

***Papier Terrier* (1660)**

or territorial inventory, ordered by King Louis XIV of France, of rural areas close to Paris, Saint-Cloud and Saint-Germain in Laye

[Unique *Papier Terrier*, part of the inventory of royal lands and properties, in use by the Crown of France or ceded to third parties, which accounts for and defines several parcels, houses and limits regarding two areas on the outskirts of Paris (Saint-Cloud and Saint-Germain en Laye). Dated March 8th, 1660, the document was drawn up on a *vellum bifolia*, measuring 281 x 438 mm (unfolded), and 281 x 219 mm (folded). It features a printed section (f. 1r) in 17th century roman typescript followed by manuscript texts in French notarial cursive, seldomly abbreviated (ff. 1r-2v). As a result of archival or correspondence practices, the document was in turn folded into twelve sections, leaving its header on the outside.]

In legal language, a *papier terrier*, also called *a livre terrier* or *plan terrier* or *terrier* (an Old French adjective meaning “of the land”), is a record that describes a Lordship’s real estate, as well as the rights and conditions of the locals, and the royalties and obligations to which they are subject. It is a typical expression of the universe of feudal economic relations in France, and it takes various forms and formulations depending on different contexts and circumstances.

In the particular case of this *papier terrier*, its *incipit*—the word *Pardevant*, printed in capital letters—introduces its testimonial and legal value, recalling the role of the notary who, as empowered official, registered lands and houses in those sections of the Parisian hinterland. In effect, the expression *pardevant* (“here in front [of us]”) frequently appears in various proclamations and documents during the Ancien Régime, whereby an official certifies, on behalf of this or that authority—in this case the king—a particular affair.

As for the rest, its historical value can be fully grasped bearing in mind that, during the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715), a trend that had accelerated since the Bourbon dynasty’s empowerment in the late 16th century, eventually deepened. In fact, Henry IV (1589-1610), and his son and successor Louis XIII (1610-1643) increased the tax burden, both direct and indirect, on their subjects. This endeavor was added to by a systematic attempt to formally delimit royal domain, an important source of direct income for the Crown. This naturally implied disputing, as far as possible, feudal possessions in the hands of the king’s vassal lords, with the consequent political tension.

The document constituted a legal act to formalize the ownership of scattered lands in Saint-Cloud and Saint-Germain en Laye, the City of Light’s suburbs today. Its purpose was to include those lands into the French royal domain and to provide the necessary information for a *Papier Terrier Général & Universel*, whereby the formal and general registry of the Crown’s possessions would be established. To that effect, a notary by the name of Beaufrancq appeared in person and resolved certain territorial disputes using the testimony of local gentlemen, who gave their consent in the act through their respective signatures.

Apropos the notary, he was an official of the *Chambre Souveraine du Domaine* or *Chambre des Comptes*, one of the so-called *Cours Souveraines* that administered the kingdom's public affairs, equivalent to the *Grand Conseil* and the *Parlements*, which dealt with the kingdom's legal dimensions, and the *Cours des aides* and the *Cours des monnaies*, focused on strictly economic and tax issues. Traditionally, all these collegiate bodies officiated as “councils” to the King, who kept for himself the sovereign authority to make the final decision. However, by 1660 the authority of the *Cours* had been significantly weakened in practice, and they seemed to function more and more as mere royal clerks.

Thanks to this process of increased state control, the Crown was able to advance over the last pockets of autonomy that limited its absolute power—power that, following a tradition of medieval Political Theory, the royal family claimed to have received by divine grace. The famous apocryphal phrase, “*l'État, c'est moi*” (“I am the State”), falsely attributed to Louis XIV by his enemies as being uttered during a speech on April 13th, 1655, reveals how heightened tensions were due to tax pressure when this *papier terrier* was ordered. Indeed, on that very day the young king decreed seventeen edicts aimed at increasing tax collection. Suffice as empirical support to illustrate this process is the fact that the Crown's tax collection increased from 130 million pounds in 1653 to over 160 million in 1659-1660.¹

