises accordées en faveur du Commerce... 10 juillet 1703.*'

<sup>68</sup> BnF F-528-606. Arrêts du Conseil d'État, Juillet-Décembre 1669. '*Ordonnance du 6 mars, 1669, portant deffenses de porter aucunes dentelles, tant vieilles que nouvelles, que celles qui sont fabriquées dans les Manufactures de France.*' The regulation is a good example of a similar approach to competition: it identifies the expensive linen lace from Venice and Genoa, but as a consequence proscribes all foreign lace; it specifically bans the trade in both new and used goods; and it applies the huge fine of 3,000 livres which will be discussed later in this study.

emanated traditionally from the Court and were disseminated through the aristocracy, with regulations intended to prevent others from imitating them. However, as Colin Campbell pointed out, not all consumption is emulative, and printed cottons exemplify a commodity desired for its own value, which was unsettling for observers who saw vestimentary imitation as a way of maintaining status and hierarchy in society.<sup>69</sup> Clothing was given to inferiors as a reward, a payment or an honour, and as Peter Corrigan observed, was used to indicate social, rather than personal, status as might be expected. Different classes were easily distinguishable by their dress, and street clothes ‘were very highly codified and deliberately indicated the public status of an individual, for example their occupation.’<sup>70</sup> Just as Molière’s *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* mocked a society in which being ‘cultured’ required showing one’s refinement through possessions, Richard Sennett has noted that the ‘social mask’ of dress in the eighteenth century eclipsed any reading of personality: ‘On the street, one stepped into clothes whose purpose was to make it possible for other people to act as if they knew who you were.’<sup>71</sup>

Daniel Roche defined ‘the cultural history of appearances’, regarding the history of clothing as central to social history, and specifically questioned the perception of identity in the eyes of the wearer and others. Roche’s work focused on the Parisians of the *ancien régime*, and in particular on the garment as a signal of gender and class identity.<sup>72</sup> The cost as well as the quality of one’s clothing denoted rank, but *indiennes* did not fit this mould, being concomitantly popular among all levels of society (visually, albeit not in terms of quality), which implied the threat of a breakdown of the accepted hierarchy. That the State had already realised it was unable control the proliferation of these seemingly harmless fabrics may have been another factor in the decision for their proscription. The printed

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<sup>69</sup> These issues and others surrounding the history of consumption were first raised in the work of Neil McKendrick, John Brewer & J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: the Commercialization of Eighteenth-century England* (London: Europa, 1982), and expanded with the inter-disciplinary study by John Brewer & Roy S. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993), which recognised the rise in consumption of all kinds of goods as a phenomenon with broad cultural and societal implications. Brewer maintained his theory that ‘the key to progress was emulation not imitation’ in his 1997 tome *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2013) but sociologist Colin Campbell attacked the accepted assumption that acquisition is driven by the desire to emulate one’s ‘betters’. Colin Campbell, ‘Understanding Traditional and Modern Patterns of Consumption in Eighteenth Century England: A character-action approach’, in Brewer & Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods*, pp. 40-57.

<sup>70</sup> Peter Corrigan, *The Sociology of Consumption* (London: Sage, 1997), p. 161.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978). See also Kaj Imonen, *A Social and Economic Theory of Consumption* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2010), on the necessary economic conditions for the consumption of commodities.

<sup>72</sup> Daniel Roche, *La Culture des apparences: une histoire du vêtement, XVII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1989); *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

cottons which are the focus of this study reveal cultural, social and economic information about France at that time and the attitudes, desires and mores of their wearers. Their popularity can be situated within the patterns of consumption of the era, when there was a notable overall rise in possessions owned by the general populace of Western Europe. Often cited now as the birth of our present ‘consumer’ society, Roche’s attempt to place the accumulation of goods which we now consider indispensable for daily life in its historical context centres on contradicting the traditional economic history perspective, which held that production (that is, supply) was the font of consumption.<sup>73</sup> His theory is that the ‘hierarchy of values’ placed on goods, and the manipulation of the demand for them, are the drivers of consumer culture. This is echoed by Maxine Berg in many essays on the consumer and luxury debates.<sup>74</sup> Clearly, the factors of supply and consumer demand were intertwined as drivers of the popularity of Asian goods, and are hard to disentangle.

The study of consumption usually focuses on a particular class. Much has been written about the division of French society in the eighteenth century between a small elite and a vast peasant class, mainly in the context of explaining the origins of the French Revolution. While this concentration on the separateness of the social hierarchy and the lack of a large urban middle class structure (in comparison to England) may explain social discontent, it does not account for the rise in consumption. Clothing changed for all, not only the ‘fashionable’, in this period, as a very large section of society became able to afford more than just the meanest cloth for their backs.<sup>75</sup> The consumption of goods (that is, not just greater expenditure, but a multiplication of *things* owned or consumed) significantly increased, and not only in the upper echelons of society, but for the vast merchant and artisan classes of the towns which do not fit neatly into either the peasant or aristocratic mould. Clothes were a major part of the home budget of rural workers by the mid-eighteenth century, second only to bread as the major consumable.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, Jan de Vries proposed that the middle and lower classes were prepared to increase their working hours,

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<sup>73</sup> Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> For a discussion on the inter-reliance of process and product innovation, see Maxine Berg, ‘From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain’ in *The Economic History Review*, 55, no.1, (2002), pp. 1-30.

<sup>75</sup> Styles, ‘Indian Cottons and European Fashion 1400-1800’, pp. 39-40. Styles argues that in England it was not a ‘craze’, when defined as a ‘sudden overwhelming popularity’, firstly because the quantities of painted or printed fabrics imported by the East India Company were only a minority part of its cotton imports, and secondly, evidence from the Old Bailey shows trials for theft before 1700 included few calico printed gowns. In France, however, the contemporary cartoon of the ‘*Damoiselle de Toile*’ (see n. 17) confirms their sudden and widespread popularity pre-1686.

<sup>76</sup> Joël Félix, ‘The Economy’, in William Doyle (ed.), *Old Regime France, 1648-1788* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 21.

and the number of family members who worked, in order to finance a lifestyle made more comfortable and pleasurable by belongings.<sup>77</sup> Printed cottons were the first commodity to contradict the understanding of a 'luxury' as an enduring item of status, desire, or rarity, by becoming affordable (or at least, the lower-quality imports and their imitations) to the greater majority of the population. Goods, including textiles, which had fulfilled the definition of 'luxury' as superfluous commodities available only to the extremely rich, became the 'necessities' of life.<sup>78</sup>

Learning what poorer people actually wore poses a problem. Unrecorded, and unlikely to merit an inventory after death, the details of their dress is for the most part supposition. The vast market in second-hand clothing and homespun production gives a rough picture, however, and it is easy to understand the appeal of printed fabrics to these social ranks, once they became affordable to all. This availability, and the possibility for the average person of owning several garments, was the very start of *fashion*, with its attendant aspirational qualities. This phenomenon highlights the perennial problem of collating accurate and unbiased information on clothing. Historians have in general made their assumptions about personal consumption in early modern France based on two types of surviving documentation (aside from anecdotal remarks in literature and diaries): household inventories after the death of the citizen, and the records of goods owned by individuals upon admittance to a charitable institution. The problem with this information is that the first traces only the belongings of the wealthy and (increasingly in the eighteenth century) those able to accumulate goods; while the second records the belongings of the destitute, when they had presumably already sold their possessions of any value in order to survive. Neither of these types of record represents the day-to-day consumption of the great mass of the labouring and artisan classes, who were newly able to afford more possessions, nor do they record goods like textiles, which are fully consumed during a lifetime, either when they were worn out, stolen, or sold in the vast second-hand markets for clothing and rags.<sup>79</sup> These factors complicate the study of cottons during the prohibition and explain, along with the illegal nature of *indiennes*, the rarity of extant samples pre-1730. For these

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<sup>77</sup> Jan de Vries, 'The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution', in *Journal of Economic History*, 54, no. 2 (1994), p. 249-270. For a fuller explanation, see his article 'Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods: Understanding the household economy in early modern Europe', in Brewer & Porter, *Consumption*, pp. 85-132.

<sup>78</sup> McKendrick, Brewer & Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> On the second-hand clothing market, see Laurence Fontaine, 'The Circulation of Luxury Goods in Eighteenth-century Paris: Social redistribution and an alternative currency', in Maxine Berg & Elizabeth Eger (eds), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, desires and delectable goods* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 93-96.

reasons, the inventories of goods confiscated in Nantes analysed in Chapter 3 are particularly valuable, as they reflect the everyday belongings of living citizens. The records of clothing indicate that printed fabrics were widely adopted as part of women's costume, although the same styles were maintained.

If it is accepted that *indiennes* provided a significant part of plebeian wardrobes by 1686, it is difficult to identify definitively whether the vested interests of the various European East India companies and their imported goods created markets for things previously unneeded, or whether these activities would have ceased if the public had not so enthusiastically sought them. Probably the truth is that both actions were co-dependent and created a limitless circle of supply and demand. If there were vast quantities in circulation, however, this raises a problem with the products of the early French workshops, as it would have been unprofitable for them to have imitated goods which were cheap and widely available. Thus, it is proposed that the workshops of the mid-seventeenth century were actually imitating commonplace Levantine prints and not high-status painted Indian cottons. Therefore, lower- and higher-quality goods were simultaneously in circulation and for different reasons challenged the French industries. This is a crucial argument that highlights the constant contradiction in many works: that *toiles peintes* were high-status goods whose import created the reaction from existing manufactures and thus required outlawing; and yet also, that their cheapness had created a volume of textiles which became significant competition.

It seems *à propos* before continuing, to discuss the form chosen here for French terms used in the legislation. Depitre states several times that there were 'two Edicts [and] some eighty rulings by the *Conseil*', suggesting a differentiation in the two types of declaration issued, and yet elsewhere says, '...all the rulings, all the Edicts repeated themselves' and '...rulings followed rulings, Edicts after Edicts', implying a similitude in their importance.<sup>80</sup> It has been concluded that the *arrêt* is best described as a 'ruling', literally ordering a 'stop' to an activity.<sup>81</sup> In the case of the *toiles peintes* this was a decision of the *Conseil de Commerce*, made law by being registered in the *Conseil d'État*. However, the *édit* (and there were several) had more weight, being registered in the *Parlement*, although in reality its content was decided in exactly the same way as the *arrêt*, in the *Conseil de*

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<sup>80</sup> Depitre, *La Toile Peinte en France*, p. 1. The first example from Depitre's Introduction is, '...deux édits [et] quelque quatre-vingts arrêts du Conseil...' but the theme is repeated throughout his work, and the other citations are examples of this type of commentary, which is perhaps an exaggeration for effect.

<sup>81</sup> The original French spelling *arrest* has been used in citations where this is the form used.

*Commerce*. In this case it was used expressly at important junctures to give more gravity to orders which were being ignored. Hence, being issued by a council which met regularly, the rulings could be, and were, issued frequently. Even if they were not 'laws' in the English sense of the word, the *Conseil*'s orders had to be obeyed, and it could impose penalties up to and including execution. It is perhaps difficult to understand the severity of such penalties for a commercial matter, but this relates to the concept of the Monarch's ultimate power to regulate every facet of his subjects' comportment, both personal and in commerce. In its examination of a macroeconomic situation, the study confirms the complexity of government in the *ancien régime*, and the extent to which its own operations precluded the successful enforcement of the ban.

## **CHAPTER 2: Contradiction & Confusion**

...a regulation so judiciously ordained, and so often reiterated.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will provide a detailed study of the legislation related to the proscription of imported *toiles peintes*, and then of printing on all textiles to prevent their imitation, during the first twenty years of the ban. The endpoint has been chosen because the first two decades of prohibition encompassed the introduction of the most salient restrictions, after which, for the most part, the rulings were reiterations of the law and introductions of increasingly stringent penalties for defying its parameters. An overview will be provided of the two organisations whose opposing interests were the motivation for the prohibition and the reason for its exceptionally long enforcement, the *Compagnie* and the *Conseil de Commerce*. Following this, the chapter will be divided into three sections, using chronological divisions to focus on different aspects of the problem: firstly, the aftermath of the ban and the successive reiterations of the prohibition between 1686 and 1690; secondly, the increasing contraband trade (1690-1700); and thirdly, the ineffectiveness of the government's measures of control (1700-1706).

### **The Compagnie des Indes Orientales**

It could take three years to raise enough capital for a ship to sail to the Indies, and up to two years for the ships to make the round trip, including the time to purchase and commission goods in India. (Figure 20.) Any voyage east of the Cape of Good Hope (the usual definition of the Indies) was long, expensive, and fraught with danger, making it too risky for one shipbuilder or even a group of investors. For these reasons, the government under Colbert, wanting to import exotic goods directly rather than purchasing them through the intermediaries of the English and Dutch, rather belatedly granted monopolies from 1664 to several groups of private investors for commerce with specific regions. The English, panicked in 1599 by the arrival of Dutch spice ships directly from the Indies into London and its foreseeable destruction of their profitable Levantine trade, had been the first to demand a royal privilege. That granted by Elizabeth I in 1600 was for the first joint stock company, with a group of 100 private investors raising capital separately for each

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<sup>1</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Lettre au Conseil d'Etat... des Députés de Commerce', 16 avril, 1702. 'Un reglement si judicieusement ordonné et si souvent reiteré.'



individual voyage. Investment was not opened more widely until 1613 to compete with the Dutch who, being banned from entering Portuguese ports due to their conflict with Spain, had set up their own East India Company, the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) in 1602. The VOC used another innovative capital-raising model whereby shares were sold by subscription. This raised vast resources which enabled many voyages to be planned without raising fresh funds each time, and spread the risk of individual voyages, thus making it particularly attractive to investors. Upon its inception, the structure of the French *Compagnie* was based on the Dutch model, but the nature of its ownership was very different. It was not state-owned, but with over 45% of the shares being bought by the King and royal family, 23% by financiers under ministerial pressure, and another eight by the ministers themselves, the control of the organisation was directed by governmental interests. Less than 7% of the shares were released to independent merchants at its founding, making it a company with very different interests to that of its foreign competitors.<sup>2</sup> The volume of capital floated in the *Compagnie* at its launch immediately made it the largest financial organisation in the kingdom, and eventually led to it being used as a bank by the government in the eighteenth century. As Haudrère noted, ‘the *Compagnie* was the State and there was no way to really disassociate the State *Compagnie* and the State Navy.’<sup>3</sup>

In Asia, the *Compagnie* was not only a trading enterprise but a *de facto* embassy, in charge of all the country’s affairs in that region, which gave its local governors enormous power. It was the only entity in France authorised to maintain its own army, and the governors directed diplomatic relations, negotiated treaties with local rulers, minted coinage and dispensed civil and criminal justice.<sup>4</sup> This meant the colonies had to be closely monitored by Colbert and his successors. This was done by two Royal Commissioners (*Commissaires du Roi*), one of whom was normally the *Contrôleur-général*, who were

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<sup>2</sup> The percentages were modified over time, with more bankers and financiers becoming involved, but the royal family remained the largest shareholders throughout the *Compagnie*’s various incarnations.

<sup>3</sup> Philippe Haudrère & Gérard Le Bouëdec, *Les Compagnies des Indes* (Rennes: Editions Ouest-France, 2005), p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> This study only allows for a brief overview of the history of the *Compagnie* and its affairs. I am indebted to Prof. Philippe Haudrère of the University of Southern Brittany for his explanations and valuable advice on this subject. His essential publications include *La Compagnie française des Indes au XVIIIe siècle* already cited; *Les Compagnies des Indes orientales: Trois siècles de rencontre entre Orientaux et Occidentaux, 1600-1858* (Paris: Desjonquères, 2006) and with Gérard Le Bouëdec, *Les Compagnies des Indes*. Also useful for this study were Paul Kaepelin, *Les origines de l’Inde française: La Compagnie des Indes orientales et François Martin* (Paris: A. Challamel, 1908), and L. Dermigny, *Cargaisons Indiennes: Solier et Cie*, (Paris: Sevpen, 1960).

charged with scrutinising all the company's activities on behalf of the government.<sup>5</sup> All the directorships of the *Compagnie* were also subject to the *Contrôleur-général*'s approval, making the *Compagnie*, in effect, an annexe of the Finance Ministry. The *Compagnie* was run by between 6 and 8 *directeurs*, each at the head of a 'service'. The most prestigious of these was the *Director des caisses*, who held responsibility for the funds overall, and others included purchasing, accounting and finance, shipbuilding, cargoes, correspondence with the overseas outposts, and an on-site *directeur* at the *Compagnie*'s base in Lorient.

In general, the *directeurs* were specialists in maritime commerce who naturally opposed the ban for its potentially ruinous effect on their commerce if their cargoes were limited. It is important to note for this study, that they often had personal vested interests in the *Compagnie*'s trade, which no doubt motivated their representations to the *Conseil de Commerce*. For instance, the *directeur* Jacques Duval d'Eprémesnil, a Le Havre ship owner and merchant, held a directorship from 1720 to 1748, including the direction of the Lorient operation for ten years. He had made his fortune importing Gum Arabic, a valuable binding agent whose many uses include adding viscosity to dye or glue, and enabling the suspension of pigments which may then be transferred to a substrate. This was the first substance to be used in experiments with textile printing, and at the period under study, the French had driven the Dutch out of Senegal (location of the sea ports used by the landlocked gum-producing countries of the Sahel) and gained control of the Gum Senegal trade, a gum superior to that previously obtained in Arabia.<sup>6</sup> Duval d'Eprémesnil would therefore have had a personal interest in encouraging the continued imports of cotton into France and the development of *indiennage*.

Other *directeurs* who had been promoted to the role on their return from service in the Indian factories (*comptoirs*) maintained personal business ties in the Indies. Some, implicated in the slave trade, had a direct interest in continuing the flow of printed cottons from the Indies for its supply. In addition, there were strong personal links between the members of the *Conseil de Commerce* and the *Compagnie* which influenced its dealings. Some even had interests on both of the opposing bodies engaged in the tussle over the prohibition of *toiles peintes*: Georges Godeheu, for example, member of a rich Rouen family of merchants specialising in textiles, was the Normandy delegate to the *Conseil*

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<sup>5</sup> An important and highly prestigious post, the position of *Commissaire du Roi* was a step to becoming an *Intendant* for many, or even *Contrôleur-général*, in the case of Peyrenc and Silhouette in the eighteenth century.

<sup>6</sup> Gum Arabic and Gum Senegal are obtained from different species of the acacia and are still widely used as thickening agents in textile printing.

from 1715-20, before being appointed a *Directeur de la Compagnie* for nearly three decades.<sup>7</sup> For a year until an election was held, he maintained both roles, an example of the capricious nature of *ancien régime* politics. It might be wondered how his affiliation changed over the years in the long deliberations over importing *toiles peintes*.

A directorship in the *Compagnie* was a reward which brought dividends, not only monetarily, but in potential influence at Court and for some, ennoblement. Posts in the *Compagnie* were also often hereditary, or at least heavily directed by family influence (Godeheu's two sons became *directeurs* in the Indies), ensuring the continuation of vested interests in the *Compagnie*'s trade.<sup>8</sup> As well as the *directeurs*, six *syndics* represented the shareholders to the board, and subsequently held great influence. They were generally courtiers, or from families of financiers closely related to the court by marriage. Becoming a *syndic* was a way to enrich oneself through access to the protected markets of the Indies. Often they became *directeurs*, and some were ennobled, again ensuring the *Compagnie* was heavily pro-government. These differences with the English and Dutch companies, which were far more independently and autonomously run, are worth noting for their effect on decisions related to cargoes and trade in general.<sup>9</sup>

It is clear then, that the *directeurs* were not only employees and shareholders of the *Compagnie*, but often used it to further their personal business interests, which guided their fight against prohibitive legislation on the cargoes which could be imported into France. In the first half of the eighteenth century their vested interests in the slave trade, and the production of printed calicoes to supply it, saw them lobby for the continuation of the trade in *indiennes*, despite the opposition from the textile manufactures. As they were for the most part members of the lesser nobility they were well placed to plead for their freight to be landed, and when these exceptions were granted, it allowed the consignments of vessels already on their way from the Indies to be sold upon their arrival in France. With the

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<sup>7</sup> The post of *deputé* to the *Conseil* gave Godeheu an income of 8,000 livres a year. Godeheu was very active in his role, mainly in the affairs of maritime commerce and fishing. His investment in provisioning ships for the *Compagnie* led to the directorship. See Henri Wallon, *La Chambre de Commerce de la province de Normandie, 1703-1791* (Rouen: Cagniard, 1903), pp. 44-46.

<sup>8</sup> In *Les Compagnies des Indes*, Haudrère & Le Bouëdec note that the two sons held directorships in China and in the Paris headquarters, acquiring great wealth from the monopolies they were granted, which allowed Robert Godeheu, in the next generation, to invest the fortune of 25,000 livres in shares in the *Compagnie* d'Angola for exploitation of the slave trade. The enterprise imported exotic tree bark and gum from the West African coast which were used for textile dyes among other things, and Gum Senegal, the thickener used in cotton printing.

<sup>9</sup> The personal interests of the employees of the *Compagnie* became ruinous for the organisation by the middle of the eighteenth century, as factions divided the direction into two groups competing over the African slave trade.

journey by sea taking up to two years, this effectively meant after 1686, the *Compagnie's toiles peintes* would continue to circulate in France for the next three years.

The original intention of setting up the *Compagnie* was to provision France with goods it could not source in France, that is, drugs and spices and primary products (such as tree bark for dyes to be used in the transformation of French-made commodities). The only manufactured goods which were tolerated were those which could only be bought at an elevated cost from one of the other European importing countries. This is why *indiennes* were a threat to manufactured goods made in France, as it was considered they could be made at home, although in reality achieving the same quality of product proved far more difficult than imagined, the details of which are discussed in Chapter 4. Therefore there was protest at the *Compagnie* importing finished 'curiosities' like the *indiennes* directly. The threefold increase in the quantity of *cotonnades* (a generic term for all cotton fabrics, of which half were white goods and the other half fine *mousselines*, blue-dyed cottons and *toiles peintes*) from the 1690s to the 1720s, to an estimated 300,000 pieces a year, was a source of concern to all the established French textile industries.<sup>10</sup> It is likely that the immediate market most threatened, however, was linen rather than silk, having an appearance and properties similar to cotton, but the Lyon silk guilds were highly organised and vociferous in the face of competition and so took the lead in the protest. The silk manufactures were also threatened at this time by the increase of duties on raw silk, which had quadrupled in recent years, forcing them to buy cheaper cocoons and risk the quality of their products.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Conseil de Commerce**

The complaints of the manufactures and the requests of the *Compagnie* were heard by the *Conseil royal de commerce*, a minor body within the *Conseil d'État*. It was created in 1664 and was a supposedly neutral committee which ruled on issues related to trade and industry, but with the *Contrôleur-général* at its head, in reality it existed to regulate those areas on Colbert's wishes. After the first minister's death there was no council or commercial deputation from the regions for ten years, and a significant event in the chronology of the *affaire des toiles peintes* was its official re-establishment on June 29,

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<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 1, n. 137 regarding the length of pieces.

<sup>11</sup> A.N. G7, 1687. 'Memoire à Monseigneur de Grandval, 19 aoust, 1704.' The silk industry's greatest fear was always of losing its skilled labour.

1700.<sup>12</sup> This incarnation was unique, as twelve delegates from the principal cities were added, giving a more powerful lobby to the urban trades. Thomas Schaeper called it nonetheless, ‘thoroughly Colbertian in its policies, using government intervention whenever it was felt to be necessary.’<sup>13</sup>

One reason for the new *Conseil*’s inception was the need to re-establish control over the entry of foreign goods since the Peace of Ryswick in 1697, the regulation of which had been suspended during the war, but also to encourage trade as a means of reviving the economy. The second reason was directly related to the conflicting responsibilities of Michel Chamillart, one of Colbert’s successors as *Contrôleur-général des Finances*, and Louis de Pontchartrain, *Secrétaire de la Marine*. These two important posts had both been held by Colbert concurrently, and after his death were the cause of many quarrels over the jurisdiction of each of the newly divided offices. In 1699, Chamillart held ultimate responsibility for all commerce (both internal and external), its State Companies and its vast North American and Caribbean territories, while Pontchartrain was appointed to the *direction* of the Companies, jurisdiction over the commerce of Marseille, and trade with the Levant.<sup>14</sup> Conflict was inevitable in such over-lapping realms of responsibility: Chamillart expressed his belief that the role of the *Contrôleur-général* was to protect and preserve the manufactures, and stop what he considered ‘unnecessary’ foreign goods entering, in order to conserve the wealth of the kingdom, while Pontchartrain was mandated to protect the *Compagnie*’s rights to enter *any* goods in order to make a profit. The contradictory course of the legislation during these years was the result of whichever party had the upper hand in government at the time.

If the poor working relationship of Chamillart and Pontchartrain was one of the reasons the *Conseil de Commerce* was re-established, its goal of consulting the interested commercial parties of the kingdom and creating a central, unified direction for trade was laudable. While the control of the commission frequently changed, a constant was the inclusion of the *Députés de Commerce*, who were not members, but attended to give advice on commercial issues. The existence of such a delegation on a Royal Council was surprising in the absolutist regime, and after Louis XV’s majority in 1722 its powers only increased, giving orders directly to the provincial *Intendants* and the *Fermiers-généraux*.

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<sup>12</sup> Although it assembled for the first time only on November 24, 1700.

<sup>13</sup> Schaeper, *The French Council of Commerce*, p. 149.

<sup>14</sup> L’Abbé Gustave Esnault, *Correspondance et papiers inédit du Michel Chamillart, Contrôleur Général des Finances* (Le Mans: E. Monnoyer, 1884).

However, it should not be surmised that the *deputés* were tradesmen, in fact they were wealthy businessmen or career diplomats who saw the post as a stepping-stone on the road to success: after their service some were knighted or received a baronetcy; others were awarded directorships of the *Compagnie*, or the lucrative post of a *Fermier-général*. Indeed, the cost of living in Paris limited the posts to those of means, as the stipend received from their towns was often inadequate or not forthcoming. The delegate for each major city was supposed to promote the interests of commerce in general and not the particular interests of his region's industries, but in reality those interests coincided with their own. The Paris *deputé* was slightly different in that he was elected by the Six Merchant Companies (*les six Corps de Marchands*), which were described by Savary as 'the principal channels through which all the commerce of this great town passes', and so had a vested interest in the affairs of their suppliers, which effectively gave the textile manufactures an additional, powerful voice.<sup>15</sup> This affected the long drawn-out prolongation of the ban.

The *Conseil*'s purpose was to advise the *Contrôleur-général*, and without the power to make executive decisions, it was therefore more accurately a Commission. As such its recommendations had to be passed as rulings through the *Conseil d'État*, and its influence over the period of the ban depended upon the *Contrôleur-général* in power. Both Chamillart and Pontchartrain are known to have paid close attention to its deliberations (both ministers had their own copies made of all the *Conseil*'s minutes) and to seriously heed its advice. Although only the permanent members could vote, it was extremely rare for the city *deputés*' advice to be rejected. However, it should not be thought that the *Conseil* was a democratic forum, as only the two ministers could introduce a topic for discussion. The effectiveness of the manufactures' lobby thus fluctuated, dependent upon the particular determination of the regional representatives (Anisson, for example, the long-serving *deputé* for Lyon from 1700 to 1722, was particularly tenacious), but also due to the interests of the Commissaires, who sometimes had conflicting interests in commercial affairs, including the administration of the *Compagnie*. With the *Conseil* responsible for drafting and disseminating all legislation related to the textile industries, the personal bias

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<sup>15</sup> Savary des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire universel de commerce*, Vol. II, p. 420, article *Corps et Communautés de Paris*. These included the Drapers, who were wool cloth producers (rather than the equivalent English term of a cloth retailer), and as such were invested in the northern wool industry, and the Mercers, who in 1694 (although not later in the eighteenth century) were defined in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, specifically as traders in 'goods of silk' and as such were intertwined with the interests of the Lyon, Tours and Nîmes silk manufactures. The other guilds were the Grocers, Furriers, Hatters and Goldsmiths.

of its individual members was to decide the course of the commerce. Chamillart, *Contrôleur-général* from 1699-1708, favoured the wool and linen industries, having previously been the *Intendant* of Rouen, where those industries constituted the main economic activity; Anisson is known to have had influence with the clerk of Desmaretz, *Contrôleur-général* from 1708-1715; and the *deputé* of the Languedoc, Fabre, was himself a silk manufacturer. With such an influential advisory capacity, the *Conseil* was a serious opponent for potential importers and printers of fabrics, mostly particularly the *Compagnie*. Schaeper noted that for the most part, ‘the deputies were virtually unanimous in their criticism of the privileged trading companies’, considering these monopolies profited a small number of businessmen (their directors) rather than the general good of the country.<sup>16</sup> Some believed individuals should be allowed to engage in foreign trade.<sup>17</sup> There was also resentment against the *Compagnie* importing high-profit cloth to the exclusion of lucrative spices, which then had to be bought from the Dutch. Overall, it is apparent that the *Conseil de Commerce*’s creation was a major reason the prohibition continued in France far longer than other countries, and for stiffening the penalties for contravening the laws.

The composition of the *Conseil* changed during its first fifteen years. Most relevant for this study was the addition of a seat for the Paris police commissioner (*Lieutenant-général de police*) in 1705, permitting him to report to the *Contrôleur-général* directly, rather than asking permission from the *Conseil* for his actions, and the creation in 1708 of six offices of *Intendants de Commerce*, to whom significantly more power was devolved.<sup>18</sup> The offices were divided between the main council members, allowing them to decide issues of lesser importance, including the enforcement of the interdiction on *toiles peintes*. Also significant was the reorganisation upon Louis XV’s accession in 1715, with the termination of the roles of *Intendants de Commerce* (the posts were reinstated in 1724), and the addition of two seats for the *Fermiers-généraux*, adding the perspective of the tax collectors to the debate on *toiles peintes*, particularly the prevention of contraband.<sup>19</sup> More

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<sup>16</sup> There were many different French trading monopolies in existence at this time, including the Companies of the Occident (the Americas), the Levant (Mediterranean and Middle-eastern trade), China and Senegal.

<sup>17</sup> Schaeper, *The French Council of Commerce*, p. 55, n.41. There were exceptions: two of the Paris *deputés* were *directeurs* of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*.

<sup>18</sup> Venal offices, the *Intendants de Commerce* presided specifically over commercial matters in their regions, not to be confused with the provincial *Intendants*, who administered provincial government on all matters. There were however significant overlaps in their interests, and incumbents of both posts are mentioned in this study.

<sup>19</sup> The body was frequently dissolved, but reinstated almost immediately with a slightly different composition of members. It was known as the *Bureau de Commerce* after 1722, but to avoid confusion it is called the *Conseil* throughout this study. After 1730 it reported to the newly created *Conseil Royal de Commerce*, rather than *Finance*, but its functions remained unchanged until the Revolution. See Pierre Bonnassieux, *Conseil de*

of the nobility became members, and during the Regency period the presidency was frequently held by one of three dukes, changing its perspective during that time.

Of course, the *Conseil*'s time was not taken up entirely with the issue of the *toiles peintes*. It debated a wide range of topics related to all areas of commerce, but the concerns of the textile industries occupied a considerable proportion of its sessions. This was particularly due to its mandate to address the quality issues related to the national manufactures, particularly Languedoc woollens, an essential product for trade with the Levant, which frequently required the appointment of additional *Inspecteurs des manufactures* to stop 'abuses by the workers'.<sup>20</sup> The element of national pride in the quality of goods, encouraged by Colbert, was still of prime importance, and it should be emphasised that this played its part in the refusal to endorse cotton printing: the new fabrics were an unknown quantity, whose quality or method of production could not at this date be confidently regulated like wool, silk or linen.

Therefore a principal reason the prohibition legislation was ineffectual was that it was constantly undermined by the repeated concessions accorded to the *Compagnie* to continue importing. This, despite the provisos specified, ensured that printed fabric circulated legally, and equally opened the way for contraband French or foreign goods to be passed off as the permitted cargoes. It was a pattern which would be frequently repeated: the *Conseil* reiterating the ban to pacify the home manufactures, while concurrently granting privileges for the *Compagnie* to sell its cargoes. Thus, an unmanageable situation existed, which was the core of the failure to successfully ban printed fabrics in France. A fundamental mistake was made by not banning all imported prints in the first restriction of 1686, and refusing entry to the *Compagnie*'s wares.

### **1686-1690: The imposition of the ban and its aftermath**

Although October 26, 1686 is the universally accepted date for the prohibition, during the research for this study, an anterior date has been identified in the original manuscripts. The Edict of October 1726, imposed penalties 'in the manner of those which were proscribed by the Ordinance of 1680 on the issue of the *gabelles*, and by the regulations which have since

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*Commerce et Bureau de Commerce, 1700-1791: Inventaire Analytique des Procès-Verbaux* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1900).

<sup>20</sup> An example of the frequent orders is Boislesle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. I, article 1673. 'Le Contrôleur-général à M. de Bâville, intendant en Languedoc, 9 Décembre 1697.' 'S.M. a cru qu'il estoit nécessaire pour le bien des manufactures d'augmenter... le nombre des inspecteurs... et, par leurs fréquentes visites, empêcher les abus qui s'y glissent facilement par la négligence des ouvriers.'



been issued as a consequence'.<sup>21</sup> This unknown ordinance, would seem to indicate that restrictions were being enforced as early as 1680. Certainly, documents show that measures were being taken earlier in the year of the prohibition, including: an anonymous handwritten list of the rulings dating the ban to April 10, 1686; an *arrest* raising taxes on white cottons (the ground fabric for printing) on April 30, 1686; and a manuscript version of the Register of the *Conseil d'État* of February 1691, which notes that 'despite laws passed on April 6 and October 15, 1686 large quantities of white cotton and muslins (*mousselines*) were being imported, the consumption of which was 'greatly prejudicial to the Manufactures of cloth, which are considerable in the Kingdom'.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, the concern over imports was gathering and, when added to the activity in *indiennage* underway in many French towns, meant the rumblings of discontent over the fashion which had appeared as early as 1680 were culminating in calls for legislation. Claude Le Peletier, Colbert's successor as *Contrôleur-général*, appears to have commissioned a survey of the damage the new workshops (*fabriques*) were causing to the kingdom's manufactures, and recommended further action in a document of the same date as the October ban, instructing the *Lieutenant-général de police*, Nicolas de la Reynie, and the provincial *Intendants* to enact the legislation.<sup>23</sup> La Reynie also seems to have reached the conclusion that a ban was necessary, stating that '100 million livres' had already been lost from the country's traditional industries to the new activity.<sup>24</sup> The Edict of October 26, 1686 was therefore intended to be a definitive end to the matter. The problems it engendered were unimaginable in the context of absolutist rule and, additionally, the manner in which it would be disregarded was inconceivable to the administration. Thus it is only with hindsight that the flurry of legislation which had to be issued can be used to judge its failure.

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<sup>21</sup> B.A. 1238. 'Edit du Roy, donné à Fontainebleau au mois d'Octobre 1726.' 'Nous avons crû nécessaire... [de] mettre nos Officiers en état de prononcer les peines que Nous jugeons à propos d'imposer, à l'exemple de ce qui a été prescrit par l'Ordonnance de 1680, sur le fait des Gabelles, & par les Reglemens intervenus en conséquence.' The Gabelle, traditionally known as a mediaeval salt tax was, by the seventeenth century, a series of taxes on many types of goods, including textiles, for which France was divided into six administrative divisions. It is therefore understandable if what was considered a minor problem pre-1686 should be included in a law related to many commodities. See the entry in Marcel Marion, *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Éditions Piccard, 1923), pp. 247-250.

<sup>22</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. *Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du roy, 10 février, 1691.* 'Le debit et la Consommation fait un grand prejudice aux Manufactures de Toiles qui sont de plus considerable du Royaume.'

<sup>23</sup> The preamble of the Edict of 26 October, 1686 refers to Peletier's report. The term 'police' is not anachronistic: Colbert inaugurated a police force for Paris in 1667, and its Lieutenant-général held considerable powers. La Reynie was the first incumbent and held the post for thirty years. See also n.51 on d'Argenson, his successor.

<sup>24</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. I, article 1148. 'M. de la Reynie, lieutenant-général de police à Paris, au Contrôleur-général, 16 décembre, 1692.'

Almost as soon as the prohibition was pronounced, the government realised it had made a serious error: its East India Company's primary cargo had been made illegal. However, the curtailing of the *Compagnie*'s activities by banning cloth 'painted in the Indies' would have been popular among those in the government who worried that importing goods generated 'millions of livres of specie leaving the kingdom', and who wanted the *Compagnie* to be limited to the original terms of its incorporation, that is, to import spices and other raw commodities as previously mentioned.<sup>25</sup> Nor was the demand for an immediate cessation on 'painting' on cotton and 'the making of moulds' unrelated to the *Compagnie*, as successive rulings indicate it had started to commission printing operations in France itself.<sup>26</sup> White cottons, a great percentage of the *Compagnie*'s cargoes, could still be imported, if the duties which had been fixed on April 30 of 1686 were paid. This fabric was restricted as it was being used to replace linen sailcloth, but as it was also used as a printing ground by the *indienneurs*, it is curious it was still allowed to enter. Thus the *Compagnie*'s activities were to be seriously limited and its profits reduced, if not eradicated. This would naturally be unacceptable to its stakeholders, particularly the nobility. In addition the government had handicapped itself, as it benefitted significantly from the import duties imposed on the *Compagnie*.

The rash imposition of a ban to appease the manufactures therefore had wide-ranging consequences. As a result it was quickly amended within three months to grant the *Compagnie* permission to unload the printed fabrics on its vessels which had been sent to the Indies since 1685 and were as yet unreturned, without which its *directeurs* noted, 'it would be entirely ruined and unable to uphold its commerce'.<sup>27</sup> Its future loss of sales was also to be compensated by the permission to import 150,000 livres-worth of other exotic textiles each year.<sup>28</sup> Most astoundingly of all, the *Compagnie* was granted permission to

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<sup>25</sup> It was a widely held contemporary perception that the country was short of silver, the symbol of a healthy economy, but it has been shown that France possessed more precious metals at this time than earlier in the century. See F.C. Spooner, *The International Economy and Monetary Movements in France, 1493-1725*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972). Perhaps greater importance than merited was placed on the prevention of specie leaving the kingdom due to the manipulation of the rates of conversion with the money of account (livres), especially in the period 1680-1720, where it was altered by the government 40 times. This uncertainty over the value of money had a destabilising effect on both individuals and investors.

<sup>26</sup> Two processes which are incompatible and demonstrate the interchangeable nature of the terms 'paint' and 'print', as well as the misunderstanding of the manufacturing processes by those in authority. The term 'mould' was commonly used for an engraved wooden block.

<sup>27</sup> B.A. 146. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat Qui confirme les privileges accordez par Sa Majesté à la Compagnie des Indes Orientales, du 27 janvier, 1687.' 'Si lesdits Arrests estoient exécutez à son égard, [la Compagnie] seroit entierement ruinée & hors d'estat de soutenir son commerce.'

<sup>28</sup> Approximately £5 million in 2015, although historians always note that a direct conversion does not represent the value of the money in real terms.

have the white cottons in its cargoes printed, using a list of printers approved by La Reynie. The printed fabrics could then be sold until the end of 1687, purchasers could continue selling them until the end of 1688, and the *directeurs* agreed to cease importing ‘any painted cotton cloths from the Indies, nor white ones to be painted in France’ once these goods had been sold.<sup>29</sup> The granting of this privilege, therefore, while understandable in that it allowed for the sale of goods already ordered by the *Compagnie*, also effectively sanctioned the circulation of *toiles peintes* in the kingdom for another two years, and weakened the previous orders to close all printing workshops. It also weakened the order to destroy all printing blocks, if some could be retained to officially print the white cottons imported by the *Compagnie*.

In other clauses aimed at mollifying the opposition, the *Compagnie* agreed to take back any *toiles peintes* unsold at the end of the year, reimburse the purchasers, and ship any excess fabrics abroad. This was an impractical promise, solely aimed at convincing the merchants that the *Compagnie*’s trade was being restricted. Additionally, the *Compagnie* promised to boost French trade by exporting 500,000 livres-worth of goods to the Indies, in an attempt to pacify the French textile manufactures.<sup>30</sup> These goods were the aforementioned poor-quality Languedoc woollens, for which there was no market in India.<sup>31</sup>

Two weeks later, the gaping holes in this privilege were noticed: that no limit had been set on the quantities of *toiles peintes* which could be imported, nor was there any way of identifying those that were legal. Both sides were concerned: the textile manufactures by this debit of large quantities of merchandise and how it would be policed, and the *Compagnie* over the likelihood of counterfeit goods being sold as its own merchandise. The *Compagnie* was given eight days to provide La Reynie with a detailed inventory of all the white and painted cottons on its ships bound for France, and a list of the merchants to whom they had already sold goods, so that all fabrics could be marked with official seals at both ends. This stipulation became standard, but was rather naïve. The tags (made of parchment with a lead seal) could be easily removed and placed at the end of a shorter or longer piece of cloth, or one illegally imported. (Figures 21 to 23.) Nor did the instruction take into account fabric already cut and sewn into garments.

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<sup>29</sup> B.A. 146. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’Etat du 27 janvier, 1687.*’ ‘*Les Directeurs de ladite Compagnie auroient offert de cesser à l’avenir de faire venir dans le Royaume aucune Toile de Coton peinte des Indes, ni des blanches pour estre peintes en France.*’

<sup>30</sup> Approximately £16.65 million in 2015.

<sup>31</sup> The agreement to export fabrics is corroborated later in A.N. F12, 1403, ‘*Memoire sur les Estoffes des Indes de pure Soye ou meslées d’or ou d’argent et les Estoffes apellées furies, 27 novembre, 1705.*’

Visits to merchants were to be carried out three months' later to check no one was selling unmarked prints but, confusing the issue of what was permitted and what was forbidden even further, the white cottons sold by the *Compagnie* could still be printed by a number of officially sanctioned workshops:

The said Monsieur de la Reynie shall name Painters & Printers nominated by the Directors of the *Compagnies des Indes*, who may paint and print only the white Cloths marked with the said seals, with the blocks and moulds which have been allowed to them. His Majesty forbids these same Painters & Printers to print other cloths but those which are marked, on pain of a thousand livres' fine.<sup>32</sup>

For the remainder of 1687 the *Compagnie* continued to land and trade in printed cottons. On April 6, 1688 orders were issued for inspections of all merchants' premises, and fabrics not marked with the official seals were ordered to be burned, which indicates that merchandise other than the approved *Compagnie*-imported or printed goods continued to circulate. The prohibition now also applied to white cotton goods, reversing the recent privilege, and signifying a desire to halt printing in France, as well as the imports. It was particularly harsh against fraud by employees of the *Cinq Grosses Fermes* (the equivalent of an Inland Revenue service), suggesting they were already often implicated in the illegal trade. They were to be fined an amount 'not less than four times that defrauded'.<sup>33</sup> A further Act of May 17 required all *toiles peintes* in the kingdom to be exported by the end of the year, and the *Compagnie* was instructed to reimburse the merchants who returned their purchases.<sup>34</sup>

During 1688, the *Intendants* from several provinces protested to the *Contrôleur-général* of the impossibility of enforcing the direction to seize and burn all unmarked goods.<sup>35</sup> It was claimed not all the permitted fabrics sold in great bundled lots at auction in

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<sup>32</sup> B.A. 1119. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat pour l'Exécution de celui de 27 Janvier dernier concernant les Toiles de Coton, tant peintes que blanches, 8 février, 1687.' 'Par ledit Sieur de la Reynie il sera nommé des Peintres & Imprimeurs qui luy seront indiquez par les Directeurs de la Compagnie des Indes, lesquels pourront seulement peindre & imprimer lesdites Toiles blanches marquées desdites marques sur les planches & moules qui leur seront prescrits. Ausquels Peintres & Imprimeurs Sa Majesté fait défenses d'en imprimer d'autres que celles qui auront esté marquées, à peine de mille livres d'amende.' The distinction between painters and printers again points to two types of fabrics using different techniques.

<sup>33</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy, Concernant les Toilles de Cotton des Indes, tant blanches que peintes, du 6 avril, 1688.'

<sup>34</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Arrest du Conseil du Roy, Qui ordonne que toutes les Toiles peintes aux Indes seront envoyés hors du Royaume après le dernier décembre 1688, 17 mai, 1688.'

<sup>35</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs généraux*, Vol. I, note to article 563. 'Entre autres lettres, celles de M. de Vaubourg (Auvergne, 17 mai et 28 juin), de M. de Madrys (Flandre maritime, 19 mai et 24 juin), de M. Mahieu (Luxembourg, 29 mai), de M. Bouchu (Dauphiné, 30 mai), de M. de la Goupillière (Hombourg, 29 juillet), etc.'

Nantes by the *Compagnie* were correctly marked, making it impossible for merchants and inspectors alike to differentiate between legal and illegal fabrics.<sup>36</sup> There was such a lively trade in *indiennes*, it was noted, with many having changed hands five or six times since the auction, that a merchant may have no idea if the cloth he bought was legal or not.<sup>37</sup> Many fabrics, said the *Intendants*, were being imported from Holland and England and passed off as legal, no doubt with the complicity of border guards.<sup>38</sup> Le Peletier vacillated: in June he replied to a query from the *Président du parlement de Bretagne* that the laws must be imposed, but that there was no need to burn the confiscated fabrics unless the merchants were to start actively trading again.<sup>39</sup> With conflicting directives like this, the steps taken to dispose of the banned textiles by local officials were minimal.

Successive rulings that summer reiterated the *Compagnie*'s privilege to import goods as long as they were officially stamped and sealed. They were to reimburse 'at 1687 prices' merchants who had bought them in 1686: an interesting remark from which it can be assumed the quantity of *indiennes* on the market by mid-1688 had increased so much that prices had dropped. The *Compagnie*, whose official charter and privileges were reconfirmed in August 1688, was granted another month to print white cottons that November, and to facilitate this, printing blocks were returned to the 'official' printers, from whom they had been confiscated by the clerks of the *fermes*.<sup>40</sup> Presumably, with cottons being printed on behalf of the *Compagnie*, the *indienneurs* saw no reason to stop their trade either, and on February 1, 1689 the restrictions of the 1686 edict were repeated: printing blocks were to be broken and not reinstated; the sale of *toiles peintes* was forbidden; and the *Compagnie* was ordered to ship any remaining out of France. This time,

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<sup>36</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs généraux*, Vol. I, note to article 579. 'Au sujet des difficultés que présentait la vérification de l'origine des toiles, une lettre de M. de Saint-Contest, intendant à Limoges, 8 octobre 1688.'

<sup>37</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs généraux*, Vol. I, article 563. 'M. de Gourgue, intendant à Caen, au Contrôleur-général, 1 mai, 1688.' 'A la publication de cet arrest, les marchands de Paris, de Rouen, de Bretagne et de quantité d'autres villes me sont venus trouver... tous disent tenir leurs toiles de différentes manières de la Compagnie des Indes, peu en première main, et beaucoup de la cinquième et sixième main... sans tenir registre, parce que ce sont des sortes d'affaires qui se font de la main à la main.'

<sup>38</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs généraux*, Vol. I, note to article 563. 'Le 18 du même mois, le Contrôleur-général... ajoute, sur la question posée par M. de Bezons [de Bordeaux], que le privilège est réservé exclusivement à la Compagnie des Indes de France, et non à celles de Hollande ou d'Angleterre, dont les produits doivent être prohibés.'

<sup>39</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs généraux*, Vol. I, note to article 598. 'Le Contrôleur-général écrivit le 22 octobre [à M. de la Faluère, premier président du Parlement de Bretagne], que le Roi était satisfait de l'effet produit, et qu'il ne serait nécessaire de recommencer à brûler les toiles que si les marchands se relâchaient de nouveau.'

<sup>40</sup> Isambert, Decrusy & Taillandier, *Recueil général des anciennes lois Français, depuis l'an 420 jusqu'à la Revolution de 1789* (Paris : Bélin-Le Prieur, 1833). Tome XX, no. 1285: 'Arrêt du Conseil qui confirme les privileges accordés à la Compagnie des Indes Orientales', 14 août, 1688.

the officers of the *fermes* were mandated to organise the transport to expedite these goods. La Reynie and the provincial *Intendants* were to proceed with searches in a month from the order, confiscating and burning any merchandise remaining.<sup>41</sup> The provisions of the new Act were a direct return to the ban of October 1686, indicating there had been little progress in the first thirty months of the law. Even this was largely ignored and two further *arrêts* repeated these orders only one month later.

On March 15, 1689 conditions were set out for the potentially problematic process whereby the *Compagnie* would refund merchants for any unsold printed goods and then export them.<sup>42</sup> In another reference to the illegal activity taking place, it did not have to accept white cottons it had sold, but which had since ‘been painted on behalf of the merchants’ to sell alongside the officially authorised goods.<sup>43</sup> Despite this law’s attempt to cover every loophole, the potential for fraud was evident. The merchants’ defence was that it was impossible to differentiate the sanctioned fabrics from the imitations, although this would have been unlikely given the difference in quality, as will be discussed. More importantly, there was also no incentive for a merchant to declare his stock illegal and then pay for its expedition, or for printers to destroy their blocks. Once this was recognised, the law was reiterated on May 14, again insisting upon the destruction of blocks, and forbidding engravers to mend or produce new ones, on pain of a large fine and the confiscation of printing equipment and tools.

At this point, three years after the ban, printers had been banned from their activity and then had it reinstated three times. It seems wholly understandable if, in the confusion, they did not destroy their equipment. Nor did the cessation of imported white cottons stop them practising their art, indicated by printing on linen and hemp being expressly banned by this Act, as being ‘equally prejudicial for the silk and woollen industries’.<sup>44</sup> Merchants were equally as active in spite of the ban, being ordered to stop displaying printed merchandise in their boutiques.

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<sup>41</sup> B.A. 1121. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’Estat du Roy, concernant les Toilles de Cotton peintes, 1 février, 1689.*’

<sup>42</sup> There is no evidence in the *Compagnie*’s archives which suggests that this ever took place.

<sup>43</sup> B.A. 1122. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’Estat du Roy, concernant les Toilles peintes, 15 mars, 1689.*’ ‘*Seules les toilles peintes provenant des ventes faites en 1685, 1686 et 1687... qui se trouveront dans le même état qu’elles auront été vendues [doivent être reprises] ...la Compagnie n’est pas obligée de reprendre les toilles de coton qui, vendues blanches, auront été peintes par les soins des marchands. Toutes, sans exception, seront envoyées hors du Royaume.*’

<sup>44</sup> B.A. 1123. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’Estat du Roy, Qui défend l’usage des Toilles de Lin & de Chanvre peintes, 14 mai, 1689.*’ ‘*On peint... des Toilles de Lin & de Chanvre, dont l’usage ne seroit pas moins nuisible aux anciennes manufactures d’etoffes de Soies & de Laines, que l’estoit celuy des Indes.*’

The government, adamant that the country be purged of *toiles peintes*, repeated the order to begin search and seizure in the summer of 1689. By July, the provincial *Intendants* were busy organising inspection visits and confiscations. Large quantities of prohibited goods were found, including 940 pieces at Rouen, which the *Lieutenant-particulier*, Cornelier, noted were not entirely the cargo of the *Compagnie des Indes*, ‘but also those which have been stained and painted in this town’, signalling the continued existence of thriving illicit *indiennage* workshops.<sup>45</sup> His report is a testament to the lengths merchants would go in order to continue their sales and avoid prosecution. Matthieu Godeheu, another member of the Rouen merchant family, first denied to Cornelier that he was harbouring *toiles peintes* in his premises, then when bundles of them were found in his warehouse pleaded ignorance that he had not known they should be declared, believing, ‘The said cloths are not painted but only dyed.’<sup>46</sup> After his initial discovery, Cornelier expanded his search to all the chambers and the attics of Godeheu’s house, and found another 107 pieces of cloth ‘of the same quality, length and width.’<sup>47</sup> It was a similar story at the merchant Cecille’s boutique and dwelling in the Rue du Gros Orloge:

[He] told us he had no painted Cottons... in an alley close to his courtyard we found a bundle in which we found a hundred pieces of blue cotton, which the said Monsieur Cecille said had been dyed and he had bought them... from the *Compagnie des Indes* in 1686 and 1687... and after making him open his cupboards, we found there another hundred pieces of the same cloth... one hundred and fifty carpets and two hundred pieces of painted Cotton.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Procès verbal du Lieutenant particulier du Bailliage de Roüen Contenant sa recherche des toilles peintes sur la commission de Monseigneur l’Intendant de justice en Normandie, 8 juillet 1689.*’ A detailed manuscript report on the visits, searches and confiscations of *toiles peintes* compiled by Simon Cornelier between July 8 and 18, 1689. ‘*Non Seulement provienents de la Compagnye de indes orientalles de france, Mais ausy celles qui avoient esté Taintes et peintes dans Cette Ville.*’

<sup>46</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Procès verbal du Lieutenant particulier du Bailliage de Roüen.*’ ‘*Lequel Sire Matthieu Godeheu a fait response... qu’il ny a aucune pieces de toille de Cotton peintes dans Ladite Boutique, nous avons visitté et le Magazin joignant, et apres avois fait ouvrir plusieurs pacquets qui se sont trouvez dans les armoires... dans lesquelles avons trouvé quatre-vingts piece de toilles de Cotton Bleüe... Ledit Godeheu a respondu qu’il n’a cru son obligation [de les déclarer] vue que lesdites toilles ne sont peintes, Mais Seulement Taintes.*’

<sup>47</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Procès verbal du Lieutenant particulier du Bailliage de Roüen.*’ ‘*[Nous avons] fait perquisition dans toutes les Chambres, Cabinets, et Greniers de ladite maison, et avons trouvé en une premiere Chambre, au dessus de la Boutique, cent-sept pieces de toilles de mesme quallité, longueur et largeur.*’

<sup>48</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Procès verbal du Lieutenant particulier du Bailliage de Roüen.*’ ‘*[Il] nous a dit n’y avoir aucune [Cotton peinture], ... nous avons trouvé dans une allée estant proche la cour une ballée dans laquelle avons trouvé cent pieces de toills de coton bleüe que ledit Sieur Cecille dit avoir esté taintes et il a acheté... de la Compagnie des Indes en l’année quatre-vingt six et quatre-vingt sept... et après avoir fait ouvrir ses armoires, avons trouvé cent pieces des dites toills... cent cinquante tapis et deux cents pieces de toills de Cotton peinture.*’

Word must have travelled quickly in the quarter that Cornelier and his assistants were making searches and seizing goods, as no illegal fabrics were found at the next four merchants' premises. The conscientious *Inspecteur* continued his work in another parish, where he found similar quantities of 'painted cottons' wrapped in great balls and hidden in attics, outhouses and alleyways. The scene can be imagined of merchants and their families scurrying to bundle their illegal wares out of the back door while Cornelier and his assistants knocked at the front. His seizure of 940 pieces over ten days represented a cache of around 15,000 metres confiscated and marked for burning.<sup>49</sup> Descriptions include 'large Chintzes' and others with 'large branches' (probably the 'Tree of Life' design, used widely in Indian hangings), indicating the merchandise seized was suitable for quality furnishings.<sup>50</sup> (See Figures 24 and 25.) They were, however, sometimes adapted for clothing. The merchants proffered many excuses for still retaining the forbidden merchandise: their customers had not picked them up; they had owned it before the ban or were unaware the law applied to all prints; they were unable to afford to ship them out of France as required. The financial implications for these traders were immense and, to most, seemed unjust. Some merchants, like Monsieur Coignard, caught concealing four bundles of *indiennes*, refused access, requiring Cornelier to force entry accompanied by his armed guards, serve his writs, and confiscate the bundles for burning. Whether this huge bonfire in Rouen ever took place is unknown; many goods were locked in warehouses under armed guard, but doubtless circulated once again when this was relaxed.

Cornelier's report shows the variety of goods which were traded, and that locally printed *indiennes* were being sold alongside the goods legally purchased at the *Compagnie's* auctions. The merchant draper Guillaume Bigot, for example, voluntarily surrendered his merchandise, which included:

Eight pieces of Red-Coloured painted Cotton cloth from the Indies... fifteen remnants, both large and small, also from painted Cotton cloth from the Indies, and other pieces entirely painted in This Town.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Calculated on the description of Godeheu's and Cecille's fabrics as 13 to 14 aulnes long. This is shorter than pieces mentioned in other seizures, and may indicate a different type of cloth.

<sup>50</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. '*Procès verbal du Lieutenant particullier du Bailliage de Roüen.*' '*Des Toilles de Cotton peinture aux indes appelez Chites Larges... ausy des Toilles de Cotton Peinture appelez Chites grandes Branches.*'

<sup>51</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. '*Procès verbal du Lieutenant particullier du Bailliage de Roüen.*' '*Huit pieces de toills en Cotton peinture aux Indes de Couleur Rouge... quinze Morceaux ou Couppons tant grands que petits, ausy des toills de Cotton paints aux Indes et des autres pieces entieres peintes en Cette Ville.*'



In a summary of his visits addressed to Michel Amelot, the *Intendant de Commerce*, the *Lieutenant* noted the widespread contempt for the law.<sup>52</sup> The merchants were openly contravening it, he noted, and even greater quantities would doubtless be found if the law could be more vigorously enforced:

It is a question of deciding if we start with a general crackdown to show the punishments we mean to enforce, and rigorously apply the fines, to teach the contraveners how much we desire the law to be obeyed. There is no question but that the prohibition of *toiles peintes* be established and that delays and other pretexts must cease.<sup>53</sup>

This memo advised the *Intendant* that the country was so full of the prohibited fabrics as a result of the dispensations made to the *Compagnie* that the trading company should not be allowed to continue to import the forbidden textiles on any pretext. With the same goal, the manufactures continued their vigorous lobbying. In 1690, they began complaining that the successive bans had only served to encourage the fashion for *indiennes*, and increased the quantity of goods flooding across France's borders to meet the demand. The government, in prohibiting direct imports from the Indies and the Levant, had overlooked the fact that Indian printed cottons imported by the other European East India companies could be smuggled into the country.

Thus, by 1690, the threat to the established French textile industries had been identified as both the *Compagnie*'s imports from the Indies and the copies being made within France. In addition, Indian goods imported by the other European East India Companies, or imitations printed in those countries, increased exponentially the quantity of clandestine goods which could potentially circulate on the black market in France. Not only were great quantities of material circulating, but many qualities: the richly hand-painted, colour-fast, originals from the Indies (extremely expensive and therefore destined only for courtiers and the wealthy); lower-quality Indian textiles imported via the Levant (cheaper

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<sup>52</sup> Michel Amelot was *Intendant de Commerce* for twenty-five years and as part of his role sat on the *Conseil* from 1699-1705 and again from 1709-24. He was appointed by the *Contrôleur-général* to administer the state manufactures, supervise the provincial *Intendants* on matters related to textiles, and appoint the *Inspecteurs des manufactures*, all of which made him extremely influential. It is also likely his main post made him partisan on behalf of the silk and woollen industries in the rulings of the *Conseil*.

<sup>53</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. '*Procès verbal du Lieutenant particulier du Bailliage de Roüen.*' '*Il est question de décider si l'on commencera par une saisie generale la punition qu'on veut establir, et si les amendes seroit exigées à la rigueur, car ce debut apprendroit aux contravenans combien on desire estre obey. Il y a nulle difficulté que la prohibition des Toills peintes est establie et que les delais et tous autres prétextes vont cesser*'.

prints in simpler designs for the mass market); and cottons printed in French workshops, which would undoubtedly have been technically deficient.

In summary, the government tried unsuccessfully in the 1680s to control a specific area of trade, just as it was used to doing in all other areas of commerce. Although it first appears that the same law was reissued constantly in these years, detailed study reveals the subtleties of the tortured path the government had to take to appease all sides, as the interested parties lobbied successfully for the protection of their rights, and the *indienneurs* became inventive in side-stepping the law. If the government had enforced the total ban on importing and printing it proposed in 1686, even if that had incurred the expense of compensating the *Compagnie* for the cargoes *en route*, it may have been effective, but its attempts to placate the *directeurs* undermined its own legislation, making the prohibition even harder to enforce.

