

BARBARA B. DIEFENDORF

Paris City Councillors in the Sixteenth-Century

The Politics of Patrimony



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Sixteenth Century*

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Barbara B. Diefendorf

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To Elizabeth and Jeffry

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relation between the law and the society in which it functions. But above and beyond these contributions, the book is dedicated to her because of the person she is and the affection I bear her. My husband, Jeffry Diefendorf, has contributed to this project in more ways than I can name. From the first tentative formulations of the thesis to the final editing tasks, he has thoughtfully heard and patiently read innumerable variations on the theme. While I am very grateful for the confidence with which he supported this project, I am no less grateful for his always constructive critical suggestions. For these and other reasons this book is for him.

The responsibility for any errors of fact or interpretation is my own.

A Note on Manuscript Sources and Abbreviations

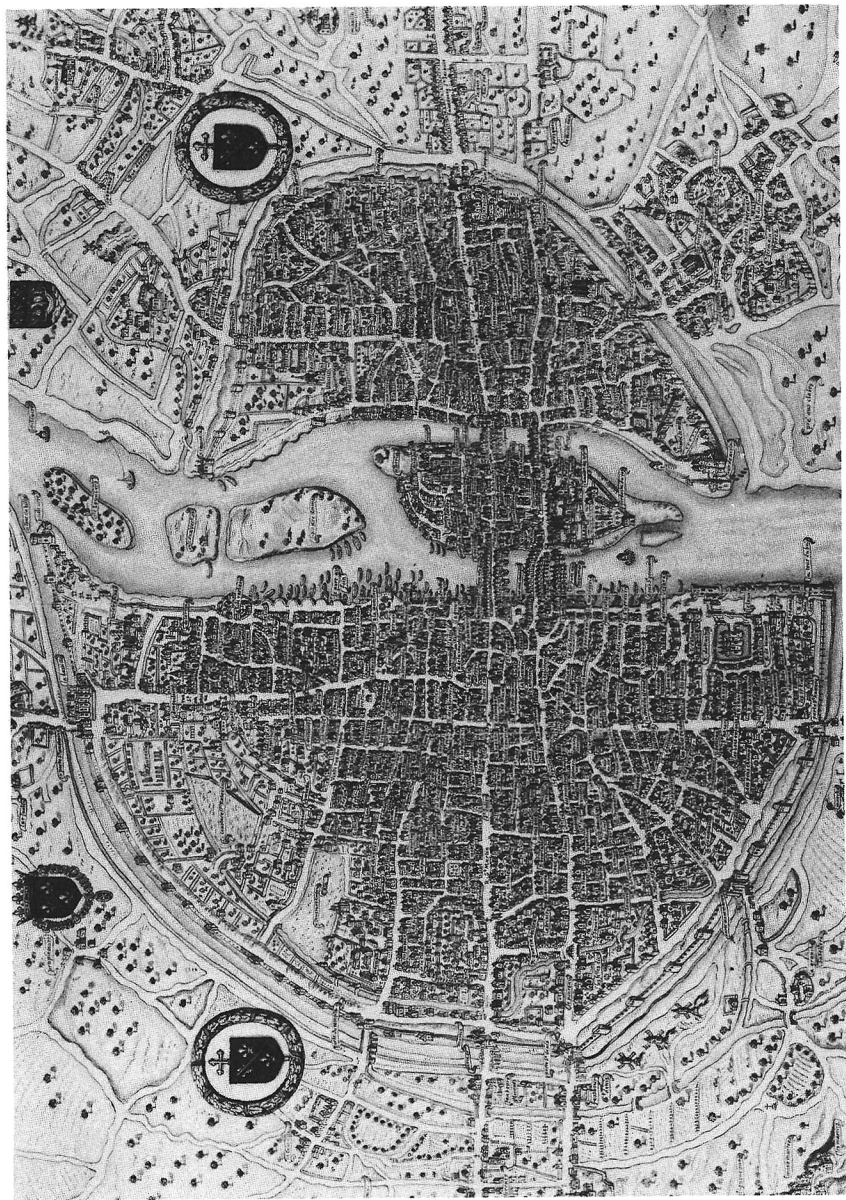
WHEN CITING manuscript sources in the footnotes, I have used the abbreviation of the archive, followed by the designation of the general series or collection and then by the number of its subdivision, followed by folio or page numbers and/or dates of contracts. The names of the principal parties are also given if they do not already appear in the text. The dates of contracts are expressed in the French style, that is to say, with the day first and then the month and the last two digits of the year. Unless otherwise specified, all years refer to the sixteenth century. The dates of documents have been left in the old style, as they appear in the sources. In the text, however, references to dates have been brought into alignment with our contemporary calendar and the abbreviation "(n.s.)" (new style) has been added to advise the reader of the change.