Moreover, the immediate context of this document is also significant: it is dated March 8th, 1660, a few months after peace was signed between France and Spain in the Treaty of the Pyrenees (November 7th, 1659), following a long series of exhausting wars. However, the deepest and most significant context to realize the nature of this instrument is, possibly, that episode known as *La Fronde*, a large-scale revolt of courts, cities and great noble families against the Crown's growing economic impositions and absolutist ambitions. The turbulent process began around 1648, soon after the Thirty Years' War, and spanned the minority of Louis XIV, and the regency of his mother Ana of Austria, sister of the King of Spain, Felipe IV (1621-1655). It was not until around 1653, after five years of disputes, that the situation seemed to normalize, with Louis XIV already firmly established in power. The document itself shows signs that the Crown was obsessed with achieving the perfection of the *Papier Terrier Général & Universel* by stating as precedents similar orders issued in 1656, 1657, 1658 and 1659. Also interesting is the fact that, around 1661, the so-called *Cours Souveraines* would be renamed as *Cours Supérieures*, for which reason this is one of the last legal acts carried out by this institution under that name.

On the other hand, since it is possible to know in detail how Louis XIV, always suspicious of the powers that could undermine his reign, managed to consolidate his absolutist project by considerably reducing the autonomy of the high aristocracy, documents such as this illustrate more silent and subterranean means of economic and political control. They can be interpreted, in effect, as signs of how the monarchy tried to ensure control of its domains by making use of

1 Yves-Marie Bercé, “Nicolas Fouquet, the «coup de majesté» of Louis XIV et la fête de Vaux-le-Vicomte du 17 août 1661”, on-line in *Canal Académies*, <https://www.canalacademies.com/emissions/un-jour-dans-lhistoire/nicolas-fouquet-le-coup-de-majeste-de-louis-xiv-et-la-fete-de-vaux-le-vicomte-du-17-aout-1661>.

increasingly sophisticated legal tools, in order to weaken the lords' territorial powers and, more generally, to discipline tenants.

In short, the document offered here is of special value due to four main reasons: 1) its uniqueness, inasmuch as it reveals local and regional economic and social issues in a particular context; 2) its documentary testimony of the state of late-feudal economy still in force during the Old Regime; 3) its documentary value to understand royal bureaucracy and its internal strains; and 4) its significance in the field of the History of Writing & Printing, as it combines mixed techniques: printing and handwriting.

In any case, this document will allow specialists in economic and political history to review, complement or test current theses in the field, and to provide new data and perspectives on an area of historical knowledge that, in being particularly dynamic and complex, requires permanent revisions and reformulations.

Bibliography

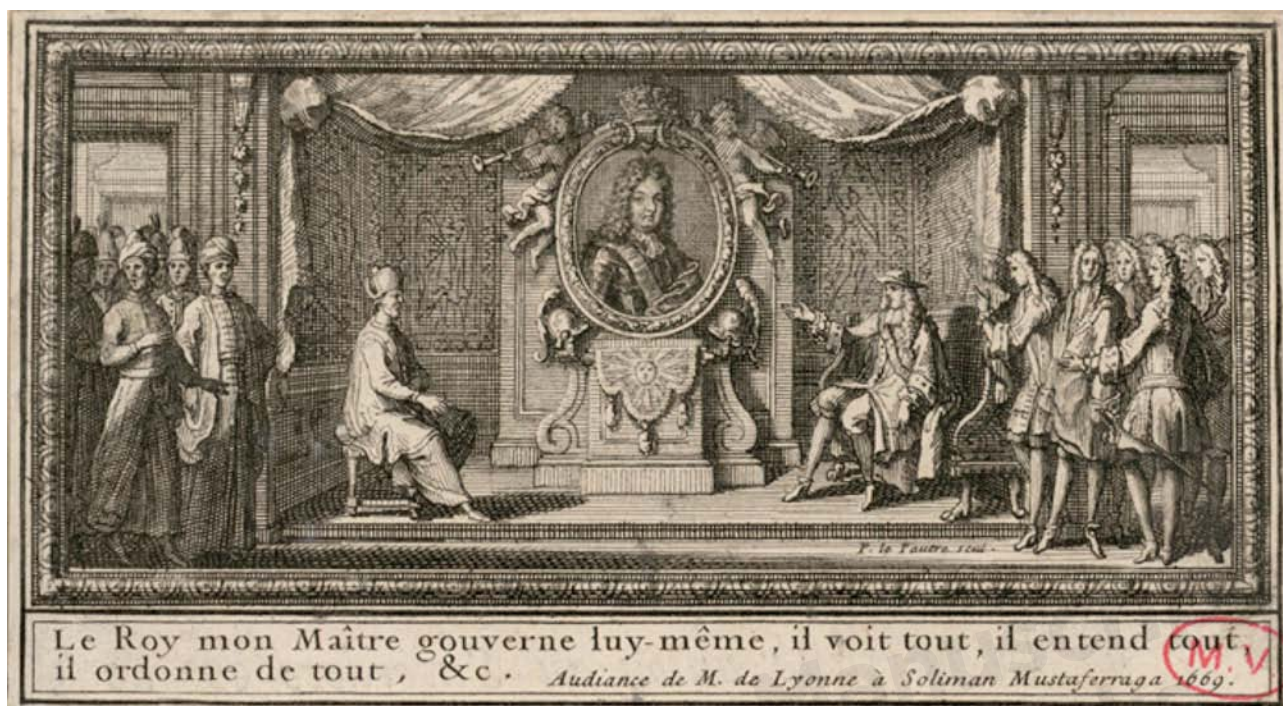
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Le Roi mon Maître gouverne lui-même, il voit tout, il entend tout, il ordonne de tout, etc.