### **1690-1700: The increasing contraband trade**

By 1691 the government was trying to enforce a law which was unpopular on all sides. A new *Contrôleur-général*, Louis Phélypeaux, conducted another survey which recommended a total ban on importing white cottons and muslins, a major concern for the *anciennes manufactures* in its efforts to halt printing within France. This was enacted on February 10, with detailed instructions to the *Intendants* on its enforcement, including proclamations to be made and notices to be posted in all the provinces, so that no-one could pretend ignorance. The *Compagnie* fought back to protect the cargoes already on its ships (somewhat of a mockery, as it would mean that they had been loaded before the ban five years previously), and successfully received permission in two rulings of February 24 and March 13, 1691 to land and sell fabrics arriving at Nantes, providing they were officially marked. Depitre notes that six new border offices were opened at this time to fight contraband, indicating an increasing desire to stop the trade.<sup>54</sup> La Reynie insisted that his officers made an example of people found with even the smallest quantity of printed cotton, and refused the request that confiscated fabrics be used to clothe the poor.<sup>55</sup> The burning of fabrics began, with 11,800 aunes, roughly 14,000 metres, destroyed in Rouen on December 31, 1692.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 42.

<sup>55</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs généraux*, Vol. I, no. 1148. 'M. de la Reynie, lieutenant-général de police de Paris, au Contrôleur-général, 16 décembre, 1692.' An interesting idea, which emphasises how wasteful the public must have considered the wilful destruction of fabrics.

<sup>56</sup> An aune (or sometimes *aulne*) was an old measure of cloth length. Estimates of its length vary, particularly as the measure itself varied from city to city. According to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* of 1694,

Two edicts of December 9, 1692 and March 3, 1693 confirmed the quantity of contraband entering France, and the continuation of illegal printing. For the first time, the rulings targeted the *marchands-merciers* of Paris who, ‘have continued to have made, distribute and bring in from foreign countries every day cotton cloths, painted and printed’, placing them squarely at the heart of the contraband trade.<sup>57</sup> Dressmakers had also apparently continued to make and sell garments of *toile peinte*, as this had not been expressly proscribed, but now all confections made from the prohibited fabrics were banned, whether furnishings or clothing, and existing stock was to be disposed of in six months.<sup>58</sup> Writs were presented to many merchants, some for trading in the prohibited fabrics, but others who were ‘at this time having linen cloths painted and printed in secret and hidden locations, because of the ease with which they are able to distribute these fabrics’.<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to note, firstly, that the merchants were becoming entrepreneur-manufacturers, or at least sponsors of *indienneurs*, and secondly, that illegal printing was being conducted on linen, which was more readily available than cotton.<sup>60</sup> Presumably the blocks used to print cotton had not been destroyed as directed, and were being used to print on any other types of cloth possible. These prints would not, however, have been colour-fast, hence the mention of more furnishing end-uses than clothing.

Contrary to the government’s intentions, a widespread, unregulated trade was now established. It only continued to prolong the paradoxical situation by granting the *Compagnie* permission in January 1695 to import 150,000 livres-worth of *toiles peintes* each year until the end of 1698, with the futile proviso that the fabrics must be kept under

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it had by that date been standardised to the Paris length, which was equivalent to 3 feet 8 inches or 1.18m. *Inspecteurs* would verify the length of the stick used for measuring, also called an *aune*, similar to a yardstick.

<sup>57</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Extrait des Registres du Conseil d’Etat, le 3 Mars 1693.*’ ‘*Neanmoins plusieurs Marchands & Ouvriers en ont continue la fabrique & le debit, & tirent encore tous les jours des païs étrangers des toilles de cotton peintes & imprimées.*’ It is difficult to find an exact equivalent term for this type of merchant, which Carolyn Sargentson retains in her work. Their guild numbered over 2,000 members in the eighteenth century and, while they did not manufacture anything, they enjoyed the right to custom-finish and embellish products to customers’ needs, and it appears some interpreted this as including commissioning printing. Carolyn Sargentson, *Merchants and Luxury Markets: The marchands-merciers of Eighteenth-Century Paris* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1996), p.1 and pp. 12-13.

<sup>58</sup> Lower-priced skirts and aprons constitute the main items of clothing confiscated from Paris dressmakers in the documents related to seizures in this period.

<sup>59</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Defens à tous Marchands, Ouvriers de fabriquer ou de faire fabriquer vendre ou distribuer aucunes toilles de cotton, ou autres toilles peintes, sous peines portées par lesdits Arrests...*’. Banned items were ‘furnishings or clothing, whether hangings, bed covers, carpets, dressings gowns or other similar work’.

<sup>60</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Arrest du Conseil du Roy, 19 février, 1691.*’ Printing on French linen and hemp were already expressly forbidden, and it also became illegal in 1691 to sell or print *Droguet de fil*, a rough linen cloth imported from the Germanic States, indicating there had been a further attempt at circumventing the law.

lock and key until sold, and then re-exported by the purchasers.<sup>61</sup> Certificates of re-export were required, and it was specifically forbidden to send the fabrics to Paris. While the re-expedition of goods as an acceptable reason to condone imported commodities was an accepted practice of many European governments, it was unenforceable in France, and rendered the previous nine years of bans virtually obsolete. For the *Compagnie*, off-loading these wares elsewhere in Europe would have been difficult, considering the Dutch and English East India Companies continued to import vast quantities to be sold in their home, European and colonial markets. These appear to have been a major source of the contraband in France, indicated by a letter from the Marquis d'Argenson, who had succeeded La Reynie as the *Lieutenant-général de police*, accusing the customs officers of accepting bribes, allowing the smuggled goods to pass through the border posts and be sent to Paris.<sup>62</sup> D'Argenson was an ardent and efficient enforcer of the law, but as France remained an island of prohibition surrounded by possible sources of illegal fabrics, the role of the police and customs officials charged with halting the smuggling of contraband goods was unmanageable.<sup>63</sup> (Figure 26.)

Other external factors had an impact on the situation, including the ongoing War of the League of Augsburg, which pitted France against most of the other major powers of Europe.<sup>64</sup> In 1696, the King permitted all fabrics confiscated from captured enemy ships to be imported, even if illegal. (Figure 27.) At the prospect of another potential influx which would harm their business, the Lyon silk manufactures, now organised, sent their delegate

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<sup>61</sup> Dernis, *Recueil ou Collection des Titres, Édits, Déclarations, Arrests, Reglemens & autres Pièces concernant la Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, 4 vols. (Paris: Antoine Boudet, 1755-1756). Tome I, pp. 576-579. 'Arrest du Conseil du D'État du Roy, Qui ordonne que les Directeurs de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales pourront faire apporter dans leurs Vaisseaux, pendant trois années, des Toiles peintes des Indes jusqu'à la valeur de cent cinquante mille livres par chacun an, du 22 janvier 1695.'

<sup>62</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. I, no. 1613. 'M. d'Argenson, lieutenant-général de police de Paris, au Contrôleur-général, 24 mars, 9 et 16 juin, 1697.'

<sup>63</sup> Marc-René de Voyer de Paulmy, Marquis d'Argenson (1652-1721), was the scion of an old aristocratic family and became *Lieutenant-général de Police de la Ville de Paris* in 1697, an illustrious post. He is frequently quoted in this study, as his profuse correspondence with successive *Contrôleur-généraux* witnesses his vigour in trying to enforce the prohibition, and often his personal frustration. According to his elegy, one of his roles was to 'suppress the tyranny of the Merchants for the public, while at the same time facilitating their commerce' which the author calls 'enough work for more than one man'. D'Argenson held the post for 21 years and was considered fair and hardworking, 'dictating to four secretaries at a time'. In addition he was altruistic, apparently refusing the repayment of a loan of 100,000 écus he made to the State, preferring that it be used to pay the pensions urgently needed for army officers returning from the war. He would later become *Contrôleur-général*, and eventually Keeper of the Seals (*Garde des Sceaux*). Anon., *Éloge de M. d'Argenson*. (Paris: M. Brunet, 1723).

<sup>64</sup> Also called the Nine Years' War (1688–97), the conflict saw a European-wide alliance, which included the Netherlands, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, oppose the territorial ambitions of Louis XIV. Through the leadership of William III both the Netherlands and England were involved, and thus the cargoes of their East India Companies were potential targets.

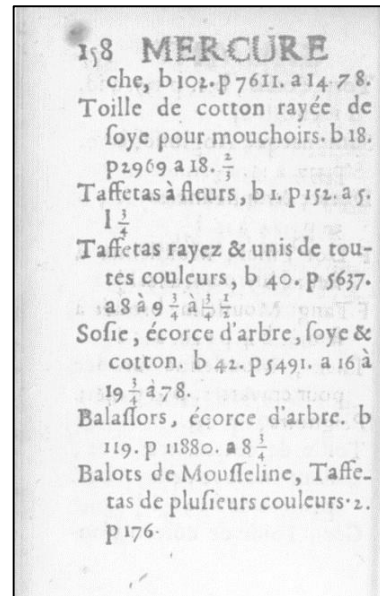
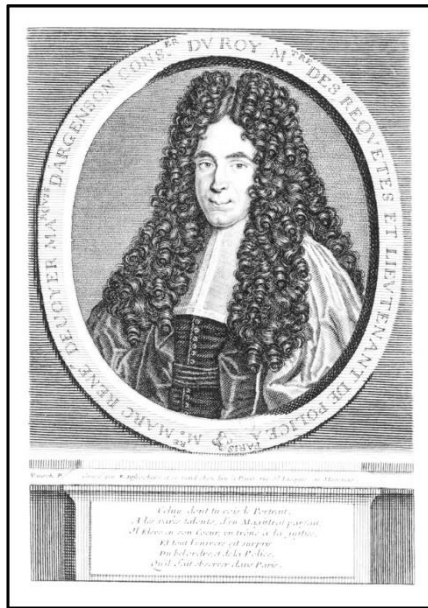


Fig. 26. (Above left) Marc-René de Voyer de Paulmy, Marquis d'Argenson (1652-1721), held the post of *Lieutenant-général de Police de la Ville de Paris* from 1697 to 1718.

Fig. 27. (Above right) A page from *Le Mercure Galant* of January 1696, listing goods for sale seized from English ships, which was permitted in time of war.

Puylata to court to vigorously appeal for all textile imports from the Indies, whatever their category, to be banned. The merchants of Paris and several other cities joined in, requesting the *Compagnie's* sale of landed fabrics be delayed from May to October to allow them time to sell their merchandise. Naturally, the *Compagnie* lobbied robustly against this measure, insisting it be allowed to sell the textiles permitted by the 1695 ban within France, due to the impossibility of exporting them to countries which already had their own suppliers, not to mention the dangerous situation at sea, and pointed out that the 150,000 livres quantity posed very little threat to manufactures producing millions of livres-worth of goods each year. A curious suggestion was made by the *directeurs*, that the cotton printing industry should be encouraged, as it was permitted in other countries by this time and would not harm the *anciennes manufactures*. This was the very first time any proposal to encourage printing was suggested, presumably to encourage the *Compagnie's* own imports of white cotton to print on.<sup>65</sup>

Pontchartrain, who as *Secrétaire de la Marine* was responsible for imports and exports as well as the direction of the *Compagnie*, tried to placate all parties by ruling that the *Compagnie's* auction would not be delayed, but refusing its request to sell its *toiles peintes*

<sup>65</sup> Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 47, citing Kaepelin *Les origines de l'Inde française*, p. 353, who in turn refers to a document in the Archives du Ministère des Colonies, a source which cannot be verified.

in France.<sup>66</sup> An additional clause, preventing the *Compagnie* from disposing of the fabrics in the French Antilles, is evidence it was looking for other options to circumvent the law, while an edict of December 3, 1697 banning the printing of linen and hemp ‘both old and new’ shows the *indienneurs* were also trying every type of substrate which was not expressly prohibited.<sup>67</sup> The Paris *fripriers*, the large numbers of second-hand clothing vendors who provided an extended market for the textiles, were forbidden on December 14 of that year to have any *toiles peintes* in their shops by March, when *inspecteurs* would be sent to check, confiscate and impose fines.<sup>68</sup>

The Second-Hand Clothes Dealers have a great quantity of *toiles peintes* either in lengths or as furnishings with which they still do business, on the pretext that they are old or partly used; this could perpetuate their manufacture, sale and use, & diminish the consumption of woollen cloths in the Kingdom.<sup>69</sup>

On every side, the government was besieged by the difficulties of attempting to halt a trade which was increasing exponentially, and faced with the problems of enforcing legislation which all the parties with vested interests were determined to disregard. Even those appointed to enforce the law were implicated. In 1699 in Poitiers, an *indienneur* called Saulin was condemned to a 3,000 l. fine and incarceration if he defaulted, while Houlier, the judge who had failed to enforce the sentences against Saulin and others, and had returned confiscated *toiles peintes* and printing blocks to their owners, was himself fined 1,000 l. on pain of corporal punishment.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Joseph du Fresne de Francheville, *Histoire générale et particulière des finances, où l'on voit l'origine, l'établissement, la perception et la régie de toutes les impositions: dressée sur les Pièces Authentiques*. (Paris: de Bure l'aîné, 1738), Tome III, p. 262. ‘*Ordre de M. de Pontchartrain pour les Droits des Marchandises des Indes Orientales arrivés à Nantes & vendues dans la même ville, du 14 mars, 1697.*’

<sup>67</sup> A.N. F12, 1403: ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’Etat du Roy, Qui fait défenses à toutes personnes d’imprimer ou peindre aucunes Toiles de Lin & de Chanvre tant vieilles que neuves, 3 décembre, 1697.*’ It was possible to stamp a print onto an old fabric, or even a made-up garment, which indicates the presence of unskilled ‘jobbing’ printers who were patterning any fabrics, regardless of their durability or quality, using the technique known as ‘*petit teint*’ on used textiles.

<sup>68</sup> *Fripriers* were an important part of the chain of clothing consumption. In a time when only the aristocracy and wealthy merchants’ wives could afford new bespoke clothing, there was no shame for other strata of society to buy their cast-off clothes, while in turn their own clothing could also be sold on to the ranks below them. However, as well as the respectable *fripriers*, there was a thriving black market of dealers in clothes stolen by servants from their employers, and the trade had a poor reputation as a result.

<sup>69</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Arrest portant Défenses aux Fripriers d’avoir chez eux des Toiles peintes, Hardes & Meubles faits d’icelles, du 14 décembre, 1697.*’ ‘*Les Fripriers de Paris ont dans leurs Boutiques & magasins une grande quantité de Toilles peintes en pièces ou employés en meubles, dont ils prétendent pouvoir faire commerce, & en continuer l’achat & la vente, sous prétexte que ce sont Toilles... vieilles ou demy usées; ce qui pourroit perpetuer la fabrique, vente & l’usage des Toilles peintes, & diminuer la consommation des Etoffes de laines provenant des manufactures du Royaume.*’

<sup>70</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Ordonnance de Gilles de Maupeou, Commissaire départi en la Généralité de Poitiers contre Saulin dit la Vignerie du 27 mars, 1699.*’ ‘*Faute par Sr Houlier Juge de Melle d’avoir satisfait à nos Ordonnances, & de représenter les Toiles peintes & Moules saisis, qu’il auroit de son autorité privée fait rendre aux Parties l’avons condamné en mille livres d’amende applicable comme dessus, au paiement*

Other existing types of cotton-related trade were caught up in the effects of the prohibition. The massive increase in excise duty, from 7.5 sols to 6 livres per piece, effectively halted the commerce of Zurich merchants who had long used an export route through France for cotton voiles they made exclusively for the Spanish market, as the value of a piece was only 4 livres. By forcing the merchants to find other routes to Spain (via Genoa, Amsterdam or Hamburg), France was losing several thousand livres of duties each year.<sup>71</sup> Pontchartrain deferred to the *Fermiers-généraux*, who reported that there was no reason to hinder their passage through France, although only through the ports of Narbonne or Bayonne, which could benefit the *Compagnie*. This is the first explicit reference to the State preventing imports of cotton specifically to aid its East India Company.

### **1700-1706: Ineffective measures of control**

The early years of the eighteenth century saw a constant flurry of legislation from the *Conseil*, bombarded on either side by the manufactures and the *Compagnie*, as it attempted to control the unabated influx of imports; to prevent the circulation of French counterfeit prints from the growing number of clandestine workshops; and solve the dilemma of how to dispose of seized *indiennes*. 1700 was a particularly pivotal year of the prohibition. It saw the growing prominence of the merchants in the argument and, most importantly, the personal use of *toiles peintes* was targeted.

Fifteen years into the ban, contraband was providing a profitable business for both the French and their neighbours. Seizing the opportunity to penetrate a lucrative market, the interests of the other European East India Companies in the infiltration of *indiennes* into France became important. Unable to land their goods after an English ban in 1700, cargoes intended for England provided an additional supply, increasing the total amount of Indian fabrics available. Many were diverted to Holland, from where cross-border smuggling offered another route to the French market, but just as many were openly landed by ship. The silk weavers claimed that nineteen Dutch and four English vessels had landed cargoes of six million livres-worth of goods in France that year, adding that, even supposing two-thirds of the high-priced goods were confiscated, the remaining third was lucrative enough

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*desquelles amendes lesdits Saulin & Houlier seront contraints par toutes voyes deües & raisonnables, même par corps.* The 3,000 livres fine was the standard penalty imposed, but was unpayable for most and therefore used as a warning. In 1710 the average salary of a weaver was 150 livres per year. See also note 76.

<sup>71</sup> A.N. G7, 1686. '*Memoire des Deputez de la Diette de Bale pour avoir le transit des toills de cotton par France pour l'Espagne, 27 février, 1699*'; A.N. G7, 1686. '*Response... sur les voiles de cotton de Suisse destines pour Espagne, 1699*'.

for the East India Companies to justify their illegal trade.<sup>72</sup> The *Compagnie* also continued to find ways to import *toiles peintes* and its commerce continued to increase, according to an envoy to The Hague, who remarked that the Dutch East India Company's sales of spices and fabrics had dropped by 12%, which was attributed to the 'quantity of these cargoes the French and English have brought in directly themselves.'<sup>73</sup>

The *Conseil* openly accused the *Compagnie* of fraud, by passing off 'a hundred times more Indian merchandise' from the English and Dutch Companies' sales as those which it was permitted to enter as the remainder of its previous cargoes.<sup>74</sup> Domestic European imitations also supplemented the amount of printed cottons in circulation, not to mention the products of an increasing number of illegal workshops in France, particularly those hidden away in protected enclaves (*lieux privilégiés*). The *Conseil* concluded that, as no one could differentiate between these products, the only solution was to ban the use of *indiennes* entirely.<sup>75</sup> On July 13, 1700 a new Edict reiterated the ban, and reaffirmed the conditions on importing and re-exportation imposed on the *Compagnie* in 1695. This clause was doubly enforced when all French merchants were expressly forbidden from trading in cloth imported by the *Compagnie* at the risk of large fines and their boutiques and warehouses being closed for three months. This extremely negative outcome for the *Compagnie* may indicate its lack of favour at this time or, at least, its *directeurs* having less influence at Court.

Perhaps the most significant clause appended in 1700 was that which forbade the wearing of *toiles peintes* for the first time:

His Majesty forbids all persons, whatever their quality or condition, to dress themselves or have made any garment or furnishings in *toile peinte*... on pain of confiscation of the garments in which these people are dressed and a fifty livres fine.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Mémoire du 24 juin, 1700'.

<sup>73</sup> A.N. G7, 1686. 'Mémoire de Bonnat à la Haye, 4 mars, 1700.' 'On écrit que la Compagnie des Indes ne fera pas cette année une vente avantageuse de ses marchandises. Le Poivre, la Cannelle, et généralement leurs Epicerie et leurs Estoffes étant baissées depuis l'année passée d'environ douze pour cent. On peut attribuer cela à la quantité que les français et les anglais en ont apporté directement chez eux.'

<sup>74</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Avis de Messieurs les Deputés de Commerce sur le Commerce et l'usage des Estoffes des Indes, 26 septembre 1701.' 'May [the Council] dare to also propose that, the sales in England and Holland being almost finished, the sale in Nantes will be used by the *Compagnie* to fraudulently introduce a hundred times more Indian merchandise from our neighbours.'

<sup>75</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. Summary on a nineteenth-century cover sheet to these documents, now missing.

<sup>76</sup> BnF IFN- 8622501. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy du 13 juillet, 1700.' 'Fait aussi S.M. défenses à toute personne, de quelque qualité et condition qu'elle soit, de porter, s'habiller ni faire aucun vêtement ni meubles... de toile peinte... à peine de confiscation des habits et vestements dont les particuliers se trouveraient vestus et de 50 livres d'amende'. Regarding the fines, the calculation of wages is notoriously difficult during the period. Alain Thilley cites a daily rate of 32 sols for a skilled artisan in 1680, or 430 livres



This lower fine targeted the general populace, and signalled the intention to halt the use of the fabrics through measures which were more realistic to impose. The final phrase was the one which would later be used as an excuse to strip clothes from wearers in public. In the face of the ever-mounting flood of textiles, seizure and destruction was the only method of control open to the *Conseil*, which commissioned extensive searches in Paris and the regions in 1700. In Paris alone, four *inspecteurs* discovered almost 7,000 bolts of the banned fabrics and 3,000 remnants in merchants' boutiques, valued at more than 329,000 livres, as well as a small number of garments, including '58 robes, 42 kerchiefs, 14 coats and 11 skirts.'<sup>77</sup> The low quantity of sewn garments in the inventory is unsurprising, as due to their illegal nature most people would have bought lengths of fabric and had them made up secretly by dressmakers. Their value is more significant: at 20 livres a coat, between 40 and 100 livres for a dress and 100 livres for quilts and wall-hangings, these were products destined for the rich, and not the imitation goods printed by *indienneurs*.

The correspondence between Amelot and the *Intendants* illustrates another loophole in the ways laws were enforced. Only two-thirds of the confiscated goods were to be burned: the other third was the reward of the denunciator, who was expected to export them to claim his profit from sale abroad, an outcome which appears extremely unlikely. Even if the destruction of goods was efficient, therefore, there would be a third of all goods left in warehouses ready to circulate on the black market.<sup>78</sup> Also in Amelot's correspondence, regarding an *indienneur* in Rouen, perhaps one who had been legally allowed to print for the *Compagnie* for a period of time, is the first reference to a design differentiation between the simple floral *toiles peintes* of the domestic workshops and the high-quality exotic imports:

On the subject of the 17 pieces of linen, cotton and silk with small bouquets of painted flowers, which they call *siamoises*, and are made in the town of Rouen... the King's intention is that this sort of cloth should stay absolutely prohibited, the same as *toiles peintes*.<sup>79</sup>

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per year based on 273 working days, but he found great variation. In 1720 a master joiner paid his companion only 11 sols per day, but another cabinetmaker paid his 40 sols in 1723. Any of these amounts, however, still made payment of even these reduced fines difficult. Alain Thillay, *Le Faubourg Saint-Antoine et ses faux ouvriers: la liberté du travail à Paris aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Seysse: Champ Vallon, 2002), pp. 208-209.

<sup>77</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. '*Estat des Etoffes des Indes trouvées chez les marchands de Paris suivant les Proces verbaux des Commissaires qui en ont fait la Visite, 13 aoust, 1700.*'

<sup>78</sup> A.N. F12, 114, cited by d'Allemagne, *La Toile Imprimée*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>79</sup> A.N. F12, 114. Recueil des Lettres écrites par Monsieur Amelot: '*Lettre de M. Amelot à Savary de Bruslons*', 30 juillet, 1700.' '*Au sujet des 17 pièces d'étoffes de fil, coton et soie à petits bouquets peints, que l'on nomme siamoises, dont la fabrique se fait dans la ville de Rouen... l'intention du Roy est que cette sorte*

Throughout 1700, the *Intendants* published the ban across the provinces, and the *inspecteurs* reported back to Amelot on their success: around 300 pieces were confiscated in each of the regional cities of Montauban, Metz, Rochefort, Montpellier, Limoges and Alençon. Amelot encouraged them to keep searching, noting he was aware of ‘the large quantity of *toiles peintes* which are circulating in your areas’.<sup>80</sup> *Inspecteur de la Fosse* noted that although he had only found five pieces in Alençon, and these were duly marked with the *Compagnie* stamp, he had still addressed a writ to the two merchants and ‘would keep searching other towns in his region’.<sup>81</sup> Culprits did not give up their illegal goods easily, as Dubois, an *inspecteur* in Cornouaille, western Brittany, found out when he chased a woman on a horse, whom he had been tipped off had *indiennes* in her baggage. A large hostile crowd gathered, allowing her to escape while they attacked him:

They helped her evade the Inspector and mistreated him with blows, from which he was grievously wounded, they ripped up his coat and his wig, broke his sword over his body, took his silver cane and stole three pistols and even the money he had on him.<sup>82</sup>

This kind of outcry became more frequent once the wearing of *indiennes* was punishable, but it had little effect on their popularity: *Intendant* de Saucen of Nantes noted that ‘*toiles peintes* are publicly worn by all sorts of people in Brittany’.<sup>83</sup> He informed Amelot of his attempt to enforce the Edict of July 13 preventing any party except the *Compagnie* from landing *toiles peintes* in Breton ports, from where the contraband was flowing freely into France. The Quimper office had made several seizures of merchandise brought in by different ships, he noted, but the illegal goods were so abundant, and the seizures so unpopular, that at one merchant’s premises:

A great number of people... cruelly mistreated the Clerks, until one feared for his life. The next day the Judge, who wanted to search the confiscated goods, was also threatened with death... Without your protection, Sire, our

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*d'étoffe demeure absolument défendue de même que les toiles peintes.* At this date *siamoises* appear to still have contained variations on the three fabrics. See Chapter 1, n. 29.

<sup>80</sup> A.N. F12, 114. Recueil des Lettres écrites par Monsieur Amelot: ‘Lettre au Sieur Bocquet, mars 1700.’

<sup>81</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘Lettre de M. de la Fosse à Alençon, au sujet des Etoffes et toiles Peintes, 9 septembre 1700.’

<sup>82</sup> A.N. F12, 1403: ‘Rapport de Maistre Yves Foucault, avocat en parlement, 28 aoust, 1700.’ ‘Lesquels auroient fait évader ladite demoiselle, et maltraités ledit Dubois du plusieurs coups, dont il a esté grièvement blessé, luy auroit déchiré son habit et sa peruque, cassé son épée sur le corps, [ôté] sa canne d’argent, vollant trois pistoles, [et] mesme l’argent qu’il avoit sur luy.’

<sup>83</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘Lettre de M. de Saucen à Monseigneur Amelot, 4 septembre, 1700.’ ‘Les toilles peintes se portent publiquement en Bretagne par toutes sortes de gens.’

Clerks will no longer undertake to make the visits, nor seize merchandise from the Indies.<sup>84</sup>

In December 1700, an unsigned memo, which would appear to be from one of the members of the *Conseil* to another, and has not been examined in any previous studies, squarely implicates the merchants of France's major cities as culpable for the continued flouting of the laws. Not only were their boutiques still overflowing with illegal *toiles peintes*, but they were actively commissioning prints on French cloths of different fibre mixes, as well as on the foreign cloths imported by the *Compagnie*, from *indienneurs*.<sup>85</sup> This memo is interesting not only for its insight into the merchants' role, but into the technical minutiae. Written in a careful style which suggests it may have been intended as a template to draw upon for the next ruling, the letter very specifically refers to the forbidden techniques as 'printing and painting' (*imprimer et peindre*) at each mention, suggesting that both methods were being used in France at this time. How unfortunate then, that the samples the writer attached to the memo have been lost, as these would have been invaluable for assessing the printing technique used and demonstrating that the poor quality of *indiennage* at this time, which the writer notes is clearly visible, meant the local products were by no means a match for the painted importations.

Secondly, the merchants were accused of continuing to sell the *Compagnie*'s cloths that were 'all painted' (*toutes peintes*), which again differentiates the Indian goods (*kalamkaris*) by their superior hand-painted decoration. It was also asserted that the *indienneurs* were using the same blocks and tools, which should have been destroyed in 1697, to print on *siamoises*, even though the *Contrôleur-général* had recently ruled that the aforementioned fabric printed in Rouen was illegal. There was no alternative, the writer advised, but to issue another edict against printing on all types of fabrics, whether French or foreign; to insist on the immediate destruction of all blocks and printing equipment; and to regulate the sale of all fabrics in the merchants' stores with a lead seal to denote their legality.<sup>86</sup> It was a full year before the writer's recommendations were implemented in the reiteration of the prohibition of December 24, 1701 and, instead of marking their

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<sup>84</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Lettre de M. de Saucen'. 'Un grand nombre de peuple...maltraité cruellement les Commis, dont un est en danger de la vie. Et le lendemain le Juge, ayant voulu faire perquisition... sur le requisition des Commis, fut menace d'estre tüé... Sans votre protection, Monseigneur, nos Commis ne ferions plus entreprendre aucune visite, n'y de saisies aux marchandises des Indes.'

<sup>85</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Memoire concernant les Etoffes peintes, 17 décembre, 1700.'

<sup>86</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Memoire concernant les Etoffes peintes.'

fabrics, the merchants were instead ordered to get rid of their entire stock of *toiles peintes*, rather unfeasibly, within a week.<sup>87</sup>

The question of how to deal with imports through Marseille remained a dilemma. In 1700 Marseille's petitioning merchants were rather confusingly granted the right to import 'white, painted or dyed cotton fabrics coming directly from the Levant' to the value of their exports of French goods.<sup>88</sup> This provided a loophole, as although the fabrics were imported via the Levantine route, they originated in India.<sup>89</sup> While the privilege was to apply solely for fabrics being re-exported, in reality, there was again no way of monitoring whether these goods slipped into the kingdom. As the average consumer could not distinguish the provenance of the textiles, this was tantamount to encouragement of the contraband trade. The silk manufactures protested against Marseille's privileges, but the *Compagnie's* imports were nonetheless their primary focus:

The permission granted to the *Compagnie des Indes* to have [fabrics] brought over and distributed here... opens up all the ports of France to foreigners who import many millions [of livres-worth of goods]... loyal guards and officials stop the passage of satins and other fabrics from the Indies every day, even in those towns the furthest from the sea, which have clearly entered illegally through one of the ports.<sup>90</sup>

Equally, they complained that the quantity of goods being smuggled into France was greater than into any other European country, and more damaging to the French economy than, for example, to the Dutch, whom they claimed 'did not export metals to pay for their cargoes nor consume the goods themselves'.<sup>91</sup> Interestingly, the silk workers also dared to suggest to His Majesty that if he could prevent the trend-setting ladies of the Court from wearing the exotic fabrics, it would have more effect than any legislation: a reference to the

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<sup>87</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat, 24 décembre, 1701.'

<sup>88</sup> BnF IFN- 8622501. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat, 13 juillet, 1700.' 'Les négociants de Marseille... peuvent continuer d'y faire venir des toiles de coton blanches, peintes ou teintes qu'ils sont obligés de prendre en retour de leur commerce en Levant.'

<sup>89</sup> See the discussion in Chapter 4 on the provenance of printed fabrics.

<sup>90</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Au Roy... [des]Ouvriers de Soye, Or & Argent de la Ville de Lyon, ceux de la Ville de Tours, et autres villes de Manufactures, Et les Marchands qui font travailler ces Ouvriers...'. Pamphlet whose content dates it to 1701. 'La permission donnée à la Compagnie des Indes de faire apporter & debiter dans le Royaume... ouvre tous les Ports de France par ou les Etrangers en font entrer pour plusieurs Millions... les Gardes & les Commis fideles arrestent tous les jours dans les Passages des Villes les plus éloignées de la Mer, des Satins & d'aures Etoffes des Indes qui sont necessairement entrées en fraude par quelque Port.'

<sup>91</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Au Roy... [des]Ouvriers de Soye, Or & Argent.' 'Les Hollandois... font le Commerce des Indes tout differemment des François & des Anglois, en ce qu'ils n'y portent point d'argent, & que la consommation desdites Etoffes des Indes, ne se fait point chez eux.'

double standards which were accepted at Court.<sup>92</sup> The *Conseil* estimated textiles being purchased from European neighbours and fraudulently imported under the guise of being *Compagnie* cargoes were costing French manufactures 12 million livres per year. The *député* for Nantes argued, however, that this was preferable to the *Compagnie* filling the space in its holds with Indian fabrics rather than pepper.<sup>93</sup> The *Conseil* declined, commenting rather acerbically, that the *Compagnie* should stick to its mandate and concentrate on importing spices.<sup>94</sup>

In spite of being accused of complicity in the entry of foreign goods, the *Compagnie* lobbied for action against contraband. In June 1701, Pontchartrain signed an order requiring all circuit judges to investigate the *Compagnie*'s claims of contraband dealings and seize any goods found.<sup>95</sup> As a result, there were many confiscations across the country, at entry points like La Rochelle, of contraband goods 'coming from England, with counterfeit seals'.<sup>96</sup> The *directeurs* of the *Compagnie*, rather optimistically, requested permission to sell the seized goods, but this was unsurprisingly refused by Pontchartrain and Chamillart.<sup>97</sup> Two further edicts were issued in September 1701, adding severe penalties for dealing in contraband: the merchants' boutiques would be closed and their names struck from their guild lists, while any officials aiding and abetting them would face nine years in the galleys.<sup>98</sup> Another ruling on December 24 specifically banned printing 'flowers or figures', the first reference to printed designs other than florals, 'even in the privileged enclosures', indicating areas of Paris such as the Temple, the Abbey of St-Germain and the Arsenal were extending their protection to the increasing numbers of new

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<sup>92</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Au Roy... [des]Ouvriers de Soye, Or & Argent.' 'Si V.M. Sire, veut marquer aux Dames de sa Cour que c'est luy déplaire de faire aucun usage des Etoffes des Indes de quelque qualité qu'elles soient, cette seule parole fera plus d'effet que les Edits & Declarations.'

<sup>93</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondence des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. II, Appendice, p. 482. 'Mémoire du sieur Des Casaux du Hallay, député de Nantes, sur l'état du commerce en général, remis au *Conseil* le 4 mars 1701.' 'Elle est bornée enfin à nous faire venir des toiles de coton... et que, prenant des mesures justes, elle eût pu établir un entrepôt aux Indes et apporter tout le poivre nécessaire.'

<sup>94</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Mémoire de Messieurs les Deputés de Commerce sur le Commerce de la *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, le 25 mai, 1701.' 'Le Protection extraordinaire dont le Roy depuis pres de 40 ans honore cette *Compagnie*... [permet qu'elle] doit s'attacher a nous fournir des drogues et Espiciers dont nous ne pouvons pas nous passer. Il est Estonnant de voir... qu'Elle se soit bornée au commerce des toiles et des Estoffes qu'elle sçait estre d'un prejudics infiny a nos Manufactures.'

<sup>95</sup> Kaepelin, *Les origines de l'Inde française*, p. 387.

<sup>96</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondence des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. II, article 292. 'M. Bégon, intendant à la Rochelle, au Contrôleur-général, le 6 Août, 1701.' 'Chez la plupart des marchands... [nos commis] sont à la découverte d'étoffes des Indes non marquées ou venant d'Angleterre avec des marques contrefaites.'

<sup>97</sup> Kaepelin, *Les origines de l'Inde française*, p. 388.

<sup>98</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Arrest du *Conseil d'Etat*, 20 septembre, 1701.' B.A. 1261, an anonymous pamphlet called 'Réflexions sur l'état actuel du Commerce de Soierie,' of 1789 mentions three other edicts in 1701 (July 12, September 6 and 27).

*indienneurs*.<sup>99</sup> Not only were these businesses evading the conditions of the edicts through their location, but also by printing on the *siamoises* textiles mentioned before. There were to be no *toiles peintes* stocked by any of the merchants by January 1, 1702 (on pain of losing their trading licence). Once again, this was a completely impractical ruling and, as mentioned before, did not improve the measures to identify the legal merchandise.

Although the direction the legislation was taking was not to the *Compagnie*'s advantage in 1700 and 1701, the government had nothing to gain by letting the *Compagnie* fail. It was granted the privilege to import a further 40,000 l. of merchandise per year (in addition to the 150,000 l. already permitted), as well as another year's grace to sell the *toiles des Indes* on board its most recently arrived vessels, but this was a very small part of the *Compagnie*'s business.<sup>100</sup> The *directeurs* suggested a compromise. The condition added in January 1687, which had stipulated that in return for 150,000 livres-worth of silk and 'exotic' fabrics landed each year it had to export 500,000 livres-worth of French goods, was proving increasingly onerous, due to the competition from the other European importers in Western markets and the lack of interest in French goods in the Indies. In return for the removal of this clause, the *directeurs* offered to renounce the quota of silk and silver and gold cloths, and this was duly legislated on May 6, 1702.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, the *Compagnie* won the right to choose which goods it imported, as long as it avoided *toiles peintes*, silks and other 'exotic' fabrics, and it was granted a one-time favour to sell at auction the '7,164 pieces of *toiles peintes*, carpets and bed coverings' remaining in its warehouses.<sup>102</sup> This privilege was vital, as it was unable to sell the goods abroad due to the War of the Spanish Succession. It had already instructed its representatives in the Indies to stop sending *toiles peintes*, and so this was a final and 'small' quantity of goods which 'would not prejudice the business of the French manufactures', its *directeurs* had argued.

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<sup>99</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy, Qui fait défenses à toutes Personnes de peindre ou imprimer, faire peindre or faire imprimer, même dans les Lieux Privilegiez, aucune Fleurs ou autre Figures sur l'Etoffe appelée Siamoise, du 24 Decembre 1701.'

<sup>100</sup> Haudrière, *La Compagnie française des Indes au XVIIIe siècle*, Tome III, pp. 434-435. Haudrière estimates the *Compagnie*'s revenue at 7 to 14 million livres per year. With merchants in Nantes buying on average between 95,000 and 180,000 livres-worth of goods each, this permission was clearly of little consequence.

<sup>101</sup> BnF F-21222 (27). Acte royal. 'Déclaration du Roy, qui permet à la Compagnie des Indes Orientales de vendre les étoffes des Indes qu'elle a reçu par ses vaisseaux, tant celles de soye pure que celles de soye meslée d'or & d'argent, 9 mai, 1702.'

<sup>102</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy du 18 novembre, 1702.' 'Sa Majesté auroit permis aux Directeurs de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales de vendre à Nantes 7164 Pieces de Toiles Peintes, tapis et Couvertures des Indes qui luy restoient des retours des Indes...ces toiles ne feroient pas un préjudice considerable aux différentes Manufactures de Royaume.'

Their merchant customers also received authorisation to sell properly marked wares until the end of 1703, paving the way for at least another two years of circulation.

Adverse reaction was swift, and the silk manufactures of Lyon, Tours, Paris and other towns petitioned the King to reaffirm that the *Compagnie*'s founding Edict of 1664 allowed only the importation of raw materials, and not finished fabrics. Anisson adamantly protested:

The Cloths are sold very dearly at Nantes, so each merchant takes only a very small quantity, providing the pretext to sell the Cloths of the Dutch and English Companies, which are much cheaper, and these they introduce into the kingdom in very great quantities.<sup>103</sup>

This document is the first to emphasise the popularity of *indiennes* with French women. French fashions were so widely copied abroad, argued Anisson, that if the French stopped wearing the silks, linens and wool they were famous for, other countries would also stop buying them. As the public were not able to tell the difference between *toiles peintes* made in the kingdom and those made in the Indies, the results would be disastrous:

A manufacture will be reborn which we have had so much trouble to extinguish in France, and in fact, we have just learned that printing the cloths is beginning in several towns and even in the Capital.<sup>104</sup>

Calculating the damage at over ten million livres, the *deputé* requested that the King rule that the 7,000 pieces permitted to be sold at Lorient by the ruling of September be confiscated immediately, the purchasers be refunded, and the goods shipped out of the kingdom. In a unique admission, the resulting order of November 18 recognised the error of granting this permission to the *Compagnie*, and gave the *directeurs* eight days to produce a list of the purchasers of its inventory, as well as all *toiles peintes* brought back in 1700 and 1701, including the prices and quantities sold to each merchant, the sale price per piece and the terms of payment.<sup>105</sup> As an appeasement, the money that the *Compagnie*

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<sup>103</sup> A.N. G7, 1687. 'Mémoire d'Anisson au Conseil de Commerce, 5 juillet 1702.' If the goods imported by the Dutch and English were cheap, it is probably due to those countries' East India Companies being unable to offload their goods in England since 1700. 'Les Toiles ont été vendues fort chèrement à Nantes, chaque marchand ayant prix une tres petite partie, pour avoir un pretexte de vendre des memes Toiles des compagnies de Holande et d'Angleterre, qui sont à beaucoup meilleur marché, et qu'ils introduiront dans le Royaume en tres grande quantité.'

<sup>104</sup> A.N. G7, 1687. 'Mémoire d'Anisson au Conseil de Commerce, 5 juillet 1702.' 'Il sera renaistre une manufacture qu'on a eü tant de peine d'esteindre en France, en effet on veint d'apprendre qu'on a commence d'en peindre en plusieurs villes du Royaume, et mesme dans la Capitale.'

<sup>105</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Estat du Roy, Qui ordonne que dans la huitaine...les Directeurs... remettront entre les mains du Sieur Chamillart un Etat par eux certifié, contenant les noms des Marchands... qui ont acheté les 7164 pieces de Toiles Peintes, etc., 18 novembre, 1702.'

reimbursed for returned goods would in turn be refunded by the Treasury. This ruling also repeated the prohibition on commerce or use of the goods within France.

If this pacified the manufactures, it infuriated an increasingly vocal protagonist: the Paris merchants. The following week, they complained to the Conseil of the difficulties in complying with the new regulations: the problems in receiving a reimbursement from the *Compagnie* or its agents; the impossibility of tracing the purchasers of the many small lots of fabric already sold; and the refusal of the public to give up their *indiennes*, the loss of which would find many in misery ‘without the means of buying other cloths to clothe themselves’.<sup>106</sup> When the Conseil paid no heed to the merchants’ woes, forty-five of them went to the wool-weavers’ Guildhall (*Halle aux Draps*) in Paris and demanded a total of 126,000 livres in reimbursements.<sup>107</sup> They remained unsatisfied, as the *Compagnie* successfully persuaded Chamillart that the amount was inflated with fraudulent demands, and the merchants were using it as an excuse to avoid the payment of bills long overdue. By December, the government tried to put an end to the discussion once and for all. The *Compagnie* and the merchants could sell their goods until the end of the year, and individual purchasers could use the official *toiles peintes* until the end of 1704.<sup>108</sup> In theory then, there would be no *toiles peintes* in the country after January 1, 1705. In reality, the government had extended the problem by another year and condoned the illicit trade.

There was one area where all parties agreed: the impounded counterfeit and contraband fabrics must be burned as prescribed.<sup>109</sup> For example, when the *directeurs* learned that a merchant called Guillery had offered 50,000 *écus* for a large quantity of confiscated *toiles peintes* on the understanding that he would ship them out of the country, they wrote to Chamillart to request the purchase be stopped.<sup>110</sup> Guillery, they said, ‘dealt only in contraband’ and would use the goods as a cover to introduce further illegal merchandise.<sup>111</sup> Chamillart granted Guillery his purchase all the same. The problem of what to do with the massive amounts of confiscated fabrics remained unsolved. The

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<sup>106</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Les Marchands de Paris sur la deffense de l’usage des toiles Peintes, 24 novembre 1702.*’ ‘Nombre de menue peuple qui ont acheté cette marchandise... se retrouveront hors d’Etat d’acheter d’autres hardes pour les couvrir par la misere qu’ils se trouvent aujourd’huy.’

<sup>107</sup> A.N. G7, 1687. ‘*Prix des toilles peintes et escorces d’arbres a rembourcer.*’ Undated manuscript list of individual claims of all the merchants, in response to the order of November 18, 1702.

<sup>108</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’Etat, 12 décembre, 1703.*’

<sup>109</sup> A.N. G7, 1686. ‘*Mémoire des manufactures des étoffes de soye de Tours, 1703.*’

<sup>110</sup> The *écu*, a gold coin, was worth around 5 livres at this date.

<sup>111</sup> A.N. G7, 1687. ‘*Lettre des Directeurs de la Compagnie à M. Chamillart, 30 juillet, 1704.*’ ‘*Ce marchand ne fait rien que la contrebande, Qu’il est connu pour qu’il n’achette ces marchandises que pour introduire une bien plus grand quantité en fraude, ce qui fera certainement.*’



*Conseil* favoured giving the Dutch East India Company permission to export them, and lobbied for passports to be issued for this purpose, but there is no record of this having happened, nor where the Dutch were expected to dispose of them.<sup>112</sup> There was also the question of how to deal with the goods which had been legally imported, yet remained unsold at the end of the period granted for their sale. This caused much confusion and legal wrangling over business deals, such as that between Paris merchants Gamard and Narcis. Gamard purchased 18,589 livres-worth of ‘Indian cloths’ (*estoffes des Indes*) in September 1704 from Narcis, who had in turn purchased them from a legal sale of confiscated goods by the *Fermiers-généraux*, with permission to sell them in France.<sup>113</sup> Gamard paid with a cash downpayment of 3,500 livres and promissory notes to pay the balance in four instalments between seven and ten months from that date. The problem arose when, in the intervening months, an Act of February 17, 1705 expressly forbade the sale of any *indiennes* within France, despite permission for this being granted the previous year. Gamard took Narcis to court for the return of his promissory notes, and won his case. Narcis complained to the *Conseil de Commerce* that Gamard had had more than six months to sell the merchandise, but the *Conseil* upheld the court’s ruling, deciding that ‘this demand must be regarded as a pretext to elude the ruling of February 17 last, which must be executed with all rigour’, and forcing Narcis to return the money, as well as accepting back any unsold goods.<sup>114</sup> This was potentially ruinous for him, as he would have been unable to sell them legally.

Exceptions and concessions became more and more common, as no workable solution was found. In early 1705, some Paris merchants, distributors of *indiennes*, lobbied to be reimbursed by the Lyon silk manufactures to the value of their confiscated Indian goods, a proposition Anisson, aghast, described in his memorandum to the *Conseil de Commerce* in response as ‘so extraordinary we cannot imagine this is their real design’.<sup>115</sup> He asserted that the Paris merchants, having recently obtained yet another prolongation of their right to

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<sup>112</sup> A.N. G7, 1687. ‘*Memoire des Députés qui sont de sentiment qu’il doit estre permis de faire sortir par les vaisseaux hollandais munis de passeports les marchandises de prises dont la consommation est deffendue dans la Royaume, 5 aout, 1705.*’

<sup>113</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Lettre de Sr. Narcis au Chamillart, 20 avril, 1705.*’

<sup>114</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Les Députés au Conseil de Commerce sur la differens entre le Sr. Gamart (sic) et le Sr. Narcis au sujet d’une partie d’Estoffes des Indes que le Sr. Gamart a acheté dudites Sr. Narcis, 4 mai, 1705.*’ ‘*Cette demande doit ester regardée comme un pretexte pour éluder l’arrest du 17 fevrier dernier qu’on doit faire executer avec toute rigueur.*’

<sup>115</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Mémoire d’Anisson au Conseil de Commerce, contre la proposition d’un fort petit nombre de Marchands de Paris qui distribuent des Etoffes des Indes.*’ Undated, but its content dates it to May 1705. ‘*La proposition que font ces marchands de se faire rembourser par les manufactures de soirie de Lyon... et si extraordinaire qu’on ne peut s’imaginer que ce soit là leur veritable dessein.*’

sell the *Compagnie*-imported fabrics until the end of 1705, were abusing this privilege to introduce contraband goods from Holland and England. This was proved, he noted, by the enormous quantities being confiscated and burned by the customs inspectors, which amounted to far more than the legal goods. The *Conseil* should not listen to the Paris merchants, he reasoned, as they were:

The unique cause of the depraved taste of the ladies of the Court and the town for these types of fabrics, far inferior to those we make in this Kingdom.<sup>116</sup>

This taste would destroy French exports if a stop was not put to the proliferation of the fabrics, which Anisson described as appealing to ‘the damaged imagination of our women, who believe any fabric not made in the Indies cannot be of good taste’.<sup>117</sup> The competition from higher-quality imported products apparently drove the French silk manufactures to take such extreme measures as perfuming their products with expensive pepper, in order to convince ladies of an exotic provenance.

In May, the *Conseil* ruled in favour of the manufactures and against the merchants, insisting the law prohibiting trade which had been passed on February 17, 1705 be fully upheld, and judging that ‘no regard should be paid to the merchants’ unreasonable request’.<sup>118</sup> Two days later, the Parisian merchants beseeched the *Contrôleur-général* to grant them permission to sell the 150,000 l. of merchandise they owned which the *Compagnie* had imported.<sup>119</sup> There is a fascinating comment in this document: the merchants claimed that, in the national interest, they had loaned *indiennes* to the manufactures of Lyon and Tours for them to copy the designs. If this could be substantiated, it would be interesting new evidence in the history of the transfer of designs from the East to Europe in the eighteenth century. They achieved slight satisfaction in next *arrest* of May 26, which granted them 15 days to present all their fabrics to d’Argenson for

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<sup>116</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Mémoire d’Anisson au Conseil de Commerce.*’ ‘*Ils sont eux seuls l’unique cause du gout depravé que les femmes de la cour et de la ville ont pour ces sortes d’Etoffes, fort inferieures a celles qu’on fabrique dans le Royaume.*’

<sup>117</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Mémoire d’Anisson au Conseil de Commerce.*’ ‘*Nos ouvriers en soie, quelque industriels qu’ils soient dans l’invention de leurs estoffes, surpassant toutes les nations, ont obliger pour conformer au mauvais gout des Francois... de fabriquer leurs estoffes à l’imitation de celles des Indes et de les enfermer avec du poivre pour tromper l’imagination blessée des femmes, qui croient qu’une estoffe qui n’est pas des Indes ne pas estre de bon gout.*’

<sup>118</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Ordonnance des Députés de Commerce, 4 mai, 1705.*’ ‘*Estiment que la demande faite par les marchands des estoffes des indes de Paris, n’est pas raisonnable, qu’on ne doit y avoir aucun egard, et que l’arrest du conseil du 17 fevrier dernier dois estre executé selon sa forme et teneur.*’

<sup>119</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Memoire des Marchands de Paris à Monseigneur le Contrôleur-général sur la nouvelle deffense des etoffes des Indes, 6 mai, 1705.*’ ‘*Mais les fabricans de Lion et Tours ayant entrepris avec beaucoup de success d’imiter les Estoffes des Indes, les Supliants toujours affectionés au bien de l’Estat leur ont meme donné les desseins de leurs etoffes des Indes, les longueurs et largeurs a fin d’epanouir plus facilement à la perfection qu’ils cherchent.*’

an inventory to be made, based upon which, sales of the officially authorised fabrics would be permitted.<sup>120</sup>

The surviving inventory, shown in Figure 28, shows that almost 16,000 items of banned fabrics were presented.<sup>121</sup> The largest quantities were whole piece-goods (11,148) or partial lengths (4,075) indicating an intended usage as either furnishings, or as cloth to be cut up and sewn into garments. The finished garments are an insignificant amount in comparison, but nonetheless are interesting, as for the first time the type of garments seized is itemised, providing insight into the kind of attire which was being worn. (Table 1.) The most numerous items were dresses (386), followed by 134 *mouchoirs*, 30 *fichus* (scarves women wore in the neckline of their bodices), 20 skirts and 14 mantles. Assembled furnishings comprised 43 painted floor-cloths, a combined total of 62 bed coverings, a door covering and a night-table cover. A similar inventory taken a year later only records 9,579 items. This could either indicate that the merchants had sold a good quantity, or that they declared less. The similarity in the sewn items suggests they may even have surrendered the same items for enumeration, while the drop in piece-goods may indicate that they had been made into garments and furnishings and then sold.

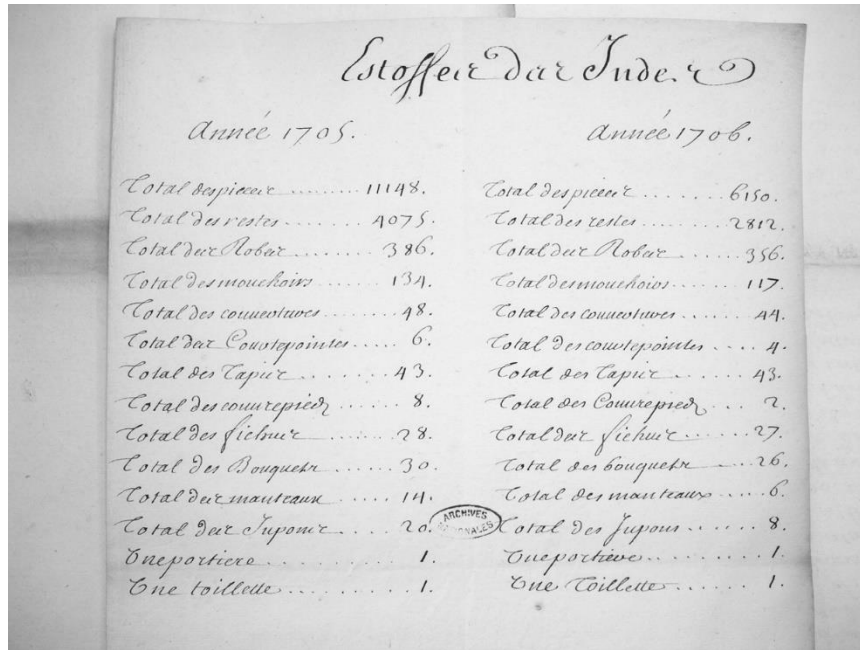
The practicality of conducting such an inventory was onerous and represents another difficulty of enforcing the ban. Accompanying the summary are the *inspecteurs*' original handwritten tick-sheets of the searches made door-to-door at each merchant's premises: just the counting of the pieces themselves must have taken a huge amount of time. In addition to *toiles peintes* they were searching for other forbidden Indian goods, and in another search after the 1705 ruling d'Argenson's men found a total of 9,802 pieces, of which 8,962 were of pure silk cloth, 272 were silk fabrics with gold or silver threads, and 154 were *furies*, a type of printed silk satin. Also confiscated were 414 kerchiefs and 'a great quantity of diverse remnants and scraps, quilts, dressing gowns and other clothes made from *toiles peintes*'.<sup>122</sup> A memorandum accompanying this list notes the perceived aim of the many iterations of the ban on imported printed fabrics over the years:

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<sup>120</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy du 26 mai, 1705.'

<sup>121</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Etoffes des Indes, Année 1705, Année 1706'.

<sup>122</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Memoire sur les Estoffes des Indes de pure Soye ou meslées d'or ou d'argent et les Estoffes apellées furies, 27 novembre, 1705.' 'Il s'est trouvé aussi plusieurs morceaux ou restes des ces Estoffes en assez grand quantité, des courtespointes, des Robes de chambres faites, et d'autres sortes d'hardes de toiles peintes.'



Indian Cloths		
	1705	1706
Pieces	11,148	6,150
Leftovers	4,075	2,812
Dresses	386	356
Scarves	134	117
Bedcovers	48	44
Quilts	6	4
Carpets	43	43
Footcovers (for a bed)	8	2
Kerchiefs	28	27
Bouquets (unknown item)	30	26
Capes or shawls	14	6
Skirts	20	8
Door covering	1	1
Night-table covering	1	1
Total pieces	15,942	9,597

Figure 28 and Table 1. List of goods in an inventory of *indiennes* in the possession of Paris merchants, which they declared for permission to sell in June 1705, claiming they had been bought legally from the Compagnie, and a comparison after a check in 1706.

The King's Council has been resolved for a long time to limit and then cease the commerce and use of all these types of fabric, in order to encourage a greater consumption of the cloths fabricated in the Kingdom.<sup>123</sup>

In 1706 an effort was made to halt the supply of contraband by imposing 20% import duties on all goods from the Levant, including those previously warehoused in other European countries, which entered France through Marseille.<sup>124</sup> (Figure 29.) Even so, the visiting *inspecteurs* found many merchants continuing to import *toiles peintes* on the pretext of getting rid of stock which had been bought legally from the *Compagnie*. The *Conseil de Commerce* noted that 'fabrics brought in fraudulently from abroad are counterfeited in the Temple', a protected area of Paris notorious for covert businesses.<sup>125</sup>

de longueur, quinze livres, cy	15. l.
Indiennes ferongy, piece huit livres, cy	8. l.
Indiennes mamoudy, piece sept livres dix fols, cy	7. l. 10. f.
Indiennes chafalrany, dix livres, cy	10. l.
Indiennes kalankar, vingt livres, cy	20. l.
Indiennes vara, six livres, cy	6. l.
Librer du Kaire, une livre douze fols, cy	1. l. 12. f.
Toiles librer d'Alexandrie, une livre cinq fols, cy	1. l. 5. f.
Indiennes de Perfe de quarante huit pans de longueur, quatorze livres, cy	14. l.
Maugarbines fines, quatre livres, cy	4. l.
Maugarbines communes, trois livres, cy	3. l.
Toiles mouchoirs chevely de quatorze cannes de longueur, piece trois livres, cy	3. l.
Mouchoirs caflaux, piece neuf livres, cy	9. l.
Mouchoirs d'Alep de vingt cannes à la piece, quatre livres piece, cy	4. l.
Mouchoirs d'Alep de treize cannes à la piece, trois livres dix fols piece, cy	3. l. 10. f.
Mouchoirs d'Alep roffet de la grande forme, piece une livre seize fols, cy	1. l. 16. f.
Mouchoirs roffet commun, une livre dix fols, cy	1. l. 10. f.
Tarranes fines, piece vingt-cinq livres, cy	25. l.
Communes, piece dix-huit livres, cy	18. l.
Tanani du Caire, piece quatre livres quinze fols, cy	4. l. 15. f.
Tanani d'Alexandrie, quatre livres dix fols, cy	4. l. 10. f.
Toiles de lin bleues d'Alexandrie, cinq livres dix fols, cy	5. l. 10. f.
Toiles de Rame, piece cinq livres, cy	5. l.
Toiles de Montagne de dix cannes de longueur, piece cinq livres, cy	5. l.
Toiles de Montagne de sept cannes de longueur, piece trois livres dix fols, cy	3. l. 10. f.
Toiles foutes de deux à la piece, une livre cinq fols, cy	1. l. 5. f.
Toiles foutes de trois à la piece, deux livres, cy	2. l.
Les autres Marchandises du Levant non comprises en l'Etat cy-dessus & non prohibées par les Arrests & Reglemens du Conseil feront sujettes au droit de vingt pour cent dans les mêmes cas que celles exprimées au present Etat, suivant l'estimation qui en sera faite	

Figure 29. A page from a register of 'Levant goods' of 1706, imposing a 20% duty on merchandise entering through Marseille. It shows many varieties of *indiennes*, which were illegal, and only allowed on the condition that they were to be exported to other countries, but it would have been impossible to stop them being distributed in France.

<sup>123</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Memoire sur les Estoffes des Indes.' Undated memorandum attached to the document in the previous note. 'Il a esté resolu depuis long temps dans le Conseil du Roy de limiter et en suite de faire cesser le commerce et l'usage des ces sortes d'estoffes pour provocer une plus grande consommation des estoffes des fabriques du Royaume.'

<sup>124</sup> B.A. 377. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy, 16 janvier, 1706.'

<sup>125</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Les députés au Conseil de Commerce, qui ont examiné les procès-verbaux fait par Messieurs les Commissaires chez les Marchands de Paris, mars 1706.' 'Il est bien connu que les toiles apportés frauduleusement de l'étranger sont contrefaits dans le Temple.' See the discussion on privileged areas of Paris in Chapter 6.