Subtitles and titles of series have been omitted from the footnotes for the sake of brevity. They can be found in the bibliography.

The following abbreviations and short forms are used in the notes:

A.C.	Paris Custom of 1510
AN	Archives nationales
<i>Annales</i>	<i>Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations</i>
BN	Bibliothèque nationale
<i>BSHP</i>	<i>Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'Ile-de-France</i>
Carrés	Carrés d'Hozier
D.b.	Dossiers bleus

£	<i>Livres tournois</i>
Min. cen.	Minutier central
MS fr.	Manuscrits français
MSHP	<i>Mémoires de la Société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'Ile-de-France</i>
N.a.	Nouvelles acquisitions
N.C.	Paris Custom of 1580
P.o.	Pièces originales
Reg. BV	<i>Registres des délibérations du Bureau de la Ville de Paris</i>



Map of Paris known as the “Tapisserie” (approximately 1540). Source: Bibliothèque nationale.

Introduction

HISTORIANS have long recognized that the bourgeoisie of sixteenth-century Paris produced some of the most illustrious dynasties of the *noblesse de robe* of Old Regime France. They have recognized as well that the ties of kinship played an important part in the success of these families. And yet, despite the burgeoning literature on elites and the family in French history, little work has as yet been published on the families that constituted the dominant elite of the largest city and political capital of the sixteenth-century French monarchy.¹ Ironically, the very importance of the role played by Paris and its inhabitants in many of the major events of French history may have contributed to this gap in the literature. In seeking out new areas of history to explore, it is easy to overlook those that are seemingly most familiar. Moreover, the study of Parisian social history poses problems that are not encountered in the study of provincial towns. It is difficult if not impossible to extricate the social and political structures of the French capital from those of the monarchy itself. It is, however, precisely because of the unique role of Paris in the French state that a study of the governing elite of this city assumes an importance that transcends the local context.

The present study seeks to enlarge our understanding of

¹ Denis Richet and some of his students have undertaken a large-scale, computer-assisted analysis of the Parisian notability, but the results of their research have not yet been published. For a discussion of this research, see Denis Richet, "Aspects socio-culturels des conflits religieux à Paris dans la seconde moitié du xvi^e siècle," *Annales* 32 (1977):764-89. Much of the recent literature on French elites is discussed in a review article by J[ohn] H. M. Salmon ("Storm over the Noblesse," *Journal of Modern History* 53 [1981]:242-58), while an excellent bibliography on the family in early modern France is provided in Gerald Soliday, ed., *History of the Family and Kinship* (Millwood, N.Y., 1980), pp. 76-94.

French history through an examination of the character and behavior of the dominant elite of Paris during a crucial period in the development of the French monarchy. In order to understand the means by which the families that composed this elite achieved their preeminence and maintained it through successive generations, I have explored the ways in which participation in civic affairs, career choices, matrimonial arrangements, and inheritance practices served the ambitions of this group. The study is principally archival in character. The initial conceptualization of both problem and approach and certain points of interpretation of course owe much to my reading of recent secondary works on social structures, the family, and the law. If there are relatively few references to these works in the body of the text, it is because as my work on the Parisian elite progressed I found that it took on a shape and contour of its own, a shape dictated by the nature of the archival sources and the information they yielded. Attempts to bring in frequent comparisons with the results of studies of other cities and other social groups, studies that are inevitably based on different sorts of data and bounded by different parameters, would have diffused the focus of the book, and I found the subject at hand to be large, complex, and important enough to stand alone.