Etching, 1669, designed by Pierre Le Pautre (1652-1716).

(Source: *Château de Versailles*®)



King Louis XIV, arbiter of peace and war, together with his Council.

Engraving by Henri Noblin & Pierre Leautre, 1692.

(Source: *Châteaux de Versailles & de Trianon*;

Public Domain: *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*)



La marche royale de Louys le Grand.

Louis XIV and his heirs, with the French army in the background.

Engraving by Nicholas de Larmessin (1632-1694), printed in Paris by Pierre Bertrand in 1672.

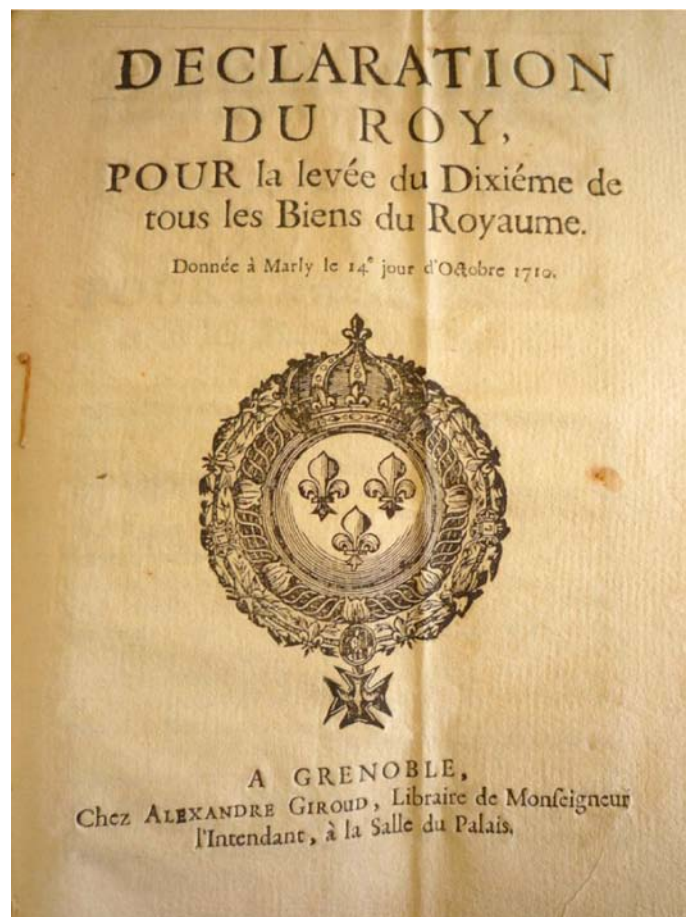


Les respectz & soumissions de l'importante ville de Strasbourg,
engraving, 1682, by Nicholas de Larmessin (1632-1694).

The lady engaged in paying honors to the king indicates the economic and political submission of the thriving city of Strasbourg to the crown.



Louis XIV holding his seals in the presence of *Conseillers d'État* and *Maîtres des Requêtes*, circa 1670. Anonymous painting attributed to the XVIIth century *École Française*, oil on canvas, 110 x 128 cm. (Source: Pedagogical Resources of the Château de Versailles - Public Domain)



Declaration of Louis XIV introducing a new tax (1710), late testimony of the tax pressure during his reign, also manifested in this 1660 *papier terrier*. (Source: Departmental Archives de l'Isère Leemage)