This was confirmed by the presence of *'furies'* in the seized merchandise, as these were not imported by the *Compagnie*. However, it advised the government that the difficulty in enforcing the prohibition lay in the repeated extensions to the time the *Compagnie* was allowed to sell the banned goods.<sup>126</sup> This pressure appears to have provoked a reaction, and the result was the law of April 24, which ordered an immediate end to all trading in cloths from the Indies (*étoffes des Indes*), and required the ban to be proclaimed twice a year across France, even in the protected enclaves, which acknowledges the part those areas were playing in dealing in the contraband, and probably also in printing fabrics. Again, it must be noted that the severity of the language of the laws was not enacted with a similar scale of repression: the enforcement remained at the discretion of local officials, and the limited amount of inspections which were carried out must have been easily avoided. It can be imagined that quantities of *toiles peintes* were carted out of each town ahead of the *inspecteurs'* arrival, and returned to the boutiques once the danger had passed. Seizures also only temporarily addressed the problem of the quantities of illegal merchandise being traded. In August of the same year another crackdown in Paris saw the confiscation of 7,000 pieces of *indiennes*, 3,000 remnants and various items of clothing, including 58 dresses.<sup>127</sup> The enormous value of 329,804 livres placed on this seizure, although probably exaggerated, was indicative of the problem the police faced, as well as the incentive for merchants to circumvent the law when such impressive profits could be made. The *Conseil*, however, did not see the sum as too enormous to be controlled by burning the fabrics in order to solve a problem which was 'so contrary to the wellbeing of the State and so prejudicial to the manufactures of this Kingdom'. They were in no doubt that the vast quantities of *toiles peintes* being sold as the legally imported goods were being supplemented continually with foreign goods, and remained steadfast that only solution was a radical ban once more on absolutely all printed fabrics. The government capitulated and issued the Prohibition again on August 24, 1706. The severest penalties were to be enacted for those who printed fabrics, thus ensuring, contrary to the intentions of the ruling,

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<sup>126</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. '*Les députés au Conseil de Commerce, qui ont examiné les procès-verbaux fait par Messieurs les Commissaires chez les Marchands de Paris..., mars 1706.*'

<sup>127</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. '*Les deputez au Conseil de Commerce, sur les Estoffes des Indes trouvées chez les marchands de Paris suivant les Proces verbaux des Commissaires qui en ont fait la visite, 13 aoust, 1706.*' A dress was valued at 72 livres, explaining why they were only for the wealthy. Unsewn lengths varied from 26 to 48 livres per piece, while *mouchoirs* were valued at 20 livres each. These prices clearly indicate the high value of Indian goods.

that while the vogue for wearing *toiles peintes* still raged, the contraband trade across France's borders would flourish for years to come.

In conclusion, this chapter has identified the first twenty years of the ban as the greatest period of legislative activity. Clarification followed exemption, and reiteration followed the privileges granted. The interests of the traditional manufactures and the *Compagnie* were perpetually conflicted and satisfying both was unfeasible. It can be surmised that individuals with influence at Court, on one side the *directeurs* of the *Compagnie*, and on the other persons of rank with vested interests in the success of the manufactures, held sway over the course of the rulings. Once large quantities of contraband imports flooded into France the manufactures' protests amplified, and it was this trade, and not the printing trade, which they saw as their greatest threat. While the debate raged on over allowing the importing of *toiles peintes*, little was done to police the covert *indienneurs*, who were multiplying across the country and improving their techniques. The *Conseil* recognised this source, but underestimated its potential. The general inability to differentiate between the various products crucially created an unstoppable tide of printed cottons in circulation.

As a study of the workings of the French State, the *affaire des toiles peintes* amply demonstrated that simply ruling against a product, an activity or individuals' preferences could no longer be expected to result in satisfaction. Occupied with other more serious concerns in a time of almost constant war, the King's advisors had entrusted dealing with the 'trivial' issue of the prohibition to the *Conseil de Commerce*, expecting it to be quickly implemented, but it took up far more of that body's time than could ever have been imagined. A new *modus operandi* was needed to successfully eradicate *indiennes*; this was to be centred around a new effort on provincial application of the law, which will be discussed through the use of a case study on the port of Nantes in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3

### Provincial Enforcement of the Prohibition: Nantes in the Early Eighteenth Century

#### **The Hub of the *Compagnie***

The immense difficulties of applying the prohibition have been identified as one of the dominant reasons for the length of the ban. The poor infrastructure described in Chapter 1 did not facilitate the necessary diffusion of orders to the provinces. The challenge of communication was made more acute by the independent legal status of different areas and the diverse systems of local government, and the individual exemptions from French law. It has therefore been decided to use an example to illustrate the differences in provincial application from the course of the prohibition in Paris and, in particular, the freedom of interpretation which existed at the local level.

This chapter focuses on Nantes, a city at the heart of the prohibition as the main port of the *Compagnie* and the location of its auctions, and which was also the starting point of much of the contraband trade in imported goods. In the eighteenth century its growth as a major slaving port provided an additional motive for circumvention of the law, to supply the ships with desirable, but scarce, Indian cottons. The time these were stored awaiting expedition provided the opportunity for further illicit activity. Nantes has also been chosen as the focus of this study due to the completeness of its municipal archives associated with the administration of the embargo. Documents related to searches for contraband and inventories of illegally owned fabrics remain, as well as a great quantity of correspondence between the officials attempting to enforce the prohibition, particularly the *Intendants* and the *Maire* (Mayor) of Nantes. Their relationships and their personal interests had a direct effect on the implementation of the law and how the State functioned in the province. The documentation has also unexpectedly thrown light on the important role women played in the illegal trade, and illustrates how they were particularly punished for their use of printed cottons.

By the early eighteenth century Nantes was a significant town of 40,000 inhabitants, and the major town in Brittany.<sup>1</sup> Before the 1630s it was only a minor seaport but, when

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<sup>1</sup> In comparison, Daniel Roche estimates that Paris had a population of at least half a million people at this time, although there are varying opinions. See Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris: An Essay in Popular Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), pp. 19-20.



faced with increasing competition, it had begun trading successfully with the French colonies of the Antilles, increasing its importance on the Atlantic coast.<sup>2</sup> However, the Dutch dominance of that market by the mid-century limited its revenue chiefly to escorting army officers and militiamen to the colonies.<sup>3</sup> Nantes experienced particular growth after 1674, when the first French East India Company was dissolved and, as a result, the town gained important commercial contracts, particularly for transporting slaves from Africa to the Caribbean sugar plantations. When the prohibition was enacted in 1686, France was in turmoil as a result of the dire national economic situation, but Nantes was in a relatively prosperous position, fuelled by a resurgence of the sugar trade.<sup>4</sup> Added to this was its enviable role of hosting the *Compagnie*'s annual cargo auctions, which took place each autumn and filled the town for over two months with merchants and a horde of dealers and small traders.<sup>5</sup> (Figure 30.)

Due to their popularity in Africa, the *Compagnie* had identified *indiennes* soon after its inception as the cargo which could complete a financially rewarding triangular trade with the Caribbean colonies. As the printed cottons that were produced in Marseille and other French towns in the mid-seventeenth century were of poor quality, goods had to be sourced in the Indian sub-continent. Nantes was the central hub of all this activity, and it was the start of a huge growth trajectory for the city, which became France's main slave-trading port by the mid-eighteenth century, eclipsing La Rochelle.<sup>6</sup> Ship owners and provisioners settled in Nantes to take advantage of the burgeoning commerce, generating a massive

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard Michon, *Le port de Nantes au XVIIIe siècle: Construction d'une aire portuaire* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Armel de Wismes, *Nantes et le pays nantais* (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> Development was spectacular after France won control of Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), the largest sugar producing island, in the 1697 Treaty of Ryswick. See Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440–1870* (London: Picador, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Haudrère & Le Bouëdec, *Les Compagnies des Indes*, p. 88. Despite the vociferous objections of the community, the auctions were moved from Nantes to Lorient in 1733. The goods were disembarked at Lorient, which was in a more advantageous geographical location. Despite being described by the *Directeurs* as 'at the back of beyond with nowhere for more than a dozen merchants to lodge' the infrastructure of the port was improved significantly at the behest of the *Contrôleur-général*, and after the sales were moved there, the town developed quickly into a centre of commerce.

<sup>6</sup> From 1691 to 1713 a total of 113 slavers sailed out of Nantes, rising to 15 per year between 1713 and 1722. On Nantes' involvement in the slave trade over the course of the eighteenth century, see Gaston Martin, *L'ère des négriers (1714-1774), Nantes au XVIIIe siècle* (1931) (Paris: Karthala, 1993); Gérard Le Bouëdec, *Le port et l'arsenal de Lorient, de la Compagnie des Indes à la marine cuirassée: une reconversion réussie (XVIIIe-XIXe siècles)* (Paris: Librairie de l'Inde, 1994); Céline Cousquer, *Nantes, une capitale française des indiennes au XVIIIe siècle* (Nantes: Coiffard, 2002); Bertrand Guillet, *La Marie-Séraphique, Navire négrier*, (Nantes: Musée d'histoire de Nantes, 2009); and André Lespagnol, *Messieurs de Saint-Malo: une élite négociante au temps de Louis XIV* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011).

development in the town, with new quays built to accommodate the vast number of ships.<sup>7</sup> (Figures 31 and 32.) The thriving town forged strong links with other European countries. As well as a long-established Dutch community built on maritime trade, a large number of Irish Catholics settled in Nantes, some of whom later became plantation owners in the French Caribbean islands.<sup>8</sup> Thus the town was by no means isolated, with ships constantly arriving from different parts of Europe and the colonies, and so the townspeople would be aware of the goods which were available in other countries, including Indian cottons.

In this increasingly prosperous town, elegant homes were built by the wealthy merchants, particularly along the Quai de la Fosse, where cotton cargoes were disembarked from the Indies, and subsequently reloaded for the African trade. (Figures 33 and 34.) Some ship owners and the *Compagnie's directeurs* used their riches to buy titles and elevate themselves to the next social stratum, creating a 'polite society' of lower nobility and bourgeoisie which enjoyed the luxury products of sugar, coffee and cocoa arriving from the Antilles. The elevation in societal status can be seen by the Indian fabrics, Chinese porcelain and other decorative Oriental items declared in various inventories of the wealthy bourgeoisie.



Fig. 33. (Left) Merchants built homes along the newly-constructed keyside in the early eighteenth century.  
Fig. 34. (Right) The offices of the *Compagnie des Indes*, built in 1756.

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<sup>7</sup> Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, *Nantes: Histoire et géographie contemporaines* (Plomelin: Éditions Palantines, 2008); and *La traite des Noirs* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1998); Armel de Wismes, *Nantes et le temps des négriers* (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> Many of them fled their homeland between 1649 and 1651 after the Irish Rebellion and were later joined by Jacobites after the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

Nantes is a particularly valuable case study because, as well as being the major port for the *Compagnie*, it was the administrative centre of the provincial government.<sup>9</sup> This provided a conflict of interest over the prohibition between the town's notables, some of whom who were wealthy shipbuilders, merchants or *directeurs* of the *Compagnie*, while others had interests in protecting the textile manufactures, and this made the application of the law particularly difficult for the *Intendant*'s appointed representative. Moreover, there were many vessels from other European countries, including those returning from the Indies or the Americas, docking in its port and enabling illegal trafficking; the long Brittany coastline facilitated smuggling; the distance from Paris hampered communications; and the independent nature of the Bretons often led them to be rebellious. The reception of the *Compagnie*'s cargoes, and the management of the seizure, secure storage and eventual destruction of illegal fabrics, made the town the centre for both legal commerce and clandestine distribution.

Life in Nantes was highly regulated in the early eighteenth century, and its trades minutely monitored.<sup>10</sup> Like any town, bringing in any provisions, even essentials like wood and coal, was forbidden without the express royal consent of *lettres patentes*. Consequently, as Daniel Roche noted of Paris, the populace was 'pursued for the thousand misdemeanours then considered real crimes'.<sup>11</sup> In this context of State control, the abundant legislation related to the new cotton textiles would not have been considered unusual. While the Governor of Brittany held the prestigious role of King's Representative, it was the *Intendant* who administered all matters related to justice, policing and the finances of the province and reported to the *Contrôleur-général*. The *Intendant* seems to have enjoyed a substantial degree of autonomy in his decisions and the interpretation of the law in Brittany. However, neither of the officeholders during the period of study, Antoine-François Ferrand de Villemilan (1705-1716) and Paul-Esprit Feydeau de Brou (1716-1728), allowed similar freedom of decision to their sub-delegate in Nantes, each making the final rulings on all matters.<sup>12</sup> This made the enforcement of orders and prosecutions a

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<sup>9</sup> Brittany's true seat of government was at Rennes, but the *Intendant* also sat in Dinan and St. Malo on occasion, and the administration worked from Nantes.

<sup>10</sup> Archives municipales de Nantes (hereafter A.M.N.) Série FF 148, '*Statuts pour les marchands de draperie, mercerie...épicerie, droguerie, etc., 1725*' contains ordinances governing all trades; A.M.N. Série HH 137, '*Règlements, personnel et gestion des Fripiers*' is an example of the regulation of the clothing trades.

<sup>11</sup> Roche, *The People of Paris*, p. 165.

<sup>12</sup> The role of *Intendant* of Brittany was for many nobles a step in an illustrious career. Ferrand (1654-1731) held the same appointment in Burgundy prior to Brittany, before promotion to the *Conseil de Commerce* and eventually *Conseiller d'État*. The wealth he accumulated from his posts is illustrated by the one million livres dowry he reportedly provided for his daughter. Feydeau de Brou (1682-1767) was *Intendant* of Alençon, then

long and tedious process, with several days required for an exchange of letters with the *Intendant* in Rennes, always supposing that he dealt with them immediately. With many other pressing concerns before the *Intendant*, it could take months to reach a final conclusion on confiscated goods, during which time the owner was deprived of them. The frequent reversals of decisions, the reductions of fines and other capricious actions by those who held the reins of power led to complex and protracted cases. A high-born patron, or an influential acquaintance who could intervene on a complainant's behalf, was a distinct advantage, although when compared to Paris, this seems to have been less important in Nantes, a bourgeois town without a significant aristocratic presence.

The town gained a reputation as the major distribution hub of clandestine merchandise, which included wines, spirits, tobacco and forbidden Protestant texts as well as illegal fabrics. This led occasionally to extreme examples being made of wrongdoers in an attempt to eradicate the activity, and not only men. Of the three women *fripières* who were arrested for receiving and reselling stolen goods in 1709, the ringleader was sentenced to death, while her two companions were flogged, branded and banished for life.<sup>13</sup> The latter was a predominantly female punishment, and particularly devastating for the condemned woman: offenders also forfeited all their possessions, leaving them destitute and unwelcome in other communities, and further punishment awaited those who unlawfully returned. On July 15, 1704 in Nantes, Yvonne Poinart, accused of 'having violated her banishment, and since having been found with a quilt stolen from the convent, and having also stolen from there a length of cloth of twenty one aunes' was condemned to be flogged on three successive market days, branded on both shoulders and banned from returning in perpetuity.<sup>14</sup> Men were rarely banished, presumably as it left their dependents in penury and reliant upon the town.

It was the responsibility of the *Intendant* to eradicate contraband, but to a great extent he, and other provincial administrators, interpreted and implemented the law selectively as they saw fit, which allowed for a wide variation in punishments, and unequal effectiveness of the ban across the country. In Nantes the administration of the law is well documented in

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Brittany, Strasbourg and Paris, before also becoming *Conseiller d'État*, and finishing his glittering career as *Garde des Sceaux*.

<sup>13</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 174. '*Ordonnances d'André Boussineau, subdélégué de M. de Béchameil, intendant, 1709.*' *Fripières* were female second-hand clothes sellers. See Chapter 2, n. 68.

<sup>14</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 58. '*Procès-verbaux contre plusieurs particuliers, le 15 juillet 1704.*' 'Yvonne Poinart, accusée d'avoir enfreint son ban, et depuis d'avoir été trouvée saisie d'une couette, volée dans la maison du Bon Pasteur, et d'y avoir volé une pièce de toile de vingt et une aunes, soit condamnée à être fustigée, trois jours du marché, à être marquée au fer sur les deux épaules, et bannie du ressort à perpétuité.'

the copious correspondence of Gérard Mellier, *Général des finances* of Brittany and the sub-delegate of the *Intendant*, who was in control of policing the town.<sup>15</sup> Mellier concurrently held the office of *Maire* of Nantes from 1720 to his death in 1729, and also became a *directeur* of the *Compagnie*. This was a lucrative post which would have given him access to exotic cargoes and fine goods for his personal use, but which put his interests in direct opposition to his role as the enforcer of the ban. The fact that his appointment was not vetoed by the *Intendant* suggests a more complex understanding of conflict of interest than today. Mellier's extant correspondence of 5,000 letters, the majority scrawled quickly in his own hand, shows the great detail with which the *Maire* involved himself in every issue related to the government of the town.<sup>16</sup> These included the management of the customs duties which were due on all items arriving and leaving the port, and the regulation of the town's tradespeople. Because of the prohibition, he had to verify and sign the documents and seals attached to each piece of fabric imported and exported by the *Compagnie*, which was an enormous task in itself.

Mellier was assiduously respectful in seeking approval for all of his actions from *Intendant* Ferrand, who was often absent. His duties as the royal representative, as well as his ambition, led him to make regular trips to Versailles from the distant, yet strategic, province, making a competent *lieutenant* such as Mellier essential. The latter would have had significant freedom of action as a result, but Ferrand paid close attention to Mellier's judgments, often writing comments in the margins affirming his agreement, such as 'you are right' and 'that is true' and making notes on the adjustments to fines.<sup>17</sup>

One of the main methods of controlling the illegal use of *toiles peintes* was to implement a search of homes and boutiques, but this was often rendered ineffective as the order had to be proclaimed, allowing the goods to be hidden or disposed of ahead of the search date. The first search in Nantes and its suburbs for which a significant amount of data exists was commissioned in December 1712 on Mellier's orders and met with only limited success. Twenty-one individuals were served with writs and their furnishings and clothing made of *indiennes* seized by Estienne Legrand de la Griollaye, *Lieutenant-général*

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<sup>15</sup> Gérard Mellier (1674-1729), who has been described as 'the most gifted Nantes administrator of the *ancien régime*', was one of the longest-serving Nantes *Maires* and received many honours and illustrious titles. He was a man of vision, who from 1720 implemented a new town plan which freed the town from its crowded mediaeval streets. He initiated the building of improved quays for the port and a promenade along the Fosse, as well as a new residential quarter on Île Feydeau. This took 60 years to complete, but was the start of an important urbanisation of Nantes.

<sup>16</sup> The bulk of Mellier's correspondence with the *Intendants* is contained in A.M.N. Série II. Liasse 23 is particularly related to prohibited textiles and the *Compagnie*'s cargoes.

<sup>17</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 257. 'Antoine-François Ferrand, *correspondence du mois d'octobre, 1714*'.

*de la Maréchaussée* and his constables (*archers*) over two days.<sup>18</sup> (Figure 35.) On the first day, 17 individuals were arrested for possessing *indiennes* in their homes, 11 of whom owned quilts in *toile peinte*, two women were caught with clothing, and four individuals owned both types of goods. The clothing was mainly housecoats (*robbes de chambre d'Indienne*).<sup>19</sup> After storing these items safely under lock and key, the *Lieutenant*'s brigade went out again on the second day and arrested four people on the streets wearing garments made of the banned printed cottons. The widow Baugin was unlucky enough to have goods confiscated in the first day's house search, and also be penalised for wearing a *robbe de chambre* on the second day.

In all, 44 items were confiscated from the 21 people, who were mainly small traders (innkeepers, a wig-maker, a carpenter) with two exceptions: a surgeon and a Dutch 'refiner', probably of sugar. The items were confiscated, but the penalty of a 300 livres fine prescribed by the declarations was not enforced. Instead, the fee of the *Lieutenant* and his nine constables, plus a person to guard the confiscated goods, was divided equally among the perpetrators, amounting to a fine of just over three livres each. Surprisingly, and in direct contradiction of the abundant legislation, their goods were to be returned to them on payment of the fine directly to the *Lieutenant*.<sup>20</sup>

Although later correspondence indicates Legrand de la Griollaye had difficulty collecting his dues, it was a pragmatic solution, but it is unclear why the illegal goods were returned to their owners. Perhaps it was a money-making scheme, allowing the citizens to be arrested a second time for owning the same items, and there may have been an implicit understanding between the officials and those fined that in future they would hide these items, or be more circumspect about wearing them. Whatever the truth, Mellier and Legrand had covered their costs and been seen to enact the law, which could be reported back to the *Conseil*, although it is unlikely that organism would have approved of such a liberal interpretation of the fines. This independence of action was widespread in the provinces, and provides an interesting commentary on the machinery of local government.

Law enforcement in the *ancien régime* can be seen to have relied heavily on trust: in this case, it counted upon the honesty of citizens to declare their illegally obtained goods.

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<sup>18</sup> The *Maréchaussée* was a military constabulary which was a predecessor of the Gendarmerie.

<sup>19</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 266. 'Procez verbal dressé par le Sieur Legrand de la Griollaye... le trente et trentième décembre dernier, 19 octobre 1713.' Considerable inconsistency over the permission for house searches has been noted: this seems to be an example of liberal provincial interpretation.

<sup>20</sup> The *Lieutenant*'s daily fee was 12 livres and his constables each received five livres, making a total cost of 62 livres that day if the guard was paid a similar amount.

Inspectors and guards swore elaborate oaths, which were recorded, repeated and signed prolifically but, ultimately, arrests relied upon one person's word against another. Due to the possibility of confrontations or resistance, officials searching property were always accompanied by several guards, who would witness the veracity of the officers' findings. It was then difficult for individuals to question the accusations, although occasionally one would try, such as the second-hand clothes dealer Louis Le Fevre, who countered in 1714 that it was he who was mistreated by the officer Guillaume Briand, and not the reverse, as Briand and his guards had sworn.<sup>21</sup> Briand may have had another motive: as well as a guard he is described as a 'merchant and master-weaver' (*marchand maître tapisserie*), and therefore a member of the traditional trades which vehemently opposed the proliferation of the new fabrics. This perhaps provides an additional insight into the motivations of those who volunteered to enforce the law. Incidents of this nature had to go to the *Intendant* for adjudication, and took a considerable time to be heard, but Le Fevre did succeed in having his fine reduced later in the year. Unfortunately his insubordination, and that of several other *fripiers*, led to a ruling that their premises and houses be searched once a week, on an unspecified day, by the *jurez* or guild of second-hand clothes dealers, tailors, seamstresses and weavers of Nantes, which would be fined 50 livres if the searches were not performed.<sup>22</sup> This was a unique interpretation of the law, but practical. Culprits found guilty would be effectively ruined, not only by the 3,000 l. fine, but by the injunction against holding the status of master craftsman and training apprentices or journeymen (*compagnons*), and so it was a serious warning.

It was not only lower-status workers who were subject to prosecution. The 'master surgeon' (*maître-chirurgien*) Cistac (or Cistak in some documents) had his home searched in Nantes in December 1712 and three kerchiefs, two housecoats and two quilts made of *indiennes* were confiscated.<sup>23</sup> In many cases people petitioned a higher authority for a reduction in their fine or prison sentence, and were sometimes successful. Cistac appealed to the *Intendant* for the return of confiscated 'Indian cottons for making kerchiefs' (*pieces de Mouchoirs des Indes*), which he claimed to have purchased at the *Compagnie's* sale in Nantes in March two years previously, but which no longer bore the official seals. The description indicates these would have been lengths of fabric with kerchief patterns printed

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<sup>21</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 267. 'Certificat de visite chez les fripiers de Guillaume Briand, 26 septembre, 1714.'

<sup>22</sup> It is not unusual that in Nantes, where there was not a great deal of weaving, the weavers were associated with other clothing-related trades, whereas in Lyon with its huge silk weaving industry, they constituted a separate guild.

<sup>23</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 266. 'Procez verbal dressé par le Sieur Legrand de la Griollaye, 26 et 27 mai, 1708.'

upon them, ready to be divided into individual pieces, similar to those shown in Figures 36 and 37. When Ferrand granted permission, he stipulated that the fabric must be cut into the separate items in the presence of Gérard Mellier.<sup>24</sup> (Figure 38.) This shows that it was considered acceptable to own small pieces of *indiennes*. It seems likely Cistac had commercial intentions for the printed pieces, which could have produced as many as 20 kerchiefs, more than his immediate womenfolk could use. Even with good connections, however, considerable patience was required: Cistac's goods were finally returned to him two years after they had been confiscated.

Examples of people hiding goods are numerous, and some of the hoards found suggest large-scale illegal operations. In February 1713, Grou, a merchant of the Fosse area, was served with a warrant for having 92 pieces of blue and white *fichus* 'neither marked or with lead seals', which he attested had been bought legally at the 1712 sales and declared to the Provost's office, with the intention of sending them abroad.<sup>25</sup> This had not been done because the said pieces 'were wet, but once they were in a suitable state they would be sent abroad.'<sup>26</sup> In March, Ferrand allowed the merchant to reclaim his soaked fabrics from the warehouse, on condition they were sealed in the presence of the *Lieutenant*, whose fees were to be paid by Grou. The merchant had rather a lucky escape, as the true volume of his illegal fabrics was revealed in June. At the auction he had purchased a massive quantity of *toiles peintes*: at least 1,627 pieces of '*mouchoirs de Pondicherry*', 492 of which were blue and white, and 305 were floral prints (*fleurry*). With some pieces printed to make 16 kerchiefs and others 20, this gave him a total of at least 13,000 *mouchoirs* to sell, on condition that they were exported from France.<sup>27</sup> As he swore that all but the 92 pieces found in the search had been sent to Lorraine (at this time an independent Duchy where imported cottons were permitted), Grou was excused. (Figure 39.) He had fulfilled the conditions of his purchase, although the fabrics may actually have been distributed very profitably in France.

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<sup>24</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 266. '*Lettre de M. Ferrand à M. Mellier, à Rennes, 19 mars 1714.*' Ferrand conveyed this decision to Mellier only in March 1714, after several appeals from Cistac, and fully eighteen months after the confiscation, indicating the length of such processes.

<sup>25</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 267. '*Procès verbal contre Grou, marchand a la Fosse, 2 mars 1713.*' '*Il y auroit saisiy quatre vingt douze pieces de fichues bleus et blancs des Indes non marquées ni plombées, qu'il a déclaré avoir acheté à la derniere Vente faite à Nantes, et dont il a fait sa soumission au bureau de la prevosté et de les représenter pour les faire sortir hors du Royaume.*' A *fichu* was a square of fabric folded into a triangle, worn around the shoulders and tied in front to fill in the typical low-fronted bodice of eighteenth-century women's costume.

<sup>26</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 267. '*Procès verbal contre Grou.*' '*Ils Etoient mouillés, et que quand ils seroient en Estat il offre de les faire sortir hors du Royaume.*'

<sup>27</sup> Half of the page is missing, so there may have been even more fabrics.



In 1709 an *arrest* had specifically forbidden women to ‘wear, dress themselves or have made any outfit in the Stuff from the Indies’, which led to dramatic scenes in public thoroughfares as the clothing was confiscated by overly diligent guards.<sup>28</sup> This violation of women’s decency was deplored by some *inspecteurs*, who complained to their *Intendants*. After an order banning the wearing of prints in ‘outfits, aprons or other clothes’ in October 1711 was posted in Troyes, several officers took it upon themselves to forcibly remove these items from women and girls in the streets. *Inspecteur* Barrollet wrote that ‘the conduct of the guards was not right or proper in this affair’.<sup>29</sup>

Arresting citizens required a surprise operation, such as the one which took place in Nantes in May of 1713, when 36 people were served with writs for wearing *toiles peintes* in public.<sup>30</sup> The details on these hand-written chits allow analysis of the possessions by occupation and the style of clothing worn. All but one of the arrested were women, but this is understandable, as men only wore printed garments at home, and the arrests were made in the street. The man with this *robbe de chambre d’Indienne*, along with three higher-status women, including the wife of a ship’s captain caught wearing a printed ‘persian’ skirt (*jupe de perse*), do not appear on the printed version of the list of writs, suggesting their connections may have allowed them to get out of paying the fine. All the remaining items were women’s aprons (*tabliers*). Overall, there are few references to full dresses made out of prints except for those of fashionable ladies, who would have adapted the styles of the silk fashions of the time, such as those previously shown in Figures 7 to 9. These would have been sewn by their dressmakers, so the dearth of costumes confiscated in raids on boutiques does not necessarily mean that few sewn-up garments existed. Research has shown that the majority of women seem to have worn only kerchiefs and aprons of printed fabrics in the first half of the prohibition period. (Figure 40.) The apron was an essential part of their costume, offering gay colouring without requiring as much fabric as a full skirt. Later, after 1730, a printed *caraco* or laced bodice became popular. Prints also seem to have been widely used as quilted linings for bodices and petticoats by the mid-eighteenth century. (Figures 41 to 44.)

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<sup>28</sup> B.A. 1226. ‘*Arrest du Conseil par lequel sa Majesté à entre autre choses fait deffenses à toutes personnes de quelque sexe et condition qu’ils soient, de porter, s’habiller et faire faire aucune habit, vêtement, et meubles des Etoffes des indes, et toiles peintes...*, 27 Aout 1709.’

<sup>29</sup> Bibliothèque de Troyes, MS. 2317, Tome II, p. 744, cited in Morin, *Recherches sur l’impression des toiles dites ‘indiennes’ à Troyes*, p. 5. ‘*La conduite des gardes n’est ni bonne ni régulière dans cette affaire.*’

<sup>30</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 266. ‘*Procès-verbaux [contre] des particuliers portent des toiles des Indes, 26 et 27 mai, 1713.*’

The list of prosecutions also allows observation of the kind of patterns and colours of fabric which were being worn in 1713. (Table 2.) Fully three-quarters were white-ground fabrics printed with red flowers. Of these, small red or violet flowers were the most common, being the simplest and therefore the cheapest to print, with a few examples of small multi-coloured floral or spotted prints. Coloured backgrounds of red, brown or blue make up the remainder, and were most likely resist-dyed. Overall, the small scale of the designs indicates that the fabrics had been specifically printed for clothing, and that by this time there was less crossover with the larger scale prints used for furnishings, with only 11% described as having large flowers. The differentiation of the captain's wife's 'persian' skirt suggests a clear difference in design which was apparent to the officer.

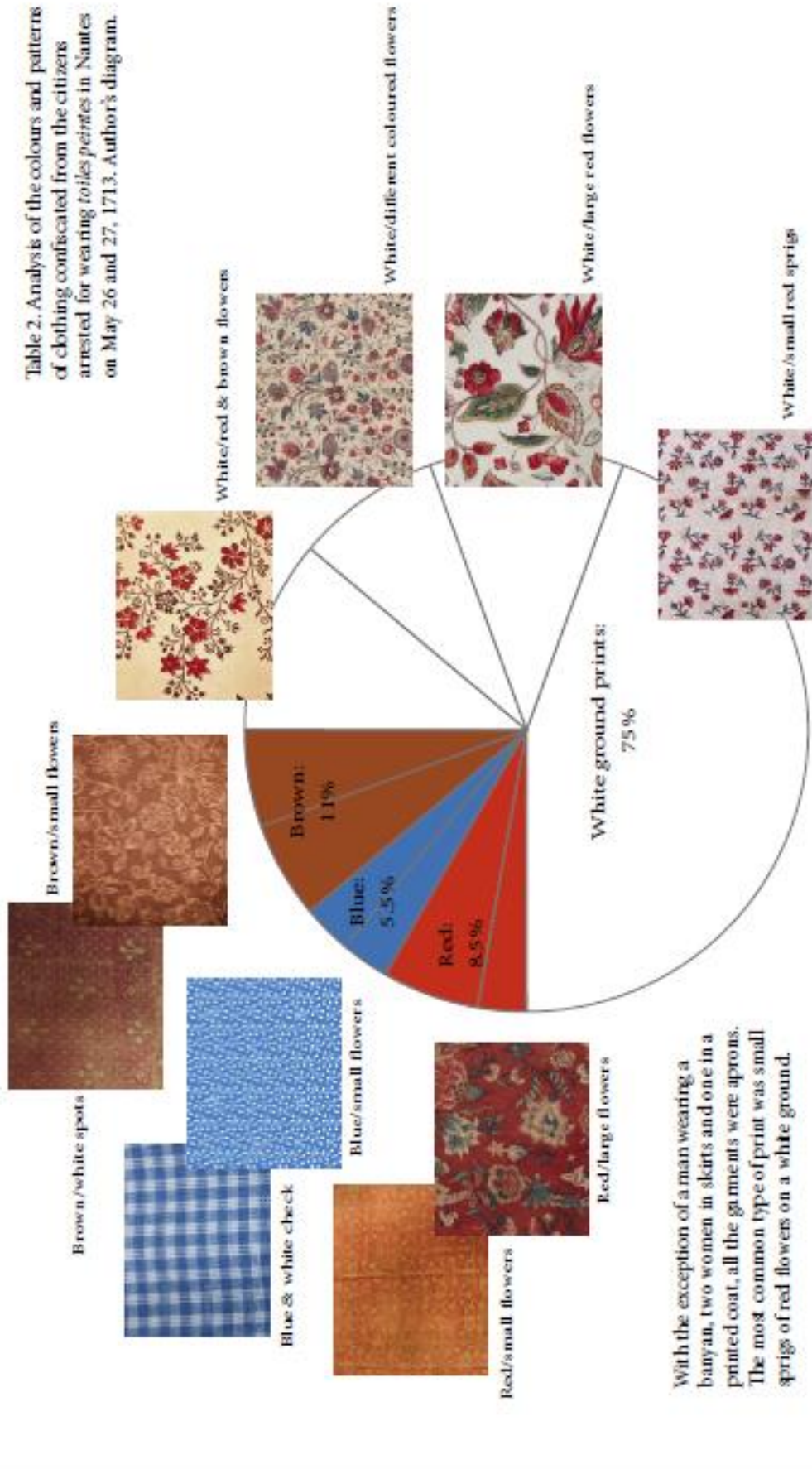
In spite of the warrant proclaiming the penalty would be confiscation and a 1,000 l. fine, the women were each fined 10 l., a more reasonable amount which it may actually have been possible to pay. Twelve of the arrested were enumerated as the wives, widows or daughters of small businessmen (butchers, bakers, tavern-keepers, merchants, a cutler and a glover) and nine are described as a 'demoiselle', normally denoting a single woman, but used here for a few married women and widows as well, some with dependents. In addition, seven women had their own profession. As they were arrested in the street, their occupations are the common trades, such as a butter-maker, a muff-maker and a fabric seller, but shop-owners were also caught going about their daily business, including the proprietress of an ironmonger's, a cafe owner, the landlady of an inn and even two female butchers.<sup>31</sup>

The proclivity for printed female clothing meant, therefore, that women were at risk of being prosecuted going about their daily tasks, which men were not. Of course they knew these items of clothing were illegal, as the sumptuary law had existed for almost 30 years, but poorer women may have had no other choice than to risk prosecution by continuing to wear them. For others, there may have been the thrill of wearing something forbidden, and there was actually a very low risk of being caught, as the crackdowns took place around once a year. The *Intendant*, aggravated that women of social strata flaunted their disobedience, instructed his officials to 'prosecute them all equally':

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<sup>31</sup> By virtue of the feminine form of the French name for their profession, women working in these trades can be identified.

Table 2. Analysis of the colours and patterns of clothing confiscated from the citizens arrested for wearing *toiles peintes* in Nantes on May 26 and 27, 1713. Author's diagram.



With the exception of a man wearing a banyan, two women in skirts and one in a printed coat, all the garments were aprons. The most common type of print was small sprigs of red flowers on a white ground.

There are people in the town of Nantes who openly do business in [*indiennes*], and others who wear and use them, assured of impunity to prosecution on the pretext of their state and condition.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, many of the well-to-do used their connections to escape their fines. For most of the population the confiscation of clothing was something they could ill afford, while the penalties for not paying fines could mean the loss of their livelihood.

It is interesting to compare this search to a similar perquisition for clothing fabrics conducted in Rennes during August and September 1721 by Richer, an *Inspecteur des manufactures*. Richer only made one or two arrests per day, suggesting either there was less contravention of the law, or perhaps the women of Rennes had heard about the arrests being made and were being more circumspect. The penalty was more severe by far than the ten livres applied in the 1713 search in Nantes: the women were given a week to present the forbidden garments for burning, and their husbands or fathers were responsible for the payment of a fine of 3,000 livres.<sup>33</sup> This impossibly high fine may either have been because Rennes was the seat of government for Brittany and the new *Intendant*, Feydeau de Brou, wished to be seen to be obeying the letter of the law, or due to the status of those arrested: some were the wives of prosecutors and notaries of the provincial *parlement*, compared to the dependents of minor tradesmen who were listed in Nantes. The elevated forfeit may also have been a reflection on the fabrics, as the higher-status women were wearing more elaborate Indian prints. (Table 3). These may have been Dutch or English imports smuggled into France. The contrast with the other sentences demonstrates the lack of parity in punishment. For example, in April 1719 de Brou had fined the Widow Remond only 30 livres for a large cache of fabrics which included nine metres of quilted white Indian fabric with small red and green flowers, a four-metre length of *indienne* printed with red and violet flowers, and two pieces of pure Peking silk, 'one blue and one lemon yellow', each thirteen metres long.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the *Intendant* permitted the quilt to be returned to her

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<sup>32</sup> A.M.N., Série HH 266. 'Ordonnance de Paul Esprit de Feydeau, Chevalier, Seigneur de Brou, etc., 23 décembre, 1716.' 'Il y a plusieurs personnes qui ne laissent pas d'en faire un Commerce ouvert dans la Ville de Nantes; & d'autres qui s'en servent pour leurs habillemens & usages, s'assurant de l'impunité de leur condition.'

<sup>33</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 266. 'Ordonnance de Monsieur de Brou contre plusieurs femmes et filles de Rennes trouvés en indiennes en la ville de Rennes aux condamnation à 3,000 livres d'amende et les robes prohibées brulées, 11 octobre, 1721.'

<sup>34</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 251. 'Poursuites contre des particuliers, 7 avril, 1719.' Imported silk was also banned, and the quantities suggest Remond was a seamstress. The *Intendant* ordered the confiscated cotton and silks to be sold in Paris to pay the fees of the arresting officers.

Table 3. Analysis of the clothing of women arrested for wearing 'toiles des Indes' in Rennes, August 25 to September 1, 1721.<sup>1</sup>

Name	Place of arrest	Occupation (or of father or husband)	Garment(s)	Pattern & colour:
Young Miss Deschamps	Place de la Lisse	-	'Robe de <u>Chambre</u> ' <sup>2</sup>	White ground with red bouquets
Mr. <u>Molien</u> 's wife	His boutique	Apothecary	'Robe de <u>Chambre</u> '	White ground with large red flowers
Mr. <u>Marie</u> 's wife	His boutique	Ironmonger	'Robe de <u>Chambre</u> '	Blue ground with small red bouquets
Miss de la <u>Gonfrais</u>	Her boutique	<u>Woolen</u> cloth retailer	'Robe de <u>Chambre</u> '	White ground with red flowers
Mr. <u>Loubry</u> 's wife	His boutique	Hat merchant	'Robe de <u>Chambre</u> '	White ground, red flowers and bouquets
Miss <u>Lanquoit</u> the elder	Her father's boutique	Linen cloth retailer	'Robe de <u>Chambre</u> '	White ground with red bouquets
Mr. <u>Claret</u> 's wife <sup>3</sup>	Her boutique	Royal Notary	'Robe de <u>Chambre</u> '	White ground with large flowers and small red dots
Mr. <u>Viard</u> 's widow <sup>4</sup>	Leaving the Franciscans' church	Prosecutor in the Brittany Parliament	'Robe de <u>Chambre</u> '	White ground with black flowers under a grey taffeta cape
Mr. Mouton's wife	His boutique	Apothecary	'Robe de <u>Chambre</u> '	White ground with red and green bouquets trimmed with green taffeta
Young Miss <u>Buchette</u>	On the Place Ste. Anne	-	'Robe de <u>Chambre</u> '	White ground with red and violet bouquets under a cape of greenish taffeta
Mr. de <u>Loué</u> 's wife <sup>5</sup>	At 6.30 in the evening walking near the St. François town gate	Royal Notary	'Robe de <u>Chambre</u> de <u>Toile</u> de Indes, appelée <u>Mazilipatan</u> '	White ground with flowers & bouquets of poppies & red birds, trimmed with white taffeta, under a cape of grey taffeta.

<sup>1</sup> A.M.N. Series HH-266. '*Ordonnance de Monsieur de Brou du 11 octobre 1721 contre plusieurs femmes et filles de Rennes trouvés en indiennes en la ville de Rennes aux condamnations à 3000 livres d'amende et les robes prohibées brûlées.*'

<sup>2</sup> '*Robe de Chambre*' must have been Richet's description of a day dress: it is not possible they would all be working in their boutiques in a state of 'undress'.

<sup>3</sup> Mme. Claret has her own boutique 'retailing fabric', even though she is married to such a prominent official.

<sup>4</sup> The higher status of the last four women is indicated by the expensive silk capes they were wearing. Imported silk taffeta was also prohibited.

<sup>5</sup> The lavish pattern of Mme. de Loué's dress, and the specific note that it was Indian rather than a copy, denotes its expense.

once the fine was paid, again demonstrating his liberty to interpret the law according to his own judgement.

In June 1714, *Contrôleur-général* Desmaretz tried a new tactic for greater control of fabric consumption, offering an amnesty from prosecution for illegal goods surrendered for marking.<sup>35</sup> It was a specifically protectionist measure, not for the French textile manufactures, but for the *Compagnie*, to ensure that any prints used were those which had passed legitimately through its sales in Nantes. Significantly, it was declared that the furnishings would not be confiscated or destroyed unless they were ‘illegally printed cottons’, a rare acknowledgment of the existence of French printing workshops. It applied only to furnishings made of, or covered in, *indiennes*, and not garments, further indicating the types of cloth the *Compagnie* was importing. It vividly illustrates the amount of fabrics which were present in the homes of French people of all levels of income by the early eighteenth century. In Nantes, hundreds of individuals came forward to seek approbation for their possessions before the end of April 1715, and the types and quality of the items declared paints a picture of the ownership of prohibited goods, and what *toiles peintes* represented to different strata of Nantes society.<sup>36</sup> The possessions which adorned the households of the rich shipowners, merchants and officers of the *Compagnie* who lived along the wealthy quayside included armchairs upholstered in *indiennes*, tablecloths, sets of curtains and *tapis* (a heavy cloth which could cover a table as well as the floor), while those in professional occupations yielded ‘beds’ (actually a set of hangings composing a full tester-type bed) and wall-coverings, and the poorer residents mainly surrendered one quilt.<sup>37</sup> This suggests the emphasis on socialising among the bourgeoisie, who could afford to decorate their entertaining spaces.<sup>38</sup> Those with less income concentrated their wealth on the bedchamber, and even the poorest aspired to own a simple bed covering.

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<sup>35</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 251. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’Etat du Roy, 11 juin 1714.*’

<sup>36</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 253-258. ‘*Déclarations de meubles en étoffes prohibées, avril à juillet, 1715.*’

<sup>37</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 255. Joachin du Cazeaux, Sieur du Hallay, a king’s steward, owned ‘a wall-hanging made of three pieces and two door-coverings, two beds with four curtains each, two sofas, thirty-six chairs, thirty-six quilts, twelve kerchiefs to put on the backs of chairs and twenty-eight serviettes for coffee, all in *indienne*, and two quilts made of Indian satin’; Madame Marie Roüillé, wife of Monseigneur Rodays, declared ‘four beds and a bedcover, a bed of Satin, four quilts, four curtains and a bed cover of fake *indienne*’ in her town house. Middle class professionals included minor officers of the Presidial Court, ships’ surgeons and captains. Among the poorer citizens were boutique-owners, street vendors and several priests.

<sup>38</sup> Jérôme Mitard, Officer of the *Chambres des Comptes* court, declared ‘five bed covers, a dressing table cover, six small serviettes for coffee and twelve pieces to cover the chair backs, all made of *indienne* and *toile peinte*’.

Over 1,000 individual coupons, hastily completed by the clerks on a preprinted form due to the scale of the operation, still survive in the municipal archives. They are the result of an extension of the amnesty to almost a year by the *Conseil*, requested by Ferrand, a local decision taken to give people a good opportunity to avoid a fine, and perhaps his comment on the unfair and futile nature of the prohibition.<sup>39</sup> The accuracy of the quantities recorded could however be disputed, as the heads of household had to volunteer the information, and therefore the truth about the furnishings they owned may be less than accurate. Although the items were not to be seized, it is likely the owners would have been hesitant to declare all they owned, in anticipation of the conditions of the prohibition changing at a later date. This would explain why the vast majority of citizens appear to have owned only one quilt or bed covering, very often described as ‘old’ or ‘worn out’ or having been ‘owned for a long time’.<sup>40</sup> The repeated calls to declare items over the course of the year would have prompted people to declare one insignificant item to complete the requirements. It is highly unlikely that for most this would be all that they owned, especially in view of the wealth of some of the people participating, and thus the documents may give an estimate of only the minimum quantities of printed cottons owned in Nantes. However, the documentation provides evidence that all households, wealthy or poor, owned some kind of printed cloth.

The inventory contains a high proportion of declarations made by women, although of course it could be considered that household goods were their ‘domain’. Interestingly, almost all of the declarations were signed, and in a competent hand, showing a high level of literacy among the women of Nantes at this time, as shown by the example in Figure 45. Anne Hinneau wrote:

[I declare] six bed-covers, of which two are of *indienne* and the other four are of *toile peinte*, and of these, two are real *Indiennes*. I also gave one to M. le Breton, the procurer at the Presidial Court, who has married my daughter.<sup>41</sup>

People clearly differentiated between imported *painted* goods, foreign-printed *indiennes* and cheaper French-made copies. Monsieur Vaiser noted the print on one of his quilts was ‘splodgy, that is to say, a fake *indienne*’. (Figure 46.) André Letourneau

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<sup>39</sup> A.M.N. Série 251. ‘*Ordonnance fait à Rennes, signé Ferrand, 12 juin, 1715.*’

<sup>40</sup> For example, the declarations of Louise Bouteiller for ‘two old quilts made of *indienne*, and another very bad one and a worn-out table carpet’ and Monsieur Preau, who declared ‘a small quilt made from an old dressing gown’.

<sup>41</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 254. ‘*Declaration of Anne Hinneau, Nantes, April 1715.*’ ‘*Six Courtepointes, don’t il y en a deux d’Indienne, et les quatres autres de toile peinte, desquelles deux veritable Indiennes. J’en ay donné une à Mr. Le Breton, procureur aux presidial, qui a Epousé ma fille.*’

described his three as lined with ‘painted or dyed’ cottons (*toiles peintes ou taintes*), showing different techniques were also recognised. The severity of the most recent iteration of the law and the determination of the new officials to enforce it was an incentive for several wealthier citizens to also mention the *toiles peintes* at their country houses.<sup>42</sup> Ostensibly in the hope of avoiding confiscation, some citizens insisted that the fabrics were justifiable because they were purchased before the prohibition, a misconception which still persisted. Others stipulated that the fabrics were ‘from Holland’, or were ‘imitations’ of *indiennes*, contradicting other statements by customs officials who declared themselves incapable of differentiating between legal and illegal goods. It is all further proof that there were many types and qualities of *toiles peintes* circulating in France. Officially, all types of printed cotton from any source were banned.

The amnesty was only a partial solution to the continuing problem of disposing of the confiscated *indiennes*. Small amounts of sequestered fabrics from individuals could be burned, but a different solution was needed to prevent the *Compagnie*’s cargoes, which were essential for its business, from open circulation.<sup>43</sup> This was to offer them for auction with the stipulation that the purchaser must export them from the kingdom.<sup>44</sup> This was an onerous option for all but one specific group of buyers: the *négriers*, or slave traders, which was fortunate for the *Compagnie*, because it would have otherwise been impossible to distribute its freight. In fact, Africa was the only possible market for the vast quantity of imported and confiscated *indiennes*, which represented almost half of the cargoes sent to trade for slaves, alongside arms, wine and spirits and precious metals. Not surprisingly, silk and wool were not popular in Africa, which provides another reason the *Compagnie* received constant prolongations of its license to import *indiennes*. The *Compagnie*’s harbourmasters were responsible for re-exporting the fabrics bought at the sales on behalf of the purchasers, as well as guarding the illegal impounded goods, both those from arriving ships and local searches, stored in warehouses awaiting destruction. Both activities provided plentiful opportunities for fraud and deception, as will be shown.

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<sup>42</sup> The wealthy Madame Roüillé, mentioned in n. 36, also owned ‘two beds of *indienne*, five other beds where only the headboard and base are covered in *indienne*, nine quilts, both good and bad, and seven curtains’ in her country house; the merchant Martin Robinet owned ‘two beds trimmed with *toile peinte* at my place in the country’; René le Ray, Lieutenant of the Presidial Court of Nantes owned ‘four quilts in the town and the same in the country’.

<sup>43</sup> Haudrère, *La Compagnie française des Indes au XVIIIe siècle*, p. 306, n. 315. In recognition of this, the directive to burn fabrics was rescinded in 1720. Provincial application of the order however, seems to have continued. See, for example, n. 33 of this chapter.

<sup>44</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Arrêt du Conseil d’Etat en faveur de ceux qui font le Commerce en Guinée, 29 décembre, 1718.*’



As the prime cargo of the *Compagnie, indiennes* were thus the mainstay of the slave trade, and a primary source of income for a whole social stratum of *Nantais*. The French slave trade was conducted principally in its West African colonies of Senegal and Guinea, where the *Compagnie* had been granted a trading monopoly.<sup>45</sup> When the *Compagnie's* slave trading license was revoked in 1713, private merchants took over and were so successful that Nantes became France's chief slaving centre. The trading price for a slave could be as much as 100 to 300 livres per captive, and the eventual profit to be made on each one ensured that premium fabrics were sourced for the exchange. The taste of the African potentates was for the highest quality *toiles peintes des Indes*, far superior to the French-made textiles, and if the merchant shipowners could not acquire enough in Nantes, they would provision their Africa-bound ships with similar goods imported by the other East India companies, particularly the Dutch.<sup>46</sup> This contradicts the assumption that cheap *indiennes* were imported by the French *Compagnie*. Because of this high return on investment, *indiennes* could amount to as much as 60-80% of a slave ship's cargo leaving France, a huge and precarious investment considering the long wait for the investors' profit to be realised.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to the well-known 'triangular trade' in the Atlantic, therefore, the French were conducting a second circuit to pick up the *indiennes* which would supply it. (Figure 47.) This began with additional slaves purchased in West Africa with commodities the African chiefs prized: cowrie shells from the Indian Ocean, manufactured goods and *toiles peintes*.<sup>48</sup> (Figures 48 and 49.) As a stop-off for ships on their way to the East, France maintained two colonies, the *Île de France* (Mauritius) and the *Île Bourbon* (Reunion Island). Slaves were needed in these islands to work the land and provide fresh food for the ships on their way to the Indies, and eventually coffee to trade in Asia. So many captives were brought there that by the mid-eighteenth century the two previously deserted islands had a joint population of 30,000, up to 85% of whom were slaves. The presence of Indian cottons in this double triangular trade is shown by the seizure in 1719 from three ships arriving in Nantes from the French Caribbean island of Martinique, of illegal *indiennes* and

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<sup>45</sup> In Senegal, as well slaves and *indiennes*, the ships from Nantes traded in Senegal Gum, a thickener with application whose usefulness for printing is discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>46</sup> Guillet, *La Marie-Séraphique, Navire négrier*, p. 49.

<sup>47</sup> X. de Boisrouvray & M. Konrat (eds), *La Traite des noirs à Nantes du XVIIe au XIXe siècle* (Nantes: C.R.D.P., 1980).

<sup>48</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 223. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy, 5 juin, 1724.' The cargoes of the ships *Le Bourbon*, *La Diane*, *l'Argonaut* and *l'Atalante*, which had arrived at Lorient in April and May 1724, included 'cowrie shells for the slave trade with Guinea' as well as pepper, cinnamon, lacquer, rhubarb and 'painted, dyed and striped cottons to be sold at the sale in Nantes, whether prohibited or not'.

goods from Guinea as well as sugar.<sup>49</sup> These Indian fabrics must have been picked up in Guinea from ships returning from India, and then completed their second triangular journey to the Antilles and back to France, underlining the value of the merchandise, transported twice across the Atlantic. Similarly in 1715, the cargo confiscated from the *Marie*, returning from Guinea and Martinique, included ‘cottons from the Indies, cloths made by the negroes, two ivory tusks’.<sup>50</sup>

Between 1713 and 1722, fifteen ships per year departed Nantes on the slave route, loaded with cloth bought at the *Compagnie*’s auctions. The *Compagnie* refused in 1722 to issue further licenses to private shipowners and took back the trade, supplying it with its cotton cargoes. The ship *Reine de France*, for example, which transported 404 slaves from Guinea to the Caribbean, was laden with 247,000 livres of goods to trade, two-thirds of which in value were Indian textiles (white, blue and printed cottons).<sup>51</sup> The high value of textiles traded is confirmed by the 1721 bill of lading for the ship *Excellent* heading out of Nantes for the port of Judas in Guinea, which entrusted François Guimont with goods to trade in Africa that included a case of guns, 18 barrels of brandy, woollen cloth and *indiennes*.<sup>52</sup> Three pieces of Indian kerchiefs were valued at 94 livres and 10 sols, or around 32 l. each, giving an indication of their high value when compared with premium Cholet white wool at 24 l. per piece, 29 l. for a litre of brandy and 35 l. for a gun. Guimont was also entrusted with another 5 pieces of *indiennes* of slightly lower value, and a high-quality dressing gown and a skirt each valued at 33 l., all of which would have arrived from India on *Compagnie* ships. Once in Africa, he was to use them to buy negroes or gold powder to load on ships bound for the Caribbean islands. Securing the highest possible quality textiles in India became increasingly difficult for the *comptoirs* over the course of the eighteenth century, however, due to the competition from other European nations which dominated more of the areas of production than the French.<sup>53</sup> Therefore the ostensibly limiting stipulation that the *Compagnie*’s goods be re-exported from France actually served two purposes: to prevent the textiles from entering France, and to provision the slave trade.

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<sup>49</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 219. *La Geneviève*, *l’Alliance*, and *l’Aurore*, all Nantes registered.

<sup>50</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 270. ‘*Saisies sur la Marie de Nantes, retour de Guinée et de le Martinique, de marchandises non déclarées restant de la traite.*’ (1715)

<sup>51</sup> Martin, *L’ère des négriers*, p. 103.

<sup>52</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 251. ‘*Procès verbal de François Guimont.*’ (1721) Modern-day Ouidah, Benin.

<sup>53</sup> J.-M. Masseur & M. Moreau, *Traite des noirs et esclavage aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Nantes: CRDP des Pays de la Loire, 1998).

## A Gateway for Smuggled Goods

There was extensive potential for smuggling fabrics into the French market by sea in Brittany. Two sorts of prosecutions were applied for this illegal activity: the first for goods found aboard ships arriving from abroad, and the second for goods bought legitimately at the *Compagnie*'s auctions, but which had not been exported as the conditions of sale required. The latter were a major source of the flow of contraband into France, as they were already sealed and appeared official. The manner of organising the sales also allowed for fraud, not least the nonsensical insistence that all the parchment docketts for the sanctioned imported fabrics had to be issued by the *Compagnie*'s Paris headquarters and then sent to Nantes. They were sent by road to Orleans, and then loaded on a boat on the Loire. In 1721, it appeared the December auction of the cargoes of *Le Solide*, *L'Amphitrite* and *La Vierge de Grace* would have to be cancelled after their tags were quarantined for having travelled on a boat with merchandise that may have been contaminated by the plague. As issuing more labels 'could take several months' an *Arrest* was issued to authorise the *Compagnie* to mark the rolls at only one end and to use 15,800 labels remaining from the previous sale so the auction could proceed.<sup>54</sup> This cleared the way for more fraud with the use of old labels. To modern eyes the obvious solution would be to issue the tags in Nantes, but the *Compagnie*, like the State, controlled every aspect of its commerce exclusively from Paris, however impractical this was.

The profit to be made on forbidden materials was naturally tempting to ships' captains, particularly foreigners with contacts in countries where Indian cottons could legitimately be sourced. In 1712, Edoüard l'Heritage, the captain of the *Marie* from Cork, Ireland was arrested when several parcels of *toiles peintes* totalling 81 aunes, and other fabrics including a 12-aulne length of *mousseline*, were discovered in a false-bottomed chest in his cabin.<sup>55</sup> The captain was condemned to a 3,000 l. fine and payment of the expenses of the guards who arrested him.<sup>56</sup> L'Heritage, through a Mr. Neil, interpreter, explained the ship had been blown off course by storms on the way home from Genoa and that he had had no intention of off-loading his cargo in Nantes. The fabrics were the belongings of his crew, and the French law, he said, should not be applied to foreigners. L'Heritage's excuse is

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<sup>54</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 221. 'Arrêt du Conseil d'Etat portant règlement pour la vente à Nantes des marchandises arrivées des Indes au Port-Louis par le Solide, l'Amphitrite et la Vierge de Grâce, le 18 octobre 1721.'

<sup>55</sup> The spellings in the original documents, undoubtedly incorrect French interpretations of the English names, are used throughout.

<sup>56</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 269. 'Procès-verbal des Commis des fermes à Paimboeuf... [contre] la Capitaine Edoüard l'Heritage de la Marie de Cork, le 28 décembre 1712.'

made more plausible because Genoa was an important arrival port for Asian goods, as well as having printing workshops. However, their concealment was harder to explain, although he claimed they had been hidden ‘in case the ship was attacked by pirates’.<sup>57</sup> *Intendant* Ferrand’s judgment was that half of the confiscated fabrics should be burned, and the other half sold by *Maire* Mellier for export, a sentence which was not only harsh but illogical, as the captain had been planning to take them to Ireland anyway.

Captain Jean Groun of Rotterdam declared five chests of smoking pipes, but hidden in another case of merchandise aboard his vessel 30 pieces of ‘Dutch painted cotton’ (*toile de coton peintes de hollande*) and ten pieces of *Albanis*, a fine Indian cotton, were found. He received a dispensation from the fine as he had declared some of his cargo, but the fabric was confiscated and the money realised on its sale was awarded to the officer who had conducted the search and seizure.<sup>58</sup> Groun’s stash would doubtless have been imports of the Dutch East India Company, picked up in Holland to smuggle into France. Similarly, Martin Maurice, an Irish sea captain arriving from London in the ship *Le Georges* in 1713, was found to have illegal goods which had probably been purchased from the English East India Company hidden in the crow’s nest of the grain-carrying vessel.<sup>59</sup> These seem to have been expensive *indiennes*, as they included a 12-aune piece of *toile peinte* with green flowers (indicating a high-status fabric, as green had to be hand-painted); another white cotton dotted with flowers which was 13 aunes long; and two unusual cotton-linen mix pieces, one ‘slate-coloured’ and 27 aunes long, the other of a ‘jasper-coloured’ (*jaspé*) mottled weave, 21 aunes in length.<sup>60</sup> The hoard also included heavy woollen and wool-linen mix cloths, but Maurice was only fined for the pieces of *toiles des Indes*, which were ‘expressly forbidden’. Maurice was more fortunate than l’Heritage and Groun, appealing to the English Ambassador, who successfully intervened with the *Contrôleur-général* and obtained a reprieve from the 500 l. fine and the return of the confiscated fabrics. Although Maurice was Irish he appears to have been based in Nantes.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 269. ‘Procès-verbal... [contre] la Capitaine Edoüard l’Heritage.’ ‘Les marchandises saisies Etoient cachées dans le fond d’une armoire... Pour Eviter le pillage des Corsaires.’

<sup>58</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 269. Unsigned letter of 1722, presumed to be addressed to Mellier, regarding Groun, headed ‘Observations’.

<sup>59</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 268. ‘Saisie, en l’absence du capitaine, à bord du Georges de Nantes, chargé de seigle, venant de Londres et mouillé proche Trantemou, d’un paquet placé sur la grand’hune contenant des morceaux de toiles peintes.’ (1713) Various spellings in different documents, probably Morris.

<sup>60</sup> *Jaspé(e)*: resembling the stone jasper in the use of two or more contrasting colours; a variegated effect achieved in weaving by the use of warp yarns of differing shades and with single-colour filling yarns in the weft.