Indeed, the first problem in dealing with the Parisian elite was to reduce the scope of the undertaking to manageable proportions by focusing research on a limited segment of the local elite and a limited period of time. This was important for several reasons. In the first place, it is extremely difficult to define the boundaries of the Parisian upper classes. Unlike the patriciate of many German and Italian cities during the Renaissance, the Parisian elite had neither a clearly defined juridical status nor carefully controlled membership requirements to set it apart from the two hundred thousand or more other inhabitants of the metropolis on the Seine.² The prob-

² There are no reliable figures on the size of the Parisian population in the sixteenth century. At the start of the century, the city was still recovering from the prolonged crisis of the Hundred Years War, which, according

lem of defining a Parisian notability according to social or professional status is further complicated by the city's role as the capital and administrative hub of the French monarchy. To avoid these problems, I have focused this study on the ninety men who held office in municipal government as *conseillers de l'Hôtel de Ville* between the years 1535 and 1575. Nomination to the office of councillor in the Hôtel de Ville was almost by definition a mark of elite standing in the city. Without formal legislative authority, the body of twenty-four councillors served as advisors to the principal officers of the Parisian municipality—the *prévôt des marchands* and four *échevins*. The office was in theory elective, but in practice it was co-optive, with a strong tendency toward hereditary function by the second half of the sixteenth century. In spite of the narrow recruitment—or because of it—the men named to the council were by birth or alliance members of prominent and well-respected Parisian families. Several of the city councillors were famous men in their own right, among them the humanist Guillaume Budé, the jurist Christophe de Thou, and the chancellor Michel de L'Hôpital. At least in terms of prestige, the city councillors well merited their nickname of the city's "little Senate," and these ninety men were indisputably a part of the Parisian elite.³

The time period for this study was chosen because it lies at the heart of an important period of social and political transition in the French monarchy. The specific years for city

to the most reliable estimates, saw a medieval city of some 200,000 reduced by half by the first quarter of the fifteenth century. Rebuilding, at first slow, gradually accelerated in the later decades of the century, so that the city had in all probability nearly returned to its earlier peak by 1500 (Jean Favier, *Paris au x^e siècle* [Paris, 1974], pp. 61-62). This growth continued in the sixteenth century, despite renewed outbreaks of the plague. Even the most conservative estimates give Paris a population of 200,000 at the end of the sixteenth century, while others go as high as 400,000 or more (Pierre Chaunu, *La Mort à Paris* [Paris, 1978], p. 198; Pierre Lavedan, *Histoire de Paris* [Paris, 1967], p. 32). In my own opinion, the conservative estimate is probably the more accurate.

³ Albert Miron de l'Espinay, *François Miron et l'administration municipale sous Henri IV* (Paris, 1885), p. 161.

council membership (1535-1575) were determined by methodological considerations as well. City records are incomplete before the 1530s; a reliable list of city councillors cannot be established for the earlier period. The register at the Châtelet of notarial contracts involving transfers of property (*insinuations*), a prime source for this research, was only begun in 1539 after the ordinance of Villers-Cotterets. The terminal date, that on which the last of the city councillors studied was nominated to office, was chosen to avoid the confusion of social and political issues that occurred as the quarrels between Politiques and Ultra-Catholics polarized Parisian society in the later decades of the century.⁴ The religious turmoil of the middle decades of the sixteenth century must of course figure into any study of French society in this period. However, because the Parisian elite remained so firmly Catholic, religious issues are touched on here only as they affected relationships within some of the councillors' families.

Because this is a study of families, the careers and marriages of the city councillors' offspring are as important as those of the councillors themselves. Therefore, the temporal limits of the study are necessarily carried beyond the forty-year period from which the city council membership was drawn. Indeed, in its broadest terms, the period under consideration spans the entire sixteenth century and the first decade or more of the seventeenth. Guillaume Budé, probably the oldest of the city councillors in the group, began his career with the office of *secrétaire du roi* in 1497, while the sons of some of the younger city councillors did not come of age until the

⁴ The problems of the League demand special attention, and since this period has already attracted more scholarly attention than other portions of sixteenth-century Parisian history, it seemed reasonable to stop short of it. See Elie Barnavi, *Le Parti de Dieu* (Louvain, 1980); J[ohn] H. M. Salmon, "The Paris Sixteen, 1584-94," *Journal of Modern History* 44 (1972):540-76; and Peter M. Ascoli, "The Sixteen and the Paris League, 1585-91" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1972). Denis Richet has attributed his research on the Parisian nobility to a desire to understand the social background of the participants in the League ("Conflits religieux," pp. 764-65), and Roland Mousnier has also had students at work on various aspects of the period of the League in Paris.

early years of the seventeenth century.⁵ The middle and later decades of the sixteenth century are the decades central to this study, however.