<sup>61</sup> Maurice was resident in Nantes despite his protestations otherwise, as his wife and mother declared goods in the 1715 furnishings amnesty, where they are recorded as ‘Morice’. His ship was moored at the Island of

It certainly appears a smuggling route from Ireland existed, with many references to cargoes impounded from Irish ships, for example Captain François Morphil of the *Marie* out of Waterford whose cargo was impounded at Paimboeuf in 1720.<sup>62</sup> Captain Danssaint of the *Union* was caught transporting six sealed bales of prohibited goods bought at the *Compagnie*'s sale from one ship to another in 1722, although he received an acquittal on condition he loaded the material and left immediately for Cork.<sup>63</sup> Other nationalities were also running contraband fabrics picked up in Ireland: Captain Janssen's ship from the Duchy of Holstein, arriving from Cork, was found with 'diverse cloths hidden between the barrels of beef and butter on board'.<sup>64</sup> Foreigners were mainly exempted from the fines if they were able to prove they were taking the forbidden goods on to another country, but just like the French culprits, some received a 500 l. fine, others the full amount, and there does not seem to have been any uniformity in the decisions. Some foreigners received rather rough treatment. In 1721, Captain Roger Matheus (Mathews) on the *Pearl* from Dartmouth was found with a piece of *indienne* on board but refused to pay his fine. The *inspecteurs* reported that they had 'beached the ship on the mudflats at Paimboeuf, and destroyed the mainsail and mizzenmast' so the ship could not depart.<sup>65</sup> This however, was too severe an action for the Regent who, probably after an appeal from the Ambassador, declared the actions 'irregular' and excused the Captain from his penalty, although no compensation was recorded for the damage to the ship.

Naturally, there were as many opportunities for French captains to import illegal fabrics as foreigners. The captain of *Le Victoire* out of Dunkirk claimed he had every right to carry two cases of *toiles peintes*, as they were 'made in Dunkirk and were being exported to the Americas'.<sup>66</sup> This provenance was doubted and the captain was fined, but others' excuses won them an acquittal. A large cache of 23 pieces of prohibited 'Indian chintz'

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Trantemou (now Trantemoult) downriver from Nantes, which would have facilitated smuggling, and where a hamlet called North House (now Norkiouse) suggests English or Irish occupation.

<sup>62</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 271. 'Saisie sur la Marie de Waterfort à Paimboeuf, capitaine François Morphil, auquel le Sieur Madgoneau, interprète pour la langue irlandaise, communique le procès-verbal de saisie.' (1720)

<sup>63</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 268. 'Estat des frais due à M. Claude Perrot, Greffier de la subdelegation de Nantes pour la saisie du 5 Mars 1722 sur le Sieur Louis Danssaint à requeste du Sieur Cordier.' (1722)

<sup>64</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 271. 'Saisie sur le Fride de Holstein, capitaine Flers Janssen, venu de Cork en Irlande.' (1723) 'Diverses étoffes cachées entre des barils de boeuf et de barils de beurre furent trouvées à bord.'

<sup>65</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 271. 'Saisie sur la Perle de Dalmouth en Angleterre, capitaine Roger Matheus.' (1721) 'Le capitaine ayant refusé de donner caution, on fit échouer son bateau sur les vases de Paimboeuf et on le dégréa de sa grande voile et de sa misaine; mainlevée donné par ordre du Régent, la saisie étant irrégulière.'

<sup>66</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 270. 'Saisie sur la Victoire de Dunkerque deux caisses de toiles peintes.' (1715) 'Capitaine Aluic... prétendait que les toiles avaient été confectionnées à Dunkerque et qu'il avait parfaitement le droit de les porter aux îles de l'Amérique; les commis contestant son dire sur le pays de production.'

(*chittes des Indes, étoffes prohibées*) was discovered on the *Duc d'Orléans*, along with other contraband including 6 dozen animal hides from the Levant and 124 packs of playing cards, but Captain Yves Margariteau was able to prove his goods were being expedited to Guinea and so the charge against him was withdrawn.<sup>67</sup> Of course, smuggling was not limited to ships' captains: the Nantes merchant Laurent Souhigaray had undertaken to ship to Guinea the 17 bales of 'Indian merchandise' he had purchased at the *Compagnie's* sale of 1715 on his ship the *Duc d'Anjou*, but nine of these bales were confiscated from another of his ships, the *Petit Vendôme*, where they had been transferred.<sup>68</sup> Both captains were fined 200 l., but protested strongly that they were acting on Souhigaray's orders. Smuggling could also be a joint enterprise between the ship's owner and its captain. In August 1719, Captain Giraudeau of the ship *La Marianne* and the merchant shipowner Monsieur du Breuil were fined for having three pieces of *mouchoirs des Indes* aboard the ship, recently arrived from Saint-Domingue. On docking, the fabric was found hidden in chests which had previously been declared to contain only haberdashery, shoes, hats and woollen fabrics. Both men were considered responsible and fined 3,000 l. each, another enormous fine imposed for a relatively small quantity of fabric.<sup>69</sup> The *Marianne* was moored at Paimboeuf, one of many small harbours which had been developed for the legitimate unloading of merchandise to avoid the sand banks in the Loire estuary, but which multiplied the opportunities for smuggling, as ships could anchor and unload illegal merchandise before arriving in Nantes. (Figure 50.) The unfortunate Spanish captain Pedro Flore's ship the *Notre-Dame d'Atoche* of Bilbao went aground on a sand bank, and he was then fined for his large cache of illegal fabrics. He was condemned to a 500 l. fine, the confiscation of his cargo, and a raft of fees related to his legal process, which reached the inflated total of 85 livres, 18 sols and 6 deniers.<sup>70</sup> French captains also suffered from the vagaries of the Loire: when the *Amazone* out of Dieppe was grounded on a sandbank, its

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<sup>67</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 268. 'Ordonnance de mainlevée, le pilote Yves Margariteau ayant prouvé que ces marchandises étaient à lui et destinées à la Guinée' (1720)

<sup>68</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 270. 'Saisie sur le Petit Vendôme de Marseille, de neuf ballots de marchandises des Indes provenant des dernières ventes.' (1715)

<sup>69</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 268. 'Procès-verbal contre la Capitaine Giraudeau et le Sr. du Breuil, armateur, du 9 aoust, 1719.'

<sup>70</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 268. 'Procès-verbal contre la Capitaine Pedro Flore du 18 mai, 1713.' Flore's exceptional punishment included the fees of the magistrate's clerk, the public procurator and even the trumpeter who announced his punishment; the cost of searching his ship, of transporting the goods to the warehouse and of burning them; the fees of the scribe who wrote and made copies of the documents, and the messenger who carried the correspondence to the *Intendant*.

captain was caught loading contraband cargo onto another ship.<sup>71</sup> Smaller scale smuggling also took place along the inlets and marshes of the Loire by individuals with small barges and rowing boats, and *indiennes* were the smuggled goods of choice. The quantities were less but the excuses, and the variations in the application of sentences, were the same.

Another important maritime source of contraband in Nantes was returning sailors' belongings, which provided a virtually unlimited opportunity for smaller quantities of *indiennes* to reach the market. Captain l'Heritage had claimed the contraband fabrics found hidden on his vessel belonged to his crew, while Captain Giraudeau had two *pacotilles* confiscated which contained *indiennes*. The *pacotille* was a duffel-bag sized allowance of goods both officers and seamen could import on their own account without paying duty, but the prerogative was widely abused.<sup>72</sup> A blind eye was turned to this practice by the *Compagnie*, as sailors were notoriously poorly paid and this was a way to supplement their income. However, the quantities of illegal items had been significant enough by 1681 for the government to rule that sailors must pay both the freight and the import duty on these bundles, in response to lobbying by French merchants importing goods from the Levant. The unpopular ruling applied 'unless a contrary agreement was made at [the sailors'] engagement'.<sup>73</sup> This doubtless exempted officers, who were known to conduct a considerable business in prohibited merchandise.<sup>74</sup> (Figures 51 and 52.) It is well documented that ships would weigh anchor in the bay before docking at Nantes or Lorient, and sailors would throw their *pacotilles* overboard onto waiting skiffs because of their illegal contents. This, therefore, was further fuel for the expanding alternative circuit of supply in Brittany.<sup>75</sup>

The illicit trade in *indiennes* was so rewarding that many of the *Compagnie*'s employees, including clerks, warehousemen and sailors, were also tempted to commit fraud. In a major prosecution in 1713, Gabriel Collenno, a guardian of the *Compagnie* warehouse where the impounded fabrics were held for re-export, was charged with the theft

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<sup>71</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 271. 'Saisie sur l'Amazone de Dieppe, échoué et en radoub au Bas-Paimboeuf, et sur la galère Guillermin de La Ciotat... six ballots d'étoffes prohibées.' (1722)

<sup>72</sup> As the word *pacotille* later became a pejorative term for cheap goods, historians have understood that inferior cotton prints were traded for slaves but this was not the case, as has been demonstrated.

<sup>73</sup> Philippe-Antoine, Comte de Merlin, *Repertoire universel et raisonné de jurisprudence*, (Paris: Librairie Garnery, 1813), Vol. 9, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 38. In 1716, the Comte de Lannion requested Mellier grant him the ten pieces of *toiles peintes* brought back in the *pacotille* of the deceased officer Desconhel, which he had funded to the tune of 400 livres.

<sup>75</sup> Eugénie Margoline-Plot, 'Les pacotilles et les circuits parallèles de distribution des cotonnades en Bretagne au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', in Gérard Le Bouëdec and Brigitte Nicolas (eds), *Le Goût de l'Inde* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008), pp. 64-73.

of four bales containing 462 pieces of 'Indian satin' (*satins des Indes*, actually different types of cotton), as well as the serious fraud of counterfeiting their lead seals and parchment tags, with the intention of redistributing the contraband within France.<sup>76</sup> The huge amount of material, about 5,700 metres in total, had been part of the confiscation from the ship *Le Georges*, and had been sealed and stored for re-expedition on the ship *La Laure*. Collenno, his younger brother Valentin and several accomplices had stolen the bales from the ship, broken the seals and substituted cheap fabrics for the valuable contraband.<sup>77</sup>

While there is no proof that Maurice, captain of *Le Georges*, was involved, it would appear Collenno's co-conspirators hailed from the Irish community. The owner of the barge which transferred the stolen goods was a Mr. Ingrand (Ingram), and the two labourers who were apprehended ferrying the fake bales across the Loire said they had obtained them in the bar of Mr. Maclemara (Macnemara). The case was sent to the *Conseil*, indicating its seriousness, and a possible death penalty, but before they could be prosecuted, the Collenno brothers fled, 'one to Paris and one to St. Malo'.<sup>78</sup> They were judged *in absentia* by Ferrand and condemned to a 3,000 l. fine and two-thirds of the enormous legal costs of the process (1,794 livres), and they were forbidden from having a business in perpetuity, a particularly harsh penalty, doubtless because Collenno was a *Compagnie* employee.<sup>79</sup> As for the impounded fabrics, they were once again offered for sale by the *Compagnie*, with the insistence upon executing their exportation. Yet astonishingly, Collenno, through his many contacts, was not only granted an amnesty, but apparently continued working for the *Compagnie*, appearing in the list of furnishings declarations of 1715 as their representative (*agissant pour la Compagnie des Indes*) with a list of printed items in his home denoting considerable status, including 3 bedrooms decorated with up to 16 wall hangings each of *toile peinte*, 2 curtains, 5 beds 'decorated with curtains and furbelows' and 2 door coverings.<sup>80</sup> He seems to have continued his dealings, and in 1718 in another amnesty, where he was described as the 'Director of the

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<sup>76</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 259. 'Poursuites contre le Sieur Collenno, Commis garde-Magasin de la Compagnie des Indes à Nantes, 1713.' Indian satins were equally prohibited, but the four bales were later described at the *Compagnie*'s sale for export as *Culgas*, *Baffetas échequées à carreaux* and *Cottonis ou Cutanées rayées*, names for different patterns of Indian cottons, including florals, checks and stripes.

<sup>77</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 259. 'Lettre à Monsieur l'intendant de Monsieur Mellier, 21 mai, 1713.'

<sup>78</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 259. 'Procès-verbal par suite du décret de prise de corps contre Gabriel et Valentin Collenno, à l'absence de ceux-ci partis, l'un pour Paris, l'autre pour St.-Malo.' (1713)

<sup>79</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 262. 'Jugement par contumace en dernier ressort rendu par Monseigneur Antoine Ferrand, Intendant de Bretagne, contre Gabriel et Valentin Collenno.' (1713)

<sup>80</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 259. 'Déclarations de Sainte-Radegonde à Nantes.' (1715) 'Gabriel Collenno, agissant pour la Compagnie des Indes, 1 chambre et 1 petit cabinet tapissés de 13 morceaux, 2 rideaux, 5 lits garnis de rideaux et falbalas, autres chambres tapissées de 14 et de 16 morceaux, 14 couvertures, 2 portières.'



Tobacco Office in Nantes' (*directeur du Tabac à Nantes*), he declared owning 1,563 pieces of cotton, of which 1,073 were earmarked for export.<sup>81</sup> Collenno is an excellent example that those who knew someone of influence could not only get a reprieve on their sentences, but could continue to be promoted and regain their status in the community, making a mockery of the lengthy legal processes which were supposed to provide an example and deter potential perpetrators.

Considerable quantities of *toiles peintes* were burned, but this was an unfeasible way to deal with the vast quantities of impounded goods. De Brou initiated the compromise that only half of the goods of any confiscation would be destroyed, and the other half could be bought back by the culprit. A detachment of sailors guarded Captain Danssaint's goods while half of them were burned in front of the Provost's office (*bureau de la prévôté de Nantes*), presumably to prevent the large crowd of onlookers stealing them, and he bought the rest back for 22 livres.<sup>82</sup> This was an ingenious way of covering the prohibitive cost of the process, but at the same time it allowed half of the goods back into circulation. Added to this merchandise, there was no way to police whether the ships which took the fabrics out of Nantes actually transported them to Africa, or if some clandestinely re-entered France. It has already been noted that other countries' contraband prints entered France from all directions: Nantes added to this illegal flood. In fact, it has been estimated that if only one-third of the goods safely reached their contraband market, their high price still made the risk worthwhile.<sup>83</sup>

The task of seizing and destroying all illegal goods was impossible for officials in Nantes, too few in number to possibly carry out their orders. A reiteration of the prohibition in 1727 gave port masters and customs officials the power to arrest smugglers and confiscate their goods without appearing before a magistrate. The same ruling also commented that far too much confiscated material was being kept by those who made the seizure and, in particular, legal clerks were expressly prohibited from removing any prohibited merchandise from the stores, on pain of a 100 livres fine. With little accounting of the *Compagnie's* stock and few means of surveillance, Nantes became a major source of the contraband in France. The clandestine circulation of merchandise cannot be underestimated as a factor in the prolongation of the prohibition.

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<sup>81</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 203. 'Déclaration du Sieur Collenno, directeur du Tabac à Nantes, déclare 1,563 pièces coton, dont 1,073 doivent sortir de la province.' (1718)

<sup>82</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 268. 'Procès-verbal énumérant les marchandises, qui... ont été brûlées et consommées dans un feu allumé par ledite exécuteur.' (1722) See also n. 41.

<sup>83</sup> Haudrère, *La Compagnie française des Indes au XVIIIe siècle*, pp. 304-306.

## CHAPTER 4

### Technological Challenges

The typical commercial reaction to a popular product brought from a great distance at a great cost is, today as well as in the seventeenth century, an impulse to replicate it for the home market, and capitalise on the desire for the profitable commodity, while reducing the capital outlay. The prohibition in France was twofold: on the importing of exotic textiles, and on their imitation at home. The success of one had spawned the genesis of the other.

It has been noted in the first chapter that by the mid-seventeenth century the textiles were circulating widely in Europe. The English East India Company was ordering its fabrics almost exclusively from western and northern India until 1680, but after that date there was a huge increase in commissions from the Coromandel Coast, although the laborious nature of their production meant that the quantities produced in that region were limited.<sup>1</sup> It was fortuitous for the French, only arriving in the sub-continent after 1664, that they were able to establish a major outpost on this coast at Pondicherry, and other *comptoirs* followed in the early eighteenth century in other regions. (Figures 53 to 55.)

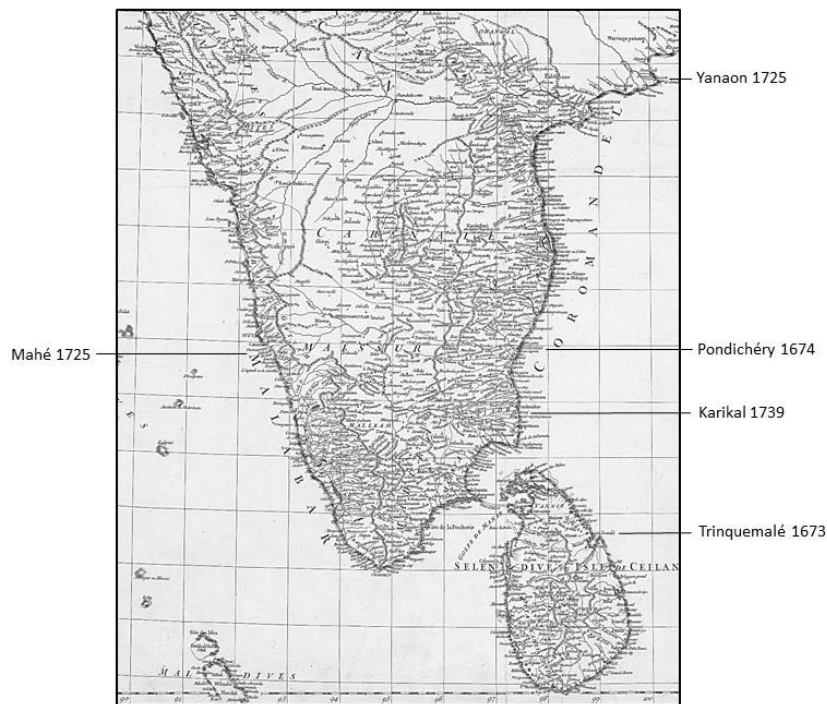


Fig. 53. Map of India showing the major French *comptoirs*, and the date they were established.

<sup>1</sup> Irwin & Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (HM Stationery Office: London, 1970), p. 5, n.11. Equally, the traveller Tavernier, mentioned later in this chapter, commented that even by buying all the cloth available during his visit it would be hard to procure 'more than a few bales'. It was only once the European East India Companies saw their value and encouraged the settlement of skilled workers in their 'factories' that the quantity produced was augmented and controlled.

The French, however, had only been established in Pondicherry for twelve years when the import ban became law in 1686, destroying any hope of the spectacular profits imagined from the trade.<sup>2</sup>

It was the increasingly volatile situation in the outposts established by the East India Companies which spurred the idea of producing similar printed cloths in Europe, to reduce the cost by avoiding the long and arduous sea journey, with its risk of losses on route. With commerce between Marseille and the Levant in decline since 1610, an opportunity was identified by enterprising artisans in that city, where printing experiments began at least as early as 1648, as will be discussed. It will be argued, however, that they aimed to replicate a different, infinitely inferior product to the Asian examples. When relations were re-established with the Levant in the 1660s and Indian fabrics began to flow back into France once more, cutting the local market for the poorer-quality copies, it became clear that better techniques were essential. It did not occur to the Europeans that their lack of knowledge of the processes and ingredients for cotton printing, which had been refined over hundreds of years, were a hindrance. Nor did they understand that the natural features of the landscape, geology and flora in India facilitated the production of the fabrics and could not be easily imitated in a northern climate.

The aim of this chapter is to establish, as far as is possible without the certainty of textile samples: the quality and designs of the fabrics which were being printed in France from the first half of the seventeenth century; which techniques would have been used; how this compared to the practices used in the Indian sub-continent; and how this knowledge was transferred. The importance of these subjects to the topic under examination is that, while much is known of both the Indian techniques and the quest to imitate them in France after 1730, the dearth of surviving products from the early workshops has led to assumptions regarding the techniques used, the design of the fabrics which were produced, and the method of transfer of the technology from Asia. These have now been so often repeated in the historiography they have become accepted as fact, and yet the conundrum remains that, if the French had the technology to print accurate and colour-fast reproductions before 1686, there is no explanation why they would still be searching for perfection as late as the 1750s. In 1751, Diderot and d'Alembert noted in the *Encyclopédie*:

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<sup>2</sup> The English too imposed an import duty of 35% on 'chintzes' in 1700, but still allowed them to be brought in for re-export to the English colonies, so the trade was not destroyed. Only in 1721 was the wearing and use of Indian prints banned, but this was to encourage the home printing industry, by then well-established, in contrast to the motives for the French prohibition. The imported chintz trade in England never again achieved the late seventeenth-century level.

It is widely believed that we cannot make in Europe [painted cottons] of the same beauty as those from the Indies, which can be washed without losing their colour.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1930s, Hyacinthe Chobaut found evidence of the earliest known European *atelier*, established in Marseille by Benoît Ganteaume, a playing-card printer in 1648.<sup>4</sup> Prior to the Marseille discovery, textile expert Henri Clouzot, writing in the 1920s, had named a cotton printer called Grioux, documented as working at Châtellerault in 1675, as the French forerunner.<sup>5</sup> Peter Floud, the British authority on early printing on cotton disputed this, concluding that the workshop of William Sherwin in West Ham, London, established in 1676, was the first, on the basis of a patent he registered ‘for a new way for printing broad callicoe’.<sup>6</sup> (Figure 56.) Either Floud was unacquainted with the Marseille workshop like Clouzot, or considered it irrelevant for a history of the English calico industry. Perhaps he dismissed it as producing fugitive prints, that is, with dyes that were not able to withstand washing, an idea corroborated by an article in the *Dictionnaire raisonné universel des arts et métiers* in 1773, fully fourteen years after the lifting of the prohibition, that the English had been the first to ‘paint cotton in the manner of Persia and India so well that they are often confused with each other.’<sup>7</sup> Following this, there is good evidence that a printing business was set up in Amersfoort, Holland in 1678, and another established in Neuchâtel, Switzerland in 1691 which most likely had appropriate colour-fast techniques like Sherwin.<sup>8</sup> (Figures 57 to 59.)

If the early French workshops were not producing goods which in any way resembled the quality of the imported merchandise, it makes a threat to the silk industry in the 1680s unlikely, and questions the main reason accepted for the enacting of a ban. It also refutes the assumed continuum towards product perfection during the period of prohibition until

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<sup>3</sup> Diderot & d’Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, Tome XVI, article *Toile peinte*. ‘On croit communément qu’on ne peut en faire en Europe de la beauté de celles des Indes ni qui se lavent de la même manière sans s’effacer.’

<sup>4</sup> Chobaut, *L’Industrie des indiennes à Marseille avant 1680*. An undated pamphlet, but Chobaut published work on the Avignon industry in 1932.

<sup>5</sup> Henri Clouzot & Frances Morris, *Painted and Printed Fabrics: The history of the manufactory at Jouy and other ateliers in France, 1760-1815* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1927).

<sup>6</sup> Floud, *The Origins of English Calico Printing*, p. 277.

<sup>7</sup> Philippe Macquer, *Dictionnaire raisonné universel des arts et métiers* (Paris: P.F. Didot Jeune, 1773). Tome IV, article *Toiles Peintes*. ‘La première manufacture de toiles de coton qui aient été peintes en Europe, fut établie en Angleterre où l’on imitoit si bien les Perses et les indiennes, qu’on les confondoient souvent ensembles’. The entry goes on to assert that a Frenchman established in London brought the technology to France and established his workshop in the Arsenal district of Paris, but Floud later discounted this as a simple confusion over names, although it may merit further investigation, given its early date.

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Caspard, *La Fabrique-neuve de Cortaillod, 1752-1854: Entreprise et profit pendant la révolution industrielle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1979).

the time of the earliest existing samples from the 1730s. Re-examining these issues is relevant due to the bearing they had on the establishment of the European industry, as well as the impact, through legislation, on the life of the citizens of France. This chapter will therefore examine the technical context, in order to explain the challenges of reproducing *indiennes*. It will also question the conjecture that the nature of the fabrics circulating in France in the first half of the seventeenth century can be defined by existing samples from around eighty years later, and also, which techniques used for copying Asian cotton prints could have been transferred via the conduit of Armenian craftsmen. It will be proposed that the French embargo hindered the development of the techniques which progressed in other countries, notably England, and that long after other countries had mastered printing, the search for excellence continued in France.

### **Technical Aspects of Printing Cotton**

The problems to be solved to facilitate cotton printing in Europe were twofold: firstly, to make colours adhere permanently to vegetable-fibre cloths and, secondly, to find an agent which could thicken the dyestuffs and allow the wood-blocks to be inverted to print the fabric, yet which could be easily removed from the cloth afterwards. When they first attempted to colour the newly imported cotton fibre, Europeans unsurprisingly began with the dyeing ingredients they had used since the Middle Ages. While these were successful for dyeing fibres from animal sources (wool, and later, silk) cotton fibre evaded these methods, much as the most common vegetable fibre in northern Europe, linen, had always done. Cellulosics do not absorb pigment in the same way as animal fibres, and even if a way had been found to print them at this date, the method of clearing the excess dye from unwanted areas after the red madder dye bath was unknown.<sup>9</sup> Existing knowledge actually hindered Europeans, therefore, from imitating Oriental fabrics for a considerable time.

Generally, natural dyestuffs will only colour cloth with the assistance of a chemical compound known as a mordant, from the Latin ‘to bite’, as the mordant helps the dye ‘bite’ into the fibres, combining with them permanently. Most mordants are metallic salts, with some acidic exceptions, and their properties for textile dyeing had been understood for centuries in Europe: a long steeping in a mordant solution is required before dyeing for

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<sup>9</sup> A generic name widely used in the textile industry for all fibres composed of cellulose, that is, derived from plants and trees. See Gwen Fereday, *Natural Dyes* (London: The British Museum Press, 2003); Florence Montgomery, *Printed Textiles: English and American Cottons and Linens, 1700-1850* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1970).

the fibres of fabric to become receptive to penetration by the dyes. By printing the mordants onto the fabric the colour will adhere only to the mordanted parts when immersed in the dye-bath, and later rinsing can remove the surplus dye from the other areas. (Figures 60 and 61.) However, printing with mordants required a technique and knowledge which Europeans had not mastered by the early seventeenth century. As well as fixing the pigment particles to the fibre and making it fast to washing and resistant to fading in the light, mordants can also increase the range of colours achievable, or make natural dyes either brighter or duller.<sup>10</sup> A skilled artisan can achieve different gradients of colours in one dyeing by controlling the amount of mordant painted or printed onto the cloth, but mordants do require skilled knowledge and handling, and used in excess they may give the finished cloth a harsh feel (alum) or even corrode the fabric (iron, in the form of sulphuric acid or oil of vitriol). Examples of printing where iron mordant has eaten away the fabric are shown in Figures 62 and 63.

European ingredients were of course the established source of pigments. A manual of dyeing published in Germany in 1683 suggested using ‘the bark of the alder tree and iron filings such as can be found at metal grinders’ or cutlers’ workshops’ to dye wool black, a recipe which would without doubt have destroyed the wool in a very short time.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, iron is still today called a ‘saddening’ agent, for the dulling effect it has on colours. English authors repeatedly quote the English East India Company’s order to its commissioning agents in India to halt sending calicoes with ‘sad red grounds’ as evidence that the European taste was for white-ground designs and that red was considered a ‘sad’, undesirable colour. In fact, it may just have referred to this dulling effect, meaning brighter reds were required.<sup>12</sup> With the advent of voyages to other continents, exotic substances had been identified which improved colour-fast dyeing, and these can be found in the cargo lists of the *Compagnie*, showing the ingredients were available for experimentation with printing.<sup>13</sup> Despite this wide range of available dyestuffs, there are very few which will become permanent (‘substantive’) on textile fibres without preliminary treatment, and those

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<sup>10</sup> R. Wizinger, ‘Noir de tannin et noir campêche’, in *Cahiers Ciba-Geigy*, 2, (1973), pp. 4-11.

<sup>11</sup> *L’Ars Tinctoria Fundamentalis* cited in Wizinger, *Noir de tannin et noir campêche*, pp. 6-7. ‘Avec l’écorce d’aune et de la limaille de fer, telle qu’on trouve chez les rémouleurs et les couteliers.’

<sup>12</sup> Irwin & Brett, *Origins of Chintz*; Rosemary Crill, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V&A Publishing, 2008), p. 14. Crill suggests that it may have referred to goods from Gujarat, where the root pigment used produced a red inferior to those made in the Coromandel Coast area.

<sup>13</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Liste merchandise d’Orient*’, an undated memo, attached to papers from 1700 marked ‘oblige the *Compagnie* to bring these’ includes Logwood, Sapanwood, Gall gum and Myrobalan nuts, ingredients which had many uses, but primarily textile dyeing.

required for the preparation of cotton were unknown, particularly the need to pre-treat the fabric with tannic acid before mordanting to assist penetration into the fibre.

To produce a printed design with a coloured background there are two basic techniques. Either the entire design can be printed in different colours, each requiring a separate process; or the cloth can be dyed with the background colour (piece-dyed) and then printed with a bleaching agent which removes areas of the colour as required. In this process, known as discharge printing, the white areas can subsequently be over-printed with different colours. The advantage to this process is not only speed, but that the background is fully covered with the colour throughout the fibres, rather than the colour sitting on the surface of one side of the fabric, as it does when the background is printed. This generally produces a softer ‘hand’ or feel to the fabric and the colour is more stable. In either method the process of ‘resist’ dyeing can be performed over the dyed background, or the printed colours. This is basically a substance which ‘masks’ areas not to be dyed and adheres to the fabric’s surface just long enough to survive the dye-bath and then be easily removed.<sup>14</sup> Later in this study it will be demonstrated that this technique was used during the prohibition, and claimed as immune to the ban as the colours were not ‘printed’.

A separate technology was also developing in France in the late seventeenth century: that of low-quality ‘reserve’ or ‘resist’ printing. A batik-like technique was used, where areas of the cloth were painted or stamped with liquid wax, to which the colour did not adhere during the dyeing process, leaving small areas of fabric white after immersion in the dye bath. (Figure 64.) Only small repetitive motifs such as spots and simple flowers could be used, as larger areas would crack. This technique owed more to dyeing knowledge than printing, producing an all-over coloured background, as opposed to the wood blocks used by card-makers, which added colour only to the designs. These approaches could be called a negative and a positive method of arriving at a decoration. Two colours could be achieved with resist dyeing by printing the dyed cloth within the white spots with wood blocks in a second colour. As early as 1709, Le Chéron, *Inspecteur des manufactures* for Rouen reported to the *Contrôleur-général* that people had begun to dye cloths in red and blue, ‘on which they make flowers and other figures by covering them in wax to keep the cloth white.’<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For further details of the basic dyeing processes see, for example, Stuart Robinson, *A History of Printed Textiles* (London: Studio Vista, 1969).

<sup>15</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondence des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. III, article 395, n.3. ‘Le Chéron, inspecteur des Manufactures à Rouen, au Contrôleur-général, 4 octobre, 1709.’ *‘Ils font des fleurs et autres figures; et pour qu’elles y restent dans la teinture, ils mettent sur ces fleurs de la cire, qui y conserve le blanc de la toile.’*

All these early processes were highly inaccurate. Samples of cottons printed in Genoa in 1730, shown in Figures 65 and 66, are blotchy single- and two-coloured floral prints, of which it was written:

The fabrics are all made in the Levant and brought in the white to Genoa, where the colours are applied. As most of them lose their colour upon [washing], it is only the common people who use this low quality.<sup>16</sup>

These unstable printed fabrics (*petit teint*) would not have been in any way comparable from a design aspect with the true *indiennes* arriving from the Coromandel and Malabar coasts of India. Indeed, if the product of the Marseille printing workshops had been similar to the excellent Indian goods, the demand for the cloths brought back by the *Compagnie* would have faltered, but it grew constantly, again suggesting there were several completely different products on the market, at hugely varying prices, and which targeted very different consumers.

To understand early printing it is key to appreciate that blue and red required not only different ingredients, but different techniques. While madder or chay root could produce a wide range of red tones when used with different mordants which were suitable for painting onto cotton, indigo was only suitable for piece-dyeing due to its peculiar properties that make it oxidise in the air before the fabric can be impregnated with colour. Indians had not solved this problem and could only therefore reserve areas of white on blue with wax resist methods, which explains the predominance of dark-ground patterns. When the Europeans showed a preference for white-ground fabrics the Indians had to laboriously cover the majority of the blue-dyed fabric with resist paste to leave only small areas of blue, a long and labour-intensive process.<sup>17</sup>

A further complication to early printing in this manner in Europe was that the indigenous woad plant required a hot bath, which naturally removed the wax resist. Only when indigo, which could be dyed in a cold bath, was imported in large amounts could the techniques advance, but as previously mentioned, it was banned until 1737. The two disparate techniques required to print the full spectrum of colours therefore posed a serious problem. In India this had been solved by highly intensive hand-application techniques, painting both mordants and wax (or mud slip, lime or Gum Arabic) resists onto the fabric.

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<sup>16</sup> BnF, Cabinet des Estampes LH-45-FOL. Collection d'Echantillons d'étoffes du Maréchal de Richelieu, Tome 1, 'Etoffes de Genes'. 'Les toiles sont toutes fabriquées dans le Levant et apportées en blanc à Genes où on y applique les couleurs. Comme la plupart se déteignent au blanchissage, il n'y a que les gens du commun qui font usage de la dernière qualité.'

<sup>17</sup> Crill, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West*, pp. 13.



This was permitted by the division of labour, with a different workshop specialising in each stage of the complex process.

The management of natural resources provided another challenge. Dyeing fabrics requires a huge amount of water, usually thirty times the dry weight of the cloth per dyebath, so that the fabric can circulate freely in the vat. The nature of the water used for dyeing cotton is equally as important as the quantity, and represented a distinct lacuna in the knowledge of the Europeans imitating Indian methods, namely, that the alkalinity or acidity of the water used to wash cotton during its many preparatory and finishing processes affects the colour of natural dyes. This prevented imitation of the brilliant Indian colours for many decades. Indeed, it explains the contemporary commentary that they were 'brighter after washing' which mystified Westerners and seems unlikely, until one learns that some Indian rivers have highly alkaline water in their deltas due to the presence of large quantities of shellfish, whose decaying shells deposit high amounts of calcium in the water. Europeans eventually solved this problem by bleaching the cotton before printing but this, as the eighteenth century expert on dyeing Charles Le Pileur d'Apligny commented, was not ideal, 'the combinations made by Nature are always more perfect than those made by man'.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps the major hindrance to technical advances, however, was the challenge of finding an appropriate thickener, which eluded European workshops for a considerable time. This was vital to remedy, because whereas for dyeing, the pigment is suspended in an aqueous solution in which the fabric is immersed, for printing the colour must be held in a gelatinous solution that can give the control to apply the design to only the required areas of the cloth. The gum needs not only to be inert, forming no chemical reaction with the pigment, but also sticky enough to adhere to the wood block when it is upturned onto the fabric's surface.

Gum Arabic, and Gum Traganth from Persia, were the thickeners imported for dyeing as a list of the tariffs on goods entering Rouen in 1689 attests.<sup>19</sup> These were tested for printing until Gum Senegal from the French African colony was found to be lighter and more easily removed from the cloth afterwards, a crucial requirement. That it was the optimal thickener is confirmed by complaints in England in 1752 by calico printers that the

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<sup>18</sup> Charles Le Pileur de l'Apligny, *L'art de la teinture des fils et étoffes de coton précédé d'une théorie nouvelle des véritables causes de la fixité des couleurs de bon teint*. (Paris: Moutard, 1776), p. 24. 'Les combinaisons faites par la nature sont toujours plus parfait que ceux fabriqués par l'homme.'

<sup>19</sup> B.A. 153. 'Extrait des registres de la Cour des Aides de Normandie, mars 1689.'

English East India Company had not imported the gum in several years (due to war with France, which monopolised the Senegal colony's trade) which was ruining their business. One printer claimed to have tried to find an alternative 'in everything glutinous in the vegetable kingdom', which confirms that there was no suitable substitute for Gum Senegal.<sup>20</sup> A later acknowledgement in his treatise on printing of 1766 by the Basel printer Jean Ryhiner, confirms that the English superiority of prints by that date was due to their knowledge of the correct thickeners.<sup>21</sup>

Along with printed *indiennes*, plain white cotton cloth was also imported, and by the end of the seventeenth century the French began importing the raw fibre to try spinning and weaving it in France. The 1689 Rouen list previously mentioned includes both finished cotton cloth and 'cotton wool' (*coton en laine*), the latter imported from both America and the Levant. The town was the major French centre of linen weaving and so was a natural place for experiments with cotton, a similar vegetable fibre, albeit with different properties, not least for dyeing and printing. The properties of the cotton plant were alien to Europeans, not being indigenous to their continent, and so were much misunderstood. As late as 1776 Le Pileur d'Apligny suggested that cotton resisted dyeing because its filaments were finer and less porous than animal wool, where in fact the properties of cellulose require more complex preparation. One of the necessary preparatory steps for dyeing cotton is to scour out the natural wax contained in its 'wool', picturesquely described by Le Pileur d'Apligny:

The longitudinal fibre... is also filled with a type of sticky marrow coming out of the seed, which is particularly fatty. It is essential to strip this out before dyeing, or the dye cannot penetrate to the interior of the fibre and will be very little fixed to the exterior. The existence of this sticky marrow is what makes it difficult to soak cotton when it is plunged in water.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Cited in Floud, *The Origins of English Calico Printing*, p. 279.

<sup>21</sup> Jean Ryhiner, *Traité sur la fabrication et le commerce des toiles peintes* (Basel: s.n., 1766). Ryhiner originated in Basle, where it is believed his grandfather was a merchant in both Indian and Dutch-made *toiles peintes* at the end of the seventeenth century who sent his son Samuel to Holland to learn the techniques. Samuel began a print works in Basle in 1715 or 1716 to supply the Swiss market, and Jean then later established a printing works in Mulhouse to extend the business to France. Although started in 1766, it was perhaps 15 years before he finished this treatise, making it less surprising that he shared his thoughts on the secret processes. He may have intended it only for circulation in Alsace to help found the industry there.

<sup>22</sup> Le Pileur de l'Apligny, *L'art de la teinture des fils et étoffes de coton*, p. 11. '*Le tuyau longitudinal... est aussi rempli d'une espece de moëlle onctueuse, qui sort de la graine, laquelle est elle-même fort grasse. Il est essentiel de le dépouiller de cette moëlle avant de le teindre, sans quoi la Teinture ne pourroit pénétrer dans l'intérieur, & seroit même très-peu fixe sur sa superficie. L'existence de cette moëlle onctueuse se manifeste par la difficulté qu'il y a d'imbiber le coton, lorsqu'on le plonge dans l'eau.*'

An advantageous property of vegetable fibres is that they do not ‘felt’ or clump together as wool does upon high-temperature washing, which permitted the scouring process and, indeed, the multiple immersions in hot water necessary for printing different colours. This attribute also produces a flat, smooth surface which, with added processes, favours printing.

### **Early European Textile Printing**

Printing on linen with wood blocks had been practiced in Europe since the Middle Ages, but this produced stiff, non-washable cloth which was useful as hangings and decorative textiles but was impractical for clothing. (Figures 67 to 70.) In the sixteenth century this simple hand-applied technique was used to print on any fabrics available: linen, silk and probably hemp. The impetus for textile printing is usually attributed to playing-card makers (*dominotiers*), who owned such engraved wood blocks, but the dyes which were used remain a mystery, although they would certainly have produced very basic, unstable colours. Floud, writing in 1960, stated that even until the end of the seventeenth century, ‘textile printing was limited to coarse linens and canvas wall-hangings printed with oil stains’, again illustrating his lack of awareness of the discoveries of Hyacinthe Chobaut.<sup>23</sup> The documents Chobaut found were contracts of partnership and apprenticeship, and show that in June 1648 a master playing-card maker, Benoît Ganteaume, formed a partnership with Jacques Baviile, a master engraver originally from Normandy, to produce *indiennes*. Ganteaume would supply the cloth, the ‘colours’ and the wood for the blocks, and both men would share the profits equally, yet continue with their own trades. Perhaps this was the problem, as the association lasted for only six months. Ganteaume, however, developed his enterprise with his family over the next decade, making both playing cards and *indiennes*, as documented in the marriage contracts of his three daughters, whose husbands joined the business. The first son-in-law was described as a card-maker who would be ‘trained to make *indiennes*’ (1654); the second was to ‘make cards and paint quilts’ (1657); and the third was to learn to make ‘the colours for *indiennes*’ (1660).<sup>24</sup>

These documents have been rightly used as proof that printing with wood blocks (as opposed to painting) was established in France by the mid-seventeenth century, although in the original contract the blocks were to be carved to ‘dye’ the fabrics, while the other

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<sup>23</sup> Floud, *The Origins of English Calico Printing*, p. 275.

<sup>24</sup> Chobaut, *L’Industrie des indiennes à Marseille avant 1680*, pp. 3-5.

contracts mention ‘painting’, making it complex to decipher exactly what the workshop made. While they show the progression of the business, they indicate that the same technique was being used as card-making, using inks or pigments which would not have been colour-fast. This is confirmed because a decade later Ganteaume was experimenting with ways to provide better colours; by the low prices of his products, indicating a low-status product for the mass-market; and that his apprentices were paid less for ‘painting *indiennes*’ than for printing cards.<sup>25</sup> Thus, it can be deduced these early designs were crudely printed with locally produced paper-printing materials, and were not fabric-specific. Playing cards from the time show a lack of the skills of registration. (Figure 71.)

Although he does not give the sources, Chobaut noted that by 1657 other workshops were established in Marseille, which may be substantiated by Ganteaume receiving permission from the Bishop of Marseille to form a ‘brotherhood’ in 1662.<sup>26</sup> This was overturned by a ruling of the provincial parliament at the request of the city’s aldermen. He appears to have given up producing *indiennes* by 1664, however, when he only hired apprentices for card printing. Other contracts with his suppliers indicate that they delivered the fabric to the workshop for printing, which again confirms a fugitive process, stamping colour on unprepared cloth. They were probably imitating the colourful but unrefined patterned cottons imported via the Levant, acceptable to those on lower incomes.

The establishment of Ganteaume’s workshop has been used by Katsumi Fukasawa in his work on the transfer of technologies from the East, and by Olivier Raveux on the history of Marseille and the early cotton printing industry there, to show that technologies for producing imitations of *indiennes* were imported to the Mediterranean area by Armenian merchants and, by inference, that these technologies successfully allowed the imitations of Indian goods.<sup>27</sup> In the many current references to Raveux’s work in the context of global textile history, the hiring of Armenians in the 1670s in Marseille and other European centres, notably Amsterdam and Genoa, is presented as if they possessed the ability to reproduce fine Indian hand-painted textiles, which does not appear to be the

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<sup>25</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. He paid his workers 240 livres a year between 1672 and 1678, or in kind, with the pieces varying from 40 sous to 1 sous 6 deniers per piece, depending on the dimensions, the number of colours and the quality of the printed fabric. In comparison, Indian goods seized in Paris in 1706 were worth 26 to 48 livres per piece, a minimum of 13 times the value of Ganteaume’s best products.

<sup>26</sup> Chobaut, *L’Industrie des indiennes à Marseille avant 1680*, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Katsumi Fukasawa, *Toilerie et commerce du Levant*; Olivier Raveux, ‘À la façon du Levant et de Perse: Marseille et la naissance de l’indiennage européen (1648-1689)’ in *Rives nord-méditerranéennes*, 29 (2008), pp. 37-51. Raveux has written many articles and book chapters on this topic.

case. It ignores Schwartz's assessment that the transmission of knowledge to Europe came from the Levant, particularly Turkey, and not directly from Indian techniques.<sup>28</sup>

Two Armenians were hired in Marseille in 1672 to disseminate 'how to paint *indiennes* as they do in the Levant', and three Armenian 'master-makers of *indiennes*' (*maître de fabrique d'indienne à couleur de Levant*) who formed an association in 1676 hired apprentices to be taught 'to paint in the Levant method'.<sup>29</sup> Chobaut doubted that these workshops were using wood-block printing, asserting that the technique they disseminated was 'pouncing' the outline of the pattern and then painting the colour inside, which he called the 'Levantine method'. If, at that date, Marseille artisans lacked the skills to produce anything more complex than basic *chafarcanis*, the madder-printed cottons described as 'Persians' (which were more likely printed in Gujarat, and imported to Persia by Armenians), then it is doubtful that Ganteaume's workshop was producing more technically complex prints twenty-five years earlier.<sup>30</sup> (Figure 72.) Nor was the knowledge to produce these simple prints exclusive to the Armenians, nor to Marseille by that time: notarial minutes from Avignon in December 1677 show a merchant, Antoine Coutelet, entered into a three-year contract with Louis-David Romal, an *indienneur* of Vincennes near Paris, to 'engrave and make *indiennes* and real Persian cloths' (*vraies toilles persianes*), indicating the trade was already established in the capital.<sup>31</sup> The ingredients to be provided by Coutelet suggest a workshop experimenting with two-colour printing in red and blue, but the insect-dyes cochineal and *escarlate* which were listed would not have adhered on cotton. The stipulation that only the products 'made perfectly and in a state to be sold' could be traded, suggests that all the cloth was not of this quality. The workshop appears to have been using blocks Coutelet owned for producing 'theses, portraits, armorial bearings and other things', which also throws doubt on its technical capabilities for printing cotton. At best, the products would have been what Chobaut called 'common types' of *indiennes*. He noted another early *indienneur* from Paris by the name of Claude Jullien was

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<sup>28</sup> P.-R. Schwartz, 'French Documents on Indian Cotton Painting, I: The Beaulieu MS, c. 1734', in *Journal of Indian Textile History*, 2, (1956), pp. 5-23.

<sup>29</sup> Chobaut, *L'Industrie des indiennes à Marseille avant 1680*, pp. 8-9, citing Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, 367 E, no.140, folio 2551 and 351 E, no.993, folio 2015.

<sup>30</sup> See note 41 of this chapter.

<sup>31</sup> Hyacinthe Chobaut, *L'Industrie des Indiennes à Avignon et à Orange (1677-1884)*. Extrait des mémoires de l'Académie de Vaucluse (Avignon: s.n., 1938), pp. 4-5, citing numerous documents from the Archives départementales de Vaucluse.

hired by two Avignon merchants in 1689 to ‘paint flowers on diverse sorts of cloth in the Indian style’.<sup>32</sup>

The attribution of the skills to impart knowledge of the fine Indian processes by the Armenians therefore raises some questions. Armenian merchants, strategically placed geographically, dominated the transfer of goods from East to West via the Levant.<sup>33</sup> They were trading in India at least from the late sixteenth century and were embedded in the Portuguese trading networks in the western Indian Ocean with close commercial ties with Gujarat.<sup>34</sup> Sebouh David Aslanian has noted that the Armenians were commissioning prints from Surat, an area known at that time for its crude prints.<sup>35</sup> This is affirmed by the English descriptions of their own dealings, which delineated the different qualities sourced in their three main trading areas, Gujarat, Bengal and the Coromandel Coast, of which only the latter provided fine hand-painted cloths. It is thought that the Armenians traded in both the Gujarati cloths and imitation *chafarcanis* they commissioned from dyers in Diyarbakir in modern-day Turkey. In 1688, when Savary de Bruslons wrote his *Dictionnaire de Commerce*, he included a list of the merchandise traded in Marseille, stating that ‘it is the Armenians who travel to Aleppo and Smyrna who often bring back the *indiennes* they call Chaferquanis... these are counterfeited and one must take care because the cloth is poor’.<sup>36</sup> John Irwin and Katherine Brett commented that the Armenians ‘were prominent in India as middlemen in the chintz trade’ but do not suggest they had knowledge of higher-quality Indian techniques, which were so hard for the Europeans to procure.<sup>37</sup> Thus the fabrics the Armenians brought to Europe would have been lower-status, explaining why they were constantly called ‘cheaper’ in contemporary descriptions. This could not refer to Coromandel Coast textiles.

Marseille had become the Armenians’ main European base for silk trading, overtaking Venice and Livorno, notably due to a 1629 *lettre patente* granted by Louis XIII which

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<sup>32</sup> Chobaut, *L’Industrie des Indiennes à Avignon et à Orange*, p. 6. ‘De peindres à façon d’indiennes à fleurs toutes les toiles de diverses sortes.’

<sup>33</sup> Sushil Chaudhury & Kéram Kévonian (eds), *Les Arméniens dans le commerce asiatique au début de l’ère moderne* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, 2008), pp. 4-6. See also Shireen Moosvi, ‘Armenians in Asian Trade: 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries’, in the same volume, pp. 103-112.

<sup>34</sup> Mesrovb Jacob Seth, *Armenians in India: from the earliest times to the present day* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992).

<sup>35</sup> Sebouh David Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 78. For a comprehensive study of Gujarati textiles, see Eiluned Edwards, *Textiles and Dress of Gujarat* (London: V&A Publishing, 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Savary de Bruslons, *Dictionnaire universel de commerce*, Vol. 3, p. 557. The dictionary was published posthumously, after 1723.

<sup>37</sup> Irwin & Brett, *Origins of Chintz*, p. 30, n. 4, Nicholas Bonnart engraving with the caption: ‘*Cette robe d’Armenian est un dishabille commode*’.

allowed them to trade in France through an agent, and the official encouragement of their activities by Colbert in the 1660s. Feeling threatened, the city's elders complained to the Crown about their influence and the 'grave and dangerous consequences' on the welfare of the citizens if these 'greedy' merchants' activities were not curtailed.<sup>38</sup> Their hiring by prospective printers is all the more curious as Marseille's merchants continued to petition for their eviction, until the Armenians were finally driven out when the 20% tax levied on all Levantine goods, from which the city had been exempt, was applied to Marseille in 1706.<sup>39</sup> As these fabrics could by this ruling only enter France through Marseille and pay the tariff, it effectively reinforced the prohibition on printed cotton imports. The huge list of all manner of goods from the 'Levant, dominions and territories of the Great Lord, King of Persia and Barbary' to which the tariff applied encompassed many types of fabric including 'Indian cloths from Isfahan' (*Toiles indiennes d'Hispaan*) and other Indian cloths both printed and painted (*Indiennes chafalrany*, presumably chafarcanis, and *Indiennes kalankar*) indicating the Indian origins of the goods considered 'Levantine', and again emphasising the lack of knowledge to be able to separate the two.<sup>40</sup> In 1770, the *Dictionnaire portatif de Commerce*, an encyclopaedia, noted that *chites* (chintz) 'even though they are called Persian, are not made at all in Persia', and in the entry for *perse*, 'this is the name given to *toiles peintes* which come from Persia, and we suppose them to have been made and printed there, even though most often it is Indian cloths which we take for Persian.'<sup>41</sup>

Michel Morineau has remarked that one reason for this confusion over cottons was that Indian designs often contained motifs borrowed from Persian symbols, having been commissioned for customers in that country.<sup>42</sup> Many accounts by contemporary travellers

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<sup>38</sup> B.A. 377. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roi, Qui ordonne que les marchandises du Commerce de Levant... payeront Vingt pour cent de leur valeur, 16 janvier 1706.' The document refers to the constant under-estimation of declared goods by the Levant merchants, a condition of the 1669 grant of free-port status to Marseille, which the *Chambre de Commerce de Marseille* attempted to regulate ten different times with new tariffs between 1683 and 1703.

<sup>39</sup> Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau (eds), *Merchants, Companies and Trade: Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Some Armenian merchants continued their businesses from the Comtat Venaissin, the papal enclave around Avignon, which was outside French control, and so actually benefitted from the avoidance of French import duties on their wares.

<sup>40</sup> B.A. 377. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roi, 16 janvier 1706.' p. 5. 'Etat des Marchandises du Commerce du Levant, Pays & Terres de la Domination du Grand Seigneur, Roi de Perse & de Barbarie, pour lesquelles de droit de vingt pour cent sera dû à Marseille.'

<sup>41</sup> *Dictionnaire portatif de Commerce* (Liege: C. Plomteux, 1770). Tome II, p. 48, articles *chites*. 'On les nomme perses ou persanes, quoiqu'il ne s'en fasse point en Perse.' Tome IV, p. 190, article *perse*. 'Se dit aussi des toiles peintes qui viennent de Perse, & qu'on suppose y avoir été fabriquées & peintes; quoique souvent ce soit des toiles indiennes qu'on fait passer pour Persanes.'

<sup>42</sup> Michel Morineau, 'Questionnaire pour les Arméniens aux 17<sup>e</sup> et 18<sup>e</sup> siècles', in Chaudhury & Kévonian, *Les Arméniens dans le commerce asiatique*, p. 27.

attest that the Persians did not print quality cloths themselves, as they could buy more beautiful Indian cloths cheaply from the Armenian traders.<sup>43</sup> The Frenchman Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, who made six voyages to Turkey, Persia and India, noted in his memoirs in 1676:

The Persians wear a thin cotton robe called a *Cabaye*... it would be a high-value material if not for the fact that the well-to-do have to change their dress almost every day, because these dyed cloths do not hold their colour at all, and as soon as a drop of water falls on them it leaves a stain, and they are ashamed to wear their robe after that.<sup>44</sup>

Ten years later in 1686, another French traveller, Jean Chardin, writing at the same date as the French prohibition, added:

The Persians make cheap cottons, but not fine quality ones, as they can get these from India at a better price than they can make them... they know also how to paint cotton but they see no reason to perfect the techniques used by the Indians because of their good price.<sup>45</sup>

The modern assumption, then, is that the Armenians were expert printers. Lemire and Riello rely on Olivier Raveux's repeat of Chobaut's evidence of the Marseille company incorporated to 'print' cottons, as well as works on historical dyeing and colouring by chemists, which note that Armenians were employed in Amsterdam in the 1670s to 'draw and colour or dye all kinds of East Indian cottons, which has never before in this country been practiced'.<sup>46</sup> Yet neither of these sources conclusively proves that anything other than

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<sup>43</sup> Rosemary Crill, Senior Curator for South Asia at Victoria & Albert Museum agrees they imported calicoes from India and would not have observed these techniques in Persia. I am very grateful for the time she has given me in many conversations on early Asian techniques.

<sup>44</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Les six voyages de Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Écuyer Baronne d'Aubonne, en Turquie, en Perse et aux Indes* (Amsterdam: Johannes van Someren, 1678), Vol. 5, p. 629. '*Des Persans... portent comme une robe qu'ils appellent Cabaye... Ces toiles seroient à grand marché si les gens de qualité ne changeoient presque tous les jours de robe, parce que ces toiles estant toutes teintes & ne tenant point leur couleur, dès qu'il y tombe une goutte d'eau c'est une tache, & ils auroient honte de porter après leur robe.*'

<sup>45</sup> Jean Chardin, *Voyages de monsieur le chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient* (London: M. Pitt, 1686), Vol. IV, p. 264. '*Ils font aussi de la Toile de coton à très-bon marché; mais ils n'en font pas de fine, parce qu'ils la tirent des Indes à meilleur prix qu'ils ne la pourroient faire... ils savent aussi peindre la Toile, mais non pas si bien qu'aux Indes, parce qu'ils tirent de ces païs-là les plus belles toiles peintes à si bon marché, qu'ils ne gagneroient rien à se perfectionner dans cette Manufacture.*' Known in England as Sir John Chardin, his ten-volume book is highly regarded as a work of early scholarship on Persia and the Levant. A Protestant, he settled in England in 1681 to escape persecution and was knighted by Charles II.

<sup>46</sup> Beverly Lemire & Giorgio Riello, 'East and West: Textiles and Fashion in Eurasia in the Early Modern Period', in *Working Papers of the Global Economic History Network (GEHN)*, 22, (April 2006); Olivier Raveux, *Spaces and Technologies in the Cotton Industry*; E. Homburg, 'From Colour Maker to Chemist: Episodes from the Rise of the Colourist, 1670-1800', in R. Fox & A. Nieto-Galan (eds), *Natural Dyestuffs and Industrial Culture in Europe, 1750-1880* (Canton, Mass.: Watson Publishing, 1999), p. 221, cited in Lemire & Riello, *East and West*, p. 22.



the *dyeing* of plain-coloured cottons and the *painting* of designs were conducted or, if printing was achieved, that it was colour-fast. Therefore, both high-status painted cottons from India's Coromandel Coast and other lower-quality prints from different regions found their way to Marseille. It seems they were all called *indiennes*, but that different products have been confusingly used to prove that good quality colour-fast prints were produced in France before the prohibition. It is an unsubstantiated leap to assume that fabrics created in Marseille mid-century were fair imitations of superior Indian goods.

It must also be emphasised that no evidence indicates the early French imitations were for clothing. Ganteaume was a playing card printer but did not concentrate his activities on *indiennes* after creating his partnership. If, by 1654 when he hired his apprentices, he was printing colour-fast fabric for clothing, it seems that it would have been a runaway success (in view of the *Damoiselle de Toile* engraving of 1681), and he doubtless would have halted his paper-printing activities. It is more feasible that Ganteaume's workshop was aiming to replicate the highly profitable Indian hangings, which did not need to be colour-fast. Indeed, it was stated in the initial partnership that Baviile would produce 'designs of figures' (as opposed to flowers) for bed covers (*vannes*), indicating the intention to produce furnishing fabrics similar to Indian *palampores*.<sup>47</sup> If indeed they had tried to produce clothing fabrics for the mass market in Marseille, it would have been in imitation of the cheaper and poorer-quality Levantine imports which would have been accessible to them. These would have been simple red or blue patterns of repeated small designs, similar to the type shown in Figures 73 to 75, and not large, complex Indian motifs.

A significant price differential between imported Indian cottons and the local wood-block printed imitations equally denotes a difference in quality. The *Compagnie* needed to import better-quality goods because these were the most profitable cargo, and indeed, their high cost was used as a rationale for the permission to print in privilege requests in the early eighteenth century.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, material evidence cannot solve the question of exactly what was being printed in France in the mid-seventeenth century, which has led to suppositions based on colour-fast samples from the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>49</sup> Even at that late date, however, poorly printed French-printed cottons were still being produced, such as

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<sup>47</sup> Cited by Chobaut, *L'Industrie des indiennes à Marseille*, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> For example, that of Baley and Le grand Prieur, discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>49</sup> See the discussion of Wetter's business in Chapter 6.

those from Marseille in 1736 shown in Figure 19.<sup>50</sup> Various techniques were used, but all were very inaccurate. Henri Clouzot described prints in his collection from the mid-1750s as ‘polychrome fabrics of loosely woven Indian cotton’ which were ‘sloppily printed and off-register’. Similarly, samples attached to the *Journal Œconomique* in 1755 show printing in France was still fugitive at that date.<sup>51</sup>

It is likely most of these early products were printed by a ‘jobbing printer’. These individuals worked in all the early European centres of printing, capitalising on the fashion without investing in the full process: they simply stamped or dyed cloths with fugitive colours, sometimes even on old linens and already made-up clothing, to give the impression of an *indienne* to a less discriminating clientele. Floud surmised that many would have been small operations due to the fact they were not near a suitably large source of flowing water, which is essential for the highly water-consuming processes of true cotton printing.<sup>52</sup> As well as having this access, Floud concluded that Sherwin’s ‘secret’ must have been how to suspend the mordants in a gum in order to print from blocks, the missing technical element which could not be learned from the Indian processes, as the Indians painted the mordants on by hand, thus requiring no thickeners. He discovered twenty-nine swatches of English printed cotton reliably dated to 1726 (by the papers found with them) in New York, nearly all of which he was able to identify as colour-fast madder prints, of which they remain the earliest examples.<sup>53</sup> This does not mean that similar prints were produced in France at that date, due to the prohibition. It is curious the French did not steal the secrets of printing from England or Holland, unless those prints, although colour-fast, were considered inferior to Indian goods. A relaxation of the prohibition could not be considered unless fabrics which could imitate the Indian high-class merchandise could be produced. It was a question of pride, as well as economy: it could not be admitted that Western society could learn from undeveloped colonies. This refusal explains why pockets of unapproved experimentation existed in the first half of the eighteenth century, and why,

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<sup>50</sup> BnF, Cabinet des Estampes LH-45-FOL. Collection d’Echantillons d’Étoffes du Maréchal de Richelieu, Tome 1: ‘*Toilles de Coton peintes à Marseille, 1736. Indiennes ou Guinées... Agemis... Indienne St Joseph ou Chiffraconni d’Alep...*’.