This was a crucial period for the French monarchy. Despite the divisive effects of religious schism and civil war, there were developments in the middle and later part of the sixteenth century of critical importance to the later strength of the absolute monarchy. Among these developments, the rapid expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus upon which centralized government depended and the growing power and prestige of the body of professional civil servants must be singled out. Although the growth in the number and status of the professional bureaucracy has its roots back in the medieval period, this process accelerated dramatically in the sixteenth century as the overt practice of venality encouraged the multiplication of governmental offices. Other important developments were the institutional reforms begun by Francis I and Henry II and continued, albeit somewhat erratically, during the reigns of the last Valois kings. The imposition of monarchical authority in realms previously left to local administration and custom is of particular significance. Finally, theoretical foundations necessary to the extension of absolute powers by the Bourbon monarchs were laid during this period.

These developments were felt particularly in Paris, the administrative heart of the kingdom. The increasing prominence of the officerial hierarchy, for example, was especially obvious in Paris because of the location there of the sovereign courts and the central fiscal bureaucracy. There was a decline in the role of merchants in the highest strata of civic government and a corresponding increase in the role of officers to the king. The institutional reforms of the French monarchy affected the Parisian elite on two accounts: as officers of the king and as his subjects. Directly, as members of the royal bureaucracy, or indirectly, as members of an administrative

⁵ *Nouvelle biographie générale*, s.v. "Budé."

body frequently consulted by the king, they participated in the formulation of a number of these reforms. In this respect, the individual contributions of Michel de L'Hôpital while chancellor and Christophe de Thou, charged with the codification of customary law, stand out, but many other city councillors, their closest relatives, and friends helped to shape the policies and powers of the central government.

Paris was at this time, as Paris has always been, an intellectual as well as a political capital, and in the sixteenth century, the center of intellectual ferment was in the ranks of the professional bureaucrats. Among the king's officers were a number of worldly and educated men who encouraged the revival of classical learning in France and who had much to do with the flowering of French arts and letters and, most importantly, with the emergence of a new vision of history and a new appraisal of the nature of political power and sovereignty.⁶

All of these developments—intellectual, political, and social—are particularly important because they affected both private values and public ambitions. They determined what was considered desirable, worthwhile, worth striving for. Since ambition is in large measure dependent upon the opportunities a society offers and the value placed upon them, an examination of the mechanisms for social advancement and maintenance among the Parisian elite inevitably involves an examination of social values. And, because a value system cannot operate in isolation from the social and political structures around it, there will be inevitable parallels between the principles from which notions of personal achievement and the principles from which notions of collective success are derived. There will also be parallels between the means judged

⁶ Among the more important works on the contribution of the royal officers to political and historical theory are William F. Church, *Constitutional Thought in Sixteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941); Julian H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Sixteenth-Century Revolution in the Methodology of Law and History* (New York, 1963); Donald R. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship* (New York, 1970); and George Huppert, *The Idea of Perfect History* (Urbana, Ill., [1970]).

most desirable for effecting private ends and those judged most desirable for effecting public ends. Thus we shall see in the study that follows repeated parallels between the role of the family and that of the state, between the role of the father and that of the king. These parallels exist because the institutions of family and state, and the roles of father and king, were based on common principles, those of order, authority, hierarchy, responsibility, and respect for tradition.

The ninety men whose careers and families are the subject of this study did not profit equally from the process of change in sixteenth-century politics, economics, and society. Some of these men had brilliant careers and promoted their children to still more prestigious positions; others knew less success for themselves and their heirs. But despite the varying levels of individual achievement, all can be seen to have operated within fundamentally the same system of priorities and values. These priorities and values were not, however, characteristic of this group of ninety men only. Many of the conclusions drawn from the behavior of this group are also valid for other local notables—for other important city officers, for other officers of the sovereign courts and at the higher levels in the royal administrative and fiscal bureaucracies (especially among those who were Parisian by birth or considered themselves so by adoption), and for the wealthier merchants and bourgeois rentiers of the city.

A few definitions are important to the work that follows. I have used the term "family" in its most common usage today, that is, to refer to "the group of persons consisting of parents and their children, whether actually living together or not; in [a] wider sense, the unity formed by those who are nearly connected by blood or affinity."⁷ This definition is more appropriate for the aims of this study than is the sixteenth-century usage, which referred primarily to the household and included servants as well as kin. For purposes of clarity, the term "lineage" is used instead of "family" when reference is

⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1971 ed., s.v. "family."

made to a group of persons claiming descent from a common ancestor, and "kin" is used for persons more distantly related by blood or marriage.⁸

As I have already said, the precise boundaries of the Parisian elite cannot be defined. For a working definition, however, I would say that a man should meet all or nearly all of the following criteria to be considered a part of the local elite. He should be Parisian by birth or at the very least have married into a family long known and respected in the city. Even if possessing country estates, he should consider Paris his principal residence. He should himself hold civic office as prévôt des marchands, échevin, or city councillor, or he should be a direct descendant or brother of one of these city officers. By profession, he should be an officer of the sovereign courts, an important member of the administrative and fiscal bureaucracy, or one of the highest officers of the Châtelet, although he might also be a very wealthy merchant (probably a wholesaler, although a few jewelers might qualify) or a rich rentier living off landed income or bonds. The size of this group is necessarily small. Only 305 persons held office as prévôt des marchands, échevin, and city councillor in sixteenth-century Paris. Even if this number is doubled several times over to include the closest relatives and most influential associates of these men, we are speaking of only several thousand persons in a city whose population was somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000 persons. I have used the term "notability" in a rather broader sense to include persons of somewhat lower civic or monarchical office and somewhat less wealthy merchants and rentiers. This would include persons who were

⁸ For an excellent discussion of the concepts of "family," "lineage," and other terms of kinship in Old Regime France, see Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Familles: Parenté, maison, sexualité dans l'ancienne société* (Paris, 1976), pp. 17-21. See also Edward Britton, "The Peasant Family in Fourteenth-Century England," *Peasant Studies* 5 (1976):5-6; Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, eds., *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge, England, 1972); and Robert Wheaton and Tamara K. Hareven, eds., *Family and Sexuality in French History* (Philadelphia, 1980), pp. 6-9.

named as "bourgeois" representatives to city elections but did not otherwise participate in civic affairs.

The term "bourgeois" presents special problems, for even in the sixteenth century the term had several, overlapping definitions. Two definitions are particularly important here. The first definition of "bourgeois" is a juridical one. In the Old Regime, the right to call oneself a "bourgeois de Paris" (or "bourgeois" of some other city) was a privilege formally accorded by the city government to persons who had resided in the city at least a year and who owned property, paid taxes, and served in the militia there.⁹

By this definition, artisans, merchants, and officers of the king, even those who were noblemen, were proud to style themselves "bourgeois de Paris" in the sixteenth century. Lists of the *notables bourgeois* summoned to assist in municipal elections, tax levies, and other important civic affairs demonstrate that the quality of bourgeois covered a wide range in the sixteenth century. Merchants and officers of the king—from simple *clerks* to presidents of Parlement—predominate, but an occasional carpenter, baker, or other artisan also appears in the earlier part of the century.¹⁰ The term "bourgeois de Paris" was thus more precisely an indication of legal status than one of social standing.

The second definition of "bourgeois" is a functional definition by which the term referred only to those residents of the city who lived off the income from lands and investments without exercising any profession or trade. This is the sense in which Henry II meant the term when, in 1554, he speci-

⁹ Reg. BV, 12:79, describes the process of obtaining certificates of bourgeoisie under Henry IV. See also François André Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises depuis l'an 420 jusqu'à la Révolution de 1789* (Paris, 1822-1833), 2:675, for the earliest known ordinance (1287) regarding bourgeois status. Antoine Jean Victor Le Roux de Lincy, *Histoire de l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris* (Paris, 1846), pp. 295-353, enumerates the royal ordinances concerning the privileges of the bourgeoisie. More concisely, the *Ordonnances des rois de France de la troisième race* (Paris, 1723-1849), 19:176 (*Edit de 1528*), gives a summary of the privileges.