<sup>51</sup> BnF 8-S-7546 (18). *Journal œconomique, ou Mémoires, notes et avis sur les arts, l’agriculture, le commerce...*, Juin 1755 (Paris: chez Antoine Boudet, 1755). Six small samples inserted in the Journal illustrate an article on a ‘manufacture de toiles’ established in the Arsenal of Paris.

<sup>52</sup> House of Lords MSS, April 4, 1696, in *Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports*, House of Lords MSS, New Série, Vol. II (1903), Section 1050, p. 242, cited in Floud, *The Origins of English Calico Printing*, p. 278. This petition to the House of Lords by fifty London printers in 1696, to protect their interests against the demand for prohibition in England by the silk and woollen industries there at that time, lists their premises in locations which lacked a suitable water supply according to Floud.

<sup>53</sup> The Alexander Papers, in the collection of the New York Historical Society.

realising their technical backwardness within Europe, French emissaries were sent to discover the secrets of Indian techniques.

### **French Envoys to India**

The separate discoveries of four manuscripts over the course of the twentieth century written by French envoys completely changed European understanding of textile production in India, particularly highlighting the differences between painting and printing on textiles. As they were not found in the chronological order they were written, each uncovering revised the previous knowledge of early techniques on the sub-continent. As mentioned in the first chapter, these were allegedly ‘secret’ missions to report on Indian methods by the *Compagnie*’s officers Roques (1678) and, much later, Beaulieu (1734), and the Jesuit priest Coeurdoux (1742 and 1747). Only a synopsis of the writings of the emissaries and a summary of the processes they described will be provided, each having been amply analysed by Paul-Raymond Schwartz, based upon his scientific experience, and related to the European context by John Irwin.<sup>54</sup> Here, the assessments of these eminent experts is not challenged, but the use of their findings by authors since to deduce the printing processes in France during the prohibition, will be analysed.<sup>55</sup>

Firstly, the notion must be dispelled that the envoys were conducting ‘espionage’, as their missions are usually described. None were agents of the government, which would have been inconceivable, as all but the first manuscript by Georges Roques date from the period of prohibition.<sup>56</sup> Beaulieu’s report actually had a different sponsor, as will be discussed. Finally, the letters written by Father Coeurdoux were to inform his superiors in the Church. Their differing interests defined the type of information which was gathered. Prior to the prohibition, the commercial exploits of the *Compagnie* had led it to recognise the value which could be added to its white cotton imports by having them printed in France, not least from observing the activities of other East India Companies. Its desire to continue the techniques in the first few years of the prohibition, in order to print the cargoes

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<sup>54</sup> See Irwin & Schwartz, *Studies in Indo-European Textile History*, and the other articles by Schwartz which are cited throughout this study.

<sup>55</sup> There may, of course, have been other European envoys whose documents have been lost. The only other account of the Indian processes as early as Roques which has been discovered is that of Daniel Havart, an officer of the Dutch East India Company, written in 1680, but not published until 1690. This will not be analysed here due to the concentration of this study on French technical developments. However, if the Dutch were equally interested in copying the techniques at that date, it again challenges the assertion Armenians had introduced quality printing to the workshop established in Amersfoort, near Utrecht, in 1678.

<sup>56</sup> Georges Roques, *La manière de négocier aux Indes, (1676-1691): la Compagnie des Indes et l’art du commerce*, Valérie Bérinstain (ed.), (Paris: École française d’Extrême Orient: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1996).

which were on route, resulted in requests for exemptions. That these were granted confirms that at least some approved workshops did not destroy their equipment, and continued printing after the ban. In this context, of sourcing new supplies for its trade, the *Compagnie* was interested in the quality of the textiles of different regions and in the techniques themselves. It has not been commented upon that the emissaries were observing techniques in completely different areas of the sub-continent, which is of particular importance to this study.

There was little need for secrecy for any of the writers. Roques was writing before the ban. Beaulieu could have openly conducted his research in India within the French-run areas, given the comparative isolation of the different European factories. There is no suggestion of a covert commission in his report, and anyway, the other nations who had already perfected their techniques would not have regarded the much smaller French operations in India as a threat to their own commerce. Coeurdoux's letters described textile production with many other 'curiosities' of the sub-continent, with no suggestion of any other motive than the 'edification' of his readership.<sup>57</sup> This he intended to be a small circle within the Church, not knowing his superior would publish them, and he was not conducting his observations for their potential commercial advantage, as Beaulieu had been commissioned to do. The processes described in Coeurdoux's letters will not be discussed here, as Schwartz decided they contained several inconsistencies and important omissions, such as one of the madder baths.<sup>58</sup> In addition, Beaulieu had a craftsman perform the stages in front of him, and took samples as described, whereas Coeurdoux only questioned the artisans on their techniques.

The 330-page Roques Manuscript is an account of cotton printing techniques in the city of Ahmedabad which is even older than the 1734 report of Antoine de Beaulieu. It was analysed by Schwartz, whose expert evaluation is used here.<sup>59</sup> Georges Roques was an agent of the *Compagnie* who was commissioned in 1676 to tour Gujarat to find sources of quality textiles and supervise their organisation for shipment to France. From his competent observations it is believed he had worked as a textile merchant. His report was dedicated to the *Compagnie's Directeur-général* and to his own colleagues, and was therefore intended

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<sup>57</sup> *Compagnie de Jésus, Lettres édifiantes et curieuses écrites des missions étrangères par quelques missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus* (Paris: Chez Marc Bordelet, 1743).

<sup>58</sup> Coeurdoux's letters are analysed for their technical accuracy in P.-R. Schwartz in 'French Documents on Indian Cotton Painting, II: New Light on Old Material', *Journal of Indian Textile History*, 3 (1957), pp. 15-44.

<sup>59</sup> P.-R. Schwartz, 'L'Impression sur coton à Ahmedabad (Inde) en 1678', in *Bulletin de la Société Industrielle de Mulhouse*, 1, no. 726, (1967), pp. 9-25.

for open circulation, unlike those which would follow, because in 1678 the prohibition had not yet been pronounced. However, the report did not reach France before 1694, and despite being composed for another purpose, its arrival after the imposition of the ban may have made it particularly useful to the *Compagnie*, which was still attempting to have its plain cotton imports printed in the 1690s.<sup>60</sup>

During the reign of the Mughal Emperors, Ahmedabad was the seat of government for the Gujarat region of north-western India, and a thriving centre of the trade in textiles, many of which were exported to the Levant and from there to Europe.<sup>61</sup> The importance of the Roques Manuscript was not only that it illustrated the early techniques practiced in a different area of India far from the Coromandel Coast, but particularly because it described the techniques of *printing* on cotton. Even though Roques freely interchanged the names of the two methods and referred to the artisan printers as ‘painters’, there is no possibility that he was describing *painting*, as there is no mention of the application of colour with a pen at all (*pinceautage*), as Beaulieu and Coeurdoux later described. Moreover, Roques entitled the third section of his treatise, ‘On the manner in which the cloth is prepared for printing’.<sup>62</sup> By documenting wood-block printing using thickened mordants, his writings definitively contradicted many later European authors’ pronouncements on the absence of printing technology in India, although that was correct on the Coromandel Coast.<sup>63</sup>

In this period before the interdiction of printing cotton in France, it is likely that the French were investigating new sources for *toiles peintes* due to the competition from the other Europeans along the south-western Indian coast. The English, the Dutch and the Danish, whose factories were long-established before the arrival of the French, monopolised trade in those regions and every incursion by the French was hard won. In the north-east, the coastal city of Surat had been an English possession since 1612, which

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<sup>60</sup> This date has been attributed to the manuscript due to Roques’ travels to Sironj that year. After requesting permission to return home, he died on board ship in 1693. The *mémoire* could not have arrived in France before 1694. It is curious that Roques was given such powers, negotiating on behalf of the *Compagnie* for such a large and important component of its cargoes, as he had a colourful past. While a merchant and accountant for the *Compagnie* in Île Dauphine (modern-day Madagascar) he was accused of stealing 3,000 livres, but after giving the *Sécretaire de la Compagnie* ‘an expensive diamond and other things’, his prosecution was halted, and he remained in service and was sent to work in India. In Ahmedabad he was involved in a long-running dispute in 1683 with a local broker which required the Governor, François Martin, to intervene personally and reprimand Roques. Nonetheless, he was considered a talented and conscientious employee and by 1686 was second in command in the Surat *comptoir*. His experience in textiles is demonstrated by comments in the manuscript on the manner Lyon merchants conducted their business in other European countries. Roques, *La manière de négocier aux Indes*, p. 15-18.

<sup>61</sup> Valérie Bérinstain, *L’Inde impériale des grands Moghols* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

<sup>62</sup> Roques, *La manière de négocier aux Indes*, pp. 106-108: ‘De la manière dont on dispose la toile pour recevoir l’impression des couleurs.’

<sup>63</sup> For example, Baker, *Calico Painting and Printing in the East Indies*.

would explain why Roques based himself in Ahmedabad to the north, and then headed inland for over six months to investigate the commercial possibilities for the *Compagnie* of the products from the area around the town of Sironj. He made a no less detailed account of the processes he observed than Beaulieu would later do on the south-east coast, but with less understanding of how dyes and pigments were made. Schwartz assessed his notes as purely a list of the ingredients used, rather than how to employ them, and concluded that the observations were not entirely accurate.<sup>64</sup> Some five-colour prints on finer cotton (*pancheranguis*) were produced, but the majority were two-coloured prints on rough fabric (*jafracanis*). He observed that the blocks for these were roughly carved and the same block was used for each colour, making the design less accurate.

It is also significant that while Roques described the technical processes, his aim was primarily to advise his superiors on how best to ensure the prints commissioned by the *Compagnie* were executed well. This was a commercial imperative aimed at satisfying their customers' preferences, rather than the beginning of imitating the processes in France, as has been constantly presumed. To this end, Roques instructed that constant verification of the work was needed. Overall, he found the artisans in the hinterland 'untrustworthy' and returned to Ahmedabad, suggesting that the secrets of the processes themselves were less important than assuring quality control. He was a concerned purchasing agent rather than an industrial spy.

Roques' discoveries of the ingredients and processes which were of importance to the success of printing included the use of iron mordants, specifically, that a gum was used to thicken the mordants and dyes alike, enabling them to adhere to the wood blocks for printing. He also deduced that the qualities of the water in the region of Ahmedabad were important to the success of the printing, without knowing it was the high calcium content which gave stability to red dyes. This is a surprisingly early observation, and one which was missed by all those who essayed to uncover the secrets in the period of the prohibition.

While Roques' manuscript detailed the printing process, it is the Beaulieu manuscript on which current understanding of the techniques used in India in the eighteenth century has been based.<sup>65</sup> Its importance is not only Beaulieu's meticulous notation of every process of dyeing and painting the cotton, but that samples taken after each process were

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<sup>64</sup> Schwartz, *L'impression sur coton à Ahmedabad*, p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> Schwartz, *French Documents on Indian Cotton Painting*, I, pp. 5-23. While his technical evaluation is invaluable, it is extremely curious that in this article Schwartz describes his 'discovery' of the 'previously unknown' Beaulieu MS in a Paris museum, when Depitre mentioned it in 1912, a book Schwartz was familiar with. See Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 5.

attached to the manuscript, giving a thorough indication of the techniques at that time. It is often repeated that Beaulieu was sent on his fact-finding mission by his employers, but according to the Chevalier de Quérelles, the author of a 1760 treatise on the production of *toiles peintes* in India, Beaulieu's report was commissioned by Charles-François de Cisternai du Fay, a noted chemist and *directeur* of the *Académie royale des Sciences* between 1733 and 1738, who was actively researching in the field at the time Beaulieu undertook his mission.<sup>66</sup> The sponsor of the report was interested in replicating fine-quality painted fabrics, and du Fay's interest in this area will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Beaulieu's description of the techniques was condensed by Schwartz into nine different stages, each comprising numerous individual processes, some of which are shown in Figures 76 to 79. It provides details of ingredients and methods unique to Beaulieu's observation. The production of *toiles peintes* consisted of many individual stages: of applying solutions which would react to the dyestuffs and produce different colours; then covering certain areas with resists; washing with astringents; and repeating the dyeing process until all the desired colours had been obtained. Beaulieu deliberately described the most complex cloth with the greatest possible number of colours. Perhaps this is proof that it was intended for study by du Fay, as there were many cloths in India produced with fewer colours in a faster process. To say this method was a labour-intensive process would be an understatement, and it is fully comprehensible that Europeans would try to simplify and speed up this *painting* process by stamping out the designs with wood blocks, based on their knowledge of paper (but not textile) printing. Beaulieu described 18 washing processes during the production (as well as many saturations in different solutions), underlining the pivotal importance of a plentiful supply of running water to the Indian technique.

An inherent problem in the transfer of technology from Pondicherry was that while the Europeans may have copied the dyes and even the methods of the Indians, they were observing *dyeing* and *painting* and assumed similar techniques could be used for *printing*, as long as the ingredients could be replicated. Significantly, unlike Roques in Gujarat, at no point in Beaulieu's account is there a suggestion of wood-block printing at his location, and indeed, the pounced outline was the only repetitive element, and this would have disappeared in washing. The development of suitable gums could not therefore be copied

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<sup>66</sup> On the Chevalier de Quérelles, see Chapter 8, n. 7.

by the French from the Indian *painting* process, where they were not required. Recent scholars have ignored that Beaulieu could not impart *printing* techniques.

In conclusion, Roques and Tavernier, both writing in the 1670s, differentiated between the fine hand-painted cottons produced on the south-east coast which were exported to Persia, and the poorer-quality and simpler prints produced in Gujarat itself.<sup>67</sup> That different sorts of goods were bought for trade with Persia and Turkey again lends credence to the premise that the technical knowledge imparted by the Armenians in Marseille, rather than being how to imitate Coromandel *toiles peintes*, is more likely to have been the secrets of how to replicate the unsophisticated wood-block prints from the Gujarat region. That the French were studying the expert dyeing and painting processes in south-east India indicates their desire to produce high-quality goods, as has been noted, but it has been taken to deduce that they already knew of a way of printing with the same dyes (in other words, that a viscous suspension was needed) and that the aim was just to improve the printed product. This point has consistently been overlooked in recent writing on the transfer of the technology to Europe: that is, to clarify why hand-painting techniques would have been investigated in order to produce *printed* copies. This is illogical, as the knowledge was not needed to add value to pre-printed cottons. In other words, if the French knew how to print they could easily apply the same dyestuffs by hand (*pinceautage*), as was later done in the proto-factories which followed the ban's repeal. Secondly, as there is no record of any other attempts to copy the *painting* process in Europe, it was the ingredients and the order of their application for printing which were of specific interest, as this was where the secret was thought to lie. In fact, other components were key to making the prints colour-fast, many of them due to the climate and geological features in India which have been discussed.

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<sup>67</sup> Schwartz, *L'impression sur coton à Ahmedabad*, p. 12. n. 43.



## CHAPTER 5

### Contraband & Counterfeiting

The reasons for the prohibition have been shown firstly, in Chapter 1, to be a protectionist measure for the existing textile industries at a time of instability in the nation, and its resulting effect on commerce; and secondly, in Chapter 2, to have included the intense competition between the entrepreneurial interests of the *Compagnie des Indes* and the entrenched policies of those directing the *Conseil de Commerce*. These contentious factors exacerbated the State's inability to apply the law effectively, as has been observed in Chapter 3, and indeed the volume of legislation itself appears to have made the commodity more desirable. This chapter will examine how the demand for *toiles peintes* was fulfilled by contraband; the criminal activity this engendered; and the possibility that the government's very inflexibility was elemental to the continued flouting of its laws.

The importance of eliminating contraband activity cannot be underestimated. More than just a major loss of revenue, it was an important issue in the *ancien régime* on many levels: nationally, it represented the power of the State to control its borders and protect commerce; locally, it was essential to subdue as a potential source of insubordination and discontent; and on a personal level it affected the lives of the population, specifically their comforts. Clothing was a particularly personal category to declare illegal, and in the case of *indiennes* could represent a necessity, a fashion or even a forbidden pleasure for its owners. It may seem curious that printed fabrics could be as interesting to traffic as wines and spirits, or forbidden religious texts, but the long prohibition ensured they were equally as profitable.

Fraud and circumvention of the law were a way of life for a population needing to supplement its income in times of excessive taxation and monetary devaluation, and the ruin of people of private means led them into illegal activities just often as the poor. With customs tariffs unequal across the country there were opportunities for smuggling from province to province as well as across national borders, and *indiennes* were a particularly lucrative contraband product. The vast borders were virtually impossible to police and the soldiers who guarded the key crossing places were often complicit. Sometimes unpaid for long periods, they doubtless thought of the smugglers' bribes as a fair supplement to their incomes. False-bottomed carts and hiding goods about the person were the favoured methods, but more serious than these individual infractions were the armed bands of organised smugglers who operated in many regions, mainly at night. In his 1965 study of

the personal correspondence of the *Lieutenant-général de police* d'Argenson, Jacques Saint-Germain recounts the case of the 'grand fraudsters' Regnault and his son, who ran an group of armed bandits between Bar-le-Duc and Paris, a journey which took ten or twelve nights, and who were arrested and imprisoned for the possession of the relatively minor amount of 300 aunes of fabric.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Saint-Germain postulated that these were not imported prints, but plain cottons destined to be clandestinely printed in Paris, in one of the areas protected from government jurisdiction. Doubtless Regnault and his band were denounced by an informant, as there were rich rewards of one-third (or in some cases, up to two-thirds) of the eventual sale of the impounded goods for those who informed on perpetrators.

Having failed to halt the contraband trade using blanket legislation, the government began to target specific perpetrators with great zeal, hoping to engender fear in the population by example. The most extreme penalties were reserved for these organised bands of smugglers, who faced 'death and the confiscation of goods' if they were caught.<sup>2</sup> Although one might assume the latter barely mattered if the former was enacted, it would affect the dependants of the condemned smugglers. The gangs were particularly vigorously pursued by the *Maréchaussée*, the small cavalry brigades charged with protecting the King's highways, so vital to communication, and armed smugglers they arrested were indeed hanged upon conviction.<sup>3</sup> Smaller groups of male unarmed bandits faced five years in the galleys and a fine of up to 1,000 livres, while women were condemned to be whipped, branded and banished for three years, and 'detained for life in a hospital or prison' if they repeated the crime.<sup>4</sup> Anyone who aided smugglers by providing horses, carts, boats or shelter could be similarly severely punished, while those who carried the illegal textiles could have their carriage or cart impounded and an immediate fine of 300

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Jacques Saint-Germain, *La Vie Quotidienne en France à la fin du Grand Siècle, d'après les archives, en partie inédites, du Lieutenant Général de Police Marc-René d'Argenson* (Paris: Hachette, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> B.A. 151a. '*Declaration du Roy, Qui établit des peines contre les Contrebandiers, donnée à Versailles le 2 Aoust 1729, Article Premier.*' '*Ceux qui seront convaincus d'avoir porté du Tabac, Toiles peintes & autre marchandises prohibées, en contrebande ou en fraude, par attroupement au nombre de cinq au moins, avec port d'armes, seront punis de mort, & leurs biens confisqués... S'ils sont sans armes & au dessous de nombre de cinq, ils seront condamnés aux Galères pour cinq ans, & en Mille livres d'amende chacun, payable solidairement.*' This declaration was not the first to define the penalties for smuggling *toiles peintes*, but was a particularly forceful pronouncement of the sentences, with 10 articles outlining all the penalties.

<sup>3</sup> BnF Archives de la Bastille, 10714-10726, *Contrebandiers*, provides examples of armed smugglers hanged for their crimes between 1720 and 1728.

<sup>4</sup> B.A. 151a. '*Declaration du Roy, Qui établit des peines contre les Contrebandiers, Article VI.*' '*Voulons que les femmes qui se trouvent dans l'un des cas cy-dessus marquez, soient condamnées au foüet, à la fleur-de-Lys, au bannissement pour trois ans... & en cas de recedive... à estre renfermées leur vie dans l'Hôpital, ou Maison de force.*'

livres imposed, which was enough to make the public carter think carefully about his cargo.<sup>5</sup> Illegal activity was also clearly rife even among those paid to police it: the officers of the *Fermes-générales* who took part in the trade in any way also faced execution.<sup>6</sup>

*Indiennes* were never the major category of merchandise trafficked, but as they began to be a noticeable part of the loot confiscated from arrested gangs the category of prohibited printed fabrics was systematically added in contraband descriptions alongside the two other long-standing aggravations for customs officials: salt and tobacco smuggling. In France salt tax avoidance (*faux-saunage*) was the most grievous border problem. The value of salt cannot be underestimated: its use in drying fish and preserving meat was invaluable. In France its production had been a royal monopoly since the fourteenth century, the tax on which, the *gabelle*, was an important part of the Crown's income and therefore jealously protected. The despised *gabelle* was characteristically applied unevenly across the regional divisions of the *Cinq Grosses Fermes*, engendering a mosaic of different systems, allowances, levels of tax and exemptions.<sup>7</sup> (Figures 80 and 81.)

As the result of the imbalance in tax from one province to another, the *gabelle* could be as much as a hundred times higher on one side of a river to another, making trafficking in it a lucrative trade. The edicts and rulings against salt smugglers (*faux-sauniers*) were as abundant, perhaps even more frequent, than those against *toiles peintes* and had always been severely punished by floggings and brandings or sentencing to the galleys. Therefore, adding *indiennes* to the same category as salt- and tobacco-running shows the seriousness of the activity. It also shows that smuggling took place across internal boundaries, significantly multiplying its incidence, and providing a network for moving the forbidden fabrics within the country.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> B.A. 151b. 'Déclaration du Roy, Qui établit des peines contre les Contrebandiers, donnée à Marly le 27 Janvier 1733, Articles II & IV.' 'Ceux qui seront convaincus d'avoir escorté des chevaux, voitures & bateaux seront punis de mort... Défendons aux Cabaretiers, Fermiers & autres gens de la Campagne, de donner retraite aux Contrebandiers ou à leurs merchandise.' The document reduced the number considered to be a gang to three or more, showing that not only were the penalties reiterated, as with all the prohibition measures, but were increased in severity as a deterrent.

<sup>6</sup> B.A. 151a. 'Déclaration du Roy, Qui établit des peines contre les Contrebandiers, donnée à Versailles le 2 Aoust 1729, Article II.' 'Les Commis & Employez de nos Fermes qui seront d'intelligence avec les Fraudeurs & Contrebandiers, & favoriseront leur passage, seront punis de mort.'

<sup>7</sup> The *Cinq Grosses Fermes* were the regional divisions of fiscal administration. As a result of the many treaties required to bring different provinces into France over several hundred years, each retained its ancient privileges. The tax on salt in particular varied from zone to zone. See Jules Le Fizelier, *La Gabelle dans le Maine et l'Anjou (1515-1789)* (Laval, Mayenne: L. Moreau, 1869).

<sup>8</sup> André Ferrer, *Tabac, sel, indiennes: douane et contrebande en Franche-Comté au XVIIIe siècle* (Besançon: Presses Universitaires Franc-Comtoises, 2002).

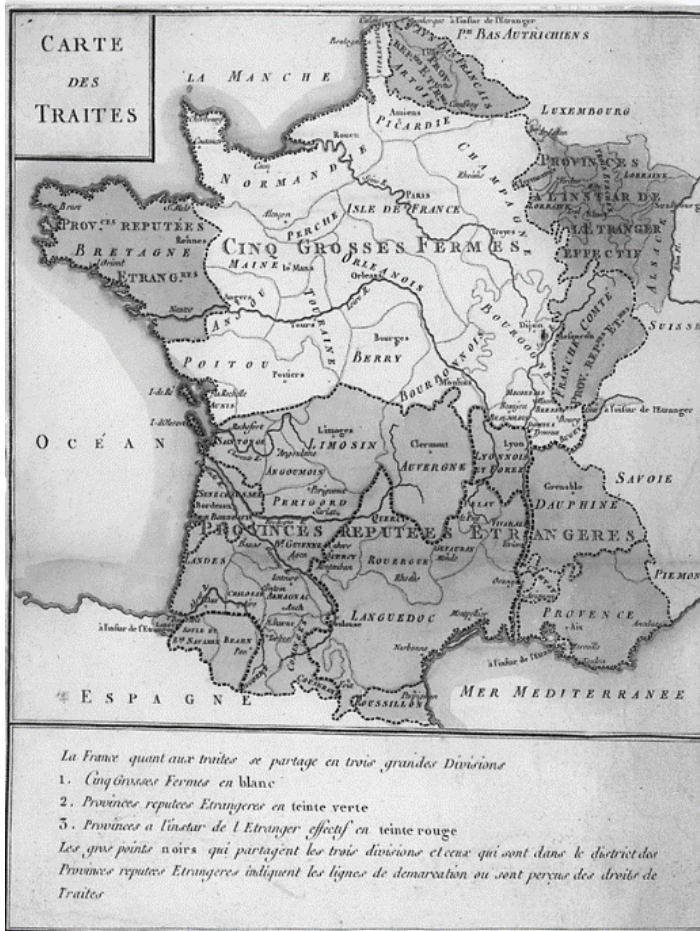


Fig. 80. (Left) A map of the main tax divisions in 1732 shows the *Cinq Grosses Fermes* in the centre, and the many other territories with different tariffs based on ancient rights. Fig. 81. (Below) Additional districts existed for the *Gabelle* customs duties, further complicating tax collection and encouraging smuggling.



Taxes on tobacco made it a long-standing item of contraband in most countries. Long-established routes in France provisioned most of the country, abetted by the overlapping jurisdictions of provincial and state customs which led to ineffective border control.<sup>9</sup> As with *indiennes*, individual acts of leniency undermined the intention of enforcement. In a swoop in 1721, a merchant found with 7,980 livres of tobacco was only fined 100 l., an amount decidedly lower than in other provinces.<sup>10</sup> Small-scale individual smugglers, on the other hand, were relatively harshly dealt with by confiscation of their carts and horses. In 1729 a Royal Declaration repeated the death penalty for smuggling ‘*toiles peintes*, salt and other prohibited merchandise’ by armed organised gangs of five persons or more, and assigned severe punishments for those who sheltered smugglers.<sup>11</sup> Notably, *toiles peintes* were the first of the contraband goods listed, suggesting their importance in the trade. The death penalty was also added in 1733 for customs employees who provided intelligence. By that date smuggling was on such a scale that the *Contrôleur-général* Orry declared the government’s inability to control it: ‘the fraudsters gather in gangs which outnumber our brigades... but disperse equally quickly and it is rare we can catch them with the goods’.<sup>12</sup> Organised crime overran areas like the Vivarais, the Dauphiné and the Languedoc, with vast smuggling networks along the coasts and rivers that seriously affected provincial revenues. Jean Regné found evidence that 77 men were hung, 57 were subjected to torture and 631 were condemned to the galleys in the Vivarais region for smuggling in the fifty year period from 1730 to 1780.<sup>13</sup> Crimes of smuggling *toiles peintes* were camouflaged in the prosecutions by other goods.

The relevance of these other contraband commodities to this study is that *toiles peintes* were a lucrative addition to a long-established illegal trade. Dealers in any of the three commodities were pursued by the ‘salt brigades’ (*brigades des salines*), who were on the lookout for all kinds of prohibited merchandise. In July 1723, while patrolling for salt-smugglers, they seized six pieces of imported muslin (*mousselines étrangères*) in a cart arriving in Besançon and burned it in the public square. The owner was condemned to a 3,000 l. fine, indicating that the crime of dealing in *indiennes* was considered equally as serious as salt and tobacco. It was, however, perhaps less rigorously pursued: in April 1726

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<sup>9</sup> Olivier Caporossi, *Douanes et contrebandes dans les Pyrénées occidentales du XVIe au XXe siècle* (Pau: Marrimpouey, 2010), p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Ferrer, *Tabac, sel, indiennes*, p. 280.

<sup>11</sup> B.A. 151. ‘*Déclaration du Roy qui Etablit les peines contre les Contrebandiers, 3 aoust, 1729,*’

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Albert Laot, *Contrebande et surveillance des côtes bretonnes* (Spézet: Coop Breizh, 2009), p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> Jean Regné, *La contrebande en Vivarais au dix-huitième siècle* (Aubenas: Habauzit, 1915).

the *Contrôleur-général* Dodun chastised the *Intendant* de la Neuville, saying he had ‘occupied himself with tobacco, but little with [the contraband] cloths,’ reminding him to implement his orders and provide a report every three months to show he had done so.<sup>14</sup>

### **Increases in covert printing**

As well as cross-border smuggling, the second source of contraband was the illicit printing workshops which had sprung up to meet the demand for *toiles peintes* once the Asian source had been severely curtailed. After the initial instructions for printers to break their blocks in 1686, there were no further measures taken against French printers until 1709, suggesting they had either ceased activity or, more likely, gone successfully ‘underground’. The increasing requests for searches of the protected enclaves supports this idea. A Royal Order of 1708 on this subject is the first to specifically mention counterfeit manufacture within the kingdom:

Many individuals continue this bad business in contravention of the law... favoured by the asylum offered to culprits in the so-called privileged enclaves, like the Temple enclosure and that of [many religious houses].<sup>15</sup>

Such was the suspected extent of the abuse of these establishments’ privileges that a special commissioner, Jean Tisserand de Luxemont, the *Capitaine-général de fermes de Paris*, was appointed by the *Conseil de Commerce* to search and stamp out the illegal production and trade in *indiennes* in 1708.<sup>16</sup> This was perhaps the most rigorous clampdown yet, and the heads of religious orders and protected areas were instructed to co-operate with the searches. Tisserand was known to ‘specialise in pursuing fraudsters’ and, as he was accompanied by armed guards, he was not afraid to go into the religious enclosures or private abodes if an informer provided evidence. As the order was to be trumpeted around Paris this may have hindered his element of surprise, but he set about making an immediate example of the contravenors he found, burning the printer Faillard’s

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<sup>14</sup> Ferrer, *Tabac, sel, indiennes*, p. 192.

<sup>15</sup> B.A. 1225, 342. ‘*Ordre du Roy, Donné à Versailles, 7 février, 1708.*’ This document is the first to specifically mention counterfeit manufacture within France as well as from ‘foreign countries’. ‘*Plusieurs Particuliers continuënt ce mauvais commerce... Laquelle contravention est particulièrement favorisée par l’asile que trouvent les contrevenans dans les lieux pretendus privilegiez, comme l’enclos du Temple, celui de S. Jean de Latran, l’Abbaye Saint Germain des Prez, les Cloistres, Maisons Religieuses, Hôpitaux, Colleges, & autres Maisons particulières...*’.

<sup>16</sup> As early as 1704 d’Argenson had asked the *Contrôleur-général* for a commission for Luxemont, and in 1705 he is mentioned as having seized goods in Saint-Jean-de-Latran, where he was attacked by a crowd stirred into rioting by a priest, but widespread access to the other privileged areas was not granted until 1708. See Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. II, articles 641 and 908, and the discussion of privileged locations in Chapter 6.

*toiles peintes* in front of the main entrance to the Temple enclosure.<sup>17</sup> He even had permission to search the royal residences, suggesting that members of the Court were equally as implicated in the counterfeit trade as the *marchands merciers* mentioned in 1693.

However successful Tisserand was, the policing of contraventions required constant effort. In July 1708, d'Argenson wrote to the Abbot of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, threatening the Benedictine order with banishment from Paris if it did not halt the open trade in *indiennes* conducted from its enclosure by the merchant Pelet; thanks to this and other enforcements, another 1,300 aunes of fabrics were seized in Paris between August and November of that year.<sup>18</sup> Tisserand's travails continued for a long time. In a typical incident in 1718, after being tipped off that Demoiselle Lefevre, a boutique owner, was conducting a business in *toiles peintes*, he caught her red-handed in her basement overlooking the river, displaying her fabrics to a client.<sup>19</sup> Another lady on horseback, when challenged to open her bag, said 'Sir, to search my bag you will need a judge', suggesting that knowledge of the limitations of the law was widespread.<sup>20</sup>

Overall, however, while the language of the laws grew more severe at this period, the repression in general did not. Away from Paris, there was little motivation for many provincial officers to implement it. In the *Conseil*, the *deputés* lamented the State's inability to enforce the prohibition, blaming this mainly on the interests of the *Compagnie*, and the favoured status of Marseille. As long as this dispensation existed, they noted, 'we cannot hope to prevent *toiles peintes* entering the kingdom'.<sup>21</sup> Despite these calls, *Contrôleur-général* Chamillart refused to extend the 1706 law imposing a twenty per cent duty on Levantine goods via Marseille into a total ban (the trade was just too lucrative, and essential for France's largest port city), insisting that it was not further legislation which was needed, but better application of the laws by the provincial *Intendants*.<sup>22</sup> A list of the

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<sup>17</sup> Saint-Germain, *La Vie Quotidienne*, p.157.

<sup>18</sup> A.N. G7, 1725. 'Lettre de M. d'Argenson, 17 juillet 1708.'

<sup>19</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Arrest sur la confiscation des Toiles Peintes saisies chez la Delle. Lefevre, Lingère, 7 décembre 1718.' 'Ayant en avis que la dlle. Lefevre, marchande lingère, faisois Commerce de Toilles Peintes, dont elle avais un depost considerable dans sa maison, ils s'y seroient transportez, et auroient trouvé dans une salle basse donnant sur la Rivière la dlle. Lefevre tenant dans ses mains des Toilles peintes en piece, dont une partie estoient etenduës sur les planches, quelle faisois voir a vue.'

<sup>20</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. One of several undated papers hand-tied together and marked 'contrebande'. 'Sire, pour chercher ma valise il vous faudra un juge.'

<sup>21</sup> A.N. G7, 1687. 'Messieurs les Députés de Commerce au Contrôleur-général, 4 novembre, 1708.' 'On ne doit pas espérer de pouvoir empêcher que les toiles peintes entrent dans le Royaume.'

<sup>22</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. III, no. 123. 'Lettre de M. Chamillart, Contrôleur-général aux Intendants, 17 décembre, 1708.'

goods which were subject to duty shows that not only printed cottons were entering by Marseille, but also white cotton goods, raw cotton and ingredients for the printing process.<sup>23</sup> These could quickly penetrate the rest of the kingdom, either by land or by sea: it proved impossible to stop French merchants, who were encouraged by the State to purchase all sorts of other Levantine merchandise from Marseille, from buying cotton goods at the same time.

In 1708, Chamillart's successor as *Contrôleur-général*, Nicolas Desmaretz, inherited a parlous financial situation due to a continuing war and the disastrous climatic conditions which did not abate. In January 1709 a wave of freezing weather brought such extreme conditions to the country, it is estimated 115,000 people died, or 60 per cent more than normal. The *Conseil de Commerce* again ordered the eradication of *toiles peintes*, but the roads that winter were impassable and the conditions impractical for the scrutiny demanded. Mesnager, the *deputé* for Rouen, reported to the *Contrôleur-général* from Gravelines in January 1709:

The abundant snow which fills the roads did not permit me to arrive in this town until yesterday, and then not without a great deal of difficulty and danger... but I will get out of my chair tomorrow and try to get to Dunkirk on horseback.<sup>24</sup>

Torrential rains then prevented further sowing, leading to what became known as the Great Famine. This brought a drop in the consumption of clothing which badly affected the *anciennes manufactures*, and their hardship provoked a revival of the demands for aid through restrictions on the perceived competition. *Toiles peintes*, they said, were one of the causes of the troubles which had befallen France. Le Chéron, the *Inspecteur des manufactures* for Rouen wrote to the *Contrôleur-général*:

I take the liberty of reminding Your Excellence that it is not only the high price of bread and the scarcity of money which have caused our manufactures to almost perish; it comes about as well because women, who formerly wore their products, now dress almost exclusively in *toiles peintes*;

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<sup>23</sup> B.A. 377. The banned fabrics included five types of *indiennes*, as well as 'Indians from Persia and kerchiefs from Aleppo' (*indiennes de Perse et Mouchoirs d'Alep*), again showing the variety of opinions on provenance. Most grades of raw and spun cotton, although not all, could enter if the duty was paid. Thirty types from the Levant were exempt. Many of the exotic plant dyestuffs and mordants mentioned in Chapter 4 were permitted to enter.

<sup>24</sup> A.N. G7, 1694. 'Mesnager au Contrôleur-général, de Gravelines, 2 janvier 1709.' 'L'abondance des neiges qui comblent les chemins ne m'a pas permis d'arriver en cette ville plustot que le jour d'hier, ce n'a pas été sans beaucoup de peine et de peril... je quitteray demain ma chaise pour essayer de me rendre a Dunkerque a cheval.'



and what encourages them is that people of quality, those who should know better, are those who wear them the most.’<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, the *députés* lobbied the King directly, asking him to cut off the source of the craze by forbidding the fashionable ladies of the Court to wear prints, because they set a bad example.<sup>26</sup> Le Chéron grumbled in dismay that so popular were these costly outfits that Rouen *indienneurs* were imitating the colourful prints with cheap and quickly-made copies in ‘blue and red flowers and other patterns.’<sup>27</sup> The lobbying resulted in a ruling against a planned project to establish ‘a workshop for cloth, painted or printed’ at Rouen, one of the first references to legal attempts to start an industry.<sup>28</sup>

In Lyon, the silk workers complained bitterly of the quantities of Indian fabrics in the shops:

Today we see the fair sex only dressed in *furies*, Indian satin, *toiles peintes*, *karancas*, *indiennes* and other foreign stuffs... the name *furies* has been given to these cloths is because of the fury with which ladies indiscriminately dress in them, in disregard of his Majesty’s laws.<sup>29</sup>

It was not only the fashionable who were to be deprived. Mademoiselle de Fleury appealed to the *Contrôleur-général* to be allowed to wear her dresses of *toiles peintes* as they were ‘her only clothing’.<sup>30</sup> This indicates it was becoming possible for more women to afford a dress, if it was made in either locally produced or smuggled European fabrics. Social commentators began to denounce the ‘violence inflicted on poor women wearing prints’, arguing that the legislation should focus instead on wealthier people who could afford other clothes. The banned fabrics had by then achieved the status of *cause célèbre*.

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<sup>25</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondence des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. III, article 395, n.3. ‘Je prends la liberté de remontrer à Votre Grandeur que ce n’est pas seulement la grande cherté du pain et la rareté de l’argent qui sont cause que nos manufactures sont presque entièrement tombées; cela vient aussi de ce que les femmes qui s’habilloient ci-devant des étoffes de ces manufactures ne s’habillent presque plus aujourd’hui que de toiles peintes; et ce qui les autorise encore davantage, c’est que les personnes de qualité, et même ceux qui devroient, par leur exemple, l’empêcher, sont ceux qui en portent le plus.’ See also Chapter 4, n. 15.

<sup>26</sup> A.N. F12, 54. Cited in Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 70.

<sup>27</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondence des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. III, article 395, n.3. ‘Le peuple, qui, non content de porter des toiles peintes, s’est avisé de faire teindre des toiles en bleu et en rouge, sur icelles ils font des fleurs et autres figures.’

<sup>28</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondence des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. III, article 395, n.3. ‘Le même jour, l’intendant, M. de Richebourg... transmet une délibération prise par les syndic du commerce de Normandie contre le projet d’établissement d’une fabrique de toiles peintes ou imprimées à Rouen.’

<sup>29</sup> A.N. G7, 436. ‘On ne voit aujourd’hui le sexe revêtu que de furies, satins des Indes, toiles peintes, Karancas, indiennes et autres étoffes étrangères et l’on pourrait dire avec quelque espèce de raison que le nom de furies n’a été donné à ces sortes d’étoffes que par la fureur que toutes les dames indistinctement ont eue de s’en habiller au préjudice des défenses de Sa Majesté, 26 octobre, 1709.’

<sup>30</sup> A.N. G7, 1728. ‘Lettre à Monseigneur le Contrôleur-général, 27 juin, 1714.’

Even when the existing orders to confiscate and burn *toiles peintes* and other imported fabrics were obeyed, the execution was not so simple. In Troyes in July 1709, the King's Procurer (*procureur du Roi*), Motet, reported that a mob of as many as 1,500 people stormed the main square at the initial burning, stealing and ripping up the fabrics in their frenzy.<sup>31</sup> He had to order that the seized goods be burned in the evenings under armed guard. 'It is certain My Lord,' he wrote to Desmaretz, 'that the contraband has become so common in this region that it will be difficult to stop it without making severe examples.' Motet's wish, and those of the growing lobby of manufactures, backed by the *Conseil de Commerce*, was answered by the most rigorous law yet, on August 27, 1709, which banned the wearing or trading of *all* fabrics from the Indes, China and the Levant.<sup>32</sup> The new *Contrôleur-général*'s desire to put an end to the debate once and for all was evident in this long and precisely detailed law. Its seventeen articles clearly prohibited imports by the *Compagnie des Indes* on any pretext, including for the purpose of re-export; excluded perpetrating merchants from their guilds for life; banned both white and printed cottons; and expressly forbade women from sewing, having garments made for them, or storing *toiles peintes* in their houses, illustrating the domestic nature of the clandestine trade.

Marseille's merchants profited from this law as the city's privileges were upheld, which was counter-intuitive as it reinforced one of the major contraband routes. Otherwise, objections to the new law were universal: the *Compagnie*'s *directeurs* requested permission to be allowed to land white cottons (to be sold for printing, amongst other uses); the Paris merchants complained that refusing them permission to sell white cottons and muslins which they had previously bought legally from the *Compagnie*'s sales would ruin them; even the merchants who were trading illegally complained. The correspondence of Desmaretz's secretary, Vallossière, is rich with examples of the complicated cases the inspections, seizures and penalties provoked. For example, the Rouen merchant Robert Lacquet begged for the return of sixty impounded pieces of printed kerchiefs which he had sold to the Calais merchant Bernonville. They had been 'mistaken for illegal Indian goods by the officer who made the arrest,' he explained, but were actually 'handkerchiefs made in the factory at Rouen', as if this was acceptable. Curiously, after it was deliberated in the

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<sup>31</sup> A.N. G7, 1694. 'Motet, Procureur du Roy à Troyes, au Contrôleur-général, 5 juillet, 1709.' 'Il est certain, Monseigneur, que la contrebande est devenue si Commune en ce pays, qu'il sera difficile de l'arrêter sans des exemples Severes.'

<sup>32</sup> B.A. 1226. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy, faisant deffenses de porter aucunes Robbes & Vestemens de Toile peinte, Furies, & Etoffes des Indes; & d'en faire aucun commerce, sur les peines y contenuës, 27 aoust, 1709.'

*Conseil de Commerce*, Vallossière gave permission for the transaction to take place, although printing was eminently illegal.<sup>33</sup> This exemplifies the complexity of a situation where repression was advocated but individual dispensations were accorded. More perplexing though, is why the Rouen factory was not closed down if it was openly printing *indiennes*. It may be that it was printing on linen, and therefore benefitted from some protection, as will later be discussed.

The *Inspecteur des manufactures* for Champagne, Barrollet, noted in March 1709 that frequent checks of the merchants who crossed Champagne's long border were needed to stop the smuggling of contraband.<sup>34</sup> He suggested that the huge fines should not be enforced for small merchants who were caught, as they had no method of paying, but their seized fabrics must be burned as an example. He was one of the only commentators who suggested another way must be found to solve the problem as the legislation was not working. Far from listening to these new ideas, the government continued to reiterate the ban, and repeatedly render it impotent by granting privileges. On November 30, 1709 merchants who had bought white cottons and muslins from the *Compagnie* were offered an amnesty if they surrendered them for marking: they quickly complied, and the astonishing quantity of more than 200,000 pieces was inventoried.<sup>35</sup> The flood of these fabrics onto the market would have been enough to keep the printers of Paris supplied for a considerable time. Furthermore, the following April, the merchants of Montpellier (and probably other towns where the manuscripts have not survived) were given the same dispensation.<sup>36</sup> With these exemptions, the embargoes were once again poorly observed, and there were inconsistencies in application. *Intendant* Trudaine of Lyon called for a reiteration of the ban, suggesting also to Desmaretz that the same measures be taken on the Spanish frontier, where contraband was 'intense', as were applied at the other borders, where the English and Dutch Companies' goods were known to enter.<sup>37</sup>

The number of states supplying contraband multiplied over time, and France was inundated with goods, particularly at frontier towns and ports such as Lille and La

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<sup>33</sup> A.N. G7, 1694. '*Lettre de Sr. Robert Lacquet à M. de Vallossière, à Rouen, 17 janvier, 1709.*' The letter is annotated by Vallossière, indicating permission was granted by the *Conseil* on February 8, 1709. The cloth is described as '60 pieces of 12 kerchiefs of cotton and silk' (*60 pieces de douze mouchoirs cotton et soye*), indicating 12 square handkerchiefs had been block printed on each piece of cloth. This would have a represented a considerable value.

<sup>34</sup> A.N. G7, 1694. '*Lettre de Sr. Barrollet à M. de Vallossière, 28 mars 1709.*'

<sup>35</sup> A.N. F12, 55. Cited in Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 74.

<sup>36</sup> A.N. G7, 1694. '*Ordonnance rendue par Monsieur d'Argenson, Lieutenant-général de Police, le 7 avril 1710.*'

<sup>37</sup> A.N. G7, 1694. '*Lettre de l'Intendant Trudaine à M. Desmaretz, 1710.*'

Rochelle, where the number of ladies wearing *toiles peintes* was remarked upon.<sup>38</sup> Some were brought in by merchants receiving privileges to buy Dutch goods supposedly for re-export to Guinea; others had particular excuses, for example Charleville, a town previously under the protection of the Duke of Mantua, whom it claimed had allowed their use.<sup>39</sup> The signing of several treaties known collectively as the Peace of Utrecht in April 1713 brought peace with England, Holland and Prussia, and commerce with these and other countries implicated in the conflict of the previous twelve years started again, bringing more *toiles peintes* flooding in. An *arrest* in March 1714 rescinded the permission to warehouse goods in France for re-export, and imposed a 6,000 l. fine, as well as the confiscation of their ship, on any shipowner found smuggling.

Repetitions of the ban over the next few years were ineffectual in eradicating the circulation of contraband fabrics in France. Overall, the *Conseil* blamed lax enforcement by the *Intendants* and *Inspecteurs des manufactures* for the lack of success. The focus shifted back onto the use of the fabrics, identified as the primary cause of the contraband: it was the demand, rather than the supply, which was considered to be causing the problem. Furnishings, however, which constituted a large part of the fabrics used illegally, were harder to track than fabrics worn in public. Another tactic was attempted to uncover illegal sales: an increased reward of another 20 sols per aune of fabric seized was offered to anyone giving information which led to an arrest. Other actions included amnesties for contraband items declared, such as those in Nantes described in Chapter 3. Further difficulties remained, including how to mark the many fabrics which had already been sewn up into furnishings, or how to deal with fabrics which had been in use for perhaps more than twenty years by this time.<sup>40</sup> The government had no solution, except to repeat the comminatory measures.

When Louis XIV's reign ended in 1715, legislation had been in place to prohibit the importation, manufacture and wearing of printed fabrics for twenty-nine years, but the many pronouncements had been generally ineffective in halting the flow of forbidden goods into the country. More importantly, they were singularly unsuccessful in stemming people's desire to wear printed fabrics. Up to this point, the rulings of the *Conseil de*

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<sup>38</sup> A.N. G7, 79. 'Lettre de M. Machault à M. de Creil, 10 mai 1710' (La Rochelle); A.N. F12, 58: 'Lettre de M. de Bernières, Intendant à Valenciennes au Contrôleur-général, 1710' (Lille).

<sup>39</sup> A.N. G7, 1695. 'Arrêt du Conseil des Finances, 13 mai, 1710' (Charleville); A.N. F12, 55: 'Commerce de Guinée, 1710.'

<sup>40</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 253. In the Nantes amnesty of 1715, Edmond Geraldin declared four quilts which were 'inherited from my parents and have been used for over thirty years'.

*Commerce* had been reiterations of the initial Edict: they listed what was forbidden, increased the penalties, and tried to close any loopholes being used to circumvent the law. As time passed, the volume of *indiennes* in France made enforcement of the law unfeasible and policing the multitude of infractions virtually impossible. It appears the quantity of legislation passed created a market for clandestine goods in itself.

### **The disdain of the ruling elite**

On Louis XV's accession, the Regent and the new *Conseil d'Etat* dismantled the existing financial structure of the government by removing the post of *Contrôleur-général* and the offices of provincial *Intendants*, in a government which became known as the '*polysynodie*', run by multiple new councils. Although he did not hold the title, the Duc de Noailles was the *Contrôleur-général de facto* for the next two years, as he was chosen by the Regent to chair the new *Conseil des finances*. Faced with the monumental task of rebuilding a state bankrupted by war and deeply in debt, Noailles was consumed with making economies through revisions to the tax structure, some of which were aimed at rebuilding trade and increasing consumption. An Edict of May 1715 introduced tax increases on a wide range of goods, including textiles, specifically to cover the expenses of 'the salaries and maintenance of the large number of troops during the last two wars.'<sup>41</sup> In October 1715 the *Fermes générales*, dissolved in the financial crisis of 1709, were restored, resulting in further powers being given to the *Fermiers-généraux* to halt smuggling.<sup>42</sup>

Unfortunately for the manufactures and the *Conseil*, the Duc de Noailles was unlikely to introduce more stringent measures related to wearing the banned fabrics: as an aristocrat, he moved in circles where wealthy ladies constantly ignored the law. The nobility was accused of leading the population by example, and the duke himself was lampooned by the critic Saint-Simon for his condemnation in the *Conseil des Finances* of the continued use of printed fabrics in the kingdom, to the detriment of its manufactures. How ironic, commented Saint-Simon, that aristocrats should deplore the practice of ordinary women, when their own ladies openly flouted the law, wearing *toiles peintes* at Court and in their country homes. Should the Duchess of Orleans and Madame, the King's sister perhaps, he enquired, be subjected to wearing an iron collar next time they appeared in public dressed à

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<sup>41</sup> Bnf F-21072 (89). Acte royal. '*Edit du Roy portant Suppression des Offices créés sur les Ports, Quays, Halles et Marchez de la Ville de Paris*', mai 1715.

<sup>42</sup> Bnf F-21073 (54). '*Déclaration... concernant les receveurs généraux des finances... Registrée en Parlement le 24 octobre 1715.*'

*l'indienne?* (Figures 82 to 84.) The Duc de Noailles, ridiculed, stormed out of the session.<sup>43</sup> The direct result was that people 'of all qualities' were banned from wearing printed fabrics in the next edition of the prohibition, pronounced on January 20, 1716.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps because of the general reorganisation of governmental apparatus instigated by the new Regency, this document was a particularly thorough iteration: its language was directed not only at contraband smugglers and dealers, but everyone who traded in the forbidden goods or wore them. Faced with mounting criticism of the ineffectiveness of the prohibition, the first article of this ruling demonstrated the *Conseil*'s determination to spell out every condition and eradicate all possible loopholes in the ban:

It is absolutely prohibited for all merchants, shop-owners, travelling salesmen, second-hand clothes dealers, tailors, seamstresses, upholsterers, embroiderers, workers and all persons of every quality and condition, to deal in, offer for sale, purchase at retail or wholesale, wear, dress, or use to cover furniture, make outfits or clothing, either within or outside their houses, any cloth from the Indies or China [including] pure silks, or those mixed with gold and silver, and tree bark, wool, linen or cotton painted in *furies* or flowers, cloths or other stuffs painted or printed, either within or outside the kingdom, old or new, at the risk of a 3,000 livres fine for each contravention, or payable by corporal punishment.<sup>45</sup>

As well as covering every prospective use and source of printed fabrics, this ruling expanded the conditions of its predecessors, stipulating that a *fleur-de-lys* and the name of the town be stamped on all existing furniture covered in *toiles peintes*. Non-marked goods could be confiscated and burned if not declared, although without the right to search households, it is not clear how this would have been enforced. Certainly, the government was aware that its rulings were held in contempt, but was poor at providing motivation to its law enforcement officials. This ruling for example, like many others, stated that the *Lieutenant-général de police* should constantly keep note of all the fabrics collected in the customs offices, a huge task, and provide an inventory to the *Fermiers-généraux* at his own

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<sup>43</sup> Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, Vol. XIII, p. 33. Cited in H.R. d'Allemagne, *La Toile imprimée*, p. 65.

<sup>44</sup> B.A. 1131. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy du 20 Janvier 1716.' 'L'usage & le commerce des Etoffes des Indes... sont actuellement prohibées & deffenduës, avec très expresses inhibitions à tous Negocians, Marchands, & autres personnes de quelque qualité & condition qu'elles soient.'

<sup>45</sup> B.A. 1131. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy du 20 Janvier 1716.' 'Il est fait très expresses défenses à tous négociants, marchands, colporteurs, fripiers, tailleurs, couturières, tapissiers, brodeurs, ouvriers et à toutes personnes de quelque qualité et conditions qu'elles soient, de faire commerce, exposer en vente, vendre, débiter, acheter en gros ou en détail, porter, s'habiller, employer ou faire employer en meubles, habits, vêtements, soit dedans, soit dehors leurs maisons, aucune étoffes des Indes ou de la Chine, des soie pure, mêlée d'or et d'argent, d'écorce d'arbre, laine, fil, coton, peintes en furies ou en fleurs, toiles ou autres étoffes peintes ou imprimées, dedans ou dehors le royaume, vieilles ou neuves, à peine de 3,000 livres d'amende pour chaque contravention, payable par corps.'

expense, in the hope of being reimbursed at a later date by the Crown. Clauses like this were personally onerous for officials.

After the *Conseil de Commerce* was re-established by Royal Declaration in December 1715, it was directly mandated to eradicate smuggling by ensuring law enforcement and clamping down more severely on contraventions.<sup>46</sup> It blamed the illegal circulation of *toiles peintes* on multiple sources: on corruption among officials, for not burning all the fabrics as decreed; on the revenue and customs officers who turned a blind eye to these goods staying in the country; and also on the general public for concealing huge amounts of illegal goods, with the intention of trading them within France. For years, the *Conseil* had insisted that the vast quantities of material in boutiques and at fairs were those which should have been destroyed or exported after sequestration. It finally won its case for all impounded fabrics to be burnt, and a law, essential for halting the continued circulation of fabrics, was passed on February 22, 1716.<sup>47</sup> Goods already confiscated were also to be destroyed, and the reward of two-thirds of their value which had been promised to the denouncers was to be refunded by the Treasury, a potentially expensive gesture. In March, the sale of all *toiles peintes* within boutiques was expressly banned, suggesting that there was still ambiguity in the interpretation of the rulings, in spite of the increased clarification of every clause.<sup>48</sup>

At the same time, new penalties were announced which particularly targeted the network of *colporteurs* who peddled printed fabrics in their panoply of wares.<sup>49</sup> These gave officials the right to imprison them, confiscate their horses and carts and impose a fine of 3,000 livres, all without trial.<sup>50</sup> Itinerant salesmen were essential to country commerce outside the main cities, but were regarded suspiciously as if they were vagrants, and rulings related to them often refer to ‘tricksters and unknown pedlars’ (*fraudeurs et colporteurs inconnus*). Part of this fear was encouraged by urban merchants, for whom they were competition.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> A.N. G7, 1697: ‘*Declaration du Roy Pour l’Etablissement d’un Conseil de Commerce, 14 décembre 1715.*’ See Chapter 2, n. 19.

<sup>47</sup> B.A. 1132. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’Estat du Roy du vingt-deux Janvier 1716. Qui Ordonne que Toutes les Toiles peintes... seront brûlées.*’

<sup>48</sup> A.N. F12, 59. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’Estat au mois de mars 1716.*’

<sup>49</sup> Traditionally an itinerant pedlar who carried small items of haberdashery, pots and pans on a string from his neck, the *colporteur* who was settled in a town could also have a second function of being used to proclaim news, edicts and arrests as well as being a street-vendor. *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, 1st Edition. (Paris: J.-B. Coignard, 1694).

<sup>50</sup> A.N. F12, 59. ‘*Mémoire pour les Colporteurs nommez en exécution des ordres de Monsieur Desmarests, Contrôleur Général des Finances, 1715.*’

<sup>51</sup> Even if they were law-abiding, *colporteurs* were restricted in their movements, and had to register any change of residence within three days. See Laurence Fontaine, *History of Pedlars in Europe* (London: Polity Press 1996).

A year later, in July 1717, the network of individuals who distributed garments and fabrics from their homes was also targeted, and although the police had no right of search, this was granted to the heads of the guilds and corporations considered at risk.<sup>52</sup> The silk weavers, embroiderers, dyers and finishers were permitted to search homes and confiscate any clothing or furniture covered in *toiles peintes*. This increased emphasis on improving the effectiveness of policing would no doubt have satisfied d'Argenson, who chaired the *Conseil de Finance* from 1718 to early 1720. Prior to this, as *Lieutenant-général de police* for 28 years, he had petitioned for increased powers of search for his officers, in frustration over the many protected areas which thwarted their efforts to eradicate printed fabrics. Guards at the Paris gates were given permission to stop all women dressed in *indiennes* and, as an incentive, they could keep the fine imposed on the offenders, which led to further extreme scenes, with women having the clothes torn off their backs in the street.<sup>53</sup> This had happened before, but not in the capital and on such a large scale.<sup>54</sup> Such violent actions against women were not unique to France, but those which took place in England were conducted by mobs of weavers who took direct action against those wearing what they perceived to be the items destroying their trade.<sup>55</sup> In France the situation was quite the reverse: incidents of the forcible removal of clothing were conducted by the authorities. The riots which took place were against this repression by the establishment, by a public protesting the freedom to wear and trade in the commodity.

Despite such determination to break every link in the chain of contraband supply, this new law was no more successful than its many predecessors, the reason for which must remain the government's inability to enforce all the aspects of the ruling equally across the country. Another significant handicap continued to be the inequality of application across different social strata. The surviving correspondence includes a considerable quantity of pleas for leniency from individuals prosecuted for owning contraband fabric, but success demonstrably depended upon the status of the applicant. Throughout the prohibition nobles requested exemptions from the laws. In 1709, the *Intendant* of Valenciennes ordered a customs inspector to return the 'Indian stuffs' being transported for Madame la Maréchale de Villars, 'to be ironed, as they had not been to her liking' from the French town of Quesnoy across the border into Ath, in the French-occupied Spanish

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<sup>52</sup> B.A. 1227. 'Edit du Roy, donné à Paris au mois de juillet 1717.'

<sup>53</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Arrest qui donne la confiscation de divers matières prohibées, juillet 1717.'

<sup>54</sup> See Chapter 3, n. 29, on similar events in Troyes in 1711.

<sup>55</sup> Beverly Lemire details many of these acts of violence in *Cotton* (Oxford: Berg, 2011), pp. 54-56, based on reports in the *Weekly Journal* and other newspapers in 1719 and 1720.