¹⁰ Reg. BV, 2:357.

fied that the city council was to include ten officers of the king, seven merchants, and seven notable bourgeois.¹¹ As the confusion produced by this edict indicates, sixteenth-century usage was not always as clear-cut as the ruling implies. The city officers were clearly not accustomed to thinking of royal officers, merchants, and bourgeois as mutually separate and exclusive categories. The status of simple bourgeois was often a temporary one—the status of a retired merchant or officer, or that of a man in transition from mercantile to official functions. Moreover, a man who held an office that provided little remuneration or who derived income from commercial ventures and bonds equally might define himself alternately as a merchant or officer or as a bourgeois. Still, it is necessary to have a term to refer to those persons who were, temporarily or not, living primarily off their investments. For purposes of clarity, I have substituted or appended the term “rentier” when this definition of “bourgeois” is required.

By limiting my use of the term “bourgeois” to these juridical and functional definitions, I do not mean to ignore the social connotations that the term had even in the sixteenth century. When the maréchal de Saint-André wanted deliberately to insult the son of the city councillor Pierre Perdrier, he called him a *bourgeois de petite condition*.¹² Nor do I mean to dodge the question of social tensions that lies behind this example. The Parisian elite occupied a position in the social hierarchies of sixteenth-century France that many historians would consider to have been fraught with tension. Since the publication of Roland Mousnier’s important *Vénalité des offices* in 1945, relations between the newly ennobled officers of the king and the old aristocracy and between the king’s officers and the lesser bourgeoisie from which they sought to dissociate themselves have gradually been given a well-merited

¹¹ Reg. BV, 4:341-42, citing edict of May 1554.

¹² Lucien Romier, *Jacques d'Albon de Saint-André, maréchal de France 1512-1562* (Paris, 1909), pp. 195-97; also cited in Roland Mousnier, *Etat et société sous François I et pendant le gouvernement personnel de Louis XIV* (Paris, 1966).

attention.¹³ Though Mousnier's argument that there was an essential antagonism between the old nobility and the recently ennobled officers is based primarily on evidence from the seventeenth century, such works as Davis Bitton's *French Nobility in Crisis* have shown that many of these tensions may have already been present in the sixteenth century.¹⁴ Recently, other scholars have staked out conflicting positions on the issue; they have renewed the controversy but have not resolved it.¹⁵ My research on the Parisian elite cannot resolve the issue either, although it inclines me more toward the view that antagonistic relations with the traditional nobility and the lesser bourgeoisie did not play a major role in the thinking or activities of the Parisian elite.¹⁶ Members of this group did not view the social system as a single hierarchy or ladder, and they did not see the path of their ambitions as being

¹³ Roland Mousnier, *La Vénalité des offices sous Henri IV et Louis XIII* (Rouen, 1945). In his more recent works, Mousnier has returned frequently to the idea that an essential antagonism opposed the traditional nobility and the newly ennobled members of the royal bureaucracy, "a conflict not only between two levels in the hierarchy but also between two types of profession and two different ways of life" (*The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy*, trans. Brian Pearce [Chicago, 1979], pp. 202 and 207).

¹⁴ (Stanford, 1969).

¹⁵ Stressing the antagonism that the mercantile bourgeoisie felt for the social-climbing members of the royal bureaucracy, as well as the tensions between this group and the old nobility, George Huppert has attempted to cast the argument in new terms by defining the robe officers as a "new class" and labeling this class the "gentry" (*Les Bourgeois Gentilshommes* [Chicago, 1977]). Robert Harding (*Anatomy of a Power Elite* [New Haven, 1978]), Jonathan Dewald (*The Formation of a Provincial Nobility* [Princeton, 1980]), and James Wood (*The Nobility of the Election of Bayeux* [Princeton, 1981]), are among those who have recently posed important challenges to the view that there was an essential antagonism between robe and sword, but because the first deals principally with political rather than social relations, while the second two are local studies, it is difficult to extrapolate a general conclusion from them.