Netherlands.<sup>56</sup> The customs official was fired: presumably he should have known better than to search a cart belonging to a noble. Similarly, the *Intendant* of Flanders asked the *Contrôleur-général*'s advice in 1708 on how he should proceed with searches of the trunks of the well-to-do on the mail coaches crossing the border. He was unnerved by finding three rolls of gold *louis* coins hidden in a parcel containing two pieces of 'toile des Indes' addressed to the Madame la Duchesse de Lorraine. The smuggling of gold coins was clearly an even greater offence than importing exotic fabrics, but the *Contrôleur-général* advised that 'people of quality should never have their belongings searched.'<sup>57</sup> In 1714, also ignoring the ban, the Duc de Gramont, Viceroy of Navarre and Béarn, claimed his share of a seizure of *toiles peintes* made on a ship in Bayonne harbour as his 'right by inheritance as a custom of this town', from the *Contrôleur-général*, as the proceeds had been awarded in their entirety to the *fermes générales*. Three requests were made before he received satisfaction.<sup>58</sup>

Courtly ladies continually disregarded the stipulated interdiction on wearing the prints. If they did fall foul of the authorities, they were unsurprisingly excused. A search in 1714 (which must have been expressly ordered by d'Argenson as nobles' homes would normally have been exempt), confiscated illegal fabrics found at the Paris *hôtels* of two nobles, the Marquis de Gontaut-Biron and the Marquis de Nesle.<sup>59</sup> Presumably among the latter were the four pieces of confiscated *toiles peintes* which had been seized from the Marquise de Nesle, and which she had the audacity to reclaim. D'Argenson approved their return, but insisted they were first 'cut into pieces only suitable for furnishings' in his presence, taking the unusual action of sanctioning a member of the Court.<sup>60</sup> However, the Marquise was not repentant, and the following month 'appeared in the Tuileries garden in a dress embroidered with silk flowers made in the Indies, on a cloth from the same

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<sup>56</sup> A.N. G1, 70.5. 'M. de Valicour de Monteye au Contrôleur-général, le 31 octobre 1709.' 'J'ai autorisé qu'il rende à M. le marquis d'Hautefort les estoffes confisquées de son muletier qu'il portoit du Quesnoy à Ath pour le compte de Madame la marechale de Villars, avec l'intention de les faire repasser car Madame ne les avoit pas trouvées à sa convenance'.

<sup>57</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Monseigneur le Contrôleur-général à M. de Bagnols, intendant en Flandre, fevrier 1708.' 'Il faut bien eviter en tout cas d'arreter des biens des personnes de condition.'

<sup>58</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*. Vol. III, addendum XXIV. 'M. le duc de Gramont, vice-roi de Navarre et Béarn, au Contrôleur-général, le 30 mars, 23 avril et 22 décembre 1714.' 'Il réclame, dans une saisie faite au havre de Bayonne, le part qui lui revient comme propriétaire par hérédité de la coutume de cette ville, sur les toiles peintes et toiles de coton qui faisaient partie du chargement saisi, quoique M. de Courson ait prononcé la confiscation intégrale au profit des fermes générales.'

<sup>59</sup> A.N. G7, 1728. 'Ordonnance du Conseil d'État, 28 janvier, 1714.'

<sup>60</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*. Vol. III, article 1783. 'M. d'Argenson au Contrôleur-général, 14 juin, 1715.' 'J'ai fait remettre... à la disposition de Mme la marquise de Nesle les quatre pièces de toiles des Indes qu'elle réclamoit, après les avoir fait couper en ma présence pour être employées en meubles, comme il vous a plu de le prescrire.'

country’, which was certainly not made from the cut pieces. In exasperation her husband promised that he ‘would not suffer her wearing the dress any more and would rather burn it.’<sup>61</sup> Only occasionally do the archives show a noble upholding the law, for example in 1710, when the *Intendant* of Rouen reported that ‘thanks to the steps taken by the Duc de Luxembourg with the ladies of rank, the use of *toiles peintes* has ceased, at least in public.’<sup>62</sup> The ladies’ abstention could not have lasted long, but it underlies officials’ belief that high-born ladies could significantly influence the public’s choices.

High-ranking government officials mimicked the aristocrats’ lead. After he had left Brittany and become a *Conseiller d’État*, Ferrand wrote from Court to Mellier of Nantes, enclosing a mustard-yellow swatch of prohibited silk.<sup>63</sup> He asked Mellier to purchase fabric in the *Compagnie*’s forthcoming sale to complete a piece of furniture he had ordered for his wife, which had been upholstered in fabric from a sailor’s *pacotille* bought at auction. Mellier was instructed only to purchase an ‘exact match’. (Figure 85.) Bureaucrats’ hubris was not always successful, however. *Intendant* de Bouville of Orléans asked permission to give his mother-in-law, ‘some pieces, for the church’, an unlikely place to use *toiles peintes*. The pieces had been confiscated by his predecessor and were ‘rotting in the court registry’, but the *Contrôleur-général* advised him not to do it, ‘for fear of the consequences’.<sup>64</sup>

In general, minor officials were not accorded exemptions, and indeed it would seem that their wives were more severely punished than other women, perhaps as they were supposed to be seen to uphold the law. Such was the case for Isabelle Champiron, the

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<sup>61</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*. Vol. III, article 1783. ‘M. d’Argenson au Contrôleur-général’, 12 juillet, 1715. ‘*Il est vrai que Mme la marquise de Nesle a paru dans le jardin des Tuileries avec une robe de chambre brodée des fleurs de soie et façon des Indes sur une toile du même pays... M. le marquis de Nesle m’a de plus promis tres expressément qu’il ne souffrira plus qu’elle porte cette robe de chambre, et qu’il fera plutôt brûler.*’

<sup>62</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*. Vol. III, addendum XVI. ‘M. de Richebourg au Contrôleur-général’, 31 janvier, 1710. ‘*Grâce aux démarches du duc de Luxembourg auprès de dames de condition, l’usage des toiles et étoffes peintes à cessé, au moins en public.*’

<sup>63</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 224. ‘M. Ferrand à M. Mellier, maire et subdélégué à Nantes, 26 septembre 1727.’ ‘*J’ay un tres beau meuble de satin brodé et de damas dans la chambre de Mme Ferrand, c’est une pacotille qui m’en revenüe il y a quelques années d’un vaisseau sur lequel j’avois mis en Bretagne. Il me manque du satin de la couleur de l’échantillon que je vous envoye, je n’en ay pû trouver d’une pareille couleur à Paris. Comme on doit vendre dans le mois prochain à Nantes, des étoffes des vaisseaux qui sont arrivez pour la Compagnie des indes, je vous prie d’en chercher et d’en prendre une piece, mais elle n’en pas absolument de la même couleur, n’en prendre pas.*’

<sup>64</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*. Vol. III, article 1624, note. ‘Le Contrôleur-général à M. de Bouville, intendant à Orléans, 31 mars, 1715.’ ‘*M. de Bouville, intendant à Orléans, demandant la permission de donner à sa belle-mère, pour les églises, quelques pièces de toiles peintes saisies par son prédécesseur, et qui pourrissent au greffe. Le Contrôleur-général lui conseille de n’en rien faire, par crainte des conséquences.*’

widow of the Chief Justice of Brest, prosecuted for selling *indiennes* in 1721.<sup>65</sup> She had retired to a nunnery, but nonetheless was found with enough lengths of fabric and sewn garments to indicate she was conducting a considerable trade in illegal goods, and was taken to the Fort-Levêque prison. After her arrest it was discovered she had sent two more huge bales of over 200 pounds in weight each to an accomplice, the Mother Superior of a hospital for the poor in Rouen. Considering the extent of her crime, her sentence of a 3,000 livres fine and the burning of her fabrics was not particularly elevated but, unusually, it was ordered by a Royal Declaration. This would have been particularly humiliating, as the pronouncement would be widely trumpeted and publically displayed. (Figure 86.) It reflected not only the scale of the infraction, but an administration scandalised that a woman of status (indeed, two women in religious orders) could commit such acts.

For ordinary individuals a connection to a wealthy or high-status patron could be the deciding factor in their fate. After paying his fine for smuggling, the master merchant Pierre Poitevin pleaded for the reinstatement of his guild status (and therefore his livelihood) to the Duc de Noailles, the Duc de Villeroy and the Prince de Montbasson. The latter wrote on his behalf to d'Argenson and he was granted his request.<sup>66</sup> (Figure 87.) Some dared to take their case higher: the merchant Tournay appealed directly to the King for the return of his eighteen pieces of confiscated *mousselines*, claiming they were legally purchased from the *Compagnie*. Although he claimed to have completed all the required formalities at each place on his route (illustrating the complex system of internal customs tariffs), the seals had been removed for bleaching, and so they had been seized. The *Contrôleur-général* wrote to d'Argenson overturning the decision and requesting he return the goods.<sup>67</sup>

The *colporteur* Gilles Dollé of Boulogne-sur-mer in Picardie, apprehended in October 1718 on the road to Abbeville with a bundle of goods containing kerchiefs of *toiles peintes*, could not aspire to such lofty sponsors, but nonetheless exemplifies the system of patronage. A 'humble country mercer, who to earn his living is obliged to go from town to

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<sup>65</sup> Archives du Musée de la *Compagnie des Indes*, Ville de Lorient, MM185. '*Jugement qui condamne Isabelle Champiron, veuve de Claude de Basserolle Ecuyer Sénéchal de Brest, en trois mille livres d'amende, pour avoir fait commerce de Toile & etoffes des Indes, 23 aoust, 1721.*'

<sup>66</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. '*Demande de Pierre Poitevin pour modération de l'amende à laquelle il a été condamné, février, 1716.*' The letters written on Poitevin's behalf to all three nobles were identical. In paying the fine he said had been bankrupted due to an unpaid debt from Lille merchants of 12,000 l., indicating he had a sizeable business. In view of Villeroy's interest in oriental imitation (see Chapter 6) it is feasible that the nobles were clients of the merchant.

<sup>67</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. III, article 1144. '*Le Contrôleur-général à M. d'Argenson, lieutenant général de police à Paris, 26 septembre, 1711.*'

town and from fair to fair with his bundle of haberdashery and hardware on his back’, Dollé claimed to have been cheated by an unknown pedlar on the way to the Abbeville fair, who exchanged the merchandise for iron tools.<sup>68</sup> After accepting a ride from another merchant, René Chaptois, both men were stopped and searched by guards, who found fifteen *mouchoirs* in Dollé’s bundle. Their merchandise was confiscated, the horse too, and a twenty livres fine applied. ‘I beg you, Sire, to consider returning this poor man’s pack of pots and pans, for he was tricked and did not know the merchandise had been hidden, and is now reduced to begging for food,’ wrote Channelier, the *Intendant* of Normandy, to Amelot, President of the *Conseil de Commerce*, on his behalf.<sup>69</sup> Amelot concurred: ‘I think it would be possible to make a special exception for him, while still upholding my ordinance.’<sup>70</sup> Chaptois for his part asked the favour of Chamelin, the *Intendant* of Picardie, and achieved the return of his horse and goods, but both men had to pay their fines. The extraordinary amount of correspondence the case created, the minimal amount of contraband it concerned, the people of influence the two humble merchants could call to their defence, and not least the fact the whole affair was resolved in three weeks, are all impressive. Most importantly, it demonstrates how, on a whim, the President of the *Conseil*, a body which constantly complained of the difficulty of enforcing the laws on smuggling, could override its decisions.

The Arrest of October 1726 was a renewed attempt to eradicate contraband, and severely increased the penalties for any person involved in trafficking in the banned fabrics.<sup>71</sup> The act aimed to be all-inclusive in its scope, banning the importation of all fabrics from ‘the Orient’, arriving by land or sea. Specifically, this act aimed to rectify the apparently unsuccessful Edict of July 1717, admitting its inefficiency, particularly in enforcing penalties on the common people, who were too poor to pay fines. Instead, these fines could be converted, if unpaid within a month, to a whipping and branding on the shoulder with a letter ‘C’ in place of a 200 l. fine for men; three years in the galleys for a

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<sup>68</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘Lettre à Monseigneur Amelot, le 26 aoust, 1718.’ ‘*Je vous presente humblement Gilles Dollé, mercier forain, Qui pour gagner la vie et celle de sa famille il est obligé d’aller de ville en ville et de foire en foire porter une balle de mercerie et de quincaillerie sur le dos.*’ The letter is signed by Dollé, but is clearly a petition on his behalf by a person of rank.

<sup>69</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘Lettre de Channelier à Monseigneur Amelot, le 17 octobre, 1718.’ ‘*S’il vous plait Monseigneur, accorder au suppliant main-levée de sa balle de quincaillerie... parce qu’il a esté trompé par ce malheureux Colporteur qui luy a joué le mauvais coup... et qu’il ne sçavoit pas avoir ces marchandises, et cette confiscation le reduit a la derniere misere avec sa famille.*’

<sup>70</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘Monseigneur Amelot à M. Channelier, intendant en Normandie, le 26 octobre 1718.’ ‘*Je croirois donc que cette grace pourois luy estre accordée par un ordre particulier, en laissant neantmoins subsister mon ordonnance.*’

<sup>71</sup> B.A. 1237a. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’Etat du Roy, 8 octobre, 1726.*’

300 l. fine; and a whipping for women and girls. These rigorous, and to the modern mind, excessive, punishments for contraventions of the *gabelles* were extended to smuggling *indiennes*. This has masked the penalties which were inflicted, as they were for ‘contraband’ crimes in general. Once again seeking to ‘protect the Manufactures of the Kingdom’, twenty-two articles were necessary to cover every avenue and ensure a comprehensive coverage of every possible person active, or complicit, in the contraband trade. Large fines and punishments were again enacted for counterfeiting the lead seals of the *Compagnie*, which even in 1726, still had the right to import *indiennes* for re-export. Citizens were expressly forbidden to give shelter to smugglers, and local magistrates were given sweeping powers to enforce the laws without having to apply to higher courts for permission. As an example, offices would not be charged if they should kill a bandit (*contrabandier*) who resisted arrest.

The exasperation of the lawmakers, after forty years of successive edicts and ordinances which had been largely ignored, flouted or circumvented on a wholesale basis, can be sensed in this law. Whole families were by this time making their living in trading in the prohibited goods: the *arrest* again emphasised that parents and husbands were responsible for the fines pronounced on their wives and minor children, indicating a lively participation by women and families in the contraband trade, particularly in the clandestine retailing of fabrics. In extreme cases a woman could be punished while her husband was excused. Madame Thomas, the wife of a clerk of the *greffe des consuls* tribunal, whom d’Argenson decried as ‘a notorious scallywag’, was fined several times and served a jail term in the Petit Châtelet for dealing in illegal merchandise from her apartment. After a subsequent offense, and her husband’s plea to excuse him from further fines, he recommended to the *Contrôleur-général*:

Her husband is a very honest man... I think that you would look fair-minded to discharge him of his ordinary obligations and let all the punishment fall on his wife, an inveterate charlatan, and relegate her forty or fifty miles away from the city, to make sure she cannot bring any contraband merchandise into Paris, and ensure that she never again trades in public, because so far, her better interests and several months in prison have not taught her this.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Boisliste, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. III, article 1481. ‘Lettre de M. d’Argenson, lieutenant-général de police à Paris, au Contrôleur-général, 10 juillet, 1713.’ ‘*Son mari, fort honnête homme, mais qui, ayant été obligé de payer deux amendes quoiqu’il n’eût aucune part au commerce de sa femme, vous supplie de l’affranchir de cette dernière condamnation. Je pense même qu’il vous paroîtra juste de le décharger de la solidité dont il est tenu suivant les règles ordinaires, et de faire tomber toute la peine sur*

The 1726 pronouncement paints a picture of a society overburdened with laws it could not effectively enforce; of lawlessness, fraud and contraband activity as the occupation of a significant number of the population; and where officers of the law sometimes had *carte blanche* to enforce punishments up to and including death, without fear of recourse. The threat to French manufactures must have indeed been perceived as grave to merit the strictures of this law, or at least, the lobbying of those industries must have been very effective. Yet how the King's ministers believed the 1726 edict was enforceable, when the *Compagnie* still had the right to introduce vast quantities of *indiennes* into France, is unfathomable. In spite of its rigour, there was little advance in enforcing the prohibition.

As well as the smuggling law of October 1726, a separate one passed that month again iterated the prohibition on wearing *toiles peintes* or using them as home furnishings. Increased powers of law enforcement were needed, and in 1727 d'Argenson's successor, Hérault, and his officers were given permission to detain without trial anyone dealing in prohibited merchandise or wearing it in public.<sup>73</sup> The police, in turn, asked for a further clarification to enable them to enforce their new powers, but the *Conseil* (without any apparent irony) declined, in order 'to not multiply the regulations'.<sup>74</sup> Over the next few years provincial archives do indeed show a marked increase in the number of prosecutions, but these are mainly for petty infractions such as the possession of a printed dress or a dressing gown by individual citizens. This was the only place where the law was having an effect: impotent at stopping the cross-border trade, printing or the peddling of goods, government officials concentrated on making an example of individual wearers, in an attempt to halt the fashion.

While the aristocracy evaded prosecution as has been discussed, people of every other social status were susceptible. In a 1730 crackdown in Paris, for example, the seven citizens arrested and fined 200 livres included: a clerk of court seen in his office wearing a white *robe de chambre* printed with red flowers; a chambermaid seen at a first floor window wearing a *casaquin* (a style of bodice) of the same colours; the wife of an architect sighted in her courtyard in a multi-coloured floral *casaquin*; a wig-maker's wife from the

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*cette fraudeuse de profession, qu'on pourroit reléguer, par un ordre supérieur, à quarante ou cinquante lieues, pour la mettre hors de portée de faire entrer dans Paris toutes sortes de marchandises de contrebande, dont elle ne pourra jamais s'empêcher de faire un commerce public, puisque son propre intérêt et plusieurs mois de prison et deux ou trois amendes n'ont pu la réduire.'*

<sup>73</sup> BnF F-21104 (98). 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy, et lettres patentes sur iceluy, du 28 janvier, 1727. *Qui commission Monsieur Herault, Lieutenant de Police... pour connoistre des contraventions... concernant la prohibition du commerce, port & usage des Etoffes des Indes.'*

<sup>74</sup> Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 94, citing A.N. F12, 73. 'Dans la vue louable "de ne pas trop multiplier les règlements" [il] se refusa à donner cet arrêt.'

notorious privileged enclosure of Saint-Jean-de-Latran seen in the street in a similar garment; and a Lady pensioner and her daughter caught wearing dresses of *toile peinte*, one in brown and white stripes and the other in a white and red floral print.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, in a series of arrests in Nantes in 1737, five of the women were wearing *casaquins* and two sported dresses, indicating that while wealthier ladies owned full ensembles, all women had graduated from neckerchiefs to bodices by that date.<sup>76</sup> (Figures 88 and 89.) It shows cheaper fabrics were available, as well as the improvement in items of dress owned in the eighteenth century. The garments were confiscated, with two-thirds of the proceeds from their sale to be given to the denunciators and the arresting officers, and the remainder to the *Compagnie*. Thus the *Compagnie*'s interests were still being protected. While the infractions may have been petty, the 3,000 livres fine handed down in such cases certainly was not, although this varied, and often even lower fines were reduced to a manageable amount on appeal. In Brittany, the women's fines were commuted dramatically by the *Intendant* from 100 livres to 40 sols 'by grace, because it is appropriate'.<sup>77</sup>

As well as constant rulings to clarify what was illegal, the later years of the 1720s saw further confusing judgments from the *Conseil* on which body had jurisdiction over the matter: the contraband fabrics could be interpreted as falling under the control of the customs authorities, the port authorities, the *Fermiers-généraux*, or various other arms of the judiciary system. In 1728, for example, it enjoined the provincial governors and their *lieutenants* in Champagne, Brie, Picardie and Île-de-France to take up arms against the armed bands of 'vagabonds' importing contraband fabrics and bring them to justice. This was never enforced due to much wrangling over what constituted a 'vagabond', and whether miscreants should be judged by a military court, the *Cour des Aydes*, or the *Juge des Fermes*. The document which awarded the *Intendants* the final decision in these cases, is itself so complex that it is not surprising there was difficulty with its interpretation.<sup>78</sup> A further reiteration of the prohibition in February 1729 directly contradicted it by awarding the 'Masters of the Ports and their Lieutenants' (*les Maistres des Ports & leurs Lieutenans*) the authority to prosecute those who illegally imported or wore fabrics from the Indies,

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<sup>75</sup> B.A. 1248. 'Ordonnance rendue par Monsieur Hérault, Lieutenant-général de Police, Qui condamne plusieurs Particuliers trouvez vêtus de Toiles peintes, en deux cens livre d'amende chacun, 29 juillet, 1730.'

<sup>76</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 266. 'Ordonnances de Monseigneur L'Intendant, contre differens Particuliers, pour le port & usage des Toiles-Peintes & Etoffes prohibées, 25 août, 1737.'

<sup>77</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 266. 'Ordonnances de Monseigneur L'Intendant.' 'Nous estimons qu'il y a lieu de moderer par grace celle par elle encouruë, et au dépens liquidez à 40 sols.'

<sup>78</sup> B.A. 1268. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Estat du Roy, 14 septembre, 1728.'

China and the Levant.<sup>79</sup> With this kind of message emanating from the *Conseil*, it is hardly surprising that the law was still failing to eradicate printed fabrics in the provinces.

In conclusion, *indiennes* were smuggled in serious quantities into France, hidden amongst other outlawed commodities, and benefitted from the established contraband networks to provide an efficient internal distribution system. This information fleshes out the existing knowledge of the illegal fabrics' dispersal after their well-documented arrival at French ports. Notably, smuggling also took place across interior boundaries, significantly multiplying its incidence. The inclusion of the fabrics in legislation against the two most illicit commodities is equally important, as it confirms that smugglers of *indiennes* were indeed as seriously punished as the *arrests* threatened, but this information has been hidden in the prosecutions of bandits for the other products. It was easy to add *toiles peintes* onto a smuggling operation planned for salt- or tobacco-running: it brought lucrative profits and the people who dared to risk the penalties were legion. Thus it has been shown that the contraband trade was a very serious operation, and a major factor in keeping the French public supplied with the printed fabrics they craved. It has been demonstrated that these may equally have been French-printed goods moved from province to province, as well as foreign imports.

The examples of sentences for smuggling also indicate that the large fines were in many cases a sort of ransom, with the perpetrator being held until it was paid. Those smaller tradesmen without the means to pay had their fine substituted by incarceration or corporal punishment: whipping and branding seem to have been meted out the most, in order to set a public example. As the *Intendants* did not have the authority to judge all cases, this was a way of dealing with minor infringements without referring the case to the criminal courts, which sat rarely and only in provincial administrative centres. The seriousness of a smuggling crime was adjudicated by the organisation and number of *contrabandiers*, and whether they were armed, thus posing a serious threat to the King's troops patrolling the highways, and of possible insurrection. Punishment was also defined, for both these gangs and individuals, by the quantity of contraband found in their possession: a particularly haphazard way of applying a penalty, in which those resourceful enough to efficiently distribute their goods escaped more lightly. All the examples used in this study show the scale of punishment to be extremely serious for the smaller perpetrator,

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<sup>79</sup> B.A. 1268. 'Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy, Qui réitere de deffenses de faire Commerce, Port & Usage des Etoffes & Toiles peintes des Indes, de la Chine & du Levant, du 8 Fevrier, 1729.' 'Les affaires qui naîtront de l'execution dudit Reglement... seront traitées devant les Maistres des Ports & leurs Lieutenans.'



based upon the authorities' conviction that this would have the desired effect of making others refrain from the activity. Clearly, due to the rich rewards available, even for the smallest pieces of *indiennes*, this was ineffective.

Thus, the trafficking of prohibited cottons seemed an insurmountable problem, and due to the lack of success in stamping it out, the authorities at last began to realise their impotence in the face of the massive quantities of illegal goods which remained in circulation, constantly replenished from the Orient, Europe, and French workshops. The impossibility of identifying illegal fabrics; the willingness of the population to commit fraud; and the fashion for *toiles peintes* (which showed no signs of abating, even after the first twenty-five years of the new century), at last exhausted the *Conseil*. Although it repeated the prohibition annually until the end of the 1720s, in truth the authorities had given up trying to hold back the tide of *toiles peintes* through legislation by the mid-1730s. After that, although the government periodically reiterated the prohibition, and the statutes remained on the books until 1759, the attempts at enforcement gradually ceased.

## CHAPTER 6

### Imitation & Experimentation

The dogmatic application of the law through the regulation of individual autonomy in the *ancien régime* was a causal phenomenon in the length of the prohibition on printing and importing cotton textiles. To suggest that this represented a blinkered inability to recognise the need for change would be to view the situation from a modern perspective, and also with the advantage of hindsight in knowledge of the subsequent Industrial Revolution, as has been previously noted. Nonetheless, the entrenched opposition to innovation and a preference for maintaining the status quo in the face of the obvious ineffectiveness of the chosen measures, were remarkable. That is not to imply that this was a unique position for the State to uphold, nor that it was specific to this commodity, as has been confirmed by examples of the regulation of other goods. It does demonstrate, however, that an impetus was needed to break the perpetual reiteration of the ineffectual ban, and allow France to progress technologically. The continued success of smuggling and clandestine printing led to a mounting recognition that, if the goods could not be eradicated, then a French supply was needed for the demand, and this required the perfection of techniques.

The first topic to be addressed in this chapter will be an examination of the underground printing activity. The nature of the industry, understandably in view of its illegal nature, has to be gleaned from prosecutions rather than accounts by the printers themselves. The unwritten assumption, where examples and anecdotes have been used in previous authorship, has been that these workshops were laboratories for innovation, and must inevitably have been part of a long continuum of development towards technical competence. It will be proposed here, instead, that the printing being conducted clandestinely cannot be connected to the experimentation required for innovation, and that illicit workshops sought only to imitate in order to capitalise on the potential of the market. In addition, the necessity of having a benefactor to enable working in the protected enclaves will be outlined. Following this, the exceptional example of the Duc de Bourbon's experiments with printing at his chateau of Chantilly will be studied, as will the establishment of early organised workshops or 'proto-factories' during the final decades of the prohibition.

## Clandestine Activity and Technical Developments

There is evidence that clandestine printing activity was conducted throughout the ban, and the products added to the volumes of illicit material traded. These enterprises were hindered by the lack of knowledge of the ingredients and techniques essential for colour-fastness and accuracy, but also by the necessity to conceal their activities in locations which lacked access to the basic necessity of a large source of running water. Another exigency was the large area of land needed to dry the printed cloths between some of the stages, and finally to expose them to the sun to complete the bleaching process and remove the excess ground colour and traces of gum. Illustrations of the space required for these operations is shown in the images of the drying tower and the bleaching fields at the Jouyen-Josas factory.<sup>1</sup> (Figures 90 and 91.) This space would not have been available or practical for a covert printer. Nonetheless, the premise must be considered that some unlawful workshops may have been improving their methods, accuracy and efficiency through trial and error since they went underground after the ban.

For their very existence the concealed workshops depended upon sheltered locations to work from, and this required patronage. The necessity of a benefactor, whether an individual or an organised body, was fundamental within the system of privileges outlined in Chapter 1. In Paris, protection by sponsors was a well-established system which existed long before the problem with *toiles peintes*, and extended to small workshops and individuals of all kinds who could not make their living in the wider Parisian market. These were a particular irritation for the government, taking business from the government-regulated guilds, while not paying taxes. When fixing the taxation rate (*la capitation*) for all the crafts and trades in 1701, Robert, the Procurator of the Presidial Court (*Procureur du Roi au Châtelet de Paris*), noted:

There are communities in Paris where many workers conduct their trade without being master-craftsman... and among them there are some who are as rich or richer than the masters of Paris.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In 1804, the French chemist Claude-Louis Berthollet discovered that chlorine could be used to bleach cotton without requiring exposure to sunshine and air, thus reducing the need for these large areas.

<sup>2</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. II, article 253. 'M. Robert, procureur du Roi au Châtelet de Paris, au Contrôleur-général, 26 mars, 1701.' *'Il y a des communautés à Paris dans lesquelles... il se trouve plusieurs ouvriers qui, sans être maîtres, font le même métier... et, dans ce nombre, il y en a d'aussi riches et plus riches que les maîtres de Paris.'* M. Robert proposed that these workmen be taxed by the Châtelet court, while the bourgeois living in the *enclos* could pay a duty to the town itself, and in addition both groups should pay dues to the corporations.

This made them a good target for taxation, and the argument for harnessing this potential income by incorporating the workers of the *lieux privilégiés*, was often expounded.

The best known enclave in Paris was the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, an area just outside of the city walls and its jurisdiction, giving it a peculiar freedom. (Figure 92.) Thousands of artisans worked there legally, but it was a notorious haven for money-lenders and counterfeiters.<sup>3</sup> It also became a centre of skilled trades of all kinds, which could be practised there without gaining a master's status. As such it was a natural environment for clandestine printers, like the woman embroiderer sentenced in 1702 for owning 'moulds, paintbrushes and tools for printing'.<sup>4</sup> Alain Thilley proposed that these enclaves actually afforded workers the possibility of entrepreneurship and experimentation.<sup>5</sup> The Paris-centric focus of studies of privileged enclaves was expanded by Jeff Horn, who studied the existence of protected areas in provincial cities and concluded they were 'increasingly important components of eighteenth-century France's dynamic industrial sector', invigorating the local and national economies alike.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, his research on Rouen showed that of the fourteen enclaves there, ten were created in 1702 when Louis XIV broke up the Vicomté of Rouen, allowing those areas the autonomy to thrive without regulation by the corporations. A perfect location, then, for those workshops to thrive which had managed to continue their production for the *Compagnie* by retaining their wood blocks.<sup>7</sup>

Within the Paris walls, areas continually mentioned as suspected centres of illegal printing included large religious establishments such as the Abbeys of Saint-Germain-des-Prés and la Trinité, and the Priory of Saint-Denis-de-la-Chartre, and several other smaller ecclesiastical houses, which were exempt from the scrutiny of the *Inspecteurs des*

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Sonenscher estimates around 9,000 people worked there in 1720. Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wages: Natural Law, Politics and the Eighteenth-Century French Trades* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 104. The Faubourg has, however, been lauded for the important role of its workers in the Revolutionary period. See, for example, Jany Baudet & Annick Botaya, *La Bastille et le faubourg Saint-Antoine, lieux de révolutions: 1789-1871* (Sèvres: Centre international d'études pédagogiques, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. II, article 365. 'Lettre de M. d'Argenson au Contrôleur-général, 26 avril, 1702.' 'La condamnation d'un jardinière du faubourg Saint-Jacques, trouvé détenteur de moules, pinceaux et outils servant à peindre les toiles.' A 1762 dictionary describes a *jardinière* as a sleeve with a special form of embroidery; it seems more likely a woman would be an embroiderer than a female gardener, the literal translation.

<sup>5</sup> Thilley, *Le Faubourg Saint-Antoine et ses faux ouvriers*, pp. 324-325.

<sup>6</sup> Jeff Horn, 'Privileged Enclaves: Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Eighteenth-Century France', *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, 32, (2004). Horn notes that during the eighteenth century the enclaves increased and eventually exceeded the legal areas of industrial production in cities such as Rouen, Bordeaux and Lyon, remaining outside of the influence of the guilds. This may have played a part in their eventual dismantling.

<sup>7</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. III, article 395, n.3. 'Le Chéron, inspecteur des Manufactures à Rouen, au Contrôleur-général, 4 octobre 1709.'

*manufactures* and from police searches for contraband.<sup>8</sup> In exchange for their protection, these institutions profited from the workers' sales. They were not completely above the law though, and in the accusations related to *toiles peintes*, they were often called 'areas claiming to be privileged', and their status could be threatened if they were found to be offering asylum to people practising prohibited activities. This was the case when Capitaine-générale Tisserand de Luxemont was granted special authorisation to conduct searches, mentioned in Chapter 5.<sup>9</sup> Two other important protective enclaves were on the property of religious military orders. Saint-Jean-de-Latran, which also encompassed many legal businesses (the early magazine the *Mercurie Galant*, holder of a royal privilege, was printed there) belonged to the Knights Hospitaller, while perhaps the most significant for this study, the Temple, was the base of the Knights Templar. (Figure 93.) An eighteenth century writer noted, 'a debtor can laugh in the face of his creditors from the doorstep of the Temple and they can do nothing about it. He rents a little room there and enjoys the Templars' protection.'<sup>10</sup> D'Argenson also denounced the Temple as 'an asylum for more than 150 fraudulent bankrupts', analogous to the claims made against the Faubourg Saint-Antoine.<sup>11</sup> 'There are two places where they openly work on painting cloths of all kinds: one is the Temple and the other is the Cour de Saint-Benoît,' he wrote in October 1701.<sup>12</sup>

Archival research for this thesis has connected several manuscripts which indicate experimental printing activity, based upon requests for permission to develop processes which could have facilitated it. The first was in August 1700 when, in spite of ostensibly unequivocal laws, a privilege was awarded to François Baley, who had 'discovered the secret of the composition of a varnished gum' which could give a smooth, lustrous finish to wood and, it was proposed, to all kinds of fabrics. According to this privilege the King, informed of 'the goodness and beauty of the said gum' and its potential applications for the

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<sup>8</sup> Ecclesiastics were particularly notorious for their protection of illegal artisans: in 1707, d'Argenson complained that the Abbess of Saint-Antoine 'took pleasure in exciting the disobedience of the inhabitants of the Faubourg' to riot against his inspectors. Archives de la Police, G7, 1725, 'Lettre de M. d'Argenson, Lieutenant-général de police à Paris, au Contrôleur-général', 27 mars, 1707. See also Chapter 5, n. 16.

<sup>9</sup> B.A.1225. 'Ordre du Roy, Donné à Versailles, 7 février, 1708.'

<sup>10</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, (1782), Gustave Desnoiresterres (ed.), (Paris: Pagnerre, 1853). 'Le Temple', pp. 305-307.

<sup>11</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. II, article 324. 'M. Le Camus, Lieutenant-civil de Paris, au Contrôleur-général, le 12, 21 et 29 octobre, 10 novembre 1701.' The repeated granting of d'Argenson's requests for searches puts into question exactly how much protection the enclaves could offer.

<sup>12</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. II, article 321. 'M. d'Argenson, Lieutenant-général de police à Paris, au Contrôleur-général, 1 octobre, 1701.' 'Il m'est revenu qu'il y avoit dans cette ville deux endroits où l'on travaille publiquement à peindre des toiles de toutes façons: l'un est le Temple, et l'autre la cour de Saint-Benoît.'

public good, granted Baley a ten-year monopoly to ‘establish manufactures in Paris and other towns’. He could prepare and apply the gum to all types of wood and also ‘linen or hemp cloth and on stuffs of silk and wool *or garments and furniture made with the same cloths.*’<sup>13</sup> The final clause is an unequivocal indication that printing with the gum was planned, in other words, he had arrived at a method of suspending colours in a viscous substance to enable printing, which was of course forbidden. Cloaking his intention in these terms perhaps convinced those with a lack of technical knowledge that the gum was a finishing treatment only, for a variety of products. Even more astonishingly, Baley was to be allowed to open offices and boutiques across the country to sell the wares, an indication of the *Contrôleur-général*’s recognition of the potential commercial importance of the discovery. The privilege was effectively a patent, and attempting to copy his process was expressly prohibited on pain of a 1,500 livres fine, payment of the expenses incurred by Baley, and the confiscation of the imitators’ materials, utensils and all the products which had been treated.<sup>14</sup> He was also free to associate with anyone he wished, including gentlemen, without them ‘being censured as having waived the rights of nobility’.<sup>15</sup> As the aristocracy were expected to have no part in business, this is a particularly telling statement, signifying he had a high-placed sponsor, as indeed, did the granting of such a controversial privilege at all.

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<sup>13</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Privilege d’établir des manufactures pour faire de la gomme donné à François Baley, 17 aoust, 1700.*’ ‘*François Baley... après plusieurs experiences a trouvé le Secret de la composition d’une gomme vernisée, lissée et lustrée, susceptible de toute couleurs, la quelle se peut appliquer sur le bois, ou sur les toiles de lin et de chanvre et sur les étoffes de soye et de laines... Estans informés de la bonté et beauté de la gomme, et... de la commodité que le public en pourra retirer par le service des toiles et étoffes ausquelles il sera appliqué... permis et permettons au dit Baley d’établir, tant dans nôtre dite Ville de Paris que dans les autres Villes... une ou plusieurs Manufactures pour la fabrication et preparation de la dite gomme et apposition d’icelle sur toutes sorte de bois et... sur les toiles de lin et de chanvre et sur les étoffes de soye et de laine ou hardes et meubles faites des dites toiles et étoffes. Comme aussi d’avoir des bureaux, magazines et boutiques dans nôtre dite Ville de Paris et dans les autres Villes... pour vendre et debiter [ces produits].*’ Unusually, the document was signed by both Louis Phélypeaux, who had been *Contrôleur-général* until September 1699 and by Michel de Chamillart, his successor. This suggests that the application had been made during 1699 and that it was important enough to have both men’s authorisation, presumably to encourage and protect the development of a new product it was thought would be of value to industry.

<sup>14</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Privilege d’établir des manufactures pour faire de la gomme.*’ ‘*Faisons très expresses inhibitions et deffenses à toutes personnes... de contrefaire ni imiter lesdites fabrications et preparations de la dite gomme... sans consentement du dit Baley à peine de confiscation des matieres et Ustenciles servant à la Fabrication et preparation de ladite gomme, et des matieres et ouvrages sur lesquels il en serait apposé et de quinze cent livres d’amende et de tous depens, dommages et interests.*’

<sup>15</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘*Privilege d’établir des manufactures pour faire de la gomme.*’ ‘*Avons permis et permettons au dit Baley d’associer à ladite Manufacture telle personnes que bon lui semblera sans que pour raison de la dite Societté les gentils hommes qui pourraient s’être associés puissent être censées avoir derogé à noblesse ni sur cela inquietés et troublés par aucunes Communauté d’Arts et métiers, Juges, officiers ou Magistrats de Police.*’

That benefactor is revealed in a scribbled note on the reverse of Baley's manuscript: 'Privilege to establish manufactures to make gum. Accorded to Monseigneur le grand Prieur.'<sup>16</sup> This endorsement has surfaced in the present research: Edgard Depitre did not find Baley's application, and made his comments on the matter based upon the 1702 document in which 'le grand Prieur' requested clarification from the *Conseil* on his privilege, after it was contested. Depitre assumed the inventor to have been a man of that surname, not attributing it to the Grand Prior of the Temple in Paris.<sup>17</sup>

Le grand Prieur, Philippe de Bourbon, Duc de Vendôme, was head of the Temple, founded by the Knights Templar in the twelfth century, which benefited from historical privileges that placed it outside of royal jurisdiction.<sup>18</sup> The Templars, bankers who controlled vast wealth, would have been able to fund the patent process, while Le grand Prieur de Vendôme had the influence at Court to get it approved. His complicity in the activity was already well known to d'Argenson, who in an October 1701 request for permission to search the Temple and the Cour de Saint-Benoît noted:

The Council rulings have authorised me to make the visits that I find necessary, but propriety forbids me to use this right without first speaking to M. le grand Prieur... and anyway, the perquisitions are usually of no use, being preceded by announcements which avert the workmen, who stop their work for a while, and then start again as before.<sup>19</sup>

He requested that Chamillart write to Le grand Prieur and ask him to 'chase all this type of workers from his property', but to no avail, as his repeated request for a similar search in 1705 shows.<sup>20</sup> This permissive attitude to printing may explain Le grand Prieur's interest in taking up Baley's cause, but it must be noted that his vision was not to print on cotton, the

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<sup>16</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. On reverse of document in the previous note: '*Privilege d'établir des Manufactures pour faire de la gomme. Accordé à Msgr. Le grand Prieur.*'

<sup>17</sup> Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 51. Depitre also confounded his argument by saying the same person objected to printing right up to the quarrel over its legalisation in the 1750s, more than fifty years later.

<sup>18</sup> Vendôme (1655–1727), a descendant of Henri IV, was a lieutenant-général who fought in all the great campaigns of the later years of Louis XIV's reign, and also abbot of several abbeys, including the Abbey de la Trinité, mentioned already as an area where illegal activities were condoned. The palace built for him at the Temple, where he was reputed to live a lavish and dissipated life, became his main residence after his fall from grace and the seizure of his ducal domains. See Jean-Claude Pasquier, *Le château de Vendôme: une histoire douce-amère* (Vendôme: Éditions du Cherche-lune, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. II, article 321. 'M. d'Argenson. Lieutenant général de police à Paris, au Contrôleur-général, 1 octobre, 1701.' '*Les arrêts du Conseil m'autorisent à y faire des visites que je juge à propos; mais l'honnêteté ne me permet pas d'user de ce droit sans en parler à M. le grand Prieur... Ainsi, ces perquisitions ne sont pour l'ordinaire d'aucun usage, étant précédées d'avertissements que l'on ne manque pas de donner aux ouvriers, qui cessent de travailler pendant quelque temps, et travaillent ensuite comme auparavant. Je croirois donc qu'il seroit plus sûr et plus convenable que vous voulussiez bien écrire à M. le grand prieur... de faire chasser de leurs enceintes tous les ouvriers de cette espèce, et de défendre très expressément d'en souffrir aucun.*'

<sup>20</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. '*Dispositif d'arrêt sur le deffense des estoffes des Indes, 27 novembre, 1705.*'

importation of which he opposed, but on linen, in an effort to revive the failing French linen industry. This was presumably influenced by his possessions in Normandy, where he noted the consumption of linen cloths had decreased and ‘Alençon and other places where they make plain cloths to be painted have almost no business since the banning of *toiles peintes*.’<sup>21</sup> It is a remarkable observation that linen was being woven specifically to print upon, when printing on all types of cloth was banned, and on linen it had been specifically singled out as forbidden before 1700. The printing of *toiles peintes*, he commented, ‘is done in France, and so in many Provinces they make themselves clothes’.<sup>22</sup> This is the first mention of the industry being commonplace in France. Le grand Prieur eloquently summarised the many economic reasons why printing should be allowed:

What reason obliged the gentlemen [of the *Conseil de Commerce*] to forbid making *toiles peintes*? If the wish is to weaken foreign commerce and strengthen our own, to diminish the consumption of fabrics from our neighbours in favour of our products, and to prevent our silver from leaving the country... nothing is more practical than granting a privilege to make *toiles peintes*, with suitable restrictions.’<sup>23</sup>

His petition was a response to the continuing opposition to printing by the *Conseil* on behalf of the traditional manufactures. They dissembled, claiming not to have seen Baley’s privilege, and it was ‘a great surprise to infer they had granted anything so damaging to the manufactures of the Kingdom.’<sup>24</sup> The author’s indignation is emphasised by heavy underlining in the surviving notes to the final draft of the document, that while the privilege had been granted as a surface finish (probably a lustrous effect similar to chintz), by the addition of dyes it could be used to print patterns ‘on cotton and linen’, which the *deputés* considered a serious abuse of privilege. Le grand Prieur responded vehemently, arguing the

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<sup>21</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘Memoire de Mr. Le grand Prieur sur le Privilege par lui obtenu, de faire peindre et Imprimer des Estoffes, 24 mars, 1702.’ ‘La consommation des Toilles de Lin... est considerablement diminuées... Alençon et les autres lieux ou se fabriquent les toilles propres pour estre peintes n’ont presque plus de commerce depuis l’absolue interdiction des toilles peintes.’

<sup>22</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘Memoire de Mr. Le grand Prieur.’ ‘Les Toilles semblable a celles qui nous venaient des Indes et de hollande se fabriquoient en France, et dont en beaucoup de Provinces on se faisoit des habits.’

<sup>23</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘Memoire de Mr. Le grand Prieur.’ ‘Quelle raison a obligé Messieurs de la chambre a demander la deffence des Toilles peintes? Ça esté la veüe d’affaiblir le commerce étranger, et de fortiffier le nôtre, de diminuer la consommation des fabriques de nos voisins, et d’augmenter la consommation des nostres, d’empêcher l’Entrée des marchandises étrangere, et la sortie de nostre Argent. Pour arriver a cette veüe, rien n’est plus utile que le privilege des Toilles peintes avec les restrictions et les deffenses convenables.’

<sup>24</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘Mrs. Les Deputez de Commerce, sur le Privilege obtenu par Mr. Le grand Prieur, 16 avril, 1702.’ ‘Ce seroit une surprise manifeste d’inferer de ces termes qu’on aye voulu permettre la fabrique des toiles peintes, et il ne faut pas s’etonner, si les Deputés au Conseil de Commerce ont crû que cette permission étoit dommageable aux Manufactures et au Commerce du Royaume.’



benefits to the economy that permitting printing could bring, including providing work and affordable clothing for the poor:

“What could be better and more useful than the privilege [to make] *toiles peintes*? They are the clothing of more than a third of the Kingdom, all the common people of the towns are inconvenienced by prohibiting their use, they cannot dress themselves as cheaply, and complain that in this time of great poverty they are obliged to spend more on clothing... If their use can be re-established it would provide work by favouring the linen trade over foreign products and providing bread for an infinite number of poor workers who have been deprived of their ordinary clothing.”<sup>25</sup>

His claim that 100,000 workers would lose their jobs in the linen industry if printing was suppressed is surprising and, while the amount is not verifiable, it is interesting to note that printing shops had thriving businesses and were apparently not trading in secret. His final point is perhaps the most important, and presages the arguments which would be used to eventually overcome the prohibition more than fifty years later: that permission to print would be the best way to increase the consumption of French fabrics over imported ones, and thereby boost employment. The French, being ‘such an industrious and brilliant nation’ would soon reverse the trend and start exporting their prints to all the countries of northern Europe, bringing foreign currency into France.<sup>26</sup> His involvement, as a royal duke, in any kind of commercial matter is extremely surprising, but even his influence was not able to sway the *Conseil*, which sided with the manufactures. Of course, Baley and Le grand Prieur may have gone ahead with their developments illicitly, but further technical development would have been severely hampered, leaving the workshops printing imperfect copies on linen. This, nonetheless, could make an attractive profit.

Around the same time as Baley’s application, a group of merchants had asked the *Conseil de Commerce* for permission to print ‘home-spun’ fabrics, which at this date must have been linen. They cited the growing industry in England, although the fact that the English printers were required to export their products was omitted. The *Conseil* did not see the potential of the new industry, and, fearing it would encourage more contraband

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<sup>25</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘Memoire de Mr. Le grand Prieur.’ ‘Qu’y a t’il de meilleur et de plus utiles pour cela que le privilege des toiles peintes? Elles sont l’habillement de plus d’un tiers du Royaume, tout le petit peuple des Villes est incommodé par la deffense de leur usage, il ne peut s’habiller a aussi bon marché qu’il faisois et il se plaint que dans le temps de la plus grande pauvreté on l’oblige a faire plus de depense pour s’habiller... Si l’Explication favourable du privilege reestablissois l’usage des ces Toilles en empechant l’Entrée des Etrangeres, on rendroit du pain a une infinie quantité de pauvres ouvriers, on soulageroit le menu peuple des petites villes, qu’on a primé de son habillement ordinaire, on relevoit le commerce de nos Toilles de Lin qui est presque tombé.’

<sup>26</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. ‘Memoire de Mr. Le grand Prieur.’ ‘Tout le monde connaît la vivacité et l’industrie de la nation française... qui doute donc que si le privilege bien estably nous donnoit moyen d’exercer nostre genie sur les toiles peintes, nous n’eussions bientost surpassé les hollandais, les Anglais, les Indiens mesmes ?’

imports, refused the request.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, it cited the difficulty of differentiating between textiles printed in France and the Indies, although it is highly unlikely that local printers achieved anything resembling Indian goods in either design or technical aspects at this period. It is more probable the confusion was between the high-quality prints imported legally by the *Compagnie* and those illegally smuggled into France by the other East India companies. Even d'Argenson was confused, and sent swatches to *Contrôleur-général* Chamillart, requesting that he identify which were prohibited and which were legal. 'The number of *toiles peintes* increases every day', he lamented.<sup>28</sup> It is unfortunate that neither these nor the samples attached to another letter of 1700 survive. The latter was a card of samples printed in Rouen attached to a memo to the *Intendant*, 'to let your eminence know the quality of these stuffs, and the reason will be clear why their circulation must be prevented', which was, that they were not fit to be called French products.<sup>29</sup>

One unexpected outcome of the proliferation and success of *indiennes* by the 1730s however, was that the silk weavers were driven to experimentation. This is confirmed by the grant of 6,000 livres to a Lyon inventor in 1737 for a mixed cotton and silk 'Levantine' cloth which 'could be substituted for *toiles peintes*'. The *Conseil* ordered the Lyon *Consulat* to reward him from the funds gathered through import duties on foreign silk fabrics. This was used in part to reward local artisans and inventors.<sup>30</sup> The involvement of the central government suggests a recognition of the pre-eminence of *indiennes* by that date. The circulation of so many different types of printed cotton from a variety of sources, and the continual confusion of their production method and provenance by those appointed to enforce the law, all contributed to the overwhelming failure to eradicate the fabrics.

### **An Aristocratic Atelier**

Perhaps the most curious experiment with printing cotton is that conducted by the Duc de Bourbon, by all accounts in person, at the Château de Chantilly. The duke was a notable collector and patron of the arts, particularly between 1726, when he retired from Court, and his death in 1740.<sup>31</sup> (Figure 94.) One of the artists he employed to embellish the

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<sup>27</sup> A.N. F12, 51. 'Arrêt du Conseil d'Etat du Roy, 18 novembre 1702'.

<sup>28</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Lettre d'Argenson à Chamillart, le 4 novembre, 1700.' 'Le nombre d'étoffes peintes augmente tous les jours.'

<sup>29</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. 'Mémoire à M. l'Intendant concernant les étoffes peintes'. Unsigned memo dated 17 décembre, 1700. 'La Carte d'Echantillons qui accompagnent ce Memoire feront connoitre la qualité de ces estoffes, et les raisons qui vous être exposées informerons de la nécessité qu'il y a d'en empêcher le Cours.'

<sup>30</sup> Hilaire-Pérez, *Inventing in a World of Guilds*, p. 244, n. 49.

<sup>31</sup> Louis IV Henri, Prince de Bourbon-Condé (1692-1740), a royal prince (*prince du sang*) and cousin to Louis XV, was known as 'Monsieur le duc'. His fall from grace after an unsuccessful three years as First Minister (1723-1726) was perhaps significant, as after his ignominious withdrawal to his chateau of

chateau around 1733 was Christophe Huet, famed for his Oriental-style *décor* of monkeys performing human tasks known as *singeries*. His fantastic decoration of a salon and a smaller anteroom, commissioned by the duke in 1737, have since become known as *La Grande Singerie* and *La Petite Singerie*, from their abundance of this type of design. Both block-printed and hand-painted elements in the wall decoration are similar to the most expensive *toiles peintes*.<sup>32</sup> (Figure 95.)

Like many of his peers during this period of the early Enlightenment, Bourbon embraced the spirit of the age with an interest in new ideas in scientific development, in which context an interest in the advances in both the arts and sciences was *de rigueur*. He established a porcelain factory in the town of Chantilly in 1730, an experimental endeavour which incorporated the new Oriental techniques and designs.<sup>33</sup> It is also believed he set up a lacquer furniture workshop to imitate the Chinese and Japanese imports becoming popular in high circles.<sup>34</sup> (Figures 96 to 99.) Textile printing was another appropriate outlet for this curiosity, as it embraced both artistic design and technical experimentation. He indulged his interest in attempting to imitate luxury Asian goods with a *toiles peintes* workshop, which is known to have been located in a suite of basement-level service rooms.<sup>35</sup> In 1760, it was written:

[The Duc de Bourbon] amused himself by, among other things, having *toiles peintes* made in his chateau of Chantilly, which imitated those from the Indies so perfectly that they could be used in furnishings without being able to tell the difference from the originals; and even those which were not made to copy the real ones, had designs which were more perfect and appealing... these *toiles* and the lacquer-work were not for public consumption like the porcelain, they were only for His Lordship's amusement and use, or for those to whom he gave them as a gift.<sup>36</sup>

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Chantilly, 50 km north-east of Paris in the Oise department, he had time to develop his interest in the arts and experiment with the workshops. Ernest de Ganay, *Chantilly au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris and Brussels: G. Van Oest, 1925).

<sup>32</sup> Huet worked at Chantilly for a total of 15 years, also decorating the *Grand Salon*. Philip Conisbee (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2009), pp. 259-260.

<sup>33</sup> Château de Chantilly, Inventaire des nouvelles acquisitions (hereafter C.N.A), Volume II, Na 20.1. The Chantilly manufacture was a commercial enterprise based in the town, not at the chateau. It was one of the first European manufactures to imitate *kakiemon* soft porcelain. See Geneviève Le Duc, *Porcelaine tendre de Chantilly au XVIIIe siècle: héritages des manufactures de Rouen, Saint-Cloud et Paris et influences sur les autres manufactures du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Hazan, 1996).

<sup>34</sup> Nicole Ballu, 'L'influence de l'Extrême-orient sur le style de Chantilly au XVIIIe siècle', in *Cahiers de la céramique et des arts de feu*, 11, (1958), pp. 100-112.

<sup>35</sup> These rooms remain in the ancient part of the chateau which escaped destruction during the Revolution. The duke's descendant, the Prince de Condé, rebuilt the Chateau after 1814.

<sup>36</sup> Gustave Macon, *Les arts dans la maison de Condé* (Paris: Librairie de l'art ancien et moderne, 1903), p. 84, citing an anonymous manuscript at Chantilly. 'Le duc de Bourbon s'amusaient outre cela à faire faire dans

Thus the products of Bourbon's experimentation would have had little in common with the reserve-dyed and printed fabrics which it has been established were being worn by the majority of women. His interest was in discovering how to simulate high-status painted *indiennes*, and it is known he was personally involved in the experiments. Even though it was not intended to be a commercial venture, it was a serious workshop, as the Chantilly accounts of the 1730s show ten people, including designers and engravers, employed 'on *toiles peintes*'.<sup>37</sup> In some of these the workshop is called the duke's 'laboratory', perfectly expressing its investigational purpose, as well capturing the crossover between scientific and artistic endeavours it embodied. It is likely with this number of workers that it had more than one printing table at its peak of activity. However, although the workshop's position on the basement level would have provided immediate access to the lake surrounding the chateau for the necessary washing processes and would have satisfied the needs of an experimental studio, it would not have provided the running water required for a larger manufacture. (Figure 100.) One is known to have been set up in 1768 after the lifting of the ban at nearby Coye-la-Forêt, also part of the duke's estate, where the chateau was rented to two entrepreneurs to set up their business.<sup>38</sup> Their request for the 'old wood-blocks used by Monsieur le duc in his chateau at Chantilly for painting cloths and which are of no use to Monseigneur [the duke's son], as he no longer uses them', confirms there was no activity between the duke's death in 1740 and that date.<sup>39</sup> Little is known of the early history of this enterprise, except that it was sold along with a cotton-spinning works at Saint Maximin nearby to a Monsieur Patinot in 1822 as 'the factory called the manufacture of printing on *toiles*, its building and its water course and wood.'<sup>40</sup> The Prince

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*son château de Chantilly des toiles peintes, qui imitent aussi parfaitement celles des Indes qu'elles vont ensemble dans des meubles sans qu'on puisse en connaître la différence; et même celles qui ne sont pas faites pour copier les véritables, ont l'avantage que les dessins en sont plus agréables et plus corrects... mais ces toiles et ces vernis ne sont pas dans le cas de la Manufacture de porcelaine qui travaille pour le public, au lieu que les toiles et les vernis ne se faisaient que pour l'amusement et l'usage de Monseigneur, ou des personnes à qui il en voulait faire présent'.*

<sup>37</sup> Bourbon may have also been experimenting with silk printing: the *Lieutenant-général de police* reported in 1735 that 'Indian painted taffetas are worn a great deal, but when women are told these are also forbidden, they claim they were painted in Paris or Chantilly'. Cited in Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 151.

<sup>38</sup> The leasing of disused buildings to industry was common by the mid-eighteenth century, and after the dissolving of all religious houses following the Revolution, there were a great number of cotton-spinning and weaving mills set up in the vast buildings vacated, including the Abbey of Royaumont near Chantilly.

<sup>39</sup> Cited in P.-R. Schwartz, 'La fabrique d'indiennes du duc de Bourbon (1692-1740)', in *Bulletin de la Société Industrielle de Mulhouse*, 1, no. 722, (1966), p. 22. '*Les anciennes planches gravées dont on faisait usage pour peindre les toiles, dans son château de Chantilly et qui sont devenues actuellement inutiles à Monseigneur, puisqu'il ne fait plus travailler*'.

<sup>40</sup> C.N.A. Vol. II, Na 20, documents 18 and 19, 1822. '*Adjudication de la manufacture d'impression de toiles de Chantilly, au profit de M. Patinot, et actes connexes*'. '*Vente d'usine dite manufacture d'impression sur toile, bâtiment, cours d'eau, Bois, etc... le tout situé à Chantilly.*'

de Condé, Bourbon's grandson, then disputed the use of the 'cascades' to power it, as well as the 'Canal machine' (presumably a steam-powered engine) and the ownership of the 'furniture and buildings of the manufacture of *toiles peintes*'.<sup>41</sup> The factory continued under different ownership at least into the 1830s.<sup>42</sup> An 1834 travel guide described a considerable *manufacture d'indiennes*, occupying 300 workers, and a cotton-spinning mill providing thread for the famous Chantilly lace workshops.<sup>43</sup>

The *toiles peintes* produced by the duke's workshop would have been designed by the artist and engraver he employed in 1729, Jean-Antoine Fraise. His *Livre chinois*, a collection of 'chinese designs taken from the originals from Persia, the Indies, China and Japan' of 1735 contains fine coloured plates of flowers and Oriental scenes, obviously drawn by a Western hand. (Figure 101.) The folio's dedication to the Duc de Bourbon includes a reference to the *indiennes* 'already being printed at the chateau'.<sup>44</sup> Fraise's designs were used on the porcelain and lacquer-work as well as textile painting and printing, but accounting records record him as a 'painter of *toiles*' (*peintre en toile*) or a 'maker of *toiles peintes*' (*faiseur de toiles peintes*).<sup>45</sup> For three years at least, he was working alongside Huet at the chateau and so there may have been a sharing of design ideas by the two artists working on Oriental themes, until Fraise's career ended abruptly and ignominiously in 1736, when he was accused of stealing a gilt-handled cane from a visitor to the chateau. He was imprisoned in the Châtelet in Paris in 1737, where he died in 1739. As the Duc de Bourbon also died in 1740, this was the end of the *atelier* at Chantilly. Susan Miller traced Fraise's birth to a family of master embroiderers and painters in Grenoble around 1680. She notes his most accomplished etchings are 'highly detailed, fantastical vegetal images that reflect this embroidery background... crowded with densely filled fantastical motifs [which bear] no reference to botanical accuracy.'<sup>46</sup> These so-called

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<sup>41</sup> C.N.A. Vol. II, Na 20, documents 20 and 21, 1822. '*Contestation du Prince de Condé au sujet de la propriété des meubles et immeubles de la fabrique de toiles peintes de Chantilly*'. 'Messieurs Patinot et Michel' disputed their right to use the 'machine' of the Canal de la Manse at Chantilly.

<sup>42</sup> C.N.A. Vol. II, Na 20, documents 22-33, 1826-1837.

<sup>43</sup> Eusèbe Girault de Saint-Fargeau, *Guide pittoresque du voyageur en France... publié en 100 livraisons contenant chacune la description complète d'un département*. (Paris: Firmin Didot frères, 1834-35), pp. 41-42. Chantilly's first lace workshop was founded in 1710, followed by a second at the time of the duke's experiments in 1736. Girault reported that by 1834 there were 14 'enterprises' around Chantilly making 'silk lace called *blondes*' (a misleading term for the famously black lace, derived from the colour of the natural silk threads). Despite being called 'manufactures' the workers worked at home, making bobbin lace by hand.

<sup>44</sup> Jean-Antoine Fraise, *Livre des desseins chinois, tirés d'après des originaux de Perse, des Indes, de la Chine et du Japon...* (Paris: s.n., 1735). Only thirteen copies were printed. One containing a few more prints than that at Chantilly is held in the Collection des Estampes in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

<sup>45</sup> Le Duc, *Porcelaine tendre de Chantilly au XVIIIe siècle*, pp. 114-115.

<sup>46</sup> Susan Miller, 'Images of Asia in French luxury goods: Jean-Antoine Fraise at Chantilly, c.1729-36', *Apollo Magazine*, Nov. 2001, pp. 3-12.

‘bizarre’ Oriental-inspired scenes and rococo-style patterns were very much in fashion at that date, both on silk and cotton.<sup>47</sup> (Figures 102 and 103.) One of the few French garments made from a *toile peinte* using a fine painting technique which has been attributed to the prohibition period has elements of this type of design. (Figures 104 to 106.) Fraise never visited the East, but wrote, ‘what place in the world could show me the most precious things that have come from China and the Indies better than the chateau of Chantilly?’<sup>48</sup>

Interestingly, as further proof of his work with the duke on *toiles peintes*, Miller proposes that three Japanese-inspired ‘chrysanthemum branch’ wood-block prints, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, were used to print fabric at Chantilly, because the lack of impressions left on the paper suggests they had been worn smooth from prior use.<sup>49</sup> This motif was also popular in the 1720s and 1730s, and two examples of porcelain identified as Fraise designs exist at Chantilly.<sup>50</sup> His wood-block prints also include designs similar to Indian fabrics. Nicole Garnier-Pelle, Curator of the Musée Condé at Chantilly, agrees that Fraise engraved wood blocks for *indiennes*, but notes that the fine details and large size of the designs reproduced in the *Livre chinois* are copper-plate prints made with a method known as *intaglio*.<sup>51</sup> In this process the design is incised into the copper and filled with ink, the reverse of wood-block printing, where carving in relief is then stamped onto the surface. Fraise was clearly a skilled craftsman to have mastered both techniques. The copper-plate process would be used for cotton printing from the 1780s onwards, and was the method used for printing the engraved designs of Jean-Baptiste Huet, Christophe Huet’s nephew, at the Jouy factory.

It should be noted that Fraise’s designs would have been destined for interior decoration, and indeed, the duke’s output at Chantilly would not have been intended for clothing. This is confirmed by the recent uncovering, beneath panelling on a house on the Chantilly estate, of two printed wall-hangings now attributed to the workshop, which are

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<sup>47</sup> Peter Thornton, ‘The ‘Bizarre’ Silks’, in *The Burlington Magazine*, 100, no. 665 (August 1958), pp. 265-270; Lesley Miller, ‘Les matériaux du costume de cour’, in *Fastes de Cour et cérémonies royales. Le Costume de Cour en Europe 1650-1800*, Exhibition catalogue, Musée national du Château de Versailles et de Trianon, 2009 (Versailles: Château de Versailles, 2009).

<sup>48</sup> Fraise, *Livre des desseins chinois*, dedication. ‘*Mais quel lieu dans le monde pouvoit me fournir une plus belle collection de ce qui est sorti de plus précieux de la Chine et des Indes, que le château de Chantilly?*’

<sup>49</sup> Susan Miller, *Images of Asia in French luxury goods*, p. 5. I thank Ms. Miller for her valuable communications on this subject.

<sup>50</sup> Le Duc, *Porcelaine tendre de Chantilly*, pp. 313-317; Tamara Préaud & Régine de Plinval de Guillebon, *Porcelaines du Musée Condé à Chantilly*. Exhibition catalogue, Musée Condé, 2005 (Paris: Somogy, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> I thank Ms. Garnier-Pelle for her time discussing the techniques used in the workshops at Chantilly.

the only known examples.<sup>52</sup> They feature floral motifs, characters in both early eighteenth-century French dress and Oriental-style costume, and architectural décor similar to that used on porcelain and lacquer wares of the 1730s.<sup>53</sup> Unknown to Paul-Raymond Schwartz, writing on Chantilly in the 1960s, they nonetheless confirm his conjecture that the duke's workshop would have produced artistic but not technically perfect prints. A report written in 1759 by the Abbé Mazeas on the continued search to perfect printing the colour red on cotton, notes that Bourbon 'had the drugs employed by the Indians brought in from that country' when he was a Minister in the 1720s, and consulted du Fay on their use for his experiments, but that this 'only resulted in the knowledge of suitable ingredients for the process'.<sup>54</sup> Bourbon's association with du Fay is particularly interesting, as the latter, according to an elegy upon his death in 1739, had been 'honoured by the King' to provide standards against which all sorts of dyed fabrics could be tested for their quality 'before they are used in Commerce', confirming the requirements for perfection before the production of any textiles in France which has been noted throughout this study.<sup>55</sup>

Aristocratic investigation of Oriental techniques was not unique to Bourbon. His younger brother, the Comte de Clermont, was a patron of the *Société des Arts*, which was interested in scientific improvements in textile and other types of manufacturing, and he is believed to have had an experimental porcelain factory on his estate near Paris.<sup>56</sup> Another aristocrat with similar interests in porcelain manufacture and the imitation of Oriental design was the Duc de Villeroy, and a Fraise design has been attributed to his *atelier*.<sup>57</sup> Equally, Christophe Huet was commissioned to decorate the Duchesse de Maine's Château d'Anet with *chinoiserie*, while the Duc de La Vallière added a rococo *salon chinois* with wall paintings by Huet to the Château de Champs in 1750. This was leased to Madame de

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<sup>52</sup> Nicole Garnier-Pelle, *Deux toiles peintes de la fabrique de Chantilly identifiées?* (S.n.: s.l., 2003).

<sup>53</sup> Geneviève Le Duc notes that the widow of the proprietor of the Chantilly porcelain manufacture owned many valuable furnishings including Oriental rugs and baldaquin beds, but also 'bed-hangings of *toiles peintes*' and armchairs upholstered in 'floral cottons', which may well have been made at the chateau. Le Duc, *Porcelaine tendre de Chantilly au XVIIIe siècle*, p. 50, citing A.N. Y15544, the inventory after death of Dame Lacombe, the wife of Buquet de Montvallier, 1754.

<sup>54</sup> Abbé Mazeas, 'Méthode de faire réussir en France le procédé dont on se sert aux Indes pour imprimer la couleur rouge sur les toiles de coton', in *Corps d'observations de la Société d'Agriculture, de Commerce et des Arts établie par les Etats de Bretagne, années 1759-1760*, cited in Schwartz, *La fabrique d'indiennes*, p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> Bernard de Fontenelle, *Éloge à Charles-François de Cisternai du Fay par Fontenelle, Histoire de l'Académie royale des Sciences, 1739* (Paris: s.n., 1739), p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Charissa Bremer-David discusses the French attitude towards science and art during the early reign of Louis XV, including the role of the Société des Arts and of the Comte de Clermont, in 'Science and Luxury: Two acquisitions by the J. Paul Getty Museum', in *Journal of the J. Paul Getty Museum*, 17, 1989, pp. 47-66. Cited by Susan Miller, *Images of Asia in French Luxury Goods*, p. 6.

<sup>57</sup> Le Duc, *Porcelaine tendre de Chantilly*, pp. 313-317. The Duc de Villeroy is mentioned in Chapter 5 as the patron of the merchant Pierre Poitevin, accused of smuggling *toiles peintes*.

Pompadour in the 1750s. The Marquise, a friend of the Comte de Clermont, is known to have decorated her chateau at Bellevue with *toiles peintes* around the same time and before the lifting of the prohibition.

A taste for luxurious and exotic goods showed refinement and indicated status through its conspicuous display, but also signified intellectual curiosity.<sup>58</sup> The French nobility was not unique in this interest, and there are other examples of European palaces decorated in *indiennes*.<sup>59</sup> Through their networks of contacts in Europe the aristocracy had access to the East India companies, and had adopted the habit of commissioning Oriental goods for their private use. As it is recorded that the Duc de Bourbon gave gifts of his *toiles peintes* to his close friends, it is clear that high-status imitations were his goal. This further explains why aristocrats thought nothing of defying the ban, believing it to be aimed at mass-produced and altogether coarser items. It was not only members of the aristocracy who interested themselves in the ongoing search for chemical perfection of the printing process, but learned ecclesiastics. The aforementioned Abbé Mazeas was influential in the debate on legalising printing in 1759 due to his interest in procuring technical knowledge, and the involvement of other clerics will be described in the following chapter on the debate over the potential repeal of the ban.

### **Increasing technical competency**

Of these two pockets of experimental activity in France, neither the decade-long flirtation of the Duc de Bourbon with high-end artisanal imitation nor the longer-term illegal reproduction of lower-end products broke the stalemate in technical advancement. Progress came in the end not directly from India or through middlemen on that route, but from Europeans who had adapted the Oriental techniques over a far longer period to workable methods for their region. Cut out of this loop, France's torpor provided a lucrative market for those who could provision it from bordering regions and areas of special status within the country. Of these, the Comtat Venaissin (a sovereign territory around Avignon controlled by the Papacy since the thirteenth century) and the Principality of Orange (a tiny feudal state around the city of Orange, itself almost entirely enclosed by the Comtat) were

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<sup>58</sup> See Berg & Clifford, *Consumers and Luxury*.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Angela Volker, 'An Indian Chinoiserie from an Austrian Palace: The Textile Furnishings for Prince Eugene's State Bedroom in Schloss Hof', in *Riggisberger Berichte, Vol. 14: A Taste for the Exotic: Foreign Influences on Early Eighteenth-century Silk Designs*, (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2007). Volker notes the prince overcame import restrictions on printed cotton fabrics from India to install this lavish set of Chinese-style bed-coverings and wall-hangings. Nine other sets of textiles in Indian cotton chintz of the large number commissioned for Schloss Hof still exist.



ideally placed to conduct printing.<sup>60</sup> After unsuccessfully trying to annex these states Louis XIV had been reduced to enforcing customs restrictions, but these had not halted the smuggling of *indiennes* into France.<sup>61</sup> The Avignon industry prospered, with 500 workers by the 1730s and a system of apprenticeship similar to any recognised trade.<sup>62</sup> The volume of fabrics produced in these territories was so significant that they were the first commodity listed in a 1734 Concordat which Louis XV imposed on the Pope to halt the massive trafficking of all types of merchandise.<sup>63</sup> The pact was effective in eradicating textile printing there until after the Revolution, but had a brutal effect on Avignon's economy.<sup>64</sup>

Textile printing skills in Marseille developed considerably with the founding of a manufacture of *indiennes* in the mid-1740s by Jean-Rodolphe Wetter, a Swiss-born entrepreneur who had been working there for more than 15 years, and had already started businesses in several different fields to exploit the unique advantages of the town's status.<sup>65</sup> He was allowed to produce *toiles peintes* (most probably by the reserve printing method) on condition that the products did not enter France.<sup>66</sup> His request for a privilege to print 'in the English manner' in 1744 in his proto-factory in Marseille's Saint-Marcel district shows he was attempting innovative methods, but his endeavours were thwarted by the *Chambre de Commerce*, in spite of his samples being approved for colour-fastness by du Fay's successor at the Académie, Jean Hellot.<sup>67</sup> Hellot had extensively researched 'grand et petit teint' dyeing on wool.<sup>68</sup> The quality of the fabrics he tested varied widely: he declared that

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<sup>60</sup> In Orange printing was tolerated, but sporadically repressed. In December 1746 the *fermiers* seized 'three pieces of badly printed *toiles peintes*, 63 engraved plates, a table and a poor press' from the small workshop of Arnaud du Moulin. The engraved plates and the press suggest he was attempting to print using paper-printing equipment, as the copper-plate method had not been perfected on fabric at that date. Hippolyte Féraud, 'De l'industrie des toiles peintes et mouchoirs à Orange', in *Mémoires de l'Académie de Vauchuse*, 1887, citing the Bibliothèque Musée-Calvert d'Avignon, Ms. 5269, folio 153.

<sup>61</sup> Orange was ceded to France in the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, but long-running disputes by several claimants meant it was not fully absorbed until after the Revolution.

<sup>62</sup> Archives Communales d'Avignon, série HH, 'Attestation légalisée des marchands d'indiennes d'Avignon sur la fabrication et le commerce des indiennes à Avignon avant le Concordat du 11 mars 1734', cited in Chobaut, *L'Industrie des Indiennes à Avignon et à Orange*, p. 27. Arguing for the reinstatement of printing after the Concordat, the merchants claimed there had been five large workshops, together producing 30,000 pieces per year and employing 500 people, and therefore 2,000 residents had been dependent upon them.

<sup>63</sup> Chobaut, *L'Industrie des Indiennes à Avignon et à Orange*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>64</sup> The counter-productive result was that most of the craftsmen vacated the territory and took their experience to other areas across France, and those who stayed became destitute. By the terms of the Concordat they had to be supported by the *Fermiers-généraux* with pensions and allowances of wheat.

<sup>65</sup> Chobaut, *L'Industrie des Indiennes à Avignon et à Orange*, p. 17.

<sup>66</sup> Clouzot, *Histoire de la manufacture de Jouy*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>67</sup> A.N. F12, 565. 'Permission de peindre des étoffes demandées par le Sieur Weter, 1744.' The file also contains Hellot's report, which notes the qualities of the samples in detail: red, violet and black were solid, but the blue dyes were considered too poor to withstand bleaching.

<sup>68</sup> Jean Hellot, *L'art de la teinture des laines et des étoffes de laine en grand et petit teint, avec une instruction sur les déboüillis*, par M. Hellot.... (Paris: Veuve Pissot, 1750). See also Doru Todericiu, *Chimie*

two linen-cotton mixtures (*siamoises et toiles flambées*) submitted by a Monsieur de la Porte of Rouen ‘tarnished in the air and were horrible after two years’.<sup>69</sup> However, he considered the textiles printed by Claude Julien, an Avignon printer who sought permission in 1746 to establish a factory in Paris for the ‘printing of handkerchiefs, tablecloths and serviettes for coffee’ acceptable, being ‘at least as solid as those from the Indies, the yellow even resisting boiling with soap’.<sup>70</sup> This this request was equally refused, and another application by Wetter that year for printing on linen was also repudiated. Further requests to print during the 1740s indicate increased attempts to replicate the success of other European countries. These requests indicate not only the technical advances being achieved but the growing possibility that the activity could soon be permitted. None of these workshops received permission to print though, showing that the government’s obstinate perpetuation of the ban had other motivations than purely quality.

Technical competence continued to fluctuate so widely that it can only be attributed to the total protection of their secrets by those who achieved success, forcing each entrepreneur to search out his own methods. In 1749, the Danton brothers of Angers asked permission from the *Intendant* of Tours to ‘dye in a fine blue all the kinds of cloths made in France, either of linen or of linen and cotton mixtures... with different designs of flowers, stripes, or other motifs for women’s and children’s dress, kerchiefs, and other useful things.’<sup>71</sup> (Figure 107.) Unfortunately, the samples furnished did not give satisfaction when washed in hot water, and the *Intendant* denied the request. The Dantons continued their experiments and two years later, in March 1752, after applying to both the *Intendant* and to Vincent de Gourney, *Intendant de Commerce*, they obtained permission to print linen fabrics made in Anjou.<sup>72</sup> They were explicitly refused permission to print on fabrics from elsewhere, or on any cotton cloth, but this would have been impossible for *inspecteurs* to

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*appliquée et technologue chimique au milieu du XVIIIe siècle: œuvre et vie de Jean Hellot, 1685-1766*, (unpublished thesis, E.P.H.E., Paris, 1975).

<sup>69</sup> A.N. F12, 565. ‘Rapport de M. Hellot sur certaines étoffes, 1746.’ ‘Les étoffes de M. de la Porte, les siamoises et toiles flambées de Rouën, se ternissent à l’air et sont horribles au bout de deux ans’.

<sup>70</sup> A.N. F12, 93. ‘Privilège demandé par M. Julien pour l’establissem d’une fabrique pour peindre des toilles.’ ‘L’impression des mouchoirs, nappes et serviettes à café.’ The early *indienneur* from Paris by the name of Claude Jullien, whom Chobaut discovered was hired by two Avignon merchants in 1689, was possibly a relative. See Chapter 4, n. 31. A.N. F12, 565. ‘Rapport de M. Hellot sur certaines étoffes.’ ‘La jaune, même après avoir été boiülliee avec du savon, a été trouvée aussi solide que des couleurs des Indes.’

<sup>71</sup> Serge Chassagne, *La manufacture de toiles imprimées de Tournemine-lès-Angers (1752-1820): étude d’une entreprise et d’une industrie au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971), p. 72, citing Archives Départementales de Maine-et-Loire 37, C131. ‘Teindre en bleu, bon et fin, toutes les toiles qu’on fabrique en France, soit de fil seul, soit de fil et coton... avec differens desseins soit fleurs, soit rayures, soit autrement, il peut faire des habillements pour les femmes et pour leurs enfants, des mouchoirs et autres choses à l’usage public.’

<sup>72</sup> Chassagne, *La manufacture de toiles imprimées de Tournemine-lès-Angers*, pp. 82-83.

police, and Chassagne surmises that within a few months the Dantons extended the meaning to cover all fabrics.

In May 1753, the *Conseil de Commerce* decided to allow the freedom to reserve-dye *toiles peintes*, but not to print them: a nonsensical differentiation. Entrepreneurs quickly exploited the permission and stretched its boundaries. In July 1754 a partnership was formed between a textile printer called Cabannes, who claimed to be the inventor of ‘a secret process of dyeing *toiles*’, a Parisian banker called Cottin and five other backers, to set up an indigo-dyeing factory in the Arsenal.<sup>73</sup> Cottin advertised twice in the *Journal Oeconomique* in April and June 1755, claiming his wares were ‘authorised by the *Conseil*’, which was completely untrue.<sup>74</sup> His initiative induced merchants to order several pieces, which were then seized.

Meanwhile Wetter, after the bankruptcy of his business in Marseille, founded a new manufacture in the more favourable administrative zone of Orange in 1757, with a huge investment of 600,000 livres from Parisian backers.<sup>75</sup> This capital permitted the purchase of not only the workshop premises and warehouses, but also drying meadows, an ‘indigo mill’ and a nearby coal mine to supply the furnaces. It grew into a significant enterprise, and has been used as an example of an early ‘factory’, but in reality it was a series of large artisanal workshops, as can be seen by the huge numbers of workers in the paintings he later proudly commissioned of his manufacture.<sup>76</sup> One of the paintings depicts men working at very basic wood-block printing tables, and the other a workshop full of *pinceauteuses*, women who painted the finishing touches onto the pre-printed fabrics. (Figures 108 and 109.) In 1759 the factory’s output was 6,000 pieces, which doubled each year, reaching its apogee in 1765 once copper-plate printing had been introduced, to an annual production of half a million metres, and sales of over 1 million livres.<sup>77</sup> This massive development was well-planned for, with the purchases of a watermill capable of washing 34,000 pieces and a shed for boiling the same quantity. Wetter’s production gained such a reputation for quality that all *toiles peintes* were known as *Toiles d’Orange*, long before *Toiles de Jouy*.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Chapman & Chassagne, *European Textile Printers in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 107-109.

<sup>74</sup> BnF 8-S-7546 (18). *Journal oconomique, ou Mémoires, notes et avis sur les arts, l’agriculture, le commerce...*, Juin 1755 (Paris: chez Antoine Boudet, 1755).

<sup>75</sup> Clouzot, *Histoire de la manufacture de Jouy*, pp. 133-134.

<sup>76</sup> Joseph-Gabriel Maria Rossetti, ‘La fabrique Wetter’, 1765. Musée municipal, Orange.

<sup>77</sup> Chobaut, *L’Industrie des Indiennes à Avignon et à Orange*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>78</sup> For example the *Encyclopédie méthodique, Tome II: Manufactures et Arts* (Paris: Pancrouke, 1784). ‘*Siamoisés* after printing are known as *toiles d’Orange*, one of the first printing establishments in our kingdom.’

Wetter's activity was condoned by the French government because he sourced his fabrics mainly within France: linen from Beauvais, *siamoises* from Rouen and Troyes, and various sources of French cottons. Together these fabrics represented three-quarters of his production, with only one-quarter printed on Indian cotton. The products were mainly hangings and *mouchoirs*, but also prints for clothing. (Figures 110 and 111.) They were said to be of fine quality and were greatly prized, competing successfully with other European printers in markets as diverse as Portugal, Spain and Russia. Unfortunately, Wetter overreached himself financially with large quantities of stock, and at the same time his market in France was attacked by competition from other manufactures after the repeal of the ban, particularly Jouy, as well as from smuggled foreign goods. In 1766 his creditors called in their debts and from the height of success the company plummeted into administration.<sup>79</sup> The litigation was still unsettled at Wetter's death in 1777.

The workshop's departure opened the way for Oberkampf and the Mulhouse factories to fully develop the French market. These entrepreneurs openly collaborated with Swiss printers, and even Cottin hired artisans from Geneva and Neuchâtel in 1758, and engaged the young Oberkampf as an apprentice. In the same year the first factory in Nantes was opened by Jean-Baptiste Ferey, and another was opened in Angers by Pierre Daviais. These were the first manufactures specifically and openly incorporated for printing. Surviving samples show the quality of their output varied. (Figure 112.) Around the country entrepreneurs began preparing for a repeal. On May 15, 1759 four months before the prohibition was actually rescinded, the elders of Nantes granted Messrs. Dutertre and Bainville who, surprisingly, 'had been authorised by the *Conseil* to found a manufacture of *toile peintes* in the city' their permission to clean out a disused river channel where the 'excellent flow of water' was known to be suitable for dyeing. As part of the agreement, the partners promised to fill in the ditch if it caused any damage to local farms.<sup>80</sup>

In summary, it has been demonstrated more than eighty years after *indiennes* were recorded at the fairs in Beaucaire and Paris, the French were still searching for ways to print multi-coloured, elaborate prints which successfully imitated the intricate Indian designs. Pockets of experimental activity existed, but these were isolated and driven by different motives. Applications for privileges for inventions which may have led to

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<sup>79</sup> A.N. 'Arrest du Conseil d'État du Roi, rendu au sujet de la Manufacture des Toiles peintes à Orange, du 9 janvier 1767.'

<sup>80</sup> A.M.N. Série HH 34. 'Permis aux Suppliants de faire Curer le fossé... le 15 may 1759.' 'Disans qu'ayans été autorisés par le Conseil a élevée une Manufacture de toilles peintes à Nantes... L'excellente qualité des eaux de cette rivière pour les teintures est connu'.

advances in production techniques were routinely refused, and the logistical limitations of developing new products in concealed workshops seriously hindered progress. Nonetheless, occasional petitions showed the determination to develop a new industry was never fully quashed.

The larger-scale enterprises which were needed to nurture experimental development had to be established in territories outside of French jurisdiction, by entrepreneurs who had gathered their experience in other countries where printing was permitted. By the end of the prohibition they had significantly advanced their processes, although even the well-organised and connected Oberkampf had not fully mastered the techniques practiced in England in time to sufficiently supply the new market. Even if they were technically competent, many of the new enterprises did not survive the initial years of free production due to the difficulties of financing an industry where a significant outlay in terms of cloth to print on was essential, revenue could only be realised with investment in labour, and the over-production of stock was a serious hazard.

A more altruistic motive of developing an industry which could benefit the country and its balance of trade gave *Académicians* and members of the establishment the desire to explore and perfect printing processes. For others, such as the Duc de Bourbon, the production of *toiles peintes* was an excellent, but esoteric project, more an experiment in line with the curiosity of enlightened thinkers than a commercial enterprise. Experimentation was first aimed at imitating the highest quality Indian painted goods, but later at equalling the reproductions which were being made elsewhere in Europe. The tests were unsuccessful in unlocking the recipes and procedures required, despite the influence of the protagonists, and their ability to import the necessary ingredients (in the case of the Duc de Bourbon and du Fay) or the required knowledge (in the case of the envoys of the *Compagnie* and the Church).

Without samples of undisputed provenance, it is impossible to prove the experimentation required for innovation was conducted in the covert printing workshops, and it is therefore erroneous to assume they were part of a continuum which gradually led to technical success. Instead, it must be concluded that they sought only to produce crude imitations. Numerous documents affirm that it was not until the 1750s that successful reproductions were made in France, and even then, the search for perfection continued, both in methods and ingredients. In 1766 Jean Ryhiner analysed Father Coeurdoux's letters and concluded that the processes he described were similar to those practiced in Europe by the 1760s, but observed that the bright colours of the Coromandel painted cloths could still

not be matched by the printed versions.<sup>81</sup> That some enterprises had clearly succeeded while others were unable to produce quality prints, indicates how localised and secret printing knowledge remained, and how closely guarded it was by those who had obtained it. Significantly, the eventual accomplishments came not from the various avenues of direct French research, but through techniques copied from other European nations, which had succeeded earlier through their own observations and experimentation, while France stagnated. The period which led to the eventual repeal of the ban, with the continued dispute over legalisation and the developments in the surrounding countries, will be discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>81</sup> Ryhiner. *Traité sur la fabrication et le commerce des toiles peintes*.

## CHAPTER 7

### Debate and Dissent

This frivolous and ridiculous taste, which has degenerated into a frenzy, has prescribed *toiles peintes* to people of all conditions. We know that fashion's empire, ascribed to a sex often too sensitive to her charms, exerts a tyranny to which all must yield.<sup>1</sup>

Although the outrage over 'fashion's empire' continued in France's textile manufacturing sector, the topic began to increasingly divide opinion as the century progressed, and the prospect of a repeal became a possibility. One reason was that all French industries enjoyed greater prosperity after 1720 as a result of longer periods of peace, and the textile trades were no exception: woollen cloth manufacture at Beauvais tripled between 1724 and 1755, and silk-making in Lyon doubled between 1720 and 1760.<sup>2</sup> The textile industry began to reclaim its importance to the economy, but reluctance to disturb this advantageous situation resulted in further intransigence over a repeal of the ban. The circumstances which led to the eventual removal of the prohibition will be examined in this chapter.

In the 1730s the prohibition was periodically repeated as a deterrent, yet the rulings became further apart and their enforcement lessened over the decade. This did not stop sporadic prosecutions and, unable to search and seize goods in private homes, zealous officers sometimes resorted to such extreme measures as fining women 'seen at their windows... dressed in *toiles peintes*'.<sup>3</sup> Nor did the public's indignation at being denied their right to wear what they chose abate, as shown by a revolt in Sommières near Nîmes in 1738, where officers who tried to enforce unpaid fines were viciously attacked by a crowd

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<sup>1</sup> Anon., '*Réflexions sur les avantages de la libre fabrication et de l'usage des toiles peintes en France*' pour servir de réponse aux divers mémoires des fabriquans de Paris, Lyon, Tours, Rouen, &c. sur cette matière' (Geneva: Damonville, 1758), p. 43, quoting one of the petitions from the Paris manufactures: '*Un gout frivole & ridicule, qui a dégénéré en frénésie, en a prescrit l'usage [de la Toile peinte] aux personnes de tout étage & de toute condition. On sait quel est l'empire de la mode; accréditée par un sexe souvent trop sensible à ses agrémens, elle exerce un pouvoir tyrannique auquel tout doit céder*'. Attributed to Abbé André Morellet. An outspoken critic, it is not surprising his work was published anonymously, as he had spent a short time in the Bastille for an insulting pamphlet he had written on the work of a playwright. Geneva is false, to avoid prosecution, the provenance of the paper used shows it was published in Paris. The original is part of the collection of papers related to the Quarrel in the Ms. Joly de Fleury 343 and 344.

<sup>2</sup> Le Roy Ladurie, *L'Ancien régime*, p. 363.

<sup>3</sup> Bibliothèque nationale, Collection de Champagne, Vol. 73, folio 156-157, '*Ordonnance de M. Hérault, lieutenant-général de police*', 17 mai, 1730. Cited in Morin, *Recherches sur l'impression des toiles dites 'indiennes' à Troyes*, p. 6. '*Plusieurs particulières trouvées vêtues de toiles peintes... avient été vues à leurs fenêtre*.' These women were fined 200 livres each in Troyes. See also Chapter 5, n. 75 on similar events in Paris.

which threw rocks at them.<sup>4</sup> There were prosecutions for wearing the fabrics right up to the repeal, but the manifest difficulty of regulating what women wore meant that many officials had given up trying to prosecute them for dressing in *indiennes* by 1740. Some *Intendants* may have been ignorant of the actual number of contraventions, as *Inspecteurs des manufactures* often reported that *indiennes* were no longer being worn in their districts, presumably to suggest their own efficacy in applying the law.

The concentration was on preventing smuggling, and Philibert Orry, *Contrôleur-général* from 1730 to 1745, was particularly vigorous in his attempts to eliminate contraband fabrics, remedying a fifty-year history of failure. He delegated the mounted police force to support officers making arrests, and issued unequivocal orders to his *Intendants*. ‘It is not necessary to wear them,’ he wrote, ‘it is enough to own them in any manner. *Toiles peintes* are forbidden in France, and I do not see why you treat them any differently to those made abroad.’<sup>5</sup> Orry’s zeal prodded some *Intendants* into a flurry of repression: in Rennes, 54 women were arrested in one day in August 1736 for wearing *toiles peintes* in the street.<sup>6</sup> They included a countess, a marquise and the wives of a state prosecutor and a parliamentary officer, as well as many ordinary folk. A consecutive order not to reduce the fines suggests some *Intendants* were considered too liberal in their interpretation of the law.<sup>7</sup> In an analysis of the application of the repression in Anjou from 1735 to 1745 based on legal archives, Serge Chassagne noted a distinct drop in the level of fines, which was peculiar to that province, but which denotes the increasing autonomy of *Intendants* in the levels of punishment.<sup>8</sup> He also noted the limitation of prosecutions to urban areas where the bans were posted, with little enforcement in smaller towns and rural areas. In addition, *Intendants* frequently overlooked the illegal activities of officials, particularly customs clerks who appropriated and sold confiscated fabrics. Nor did the continuing prohibition prevent some *Intendants* from granting individual privileges to print,

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<sup>4</sup> Archives Départementales de l’Hérault, 1738, cited in J.P. Desauunay, *Révolte à Sommières pour les Indiennes*, Site de Sommières et Son Histoire, Bulletin no. 3, at <http://www.sommeresetsonhistoire.org/SSH/spip.php?article90>. [Accessed June 14, 2014]

<sup>5</sup> Archives départementales de Bouches-du-Rhône, cited in Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 100. ‘Il n’est pas nécessaire de porter les habillements d’indienne pour être sujet à la condamnation. Il suffit d’en avoir de quelque manière que ce soit. Les toiles peintes en France sont défendus et je ne vois pas pourquoi vous faites la différence de ces toiles avec celles qui sont peintes à l’étranger.’

<sup>6</sup> Archives départementales d’Ille-et-Vilaine C1526 and C1530, cited by Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 112, n. 2.

<sup>7</sup> B.A. 1246. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’Etat du Roy du 30 octobre, 1736.*’

<sup>8</sup> Chassagne, *La manufacture de toiles imprimées de Tournemine-lès-Angers*, p. 64-65. The provincial *Intendant* Viarmes never pronounced a fine of more than 1000 l., and more than half were not more than 10 lives. However in most provinces, the standard fine of 3000 l. was automatically applied.



purportedly for export to Guinea. For example, Callot and Ponthieu obtained exclusive permission in 1743 to print *guingans*, a cotton and hemp cloth, 'in the Indian style' (*façon des Indes*) and kerchiefs 'in the style of those from Bengal and Pondicherry' (*façon de Bengale, Pondichéry et autres des Indes*) in the diocese of Rennes: there was little doubt that this was a manufacture of *indiennes*.<sup>9</sup> Other exceptions were made to print *mouchoirs*, although these goods should have been equally proscribed, and the blocks could be used to print other fabrics.

Economic factors greatly affected the move towards legalisation. The prohibition was a financial burden to enforce, and contrary to the expectations of the manufactures, its application had not increased their business. The *Conseil* began to recognise other missed commercial opportunities, for example, the market for *indiennes* in France's hotter colonies, where, as it was not practical for women to wear silk, they purchased cotton from other East India Companies. Clearly, supplying them with French-made cottons would be an advantage. The better quality of prints being smuggled into France from the rest of Europe was also noted.<sup>10</sup> It piqued a desire to equal these developments, a goal more tolerable than imitating products from the colonies, which was considered an admittance of inferiority that had always been execrable to the French and the English alike. In addition, the growing awareness of the technological advances taking place in England since the mid-1730s provoked discussion on whether spinning and weaving, using cotton from Louisiana, could be developed as a controllable industry, with governable standards.<sup>11</sup> However, development was hampered by the inability to provide strong enough warps for a pure-cotton fabric. Linen-warped *siamoises* could provide a fair imitation of imported cottons for furnishing, but for clothing they 'come back from washing completely changed', and were thus poor in comparison to *indiennes*.<sup>12</sup> There were almost 15,000 workers employed making *siamoises* at Rouen by 1727, enough to give its *Chambre de Commerce* another reason for upholding the ban, as it feared that if cotton printing was

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<sup>9</sup> Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 153, citing A.N. F12, 90. Depitre credited this with being the first sanctioned manufacture, but it seems rather to have been an example of a provincial exception.

<sup>10</sup> B.A. 389, 'Arret qui defend l'entrée dans la ville, port et territoire de Marseille des toilles teintes ou peintes autres que celles du Levant, 30 juin, 1742.' This law reiterated the ban on importing 'printed, dyed or checked fabrics' into Marseille from any source except directly from the Levant, suggesting the products of other European printers were being purchased by the city's merchants.

<sup>11</sup> The successive English cotton spinning and weaving inventions which gave birth to the Industrial Revolution are described in detail in Baines, *History of the Cotton Manufacture*.

<sup>12</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. III, no. 241. 'Lettre de M. Lamoignon de Courson, intendant de la généralité de Rouen au Contrôleur-général, 20 décembre, 1708.' 'Ils reviennent du lavage complètement changés.' While these fabrics were substituted for cotton for printing, the majority of *siamoises* were striped weaves which were legal and explain the employment figures.

allowed, and Normandy weavers could not supply the anticipated demand for plain cloths to print upon, then the flood of cotton imports would ruin their industry.<sup>13</sup>

Conversely, respected scholars and men of political influence began to be persuaded of the benefits of rescinding the ban. The argument of low-quality textiles injuring the French economy began to lose support, and there was recognition that an opportunity was being missed to exploit a potential new market for the products of the *anciennes manufactures* as, indeed, Le grand Prieur had suggested as early as 1702. This was for printing on other fabrics, not cotton. Technical developments in both printing and fancy finishes to fine wool products in England meant those innovative textiles were being smuggled into France alongside *toiles peintes*, and this spurred the granting of a privilege to Jacques Le Marcis, a merchant from Bolbec in Normandy to print wool serge in 1729.<sup>14</sup> He had apparently learned the technique, which consisted of placing the fabric on a heated copper plate, in England. This was unrelated to the techniques for printing cotton, perhaps allowing it to be considered differently. It was also tolerated because the products had been perfected: due to the inherent knowledge of dyeing animal fibres, it had taken less time to make the prints colour-fast on wool and arrive at a suitable product for trade. The Le Marcis family obtained repeated privileges which gave them a monopoly for over twenty years, although other workshops are believed to have existed.<sup>15</sup> Wool printing was only fully permitted shortly before cotton in 1757, in a ruling which noted that ‘waffled’ (*gauffrés*) and printed wools had ‘revitalised the wool Manufactures’.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, anyone wishing to start similar establishments ‘should not be deterred by the orders pronounced at different times against painting and printing cloth in France, even though among them there are some which include wool in the prohibition’.

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<sup>13</sup> Depitre, *La toile peinte en France*, p. 146. Depitre studied documents in the archives of the Seine-Maritime department. With this number of employees, and using local linen at least in part, the cotton component was conveniently overlooked.

<sup>14</sup> A.N. F12, 76 and 97. As well as printing, the finishes included *laines gaufrés* (literally, waffled wools), where a design was embossed on the fabric with hot irons.

<sup>15</sup> D’Allemagne, in *La Toile imprimée*, pp. 78-79, asserts (without a reference) that there was another authorisation for printing ‘floral serge’ at Montpellier in 1743, and that workshops began in Reims (1746), Beauvais (1748) and Rouen (1754), but that these were short-lived as they could not compete with the lower-cost *toiles peintes* once the industry was legalised.

<sup>16</sup> B.A. 1163. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’État du Roi, Portant permission de gaufrer, peindre et imprimer les Serges, Anacostes & autres étoffes de laine de toute espèce, 24 août, 1757.*’ ‘*On leur devoit la conservation, & même le rétablissement de plusieurs manufactures de laine qui tomboient... si plusieurs personnes qui desireroient se livrer à de pareils établissements, n’en avoient été détournées par les défenses prononcées en différens temps de peindre & imprimer les toiles en France, parmi lesquelles il s’en trouve quelques-uns où les étoffes de laine sont comprises dans ladite prohibition.*’ Anacoste was a type of twill weave specific to Normandy.

Silk printing was of little interest while the French held supremacy in Europe with their highly complex, decorative woven designs. However, they progressively lost this advantage in the first half of the eighteenth century as the other European nations developed their silk industries (not least because of their improved access to the raw material), particularly in plain weaves, where the French could not compete on price. It was only when a fashion for printed Indian silks began in the 1730s that the possibility of adding value through printing became of interest. Having some properties in common with wool, the process of fixing hand-painted dye on silk was already known, but printing remained a technical challenge like cotton. It is thought there may have been experimentation on silk as well as cotton at Chantilly, which would seem likely in view of its fashionable status. In 1742 a Lyon merchant's request to 'paint silk with a paintbrush if he paid the duties' was rebuffed by the *Conseil*, on advice from the Lyon *Chambre de Commerce* because, firstly, the design outline had actually been stamped with a block, and secondly, because 'the taffetas are of an inferior quality, and a drop of water would wash the paint away'.<sup>17</sup> With the printing process imperfect, the prohibition remained in force, and repeated requests for privileges to print on silk were refused throughout the 1740s, indicating a growing technical competence.

Wetter's demand for a privilege in Marseille in 1744 and Julien's in Paris in 1746 (see Chapter 6) were representative of the growing pressure for a repeal. Their requests to establish legitimate businesses were among the catalysts which opened up the debate, not least because their samples had been found to be substantive by the chemist Jean Hellot. In his adjudication of new fabrics, he concluded that printing could be a boon to the economy, by creating a demand for French cottons and also using the raw products of her colonies. Importantly for this study, however, his suggestions were directed exclusively at its use for home furnishings, and not clothing.<sup>18</sup> This was later borne out by the production of the Oberkampf factory at Jouy. Hellot's recommendations were disregarded, but with the growing requests for printing permission, the *Conseil* was roused to commission an enquiry into the feasibility of legalising printing, under the direction of Michau de Montaran,

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<sup>17</sup> A.N. F12, 88 and 89. 'Correspondence du Prévost des marchands de Lyon', 6 juin, 1742; 20 septembre, 1742. 'Le négociant demande s'il recevrait, en payant les droits, permission de faire des mouchoirs ou fichus de soie peints au pinceau.' 'Messieurs les députés ont remarqués que le trait qui sert à marquer le dessin étant imprimé avec une moule... [et les taffetas] sont d'une qualité très inférieure, soit par rapport à la peinture qu'une goutte d'eau efface.' Significantly, this describes the *outline* of the pattern being stamped, to be then filled in by hand with a paintbrush. This may be easily confused with the *design*, or full pattern, being printed on the fabric, misleading those who have interpreted the process.

<sup>18</sup> A.N. F12, 565. 'Rapport de M. Hellot sur certaines étoffes', 1746.

*Intendant de Commerce*, who found the wool industry to be well placed to deal with any competition.<sup>19</sup>

The report he delivered in 1749 suggested three different options for the resolution of the *affaire des toiles peintes*.<sup>20</sup> The first of these was to continue the prohibition and to extend it to reserve printing; the second option was to allow printing on fine woollens, but to continue the ban on all other fabrics; the final, original, idea was to allow printing in France's boundary provinces of Brittany, Flanders and Alsace, presumably as resistance from the old manufactures did not come from these areas. Overall, however, his report was contradictory, concluding, like Hellot, that these solutions could be safely applied to printing furnishing fabric, but that a widespread permission to print cotton for clothing, as well as lifting the restriction on wearing them, was undesirable.<sup>21</sup> His assessment that printing *toiles peintes* uniquely for domestic decoration could provide an end to the contraband in foreign-printed *indiennes* seems extremely naïve for an *Intendant de Commerce*. Perhaps his most useful observation was that the affair should be revisited as circumstances changed. In the *Conseil*, the *deputés* could not agree: the representatives for Lille and Lyon favoured permitting the printing of the *Compagnie*'s plain cotton fabrics in the port cities of Marseille, Bayonne or Dunkirk, on the understanding that they were to be exported for the slave trade, while the Paris *deputé* stood fast to the prohibition, declaring the excellence of the fine cottons from the Indies would never be matched in France, and expressing his concern that printing would continue on those fabrics, rather than home-grown products.

With the continued objections, it was several more years until another category of textile was released from the restrictions, when permission was granted for reserve printing in 1752.<sup>22</sup> Following the complaints of Parisian dyers who had had their goods seized, the

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<sup>19</sup> Opinions differ on this point, and it can be concluded that the wool manufactures' business was subject to fluctuation. The growth Montaran noted had arisen from the development of new products that could resist the need to import English goods is at odds with Herman Van der Wee's description of a 'deep and irredeemable structural crisis' in the French wool industry in the 1740s (particularly at Amiens and Reims). Herman Van der Wee, 'The Western European Woollen Industries: 1500 to 1750', in David Jenkins (ed.), *Cambridge History of Western Textiles*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Vol. 1, p. 468.

<sup>20</sup> A.N. AB, XIX, Tome VII. 'Mémoires du Parlement de Paris, recueillis par M. Michau de Montaran de Montbrun: 1757-1767.' Michau de Montaran was appointed *Intendant de Commerce* in 1744 (a position of more importance than a provincial *Intendant*) and, perhaps conflictingly, King's Commissioner of the *Compagnie* in 1751. His great wealth is shown by his 50,000 livres investment in the Angola Company (*Société d'Angola*), an organisation set up in Nantes in 1748 which controlled almost 30% of the slave trade on the African coast. This interest may also have swayed his conclusions.

<sup>21</sup> A.N. F12, 565. 'Opinion de M. de Montaran sur les toiles peintes', 1749.

<sup>22</sup> A.N. F12, 100. 'Ordonnance du Bureau de Commerce qui donne mainlevée aux teinturiers des toiles de coton teintes à la réserve...', décembre 1752.

*Conseil de Commerce* finally agreed to allow this type of production. By this date there had been significant developments in the technique, particularly how to apply melted wax with carved blocks, rather than hand-application.<sup>23</sup> This offered the potential for a wider choice of designs, even though the operations of dyeing were the same. The approbation for this process complicated matters further, as workshops of *toiles peintes à la reserve* sprang up around the country to take advantage of the authorisation. Officials tended to turn a blind eye, and *Contrôleur-général* Machault d'Arnouville declared the fabrics should be tolerated because they were 'dyed not printed'.<sup>24</sup> Without doubt some of these establishments would have produced goods using the forbidden printing technique instead, which was quicker and more cost-effective. These *ateliers* were well established before the end of the prohibition.<sup>25</sup> The approbation for reserve printing gave scope for even more illicit activity. A Dutch merchant in Paris wrote to his London associate about the opportunities:

I have arrived from Paris: I thought myself in Amsterdam... everywhere I have seen *toiles peintes* and *indiennes* brought in by foreign hands. And us? We're sleeping! We should profit from the breach which is opening as their laws slacken... let's go! I've sent all the stock we had into France in bundles by various routes. You will see on each bale the mysterious words '*toiles teintes avec reserves*': this little phrase is a license which guarantees avoidance of all their prohibitive laws. I will explain more later. In the meantime, send me all the *toiles peintes* you have.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> This involved picking out the edges of the designs with brass or copper strips, and is still used today.

<sup>24</sup> A.N. F12, 99. Bewilderingly, a request for a privilege to print linen and hemp *à la reserve* was refused in 1752, the same year that the procedure was allowed on cotton. The threat it posed to 'the cotton and linen industries of Rouen' was cited as the reason. This would have only added to the confusion about which prints were legal and which illegal.

<sup>25</sup> According to Joseph Dépierre in *L'impression des tissus, spécialement impression à la main, à travers les âges et dans divers pays* (Paris: Béranger, 1910), pp. 51-52, they were established in Amiens in 1753 and Puy in 1756. The most important documented workshop was that of Cabannes and Cottin in the Arsenal of Paris in 1755, discussed in Chapter 6. Depitre asserted that Madame de Pompadour offered her protection in 1756 to the Swiss printer Abraham Frey who had settled in Rouen, bringing him to Corbeil near Paris to work on furnishings for her Chateau de Bellevue, before he returned to Rouen and founded a large printing establishment upon the lifting of the prohibition. Dardel disputed this due to Frey's age (he was only 20 in 1756) and suggested his first workshop was founded in 1764. Depitre also recounts an apocryphal anecdote of a workshop set up by the adventurer Casanova in 1758, under the protection of the Prince of Conti, in a 'house near the Temple' and that it quickly went bankrupt and he was imprisoned, but this is equally unsubstantiated.

<sup>26</sup> Anon., *Lettre de M. Van B\*\*, négociant Hollandois, au Chevalier R\*\*\*, négociant à Londres, son associé*, 20 juillet 1756 (The Hague: Pierre Neaulme, 1756), p. 24. '*J'arrive de Paris: aux habillemens & meubles de Toile peinte, qui de tous côtés frappaient mes yeux, je me croyais à Amsterdam... partout j'ai vu la Toile peinte & l'indienne, que les mains étrangers leur ont apportés. Et nous... nous dormions! Profitez de cette Mine qu'ils nous ouvrent... leurs Loix prohibitives sont assouplies... entrons, il y a brèche. J'ai mis en ballots l'assortiment de nos magasins, il va en France par diverses routes. Vous lirez sur chaque ballot, en beaux caractères ces mots François: Toiles tentes avec reserves... Cette gentille petite phrase est un brevet*

The increasing acceptance of printing-related techniques was a reflection of a growing division of opinion in the *Conseil*. Some *députés* were by then responding to the increasing lobby to allow printing, while others remained steadfast. With the industry developing in an unregulated form, and the continued impossibility of preventing the infiltration of foreign products, it was recognised that after fifty years of failure, either a different way of enforcing the prohibition had to be found, or the doors had to be opened to production. The proponents of liberalisation advocated the potential economic benefits of encouraging the industry, generating an unprecedented debate on commerce. The deliberations in the *Conseil* over the legalisation of printing lasted ten years from Montaran's report in 1749 until the repeal, and sparked what became known as the 'Quarrel of the Calicoes' (*La Querelle des toiles peintes*). It has since generated great interest among historians, firstly, because this later period was instructional in understanding the subsequent era of great manufacture after 1759; secondly due to the abundant records it produced; and not least because it became a symbolic political debate. Depitre reported this famous episode in great detail, devoting almost half of his book on the prohibition to the period from 1749 to 1759. Indeed, he declared the object of his work was to shed light on that conflict of 'economic ideas' which he saw as a herald of the modern state. With the existence of such meticulous coverage, only the salient points of the debate will be summarised here.

### **Fashion's Empire: The Quarrel of the Calicoes**

While the manufactures did not relax their complaints, the commissioning of Montaran's report coincided with a new spirit at the mid-century, that commerce, rather than conquest, was the route to a nation's prosperity. From observation of the wealth which neighbouring countries (in particular, England) were enjoying from trade with their colonies, while also encouraging innovation in the home manufacturing sphere, the benefits of developing a new industry could no longer be ignored. Awareness of the commercial advantages, together with an escalation in petitions for printing rights, were the catalysts for a debate which was crystallised in 1755 in a treatise published anonymously (but whose authorship was an open secret) by Véron du Forbonnais.<sup>27</sup>

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*de passage & de plus un opium assuré pour toutes leurs Loix prohibitives... je vous expliquerai ces mots Cabalistiques. En attendant, envoyez-moi à même fin tout ce que vous avez de Toiles peintes.'*

<sup>27</sup> François Véron Duverger de Forbonnais, *Examen des avantages et des desavantages de la prohibition des toiles peintes* (Marseille: Carapatria, 1755). Forbonnais (1722–1800), was a political economist with a particular interest in textile-related issues as he came from a textile manufacturing family in Le Mans. He had translated the 1733 work of British author Charles King, *The British Merchant*, and so was aware of the

Elaborating on his wider observations on commerce, Forbonnais weighed the arguments for and against removing the ban.<sup>28</sup> Those for maintaining it were promulgated since its inception: the free manufacture of *toiles peintes* would deprive the *anciennes manufactures* of their livelihood, leading to mass unemployment and social unrest. After seventy years they had expanded upon this initial concept to include the prediction of the downfall of the agricultural sector, proselytising that peasants were likely to stop work on the land if new jobs were offered in the towns. Fear of an unregulated new industry emphasises how the guilds still clung vigorously to the notion that the preservation of their work was dependent on the rigorous execution of the ancient ordinances. For Forbonnais, these arguments lacked proof and he decried the absence of evidence to show the *anciennes manufactures* had lost business. He also took the innovative stance of suggesting that granting protection to any localised industry (and the lobby for prohibition was always city-specific) was to the detriment of a wider prosperity. Privileges granted to the Normandy linen manufactures, which he categorised as ‘the most vociferous complainant’ (and not, as may be expected, the Lyon silk weavers), limited the opportunity for other provinces to develop a potentially lucrative new industry. In addition, he noted that the inception and development of a home cotton weaving industry in the period of the prohibition had not caused any harm to the other fabric producers, and thus, markets could be created, rather than necessarily usurping the competition.

To the other persistent argument of the destruction of the balance of trade by the unregulated circulation of imported fabrics, he proposed that printing would actually stop the influx of foreign goods:

Permission to dye and print the *toiles* ourselves would be the natural remedy to this abuse. At the same time, it would open a new foreign market for our [linen] *Batiste* manufactures, which, once painted in the style of the cotton cloths, would surpass them in beauty.<sup>29</sup>

This would be particularly desirable as it would ‘stop other countries enriching themselves at French expense’ and, with the usual conviction of French superiority, it would not be long before their products dominated the market for, ‘the best equivalent for a

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economic policies of the English. He became first advisor to Silhouette when he was appointed *Contrôleur-général* in 1759, and was credited with the useful reforms of that minister. See also n. 43.

<sup>28</sup> François Véron Duverger de Forbonnais, *Éléments du commerce* (Paris: Briasson, 1754).

<sup>29</sup> Forbonnais, *Examen des avantages*, pp. 38-39. ‘*La permission de teindre & imprimer nous-même des Toiles, seroit le remede naturel à tant d’abus; en même temps qu’il nous ouvreroit une nouvelle branche de commerce avec les étrangers... en facilitant la vente de nos manufactures de Batistes, qui peintes dans le goût des Toiles de coton, les surpasseroient en beauté.*’ *Batiste* was a fine-weave linen cloth.

*toile peinte* is another *toile peinte*'.<sup>30</sup> In other words, if allowed to develop, the French products would be unparalleled in quality, but could also be cheaper than Indian imports. This rather surprising conclusion was based upon a marked increase in the price of Indian goods in the preceding few years: 'a Lyon-made *mousseline* now sells at 57.5 sols per aune, and an *indienne* of the same quality cannot be bought cheaper', an enlightening statement which underlines the success of French technical developments in cotton spinning and weaving.<sup>31</sup> It was quickly disputed by a detailed costing by the Rouen cotton merchants, commissioned by the *Intendant de Commerce*, which arrived at a price for finished, bleached cottons of 26 to 27 sols per piece (in this case, 14 to 16 aunes long) for Indian *Garats*, and 44 to 48 s. for the same product made in France; 40 to 42 s. compared to 56 s. for *Guinées*; and 3 livres to 3 livres 2 sols compared to 3 livres 13 sols and 9 deniers for the superior quality *Baffetas*.<sup>32</sup> The *riposte* also gives a good indication of the cost of materials and labour involved in cotton production in France. (Table 4.)

Nonetheless, Forbonnais retained the traditional stance of controlling new industry. Printing, he said, should be encouraged in the border provinces and ports, and the fabrics exported rather than brought into France. Lastly, he adhered to the argument that the poor should be entitled to have access to cheaper fabrics, although as they used imported low-cost cottons widely, this argument had less coherence. He was, however, still conflicted over encouraging consumption, which he avowed 'causes indolence'.

Forbonnais' polemic was defined by his liberal attitudes, not least indignation at the inequality of the ban's application:

The palaces of our princes, even those of the King in the capital, have become warehouses of goods prohibited by law... they are sold in the Louvre, yet it is punishable to introduce them into the Kingdom! Ladies dare to flaunt their painted dresses without shame at the same hearing where the family of the unfortunate who sold them are kneeling to seek grace!<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Forbonnais, *Examen des avantages*, p. 97. '*Le meilleur des équivalents pour la Toile peinte, est la Toile peinte elle-même.*'

<sup>31</sup> Forbonnais, *Examen des avantages*, p. 82. '*Une piece de mousseline de 16 aunes... faite à Lyon, revient à 46 liv. 2 sols, ou 57 sols et demi l'aune; les mousselines des Indes de pareille qualité ne se vendent à meilleur marché.*'

<sup>32</sup> B.A. 1261, '*Réflexions des Marchands Merciers, Drapier & Corps unis de la Ville de Rouen, sur l'impossibilité de fabriquer en France des Toiles propres pour l'impression, en concurrence avec celles des Indes, 1755.*'

<sup>33</sup> Forbonnais, *Examen des avantages*, p. 45-46. '*Les palais de nos Princes, celui de nos Rois même dans la capitale sont devenus le dépôt des marchandises proscrites par les loix... on les vend dans le Louvre, ce qu'il est punissable d'introduire dans le Royaume! Des femmes sans égards osent venir étaler des robes de Toiles peintes dans la même audience où la famille éplorée du malheureux qui les a vendues, vient à genoux solliciter sa grace!*'



Table 4. Cost of producing cottons suitable for printing in France, compiled by the Rouen cotton merchants, commissioned by the Intendant of Commerce, in 1755. The example of a piece of *Garats des Indes*, a medium-quality cloth, is used.

Costs	Livres (l.)	Sols (s.)	Deniers (d.)
Cotton wool from America, at least 30 s. Five and a half <i>livres</i> (weight) are needed to produce a piece of <i>Garats</i> .	8	5	
Commission and packaging fees		16	6
Freight, insurance and customs duties	2	5	6
Commission for the sale in France (at auction) and the retailer's profit	1	2	6
Carding, spinning and waste	8		
Preparing the thread, preparing the weft and the Weaver's fees	7	5	
Bleaching	1	4	
<b>Total</b>	<b>28 l.</b>	<b>18 s.</b>	
Note: The livre was divided into 20 sols, and the sol (or sou) into 12 deniers, similar to the pre-decimal British currency. There is a small error in this calculation, the total should be 28 l. 18 s. and 6 d.			

Author's table, extracted from B.A. 1261, a memo of the merchants, mercers and drapers and other 'united trades' of Rouen, '*Reflexions des Marchands Merciers, Drapier & Corps unis de la Ville de Rouen, sur l'impossibilité de fabriquer en France des Toiles propres pour l'impression, en concurrence avec celles des Indes*', 1755.

The manufactures' lobby refuted his arguments, and over the next few years their complaints were constant, but added nothing new.<sup>34</sup> By 1758 their arguments had begun once again to hold sway in the *Conseil*, which elicited a response from the Abbé Morellet.<sup>35</sup> In his critique he concurred with many of Forbonnais' opinions, and reiterated the most salient ones to counter the opposing claims. He censured the manufactures for their hypocrisy:

It is astonishing to see the *siamoises* makers of Rouen among those who so strongly oppose the establishment of these Manufactures, they who obtained a similar permission at the start of this century, and experienced the same opposition from the Manufactures themselves... The silk workers of Lyon & Tours only produce luxury goods, which are used by people of means; they have nothing to fear from the competition of these common *Toiles peintes*... One would think that as soon as we permit the establishment of this industry, no-one will wear wool or silk any more... that they will adopt the new cloths and abandon the old ones.<sup>36</sup>

He stressed the many advantages to permitting printing. These included the eradication of the damaging consequences of the contraband trade; a reduction in the export of specie; the possibility of exporting French-printed *toiles peintes*, if they were of a suitable quality; providing a supply of goods for the Guinea triangular trade; and a new use for cotton from the colonies. Rather optimistically, he agreed with Montaran that new factories could be located in the countryside to spread employment out from the cities and large urban areas, as well in the 'frontier states' of Lorraine, Alsace and Franche-Comté who 'have no manufactures and could benefit from having cotton spinning and printing established

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<sup>34</sup> The complaints between 1755 and 1758 do not survive, but are evidenced by the title of Morellet's 1758 treatise, which was written 'in response to the diverse memos of the manufactures of Paris, Lyon, Tours, Rouen, etc. on this matter'.

<sup>35</sup> When the *Conseil* needed technical advice on a new process or invention for which a privilege was being requested, or to produce new industrial regulations, it consulted the members of the Académie des Sciences. Membership of the Académie was not limited to scientists, but respected scholars of all types, such as Abbé André Morellet (1727-1819), a cleric who contributed articles on theology, philosophy and literature to the *Encyclopédie*. He was known for his sharp criticism on economic affairs, and knowledge of English commercial policies. Born in Lyon, he had a particular interest in matters related to its industries, but was not always their defender, as his treatise shows.

<sup>36</sup> Anon., 'Réflexions sur les avantages de la libre fabrication, pp. 96-124. 'On ne sauroit trop s'étonner de voir [les Fabricans de Siamoises de Rouen] parmi ceux qui s'opposent avec les plus d'ardeur à l'établissement de ces Manufactures, eux qui ont obtenu au commencement de ce siècle une permission de même genre, qui ont éprouvé de la part des autres Manufactures les mêmes difficultés qu'ils opposent aujourd'hui contre les fabriques de Toile peinte... Les Manufactures de Lyon & de Tours... ne produisent guere que des étoffes de luxe, qui ne sont à l'usage que des gens aisés; par conséquent elles n'ont rien à redouter de la concurrence des Toiles peintes communes... Il semble, à entendre les Fabriquans, qu'aussi-tôt qu'on aura permis l'établissement des Manufactures de Toiles peintes, personne ne portera désormais ni drap, ni soie, & que tous les Habitans du Royaume se concerteront ensemble pour prendre à-la-fois les nouvelles étoffes & quitter les anciennes.'

there.’<sup>37</sup> It was not *toiles peintes* which were the malady of the country’s commerce he proposed astutely, but the state of war: the-ongoing conflict with England had limited maritime commerce, interrupted exports and the import of goods from the colonies, while the silk manufactures suffered from a huge unpaid debt from German clients due to the French invasion of Saxony.

Like Forbonnais, Morellet concluded that import duties would be vital on other countries’ products to stop a flood of goods, but resigned himself that it would never be possible to prevent the highest quality luxury goods from entering, as they were ‘the preserve of the rich, who will continue to use them’.<sup>38</sup> Several retorts from the manufactures, listing again the predicted apocalyptic consequences of a repeal, were supported in a memorandum by Jacob-Nicolas Moreau, another respected scholar.<sup>39</sup> Describing the crux of the quarrel as ‘the difference between unlimited liberty [in commerce] or a regulated liberty’, and proposed the former held the threat of ‘disorder’:

Do we wish that a cloth can be composed of any material? That the fakes can be used indiscriminately? That good and bad dyes can be indifferently employed, without the consumer being aware unless he has the knowledge himself? <sup>40</sup>

Morellet was intractable. In a later addition to his treatise the same year, he summed up that there was no foundation to the manufactures’ complaints, and that overall the prohibition

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<sup>37</sup> Morellet also propounded the argument of potentially cheaper French products, declaring that the cotton weavers had exaggerated the cost, especially with the higher price of labour in ‘Rouen and other great cities’. He estimated that in rural areas such as Puy en Velay cottons could be produced for as little as 18 sols per aune and 36 sols per aune for *Garats* dyed in ‘two or three colours’. This seems unachievable given the cost of plain woven cotton.

<sup>38</sup> Anon., ‘*Réflexions sur les avantages de la libre fabrication*, p. 196. ‘*Quant aux Toiles de qualité supérieure, tout le monde conviendra que l’usage en est impossible à empêcher, parce qu’il est propre aux gens riches. Ainsi cette consommation demeura toujours à-peu-près la même.*’

<sup>39</sup> Les Fabricants d’étoffes de la ville de Tours ‘*Réflexions sur la situation des principales manufactures de France, et particulièrement de celle de Tours*’ (S. l.: s.n., 1758); Les manufactures de Lyon, ‘*Mémoires des manufactures de Lyon, concernant les inconvénients de la tolérance de l’impression et la permission de l’usage des toiles peintes*’ (Paris: s.n., 1758); and Les Six Corps des marchands de la ville de Paris, ‘*Contre l’usage des toiles peintes, teintes à la réserve, imprimées en façon des Indes et autres étoffes prohibées*’ (Paris: J. Chardon, 1758). The former demands the proscription of both foreign fabrics and ‘des toiles peintes ou indiennes’; the latter added the category of reserve-dyed goods as well. It is likely there would have been similar petitions from the manufactures of Rouen.