¹⁶ I hope in a future study of religious violence in Paris during the early years of the Wars of Religion to explore more fully the underlying social and political tensions in the city. It is possible that this work will cast a somewhat different light on the role of the governing elite of the city and their relations with other elites and with the less privileged inhabitants of the city.

barred by the position of the traditional nobility. The sources on which I have relied most heavily—notarial records and personal papers—show few signs of tension between the Parisian elite and the groups above and below them on the social scale. As the chapters that follow will show, the image that emerged from all of my sources was that of an elite which, fortified by an impressive degree of family solidarity, was secure in its role in both city and monarchy and confident in its dealings with other groups.

PART I

*Portrait of a Municipal
Elite*

I. City Government: Institutions and Politics

Nostre ville est la nef royalle, nostre prévost des marchans en est le pilote, les eschevins en sont les voiles, les fleurs de lys et la croix blanche en sont les enseignes. Mais certainement nul vent ne la peut remuer que celui seul qui sort de la bouche du roy ou de ses lieutenans et gouverneurs. —*Le Livre des marchands*

PARIS in the sixteenth century was the center of the French monarchy. Though the king's household was not yet stationary, ambling like the medieval court from one royal residence to another and lingering more frequently in the gracious châteaux of the Loire valley than amidst the noisome activity of the metropolis on the Seine, Paris remained the heart of the realm. More than a symbol, "the glory of France, and one of the noblest ornaments of the world," as Montaigne expressed it,¹ Paris was a functioning capital, a city that bustled with the business of the king.

If the Valois monarchs were frequently absent, the administrative and judiciary organs of the monarchy were nonetheless securely rooted in the capital. At the heart of the city, on the Ile-de-la-Cité, the Palais de Justice buzzed with the activity of the sovereign courts. Coffers in the Tour d'Argent of the Palais and in the Louvre held the king's treasure, and the responsibility for the royal accounts was likewise centered in the capital. Men of ambition were drawn to Paris from all corners of the realm and beyond: bankers from Tuscany, merchants from across the Rhine, students, and provincial law-

¹ Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, *Essais* (1588), bk. 3, chap. 9. All English quotations from Montaigne are taken from Donald M. Frame, trans., *The Complete Essays of Montaigne* (Stanford, 1958) and are cited as "(Frame, p. 743)."

yers converged upon the capital in search of knowledge and wealth. The great nobles of the kingdom, princes of the church, and representatives of foreign courts kept lavish townhouses in the city to be near the official, if not permanent, residence of the king. From the greatest courtiers and magistrates to the lowest clerks and the peddlers of lace and ribbons in the courtyard of the Palais, the character of Parisian life was indelibly stamped by the city's role as the capital of France.

There was, however, another side to Parisian life. For all its cosmopolitan airs, there still existed within the metropolis a nucleus of native Parisians who looked upon the city not just as the hub of France but as their own town and home. It is this locally oriented Parisian society that concerns us here; in particular we are concerned with its upper crust—the local elite whose family names appear and reappear throughout several centuries of parish, confraternal, and municipal records—and with the ways in which family ties functioned in the sixteenth century to promote personal standing, political success, and financial advancement. Before examining the structures of this elite society, we need a clear picture of the political and institutional framework in which it existed.

The French kings recognized that the security of Paris and the well-being of her citizens were too important to be left to agencies whose responsiveness to the royal will could not be guaranteed. In consequence, they fostered the creation of a complex administrative structure that allowed the city only limited autonomy. Appointive officers directly responsible to the crown assumed control of the vital functions of police and justice, while the elected officers of the Parisian bourgeoisie took on subsidiary tasks such as supervising commerce and collecting taxes. The division, however, was neither clear-cut nor simple. The agencies of king and city overlapped in function and in personnel. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine the institutional structures of the municipality and their relationships to crown and citizenry. These relationships will be examined in three different contexts: first, in the con-

text of the evolution of the municipal administration from the medieval period to the sixteenth century; second, in the context of election procedures and the selection of municipal personnel; and third, in the context of the behavior of city officers when confronted with the monarchy's escalating demands for funds. In this way we can begin to understand the nature of the role played by the Parisian elite in the affairs of the city and the kingdom.