<sup>40</sup> Anon., ‘*Examen des effets que doivent produire, relativement au commerce intérieur et extérieur de France, le libre usage et la fabrication des toiles peintes...*’ (Geneva: Veuve Delaguette, 1759), p. 6. ‘*Veut-on que la même étoffe puisse être composée de toute sorte de matières; que le faux & le fin puissent être indistinctement employés; que le bon & le mauvais teints y puissent servir indifféremment, sans que le consommateur puisse en être informé autrement que par ses connoissances personnelles?*’ Attributed to Jacob-Nicolas Moreau and now shown to have been published in Paris under tacit official approval. A historian and bibliophile, Jacob-Nicolas Moreau (1717-1804) was an advisor at the *Cour des aides* of Provence (which adjudicated customs disputes) and Keeper of the Charters (*Garde des chartes*). He was later librarian to Queen Marie-Antoinette.

had done little good as it had ‘always been badly executed’.<sup>41</sup> Forbonnais concurred. The debate in the *Conseil* did not therefore lead to an immediate repeal of the prohibition, but it led to increased questioning of its usefulness.

### The End of the Prohibition

When we stopped burning the goods confiscated, they only changed owners or resellers. The clerks came up with a maxim, that searching for prohibited fabrics was a supererogatory task because it only interested the King and the State, and in reality, their wages were paid by the tax collectors. Finally, we have begun to tolerate public use, to let furniture and clothes made of *toiles peintes* pass, without bothering their owners.<sup>42</sup>

That the interdiction remained on the statute books until 1759 was not remarkable, and in fact a similar situation existed in England, where all the restrictions were only finally removed in 1774, although they had been roundly ignored up to that date. The final easing of the way to full repeal came with an Act on September 5, 1759. It was not a declaration of commercial liberty, as it is generally portrayed, but a compromise aimed at assuaging all parties. It was instigated by Etienne de Silhouette, who became *Contrôleur-général* in March of 1759 and was appointed specifically for his skills in raising funds, as the country was once again at war and perilously in debt. A pragmatic financial director, he favoured encouraging commerce and industry as a long-term solution, and was a proponent of free trade as a method of encouraging the consumption of French-made goods. Without him, and his primary advisor Forbonnais as exponents, the prohibition would have continued.<sup>43</sup> Silhouette’s balanced solution to the issue became law, but he did not remain in office long enough to direct its implementation, being forced to resign two months later.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Anon., ‘*Réflexions sur l’objet des Mémoires répandus dans le Public, concernant la permission de l’usage des Toiles peintes*’, p. 219. ‘*Cette prohibition n’a rien favorisé, puisqu’elle a été toujours fort mal exécutée...*’.

<sup>42</sup> Forbonnais, *Examen des avantages*, pp. 44-45. ‘*On a cessé de brûler les marchandises confisquées, & elles n’ont changé que de propriétaires ou de revendeurs; les employés ont introduit entr’eux cette maxime, que la recherche des étoffes prohibées n’étoit qu’une œuvre surérogatoire, parce qu’elle n’intéressoit que le Roi & l’État, & qu’ils étoient payés par les fermiers; enfin on est parvenu à en tolérer l’usage public, à laisser passer les meubles & les habits de Toiles peintes sans inquiéter les propriétaires.*’

<sup>43</sup> Forbonnais was dismissed at the end of Silhouette’s short ministry and was exiled briefly due to the scheming of Madame de Pompadour, but returned to continue an illustrious career, including direction of the *Journal de l’agriculture, du commerce et des finances* in the 1760s. Later in life he wrote many treatises on the advantages of free trade and contributed to the famous *Encyclopédie*. He became a founding member of the Institut de France in 1795.

<sup>44</sup> Françoise Bayard, Joël Félix & Philippe Hamon, *Dictionnaire des surintendants et des contrôleurs-généraux des finances* (Paris: IGPDE, 2000), pp. 34-35. In his short ministry Étienne de Silhouette (1709-1767) implemented laws rationalising the taxation of the leather industry and eliminating many of the duties on grain and dairy produce, but at the same time was forced by the huge national debt to implement a raft of

The Act was not so much a repeal as a multi-faceted new set of regulations aimed at covering all angles of the difficult situation. The King, it affirmed, had concluded that ‘with appropriate monitoring the older industries could be protected at the same time as a new one was encouraged’.<sup>45</sup> This was to be achieved by allowing foreign fabrics to enter France, with a 10% duty by value on white cottons and a 15% tax on *toiles peintes*, with strict controls of the ports of entry and circulation. The fabrication at home of plain cotton cloths ‘in imitation of those from the Indies’ was permitted free of duty, but French-printed fabrics of linen, hemp or cotton (again, emphasising the variety of types of cloths being printed) did not receive the same status: they were to be subject to a 10% tax, as well as an additional 4 sols per pound-weight paid directly to the *Fermiers-généraux* to cover the costs of the tax collection incurred.<sup>46</sup> (Table 5.)

After a fierce month of lobbying by the manufactures and merchants, further letters patent were issued on October 28 which increased the duties on foreign cottons to 15% for plain goods and 25% on prints, ‘to protect the manufactures and stimulate the new cotton-weaving industry’, while the duty on French *toiles peintes* was significantly reduced, to ‘double the border duty on *siamoises* from Rouen in those provinces where they are due’.<sup>47</sup> The government was trying to simultaneously stimulate a printing industry and pacify the existing trades. The hope that the Act would create a new commodity for export was underlined by the lack of duty on French prints sent to the colonies; similarly, the *Compagnie’s indiennes* were exempt from duty if they were being exported to Guinée, if

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taxation increases. Somewhat imprudently he chose methods which particularly affected the rich, taxing luxury imports, boutiques and domestic servants, and instructing the rich to donate their gold and silver plate to the Treasury. Having quickly made enemies in the aristocracy, Silhouette was forced to resign in November 1759. ‘His ideas were very good it seems to me,’ commented Voltaire, ‘but their application was poor’. (p. 35) ‘*Ses idées m’ont paru très belles, mais appliquées fort mal à propos.*’

<sup>45</sup> B.A. 1164. ‘*Arrêt du Conseil d’État de Roi et Lettres patentes sur icelui, concernant les Toiles de coton blanches, & les Toiles peintes, teintes & imprimées, 5 septembre, 1759.*’ ‘*Sa Majesté, desirant procurer à ses sujets la multiplicité des moyens de pouvoir à leurs besoins, veiller néanmoins d’une manière particulière à la conservation des manufactures établies ; encourger les établissemens nouveaux, sans toutefois préjudicier aux anciens.*’

<sup>46</sup> B.A. 1164. ‘*Arrêt du Conseil d’État de Roi.*’ ‘*Les toiles de lin, chanvre & coton, qui seront teintes ou imprimées dans les manufactures du royaume, tant celles qui y auront été fabriquées, que celles venues de l’étranger, payeront dix pour cent de leur valeur, & quatre sols pour livre en sus.*’

<sup>47</sup> B.A. 1165. ‘*Arrêt du Conseil d’État de Roi et Lettres patentes sur icelui, concernant les Toiles de coton blanches, & les Toiles peintes, teintes & imprimées, 28 octobre 1759.*’ ‘*Il seroit de la bonté de Sa Majesté d’accorder plus de faveur aux toiles nationales en général, & principalement à la fabrication naissante des toiles de coton... A compter du jour de la publication du present arrêt... pour lesdites toiles de coton blanches, quinze pour cent de leur valeur, & pour les toiles de coton, de lin ou de chanvre peintes ou imprimées venant de l’Étranger, vingt-cinq pour cent de leur valeur... Permet Sa Majesté de peindre & imprimées les toiles de lin, de chanvre & de coton... lesquelles toiles ainsi peintes ou imprimées payeront dans les bureaux des différentes provinces du royaume, où il est dû des droits, le double de ce que payent actuellement les siamoises teintes ou façonnées de la fabrique de Rouen.*’

Table 5. Summary of the duties and exemptions on foreign and domestic cotton in the rulings of 1759-1760.

Provenance	Fabric Category	September 5, 1759 % of value	October 28, 1759 % of value	July 19, 1760 Value in livres/quintal <sup>1</sup>	July 19, 1760 Duty payable in livres/quintal
Foreign imports	White cottons & <i>mauchairs</i> .	10%	15%	500	75
	<i>Toiles peintes</i> & <i>mauchairs</i>	15%	2.5%	600	150 <sup>2</sup>
<i>Compagnie</i> cargoes	White cottons	5%	5% <i>toiles et mouchoirs</i>	500	25
			2.5% <i>mousselines et basins</i> <sup>3</sup>	2,000	50
French production	<i>Toiles peintes</i>	15%	Exempt if exported	-	Exempt if exported
			15% if sold in France	600	90
	White cottons	Exempt	-	Exempt	
	<i>Toiles peintes</i> (printed on French or imported cotton, linen or hemp)	10%	Exempt if exported	-	Exempt if exported
			Internal border duties: twice that on Rouen <i>siamoisés</i>	-	Reduced to the same as Rouen <i>siamoisés</i> on October 1, 1762 <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The 1760 ruling translated the duty into livres (monetary value) per quintal, a weight equivalent to one hundred pounds, based on the same percentages as the October 1759 amount. It was not an increase, but merely a simpler way for the *commis des fermes* to apply the tax: rather than laboriously measuring out the length of the fabric and relying on a fluctuating price per product, it established an average value by weight. The *commis* could then open one piece, identify the fabric, weigh the total bale and apply the tax, in a similar way to grain or other products.

<sup>2</sup> The prices per quintal are quite surprising: *toiles peintes*, at 600 l. per quintal, were only valued at 20% more than white cottons (500 l. per quintal) for both the foreign imports and the *Compagnie* cargoes. This may have been chosen as an average duty for tax purposes rather than reflecting their market price.

<sup>3</sup> A *basin* was a fine twill weave of cotton, or cotton and hemp mix, used for light shirts. No reason is given for the lower rate of duty on muslins and basins after October 1759. Their higher value compared to regular cottons (2,000 l. versus 500 l.) once measured by weight is due to the greater quantity of these lightweight cloths to a quintal.

<sup>4</sup> The only change from the previous rate was the reduction of the duty on French-made *toiles peintes*, when moving from province to province, from twice that on Rouen *siamoisés* to the same amount, to take effect on October 1, 1762. This gave the manufacturers of *siamoisés* three years of protection from the competition.

not, they were liable for the same 15% tax as foreign imports. Overall, the conditions were not financially favourable to the *Compagnie*, and a total embargo on transporting its cargoes within the kingdom recognised the fraudulent practices of the preceding years. As compensation for the loss of its market to foreign imports, the revised Act awarded it half of the duties collected.

The rapid reversal of policy from prohibiting the industry to protecting it was impressive but, as ever, came with stringent controls. On July 3, 1760 noting that manufactures of ‘painting and printing on linen, hemp and cotton cloth are multiplying since the authorisations of last September and October’, the *Conseil* ordered that marks and seals were to be affixed, this time, paradoxically, to ‘come to the aid of these new manufactures and protect the consumer from fraudulent goods’, namely those from abroad.<sup>48</sup> A maker’s stamp on the fabric was required for the first time, bearing the name of the producer, his location, the date and either ‘*Bon teint*’ or ‘*Petit teint*’, two terms used to denote the extent of colour-fastness of the fabric, similar to wool. Not only that but, immediately upon leaving the workshop, the fabrics were to be taken to the office of nearest Clothmakers’ or Mercers’ guild for assaying, where the local *Inspecteurs des manufactures* could ‘boil them with hot water and soap’ to test their fixity, if they should so wish. Thus policy related to the new industry was taking shape in exactly the same way as the regulation of all other textile industries, that is, by carefully controlling which manufacturers could produce each fabric, and monitoring the quality of the goods.

The corporations were evidently jealous of the new trade and had to be ordered to allow non-members to buy materials and tools and to ‘refrain from making difficulties for those who present their goods to be approved’.<sup>49</sup> Resistance continued in spite of the repeal, and the manufactures remained resolute: in 1760 the *Chambre des Comptes* of Rouen published a letter of remonstrance claiming the free circulation of both French and foreign *toiles peintes* would ‘wipe out the best branches of Commerce’.<sup>50</sup> They were

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<sup>48</sup> B.A. 1203. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’État, Qui ordonne que les Toiles de lin, de chanvre ou de coton, peintes ou imprimées dans le Royaume, seront revêtues d’une nouvelle marque pour faire connoître leur fabrication, 3 juillet, 1760.*’ ‘*Les peintures & impressions sur Toiles de lin, de chanvre & de coton... se multiplioient dans le royaume... Qu’il étoit à propos de venir au secours desdites fabriques, pour empêcher les Toiles peintes étrangères introduites en France de circuler librement dans le royaume, à l’abri des fausses marques... qu’il convenoit aussi d’assurer le Consomateur sur la bonne foi de la marque de teint apposé auxdites pièces.*’

<sup>49</sup> B.A. 1166. ‘*Arrest du Conseil d’État, Qui permet à tous les habitans de la campagne... de fabriquer des Étoffes, du 7 septembre, 1762.*’ ‘*Ils suscitent toutes sortes de difficultés à ceux qui présentent les étoffes à la visite: Et Sa Majesté considérant combien il est essential de faire cesser tous les obstacles qui peuvent nuire au progrès de l’industrie des ses sujets... voulant faire connoître de nouveae ses intentions.*’

<sup>50</sup> *Journal de commerce, janvier 1760*, p. 184. ‘*Remonstrances de la chambre des comptes, cour des aides & finances de Rouen au sujet de la fabrication, de l’impression & usage de toiles peintes, tant nationales*

rewarded with an additional two years before the double rate of duty on the provincial circulation of *toiles peintes* would be removed. At the same time, the scale of the operation required to adjudicate the value of goods entering from abroad had been quickly realised, and the duties were changed, to be applied by weight for each category.<sup>51</sup>

The need for an increase in national cotton production to supply a new printing industry was evident, but this was now feasible, as the production of spun cotton had greatly increased by the mid-century, and in 1762, the *Dictionnaire portatif de Commerce* noted Rouen made ‘the most cotton cloths in Europe and at the best price’.<sup>52</sup> However, *mousselines* were imported from the Indies, suggesting that the French weavers had not perfected the art of making the lightweight but strong warps which were needed for producing the desirable finer muslins.<sup>53</sup> At last, perhaps due to the freer circulation of all kinds of printed cotton, the difference between printed and painted cottons was understood. The *Dictionnaire portatif de Commerce* explained:

For *toiles peintes* & imprimées, we must include Persians, Indians & all the cloths that the French... and other nations now make, in imitation of those from the Orient. Among these, some are designed and painted by hand, and others are printed with wooden blocks. There is also a third type where only the outline is printed and the interior of the flowers is painted with a brush. Those which come from the Coromandel Coast are worked with a quill and brush, and some Persians and Indians are printed but these are rare. On the contrary, in Europe blocks are principally used. It is easy to distinguish these printed cloths from the others, because the design is repeated at the edge of each block. It is possible to see the join between one block and the next, no matter how much care has been taken with the printing, and the repeats of the blocks resemble each other exactly. In contrast, in designs traced by hand, it is always possible to perceive small differences, especially if the design is repeated several times within the piece.<sup>54</sup>

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qu'étrangères.’ *La libre circulation des toiles peintes, tant nationales qu'étrangères, anéantiroient les plus belles branches du commerce.*’ *Chambres des comptes* were sovereign courts with special jurisdiction over financial affairs in a bailiwick, including public spending and audits of crown officials. In Rouen, it was yet another body with jurisdiction over part of the industry.

<sup>51</sup> B.A. 1252. ‘*Arrêt du Conseil d’État, Qui évalue les Droits que des Toiles peintes & Mouchoirs de Toile de coton venant de l’Étranger, payeront à l’entrée du Royaume, 19 juillet, 1760.*’

<sup>52</sup> *Dictionnaire portatif de Commerce*, (Copenhagen: C. & A. Philibert, 1762). Tome II, p. 196, article *coton*. ‘*Rouen est la ville de l’Europe où il se fabrique le plus de toiles de coton de toutes qualités & aux meilleurs prix.*’

<sup>53</sup> *Dictionnaire portatif de Commerce*, (Copenhagen: C. & A. Philibert, 1762). Tome IV, p. 6, article *mousseline*. ‘*On apporte des Indes Orientales... on en fait aussi... mais dont la qualité et de beaucoup inférieure à celles des Indes.*’

<sup>54</sup> *Dictionnaire portatif de Commerce* (Liege: C. Plomteux, 1770). Tome IV, p. 611, article *Toiles peintes et imprimées*. ‘*On doit comprendre sous cette dénomination des Perses, les Indiennes & toutes les toiles que les François... et autres nations fabriquent chez elles, à l’imitation des toiles de l’Orient. Parmi ces toiles, les*



National pride just as quickly enveloped the new trade. The *Dictionnaire du citoyen* claimed:

Our talent for engraving, the elegance and variety of our designs, our taste in the choice of colours, would already seem to ensure superiority over the competition. Our new manufactures of *toiles peintes* have made such progress in a short time... they are already superior to the *indiennes* for the beauty and perfection of their designs. Some have already equalled the fixity of the colours of the Orient.<sup>55</sup>

This last boast was premature. While the freedom to print excited immediate development and the establishment of many printing workshops, it did not mean that French techniques were sufficiently advanced to compete with their European counterparts, who had been printing legally for decades and perfecting their art. Dardel described two sheets of samples from a manufacture at Rouen, estimated to be from 1760, as testifying to the ‘inexperience of the founder’.<sup>56</sup> The new industry was also held back by a lack of skilled workers, and for the first decade after the lifting of the ban they had to be brought in from Holland, Germany and Switzerland. These workers were expensive and unreliable, often returning seasonally to their homelands or refusing to impart the latest techniques of their masters.<sup>57</sup> In addition, new business owners with a lack of experience hired men ‘who said they were colourists, but in their own countries were no more than drug-crushers and furnace-stokers’.<sup>58</sup> For these reason, the operations which were owned and operated by Swiss-born entrepreneurs had more success than those started by the French.

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*uns sont dessinées & peintes à la main; les autres sont imprimées avec des moules de bois. On peut encore distinguer une troisième sorte de toiles peintes, qui sont celles dont le trait seul est imprimé, & dont tout l'intérieur des fleurs est fait au pinceau. Les toiles qui nous viennent... de la côte de Coromandel, sont travaillées à la plume & au pinceau: on voit cependant des perses & des indiennes qui sont imprimées, mais celles-ci sont plus rares. En Europe, au contraire, on se sert principalement du moule: il est facile de distinguer ces toiles imprimées des autres, parce que le dessein se répète à l'extrémité de chaque planche. On peut même appercevoir la jonction d'une planche à l'autre, quelque exactitude qu'on ait apportée dans l'impression. D'ailleurs toutes ces répétitions de planches se ressemblent parfaitement. Lorsque le dessein, au contraire, a été tracé à la main, on y remarque toujours des différences sensibles, quoique ce dessein soit répété plusieurs fois dans le cours de la pièce.'*

<sup>55</sup> Honoré La Combe de Prezel, *Dictionnaire du citoyen, ou Abrégé historique et pratique du commerce* (Paris: Grangé, 1761). Tome II, article *Toiles Peintes*: ‘Nos talens pour la gravure, l'élégance & la variété de nos desseins, nôtre goût dans l'assortiment des couleurs, semblent déjà nous assurer une supériorité dans la concurrence. Nos nouvelles fabriques de toiles peintes ont fait en très peu de temps des progrès... elles sont bien supérieures aux indiennes pour la beauté & la correction des desseins. Plusieurs même de ces fabriques sont parvenues à la tenacité des couleurs de l'orient.’

<sup>56</sup> Dardel, *Les Manufactures de toiles peintes*, p. 20. A black and white photograph shows very basic stripes and bud designs on unreferenced samples from the Musée Industriel and Commercial de Rouen.

<sup>57</sup> Pierre Caspard, *La Fabrique-neuve de Cortaillod, 1752-1854: Entreprise et profit pendant la révolution industrielle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1979).

<sup>58</sup> M. Delormois, *L'Art de faire les indiennes* (Paris: Librairies Associés, 1786), p. 2. ‘La plûpart des entrepreneurs n'ayant aucune connoissance dans la fabrication d'indienne, étoient obliges de s'en rapporter

The exception to this was Cottin's large workshop in the Arsenal mentioned in the previous chapter, as for years he had exploited strong connections with Swiss and English printers and imported the talents of immigrant workers, including Christophe Oberkampf, who was apprenticed there in 1758. Once his business had to compete for workers with workshops which had opened legally, Cottin asked the bailiwick for a fine of 100 livres to be imposed on any skilled workers who left without notice, and 300 l. on businessmen who hired them without written permission. This presumably futile initiative is particularly interesting, as already it called his workers 'journeymen' (*compagnons*), in the form used by the established incorporated trades, indicating the striving for legitimacy of this new profession, until so recently illegal. It also indicates that Cottin considered his business to merit similar protection to the long-established trades.

The majority of the flurry of new workshops founded after the lifting of the prohibition survived less than twenty years. The chemist Pierre-Joseph Macquer noted in 1763, only four years after the repeal:

More than one hundred manufactures were established [since the repeal], of which almost eighty have failed, either from lack of funds, poor design or the little knowledge the entrepreneurs had of making *indiennes*.<sup>59</sup>

The finance required to support the buildings, land (for bleaching and drying cloth) and labour required for an enterprise on any significant scale was perhaps the prime deciding factor. Many of the businesses which survived the first few years were established, or at least funded, by wealthy merchants who had made their fortunes selling *indiennes*. Equally, funding came from those with a vested interest in the African trade, and was the main reason for the establishment of manufactures in the ports of Nantes and Bordeaux, making prints to supply the triangular trade. (Figure 113.)

Oberkampf was the exception, settling on land at Jouy-en-Josas, conveniently located for both the custom of the Court at Versailles and Paris, and on a fast-flowing river with plenty of land available, as illustrated in Figure 91. It was family connections in Switzerland and Germany which helped him develop his factory (his father continued for many years to send him skilled artisans, recipes for colours and reports on new techniques)

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*à ce que leur disoit un soi-disant coloriste, qui n'avoit été dans son pays qu'un pileur de drogues & chauffeur de chaudiere.*

<sup>59</sup> Pierre-Joseph Macquer, *Art de la teinture en soie* (Paris: Desaint, 1763). Article *Toiles Peintes*, p. 262. 'Il s'est établi depuis en France plus de cent manufactures de ce genre, dont près de quatre-vingt ont manqué, soit par le défaut des pièces, le peu de correction du dessein, et le peu d'intelligence des entrepreneurs dans la fabrication de l'indienne.'

as well as his business skills, particularly in obtaining credit. This was in many cases the reason for the failure of the other nascent businesses.<sup>60</sup> Oberkampf's factory also succeeded because he was adept at securing patronage, and particularly successful at keeping on the right side of the prevailing governing bodies. The factory supplied fabrics to royalty and the aristocracy and was granted the status of *Manufacture royale* before the Revolution; it remained in business throughout that period, and was then favoured by the Empress Josephine. (Figures 114 and 115.) Oberkampf was honoured with the *Légion d'honneur* by Napoleon, showing a particular skill for survival and adaptability during the most turbulent time in French history. In spite of the monopoly of the European markets by the longer-established English and Dutch manufactures, particularly after the developments of steam engines, copper-roller printing and better dyes, Oberkampf's factory grew to become the largest in Europe, even outstripping that of Peel in Lancashire. Nonetheless it eventually floundered under his successors, failing to compete with the English factories and large enterprises in Mulhouse, Alsace, and it closed in 1843.<sup>61</sup>

Oberkampf's correspondence in the first five years after the repeal shows he was still searching for satisfactory techniques. This is not surprising given the complex combination of ingredients required, the unfamiliarity of the processes and the physical constraints of his early workshop at Jouy. However, according to Dardel, five small samples from his workshop and four others attached to an affidavit of 1764 show successful colour-fastness after washing, indicating progress in 'both technique and design'.<sup>62</sup> After copper-plate printing was introduced the cost of the plates was prohibitively expensive, and wood blocks continued to be used. Even after the installation of copper-roller technology, the majority of the factory's output in the early nineteenth century was produced using the old method.<sup>63</sup> (Figures 116 and 117.) Other manufactures were the same, using finer wood-block carving

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<sup>60</sup> See the seminal works of Serge Chassagne, particularly *Oberkampf, un entrepreneur capitaliste au siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Aubier, 1980); and with Stanley Chapman, *European Textile Printers in the Eighteenth Century*.

<sup>61</sup> As well as the works of Serge Chassagne, see Josette Brédif, *Toiles de Jouy* (Paris: A. Biro, 1989); Henri Clouzot, *Histoire de la manufacture de Jouy*; Mélanie Riffel, *La Toile de Jouy* (Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 2003); Michel Sementery, *Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf, sa famille et sa descendance* (Paris: Éditions Christian, 1990).

<sup>62</sup> Archives municipales de Rouen, F4 folios 170 and 171, cited by Dardel, *Les Manufactures de toiles peintes*, p. 15.

<sup>63</sup> The majority of the production by the end of the century was small designs called *mignonettes* (literally, 'cute little things'), popular for women's dresses in the new Empire style. These could be produced quickly, and therefore cheaply, with copper-rollers. The genre scenes for which the factory is remembered were a significantly smaller part of the goods manufactured.

to achieve approximations of the engraved designs, and this carried on into the late nineteenth century. (Figures 118 and 119.)

Scientific curiosity in the field continued: Hellot explored colour science for wool dyeing until his death in 1766, while Macquer similarly worked on perfecting silk dyeing. The other great preoccupation of dyers and chemists during the 1760s was the ability to grow the necessary tinctorial plants at home. The botanist and Académicien Henri-Louis Duhamel de Monceau experimented with madder production on his Loire Valley estate; Louis-Alexandre Dambourney was awarded a pension of 1,000 livres in 1772 for producing a red dye which could successfully dye cotton velour; the Abbé Mazéas experimented with black dyes from plants brought from Virginia; and Charles Le Pileur d'Apligny occupied himself with treatises on the cultivation of woad, weld and madder, and their application for cotton.<sup>64</sup>

It seems curious that the methods of the English and other European dyers were not appropriated, but apparently the secrets remained highly guarded. The chemist Jean-Antoine Chaptal was in no doubt that France had fallen behind her peers in the art during the prohibition. 'For over half a century this dyeing [of linen and cotton] was not known to us, the procedures are long and tiresome, and they have been secret until very recently,' he wrote in 1807. The challenge, he explained, was to find dyes which were resistant to alkaline detergents, so that the number of mordants could be reduced.<sup>65</sup> The difficulties of the art were summarised by the Abbé Vitalis in 1810:

Dyeing does not truly become an art until those who exercise it have... the ingredients necessary to dye... and they know perfectly the proportions to employ them, the time to use, the effects of heat on the dye bath, the influence of air, light and all causes in general, that change, alter or destroy the colours.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Henri-Louis Duhamel Du Monceau, *Traité de la garance, et de sa culture avec la description des étuves pour dessécher cette plante, & des moulins pour la pulvériser* (Paris: H. L. Guerin & L. F. Delatour, 1765); Abbé Guillaume Mazéas, 'Méthode de faire réussir en France le procédé dont on se sert aux Indes pour imprimer la couleur rouge sur les toiles de coton', in *Corps d'observations de la Société d'Agriculture, de Commerce et des Arts établie par les Etats de Bretagne, 1759-1760*; Charles Le Pileur d'Apligny, *Essai sur les moyens de perfectionner l'art de la teinture, et observations sur quelques matières qui y sont propres* (Paris: Chez Laurent Prault, 1770).

<sup>65</sup> Jean-Antoine Chaptal, *L'Art de la teinture du coton en rouge* (Paris: Déterville, 1807), pp. 2-3. The art of red dyeing on cotton remained elusive: Chaptal noted artisans were brought from Greece to transmit the secrets of Turkey Red (*rouge Andrinople*) and reduce dependence on the Levant trade.

<sup>66</sup> Abbé Jean-Baptiste Vitalis, *Manuel du teinturier sur fil et sur coton filé, ouvrage qui renferme un grand nombre de procédés nouveaux...* (Rouen: Mégard, 1810). 'La teinture ne deviendra donc véritablement un art, qu'autant que ceux qui l'exercent auront des... ingrédients qui servent pour teindre ... qu'ils connoîtront parfaitement la proportion dans laquelle il convient d'employer, les temps que doit durer leur action, les effets du calorique sur les

True experimentation was now possible, protected by the State. As the techniques were improved, the French took possession of their own marketplace and it became time, the government noted, to regulate this new branch of commerce, ‘to provide fixed rules from which the new entrepreneurs can benefit, like all the other manufactures, and to assure the reputation of their products.’<sup>67</sup> This, in effect, was the beginnings of a new guild, with the registration of businesses required and a dedicated inspection office. Measures to foster the new industry were devised, and in 1785 the law made another the supreme about-turn: imports of foreign printed textiles were once more banned, but this time to protect the flourishing new home-grown industry.

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*bains colorants, l'influence de l'air, de la lumière et de toutes les causes en général, qui changent, altèrent ou détruisent les couleurs.*’

<sup>67</sup> B.A. 1175. ‘*Arrêt du Conseil d’État, Portant nouveau Règlement pour les Toiles peintes & imprimées dans le Royaume, 10 novembre, 1785.*’

## CHAPTER 8

### The Consequences of Repression

When *Contrôleur-général* Claude Le Peletier instigated a cessation to the introduction of Indian printed cottons and a prohibition of their imitations in France in October 1686, he could have had little inkling of the conflict his sweeping prohibition would engender, or that it would prove impossible to apply in the way in which other matters were controlled. The immediate reaction of competing interests, in commerce and within the government itself, resulted in a more complex issue than could have been imagined. This study has confirmed that the oft-repeated motivation for the prohibition, of protecting France's *anciennes manufactures*, is too simplistic, and multiple reasons which ensured the ban was maintained over such an extended time have been revealed from the research. A flurry of reiterations and additions to the law during the first twenty years demonstrated the unforeseen vested interests it affected, the loopholes which existed in its construction, and the ingenuity of individuals in circumventing its proscriptions. The enactment of the prohibition was not unique: the State acted in its traditional manner, with the conviction that, in case of disobedience, upgrading the penalties for transgression would provide the required effect. However, the interests of the traditional manufactures and the *Compagnie* were immediately at odds, and the influence of their patrons guaranteed the unlikelihood of a quick solution. The continual lobbying for privileges and the granting of exemptions to each ruling consistently rendered the laws impotent.

From the start, the prohibition was a State policy completely at odds with the French East India Company's interests and, therefore, its own. In effect, the State sacrificed the *Compagnie des Indes* in 1686 to satisfy the interests of the established textile industries, which were a major source of export revenue. It was only after the initial ruling that the government realised how it had handicapped the *Compagnie*, whose imported Indian fabrics were its main cargo. Instead of finding a moderate solution, the government firmly entrenched its position and, convinced that all commerce in the kingdom was entirely under its control, issued regular repetitions of the law each time it was ignored, adding increasingly severe penalties. The restrictive rulings were interspersed with temporary exceptions and exemptions to appease the *Compagnie's directeurs*, resulting in twenty years of confusion and ineffectiveness in law enforcement. Closing the country's borders

was an ineffective solution in a continent flooded by goods imported from the Indies, which were not difficult to smuggle into France. Indeed, the continuing proscription increased the demand for *toiles peintes*, and made the profits from smuggling worth the risk.

In seeking to protect both the *anciennes manufactures* and the *Compagnie*, the government failed to recognise the contradictory nature of their interests. While the popularity of the imported cotton prints may indeed have proved competition for existing textiles manufactured in France, the frequently cited allegation that printing was attracting workers from the wool, linen and silk industries was patently untrue. Printing workshops were established as early as the mid-seventeenth century in Marseille, followed slightly later in Paris and other locations, but their number had not increased sufficiently before the prohibition to require enough workers to impact the well-established industries, mainly due to the lack of technical progress. In addition, cotton printing was also much less labour-intensive than weaving, with a higher output: a printer could quickly produce long lengths of printed cotton, with only the help of a boy assistant. It also required considerably less skill: it was easy to learn a basic proficiency in hand-block printing, but weaving typically required a long and arduous apprenticeship and guild certification. The accusation that the new industry would steal workers from the silk and woollen industries was a fiction, therefore, which hid the inconvenient fact that the State's religious policies had resulted in the flight of Protestant workers abroad.

In desperation at this situation, and the economic factors driving their industries into decline in the first twenty years of the prohibition, the textile lobbies insisted on State protection. They then clung to their stance throughout the long years of the prohibition, even in periods of prosperity for their trades, and constantly exaggerated the potential effects of a repeal: the Rouen manufactures claimed it would reduce 50,000 families to 'misery', while the Lyon trades estimated 200,000 households would lose their livelihoods. The complaints were based not only upon a fear of losing their markets and anxiety over a potential shortage of workers, but also of being unable to sell any surplus production abroad. They expected the State intervention to regulate this problem as their right, always refusing to admit that their products were unable to compete with foreign competition. The State agreed: as long as an industry employed enough workers, and therefore supported a significant population, it had to be protected. The potential for developing a profitable industry producing *toiles peintes* could not be imagined in this context, only the possibility of it usurping the business of existing industries.

The government's initial tactics in response to the manufactures' lobby were twofold: to attack both the source of supply of the cotton textiles to the market, the *Compagnie des Indes*, and the nascent French printing industry. It has been demonstrated how the legislation evolved over time, with the emphasis shifting to the selling and smuggling of *toiles peintes*, and forbidding consumers from using the fabrics in any manner. This targeting of the public was not only a failure, but significantly increased the desire for the products, making them simultaneously a novelty and a way of flouting state authority. The *frisson* of owning something forbidden was an encouragement to consumption and, through commercial links, the public was aware that their foreign neighbours had access to *indiennes*, which made them even more desirable. Transferring the focus for prosecution to wearing or owning furnishings made of *toiles peintes* was therefore a singularly ineffective policy, with a severity unmerited for the category of crime, and which was particularly harsh on the lower strata of the population. It has been discussed in Chapter 3 how women were particularly susceptible to prosecution, due to the fashionable *indiennes* forming a more important portion of their clothing; their professions as boutique owners and second-hand clothing sellers; of many trading in the fabrics from their homes; and their involvement in small-scale smuggling. Punishments for women included fines, whipping, the stocks or iron collar (*carcan*) and, perhaps with the most devastating effect, banishment from their home towns. In periods of a concerted effort at enforcement, the rather ludicrous arrests for offences such as merely being 'seen at a window wearing *toiles peintes*' were motivated greatly by the major portion of the fine being awarded to the denunciator and the arresting officer.

Once wearing *toiles peintes* was forbidden, the prosecution of individuals was taken extremely seriously and, contrary to recent assertions that 'some people were fined [for wearing forbidden cloth], but it seems the law was upheld only occasionally', this study has shown that there were many and continual clampdowns throughout the prohibition period.<sup>1</sup> The examples in Chapter 5 include arrests by officer Tisserand in 1708 through to the prosecution of Nantes women for wearing forbidden garments in 1737. The issue of the paucity of documents on incarcerations and the execution of the most serious sentences can be explained. For the most part, individual crimes for both sexes were dealt with by

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<sup>1</sup> Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that made the Modern World*, pp. 121-123. The statement does not take into account the multitude of provincial arrests and fines. While it is true the clampdowns were sporadic, they were far more numerous and frequent than Riello suggests, and the chosen examples and anecdotes seem particularly unrepresentative.



ruinously high fines, corporal punishment or banishment, adjudicated directly by the local *Intendant* without trial, and intended to set an example. Public humiliation and censure was a significant penance, as shown by the punishment of Isabelle Champiron, discussed in Chapter 5. A major obstacle to imposing the law was the inability of the majority of people to pay the fines, in which case the sentences could be transmuted to a penal sentence or corporal punishment. The example of Madame Thomas in the same chapter, who was fined, imprisoned and eventually exiled for retailing *indiennes* from her home, shows that harsh punishments were indeed enacted. Significantly, this study has also uncovered evidence that the severest sentences were applied. The death penalty was handed down for organised smuggling, and for officials aiding the activity, but this has been masked in prosecutions for ‘contraband’, of which *toiles peintes* were one of the three major commodities, along with salt and tobacco.<sup>2</sup> Inciting rebellion against the authorities over the application of search-and-seizures was equally harshly punished.<sup>3</sup> As a result the fabrics came to characterise social insubordination, and be symbolic of the loss of revenue from smuggling, which was anathema to the State.

The complexity of juridical regulations, the incessant reiterations of the law and the many exemptions and indemnities initiated a constant stream of requests for elucidation from officials. The permutations of exceptional circumstances were endless and it was difficult for them to remain informed. For instance, the *Intendant* of Metz asked if the restrictions on wearing *toiles peintes* should be applied to the wives of ‘the lower officers, soldiers and sutlers’ of mercenary foreign troops in the service of the king, and if used furniture found in an inventory after death should be seized. After all he remarked, erroneously, ‘the use of old cloths is permitted’.<sup>4</sup> His assumption that some situations

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<sup>2</sup> Isambert, Decrusy & Taillandier, *Recueil général des anciennes lois Français*, Tome XXII, p. 264, no. 701, ‘*Declaration du Roi concernant les Loix pénales contre les Contrebandiers, donnée à Versailles*’, 30 Mars 1756. Smugglers not condemned to death had a month to pay their fines, after which time they were condemned ‘for life’ to the galleys or deported to the colonies. While unlikely, their release could be obtained if the fines, which remained payable, were settled, but they were to suffer ‘*mort civile*’, a catastrophic fate which removed all the civil rights of an individual, including marriage.

<sup>3</sup> BnF F-21151 (35). ‘*Jugemens Souverains de la Commission du Conseil établie à Valence en Dauphiné des 16 avril 1751 et 17 mars 1752*. For example, customs inspector Bernard Gaillard was hanged in Valence in 1751 for taking bribes to allow the passage of forbidden merchandise, and in the same session a customs clerk was condemned to the galleys and two others banished in abstentia for attacking an officer performing a search and ‘inciting rebellion’.

<sup>4</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. III, article 1624. ‘M. de Saint-Contest, intendant à Metz, au Contrôleur-général, 25 avril, 1714.’ ‘*Il y a parmi les troupes, surtout parmi les régiments étrangers au service du Roi, quelquefois des femmes de bas officiers, de soldats ou de vivandiers qui se trouvent habillées de toiles peintes. Faudra-t-il, dans ce cas, exercer la même rigueur contre ces gens-là que contre les autres sujets du Roi?*’ ‘*Il se trouve dans les inventaires des personnes décédées... des meubles de toiles peintes... dont l’usage est permis par les arrêts, quand ces meubles sont vieux et qu’ils ont été faits de*

would naturally merit exemption is a clear indication that no law was ever considered immutable. Another comment, ‘Should we condemn a person wearing a kerchief of *toile peinte* to a fine of 1,000 livres?’ indicates that *Intendants* often found the nature of the rulings nonsensical, which presumably limited their zeal. If the enforcers of the law were uncertain of its parameters, it is understandable that its application was less than efficient.

Administration of the interdiction was a challenge for all concerned. It required clerks and port officials to have a knowledge of the different fabrics and be able to differentiate which were legal and which were forbidden, and their employers to have faith in their honesty. Logistically, the scale of operation which was required to confiscate and burn all the illegal fabrics was completely underestimated, while granting permission for *indiennes* to enter the country provided they were re-exported seems extraordinarily naïve. There was little motivation, in view of the great cost involved and the huge demand for the goods within France. It has also been illustrated in Chapter 6 how the State’s condoning of privileged urban areas exempt from searches, particularly religious institutions, allowed workshops and the trade in illicit fabrics to prosper unchecked. As with so many aspects of the prohibition, the influence of the high-born was a key factor, as they protected their personal interests. As a result, large unpoliced areas of Paris, and similar enclosures in other major cities, developed into veritable hives of illegal activity, secretly distributing illicit goods to the rest of the country.

The research has shown how the prohibition was applied unequally according to the accused’s status, and the variation in its enforcement by officials. This was partly because they were expected to enact the many complicated rulings with little financial incentive. The manpower to do so was at their own expense, with the reward only realised from the later sale of the confiscated goods, which was not guaranteed. They were challenged by an aristocracy which paid no heed to the prohibition, presuming itself to be above the law, and those lower down the economic scale, who tried to circumvent the prohibition by smuggling. The former never ceased to use *toiles peintes*, both as clothing and as decoration for their country homes, while the latter particularly resented giving up the right to wear garments which had clothed them for generations, and they defiantly continued to do so. Perceived as either irrelevant or unfair, the embargo was thus spectacularly

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*longue main.* ‘Faudra-t-il, à la rigueur, condamner une personne qui portera un mouchoir de toile peinte, comme s’il en étoit habillé, en amende de 1,000 [livres]?’

unsuccessful as a sumptuary law, and indeed, it was the last one attempted on such a significant scale.

The popularity of the highly coveted *indiennes* was in part due to greater changes in society. In the eighteenth century, an increase in the ownership of possessions represented the desire of individuals for small luxuries indicative of social betterment. The rise in the number of families with a bed-chamber, for example, provided an impetus for decoration rather than simply necessities. While the wealthy owned more and better quality items, the overall appearance of the different types of goods was similar, which posed a threat to those in the higher echelons of society.

Provincial policy, far from Paris and with different policing challenges, remained at the discretion of the incumbent *Intendant*. Bretons, for example, had a wider access to the imports due to their proximity to the *Compagnie*'s ports, as well as a coastline suited to smuggling operations, and a significant distribution network developed. Through studying the correspondence of *Intendant* Ferrand, it can be seen that his intention to uphold the rulings required a significant part of his time, disproportionate in comparison to his other serious responsibilities of law enforcement, the control of all types of commerce and civil affairs. The study has shown that a great amount of the imported Indian fabrics were used as furnishings, with the data collected in Nantes examined in Chapter 3 confirming that even households on moderate incomes possessed a bed covering or quilt made of *indienne* by 1715. This cannot, however, be extrapolated to conclude that all the populace was dressing in the imported fabrics, which it has been demonstrated were of the most expensive kind. Another general misconception in recent writing, based upon the consumption of printed cloth in England, is to assume that huge quantities of cheaper fabrics were being imported from India for this purpose. This is based upon contemporary comments in England on the cheapness of the goods, but in France for the most part it was high-quality painted goods which were imported, due to the late establishment of French interests in India. These always remained a far lower percentage of the total cargoes than plain cottons, compared to those of the English. Thus the 'Calico Craze' which took place in England took a different form in France, with cheaper prints for clothing smuggled in from alternative sources.

The inferiority of early French cotton prints is attested many times throughout the period. As early as 1700 a report to the *Conseil*, referred to in Chapter 6, related the poor quality of the local products, enclosing samples printed in Rouen to demonstrate 'their

circulation must be prevented'.<sup>5</sup> Many of these fabrics may have been reserve *dyed* rather than printed, a process which produced colourful cloths and became a useful cover for illegal printing in the later years of the prohibition, but could not replicate Indian goods. Merchants were accused of continuing to sell *Compagnie* cloths that were 'all painted', differentiating the Indian goods by their superior hand-painted decoration. Rouen's *Inspecteur des manufactures* Le Chéron confirmed that two different types of prints were circulating: Indian prints which were as expensive as gold and silver cloth, and therefore reserved for the ladies of the Court, and cheap copies for the ordinary citizens who wished to emulate them.<sup>6</sup> Deprived of a progression in its technical processes, French printing continued to be inferior for decades. The *Compagnie* was clearly interested in converting Indian methods in order to add value to its imported plain cottons, demonstrated by the report by its officer Beaulieu, discussed in detail in Chapter 4. However, this and other observational reports persistently missed at least one element which could achieve successful imitation of the hand-painted cottons by printing.

The intention was always to emulate *painted* Indian techniques with wood-block *printing*, which would save time and labour. Pride dictated that such an infinitely superior race must be able to replicate, and even improve upon, Indian creations. This was a fundamentally flawed conceit by which the French unwittingly set themselves the very difficult task of designing a new process, rather than copying the actual Indian techniques used to produce the product they craved. As with other Europeans, the motivation was to find a quicker, more expedient method of achieving the same results as Indian painted cloths, but the understanding of the ingredients and processes required to work with them was elusive. Printing with wood blocks fundamentally required the addition of gum to make the dyes viscous enough to retain the colour when held upside down, and yet be easily washed from the fabric afterwards, while successful colour fastness required the correct combination of mordants for each colour. Lack of understanding of these processes, and the inability to experiment with them openly, resulted in the production of inferior goods throughout the entire seventy-three years, and this has been repeatedly illustrated in this study.

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<sup>5</sup> A.N. F12, 1403. '*Mémoire à M. l'Intendant concernant les étoffes peintes*'. Unsigned memo dated 17 décembre, 1700.

<sup>6</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondence des Contrôleurs-généraux*, Vol. III, article 395, n.3. 'Le Chéron, inspecteur des Manufactures à Rouen, au Contrôleur-général, 4 octobre, 1709.' '*Des dames qui en ont des robes de chambres qui leur coute preque aussi cher que celles d'étoffes d'or et d'argent.*'

Confirmation that this technological stasis continued for the whole period of the prohibition is found in a manual written by an anonymous expert, ‘M. Q\*\*\*’ in 1760.<sup>7</sup> Sharing his secrets for printing *toiles peintes*, he noted that the ‘common prints’ produced were poor quality, and often the many faults left by the blocks had to be retouched by hand. (Figure 120.) He claimed to have learnt the techniques of *Bleu d’Angleterre* ‘from English workers’, and of full-colour printing from the chemist du Fay. However, the formulae du Fay had passed on were those in Beaulieu’s report of thirty years before, so it is unlikely these were useful for anything but the wall-hangings M. Q\*\*\* printed. While he noted that that the printing of the mass-market products was messy, ‘due to the speed with which the work is done and the lack of care taken with it’, he nonetheless stated his intention to offer tricks to make production ‘quicker and easier’.<sup>8</sup> This shortcut to printing in volume was the true overriding goal for Europeans, and not the imitation of Coromandel high-quality goods which has constantly been assumed. They also employed other methods to skip the hand-applied processes, such as *picotage*, a nail-studded block used to create a stippled background effect. (Figure 121.) Boxwood blocks were used to imitate finer painting, but this ‘demanded infinite patience from the printer’ according to M. Q\*\*\*, because the colour got trapped in the grain and made faults if it was not cleaned scrupulously after each impression: as such it was only suitable for ‘curiosities’.<sup>9</sup> He counselled his readers not to

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<sup>7</sup> M. Q\*\*\*, *Traité sur les Toiles Peintes, dans lequel on voit la manière dont on les fabrique aux Indes, & en Europe* (Amsterdam & Paris: Barrois, 1760), pp. 4-6. He is named as the Chevalier de Quérelles by Depitre. The gentleman sought to convey the techniques ‘conveyed to him by the late M. Dufay’ of ‘painting or printing a solid English Blue with the cold method’, in other words with indigo, and a method for printing more subtle gradations of colour which would permit representations of fine draperies, architecture and trees without losing the brightness of the colours. This unequivocally confirms the goal of printing furnishing fabrics, not clothing. An example of his work could be seen, he said, in the ‘unparalleled’ eleven-foot high wall hanging he had made for the Marquise de Fervaques in Paris, which featured a Chinese garden with a pavilion, triumphal arches and flower vases and ‘three-and-a-half foot high figures’. It seems likely the wall-hangings found at Chantilly mentioned in Chapter 6 would have been in this style. ‘*Les techniques que feu M. Dufay m’avoit communiquées... le secret du Bleu d’Angleterre à froid, du bon teint, applicable avec le pinceau, ou avec la planche... et celle d’adoucir & noyer les ombres du côté des parties qui doivent leur être opposées; procédé inconnu jusqu’à ce jour... et l’on pourra faire des Figures avec leur draperies au naturel, des Bâtimens ornés d’architecture, des arbres, &c. ... On peut s’assurer de cette vérité... chez Madame la Marquise de Fervaques à Paris, à qui j’ai fait une Tapisserie de Toile Peinte, de onze pieds de hauteur, représentant un Jardin où le Roi de la Chine est placé sous un beau Pavillon... décoré de Vases remplis de Fleurs... des arcs de triomphe... les Figures ont environ trois pieds & demi de hauteur. Cette Piece mérite d’être vue des Connoisseurs.*’

<sup>8</sup> M. Q\*\*\*, *Traité sur les Toiles Peintes*, p. 100 & p. 89. ‘*Il est nécessaire que les rapports soient exacts, sans quoi la couleur se trouve n’être contenue dans le trait; c’est ce que l’on voit très souvent dans les Toiles peintes communes, à cause de la vitesse avec laquelle on y travaille, et du peu de soin qu’on y apporte... nous allons voir des pratiques qui en rendent la fabrique beaucoup plus prompte & plus facile.*’

<sup>9</sup> M. Q\*\*\*, *Traité sur les Toiles Peintes*, p. 100 & p. 89. ‘*On fait aussi quelquefois des planches de buis pour les desseins d’une finesse extraordinaire; mais cela ne peut être d’usage que pour la curiosité; parceque ces desseins si délicats demandent une attention infinie pour les imprimer, la couleur s’arrêtant à chaque instant dans les traits de la planche, & faisant des fautes dans l’impression si on n’a pas le soin de la nettoyer à chaque instant.*’

skip stages in the process, or to use cheaper, unstable colours, which indicates the cost-cutting avenues the workshops were taking.

It has been concluded from many similar attestations to poor quality work, that the earliest workshops in Marseille endeavoured to approximate the simple stamped designs made in the Gujarat region of north-western India. It was these which the Armenians imported to Europe, and not, as is frequently inferred, the fine hand-painted cottons produced on the south-eastern Coromandel Coast. While these merchant traders were hired to inform Marseille printers, it is probable the technical knowledge they disseminated was of replicating unsophisticated wood-block prints. These simple one- or two-coloured repeating patterns would have been acceptable to a less sophisticated market. Certainly, the notion that early printers produced high-quality imitations of the goods imported by the *Compagnie* can be discounted. Without having perfected these techniques, the French could not have continued to develop them during their years of technical isolation. This means that the assumption that there was a parallel development to the better-quality goods being developed elsewhere in Europe is erroneous.

In addition to the barriers to learning how to apply decoration, the ban curtailed access to fabrics to print upon. Cotton spinning and weaving only started to develop in France after 1710, and before that the only source of woven cotton was the *Compagnie's* imports. Plain cottons composed the majority of the *Compagnie's* textile cargoes, providing a solid reason why the *Compagnie* wished printing to continue after the ban, as evidenced by the permission it received for its chosen Rouen printer to retain his wood blocks. It was later asserted in 1697 that Rouen *indienneurs* were using these same moulds and tools to print on *siamoises*, even though the *Contrôleur-général* had specifically ruled against the use of that fabric, and demonstrating the impossibility of enforcing the eradication of equipment. The linen content of *siamoises* made them even more difficult to print permanent colours upon, and so the imported goods remained the highest quality offering for the longest time. It was only when cotton spinning and weaving were perfected that there was the prospect of a serious and profitable national printing industry.

That covert printing was mainly carried out on linen has been greatly overlooked and is a significant finding of this study. French-made linen was an obvious substitute for cotton for people attempting to print, due to its availability and the similarity in appearance of the fabrics, which were imagined to be interchangeable in spite of their different properties. Applications for privileges to print prior to successful cotton production were exclusively requested for printing on linen, and indeed experimentation was carried on

throughout the prohibition on that substrate. It would have been less successful technically, but nonetheless desirable, as the rare example of a printed linen *gilet* in Figure 122 shows. As a result the linen industry considered itself more threatened than any other national manufacture, firstly, as its premium *fleurets* were used for printing, limiting the supply for the lucrative export markets, and secondly, due to the fear that low-quality prints would ruin their reputation for good quality cloth. This is confirmed by the lengthy campaigns by the Normandy linen producers for State protection from the cotton industry, although in reality this was never a threat until it was mechanised and produced prints in great volume. In addition, linen was always protected from foreign competition by tariffs.

While the complaints were continuous from the silk and wool weavers, petition manuscripts have revealed that it was actually the Rouen linen makers who were the most active opposition to cotton printing. Once they later realised that they could themselves benefit from the increased profit which could be made through decoration, they were the first to reverse their policy. By the 1730s the Normandy *Chambre de Commerce* favoured the development of textile printing on both linen and wool. This had arisen from two changes in the market by that date: firstly, the continued development of cotton production, which threatened to usurp linen for printing; and secondly the perfection of colour-fast and successful imitations of Indian goods in England and Holland which were by that date being smuggled into France. Emulation of these fabrics offered a potential solution for reviving Normandy's failing textile trades. Linen remained a viable alternative: as discussed in Chapter 6, it has been discovered that Wetter's much-cited request in 1746 to set up a workshop was actually to print on linen, a point which has gone unremarked. He would produce 30,000 pieces of linen each year in return for the permission to print, which he argued could regenerate the industry. The products would be exported to the colonies and, in addition, he offered to share his secrets after ten years of production. In spite of such lucrative advantages, and the approval of his samples by Hellot, Wetter's privilege was not granted. As it would seem to be an irresistible offer, the resistance was perhaps from fear that in reality he would print on imported cottons.

This study has demonstrated that the assumption that textile printing in France developed progressively from the 1640s to the 1760s cannot be confirmed. Early printing was tentative, with printers attempting to copy the designs and ingredients of Indian products without sufficient knowledge of the processes to make the printing colour-fast. The assumption that this automatically led to the development of washable designs suitable for clothing is debateable. It remains uncertain whether the workshops developing from the

1670s could have been producing colour-fast cotton prints, when there was expert commentary as late as 1766 that the French products were ‘below standard and did not imitate the Indian models in fastness’.<sup>10</sup> This fact remains significant but frustrating, as without the proof of fabric samples the different qualities which were acceptable between the beginning and the end of the prohibition cannot be definitively established.

The prohibition was initially ignored and then actively defied, creating a situation which the State had not envisaged and did not have the machinery to enforce. The ardent initiatives of the first twenty years gave way to a resignation at the ineffectiveness of the application of the interdiction, punctuated only by the periodic zeal of incoming *Contrôleurs-généraux*, and even then only in periods where issues of commerce became of increased interest for their revenue-producing potential. For the State, the cost of policing the ports and borders for contraband, monitoring the cities and towns for infractions, conducting searches, bringing perpetrators to court and disposing of the confiscated goods were all prohibitively expensive. Initial conviction that these expenses would be covered by the sale of seized merchandise was thwarted by the interdiction on reselling the goods in France, and so the management of contraband goods was entrusted to the *Compagnie*. It was awarded the right to continue to import its Indian textiles, and add the confiscated cottons to them, on the condition of re-export. However, finding a market within Europe was restricted by the competition of the other East India Companies, and it was only once the potential of a triangular trade with France’s colonies in Africa and the West Indies was realised that a viable outlet was provided. Even so, for the *Compagnie*, reloading ships to export the goods it seized was onerous, as was the cost of storing the merchandise securely until this was possible. There was, therefore, considerable motivation for the *Compagnie* to off-load the collected goods within the country, providing large quantities of textiles for sale on the black market.

The prolongation of the prohibition suited individuals with vested interests, and the *Compagnie*’s *directeurs* particularly benefitted, increasing their personal profits over time. In 1709, two thirds of the fines collected from sentenced smugglers, as well as the fee the *Compagnie* charged for calibrating and marking the confiscated fabrics, belonged to the officers conducting the seizures. The remaining third of the fines was shared between the *Compagnie* and the *Fermiers-Généraux*, but in 1726, in recognition of the difficulty of collecting penalties from smugglers, the majority of whom were ‘vagabonds, whom it is

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<sup>10</sup> Ryhiner, *Traité sur la fabrication et le commerce des toiles peintes*.



very difficult to make pay the fines which are pronounced against them', the *fermiers* and the *directeurs* agreed to share two-thirds of the *aunages*, at the expense of the arresting officers.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the *Compagnie* retained the contraband. Thus financial incentives for both organisations and their governors provided a distinct advantage to maintaining the circulation of illicit merchandise, but there was less motivation for officials to enforce the ban.

In spite of the determination to maintain the status quo, by the 1730s the *Conseil* was essentially defeated by the ineffectiveness of reiterating the law; the impossibility of policing the seemingly limitless illegal activities; and its impotence in holding back the flood of foreign contraband. Notwithstanding this disinterest, some provincial *Intendants* continued the enforcement up to the repeal, illustrating an independence of action which has been noted throughout the research, and which contributed to the unequal application of the interdiction. A period of renewed vigour to uphold the ban in the 1740s was a reaction to the increasing demand for a revocation from liberal reformers. The repeal only came about after a protracted debate which saw the emphasis of the argument shift to the greater issues of principle: freedom of trade, and the recognition of the rights of the individual to choose what they wore. While the traditional craftsmen clung to the policy of the eradication of all potential competition, other influential thinkers propounded the advantages to be gained by developing the industry, not least for the taxable income which a successful new field could provide. By the 1750s, the commercial and ideological climate bore little relation to the situation seventy-five years previously. Printed cottons had by then been used for over a hundred years, and had become a commodity for general consumption, rather than luxury items which could be controlled through repressive sumptuary laws. Ultimately, however, the stalemate was only broken on the volition of Silhouette, advised by Forbonnais, both men being proponents of the advantages of the liberalisation of commerce. Had it not been for Silhouette's brief ministry in 1759, the prohibition may have continued even longer. The government then moved swiftly from prohibition to protection of the new industry, its tried-and-tested mode of operation.

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<sup>11</sup> Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon, Collection jésuite des Fontaines, SJAB 120/165, 4. '*Délibération de Messieurs les Fermiers-généraux, concernant les Gratifications accordées aux employés dans les Saisies des Marchandises de Contrebande, Amendes & Confiscations, 28 février, 1726.*' '*La majorité d'entre eux soient des gabonds, dont il est très difficile de faire payer les amendes qui sont prononcés.*'

On balance, it may be concluded that the repression of printing skills, which drove the printers underground, was a more far-reaching consequence of the prohibition than banning the importing of cotton fabrics by the *Compagnie*. As a result of the industry becoming illegal there was a total stagnation of technical knowledge, which was vital at a time when other Europeans were on the cusp of deciphering how to successfully recreate Indian products. As printers in England and other European centres experimented and improved their techniques through practice and open discussion among the practitioners, France was denied this possibility, ensuring that an underground, furtive and therefore necessarily small-scale production continued through the period of prohibition. Somewhat paradoxically, by impeding the flowering of the industry, the State forfeited its ability to control the quality of the products which circulated in France.

Nevertheless, the hindrance to the acquisition of knowledge and technology caused by the ban did not ultimately inhibit the country after the repeal. The technological processes required were appropriated from other Europeans, rather than being learned from Indian techniques, the pursuit of which was ultimately a dead end. A multitude of new businesses were established, many of which failed due to lack of investment, but after a period of experimentation some achieved great success and soon equalled their competitors technically, unchecked by the years of prohibition. The perfection of the copper-roller technique allowed huge volumes of cotton to be printed quickly and cheaply, ensuring the supremacy of European factories in the nineteenth century, and the end of importing Indian prints.

Imposed with magnificent hubris, and considered a commercial concern of little importance in a time of almost constant war, the *affaire des toiles peintes* occupied far more of the time of successive governments than could initially have been imagined. Although it was undeniably instigated as a protectionist economic policy, it has been shown to have been extended due to conflicting policies, vested interests and an overriding fear for France's reputation for high-quality products. Refusal to concede that the King's will could not suppress any product or activity saw the firmly entrenched policy endure for seventy-three years, without recognition of the changing situation, both technologically and socially, within France and in the surrounding countries. The detrimental legacy of the prohibition was not its handicapping of a future industry, which ultimately overcame any delayed development, but the expense of its implementation and the cost to persecuted individuals of a futile policy.

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