The Structure of Municipal Government

The focal point of municipal politics in the sixteenth century was the Hôtel de Ville, or city hall. An awkward pastiche of medieval and Renaissance styles, the building itself serves as an appropriate symbol of the times. In the 1530s Francis I imposed upon the city his plan for a new city hall. Designed in the lavish style of the Renaissance, it reflected the youthful exuberance and determined authority of the king rather than the more conservative tastes of the city fathers.² Because of financial pressures, however, construction of the new building faltered and ground to a halt, and for most of the century the Hôtel de Ville retained a somber medieval mien behind its Renaissance façade.

Like the building in which it functioned, the city administration remained essentially medieval in structure. At the head of the city's government was the prévôt des marchands, or merchants' provost. He derived his functions from the gradual evolution of the medieval Hansa, the Marchandise de l'Eau, which he represented. Originally a purely mercantile association controlling shipping on the Seine, the Hansa had gradually evolved into a municipal administration with broad-based responsibilities for public services, welfare, and security.³ The term "prevôt des marchands" was rather outdated

² *Reg. BV*, 2:164-65.

³ Frédéric Lecaron, "Les Origines de la municipalité parisienne," *MSHP* 7 (1880):105-106. Fifteenth-century city records give lists of the "marchands hansés," and the term still occasionally occurs in the sixteenth-century city registers.

by the sixteenth century, as the prévôt represented a bourgeoisie that was by no means strictly mercantile in its orientation. Like his medieval predecessors, however, the prévôt des marchands was responsible for the regulation of commerce, the direction of public works, the organization of the militia, and the collection of taxes. He was assisted in these tasks by four échevins, or aldermen. In principle, at least at the end of the sixteenth century, the first échevin was responsible for municipal finances, the second for provisioning the city, the third for public works such as pavements, lighting, and fountains, and the fourth for the personnel and correspondence of the municipality.⁴ It is not, however, certain that these administrative distinctions were adhered to in practice.

The prévôt des marchands and échevins were elected for two-year terms, with two of the four échevins elected each year so that there would always be some experienced men among them. Greater continuity was provided by the permanent employees of the Hôtel de Ville, the *greffier* (secretary), the *receveur* (treasurer), and the *procureur de la ville* (the officer charged with representing the city's interests in Parliament and other governmental agencies). The daily routines of administration were largely carried out by the *sergents* (police officers) of the Hôtel de Ville and by the district agents, the *quarteniers*, one from each of the city's sixteen *quartiers*. The quarteniers, in turn, relied upon *cinquanteniers* and *dizainiers* to help run the militia, supervise tax collection, and otherwise handle problems at the district level. Together, the prévôt des marchands, four échevins, the greffier, and sixteen quarteniers were known as the *corps municipal* or Bureau de la Ville.

For important affairs, particularly those dealing with finances, personnel, and defense, the Bureau de la Ville was assisted by a council of twenty-four local notables. These were the *conseillers de la ville*, the city councillors who, for the years 1535 to 1575, are the subject of this study. The office

⁴ Miron de l'Espinay, *François Miron*, p. 158.

itself dates back to the year 1296, when a standing council of twenty-four *proudoumes de Paris* was first elected to assist the prévôt des marchands and échevins with the city's business.⁵ The councillors were in many respects only second-level city officers. They possessed no formal legislative power. Rather, they served as advisors to the members of the *corps municipal*. They did not even attend municipal assemblies on a regular basis but had to be summoned specially. Thus the importance of the city councillors lay in the prestige of the men named to this office rather than in the functional significance of the office itself.

The city councillors were not the only advisors consulted by the Bureau de la Ville on important civic issues. Remonstrances to the king, the levy of new taxes, and other questions of great importance were often handled by even larger municipal assemblies. On occasion, members of the sovereign courts, university officials, and representatives of the major ecclesiastical corporations of the city were also invited to be present at civic meetings to voice their opinions on issues that concerned them.⁶ There is a certain cynical truth in Henri de Carsalade du Pont's appraisal of this practice as an attempt on the part of the city to distribute the blame if matters went ill.⁷

City officers received no salary for the performance of their functions, but they did enjoy certain privileges and honoraria. For example, the city councillors, along with the prévôt des marchands and other major officers, were traditionally given on the occasion of their entry into office a velvet purse of silver coins stamped with the emblem of the city. They also received cloth for new robes when a royal marriage or formal entry into the city was celebrated, and candles and spices were ritually distributed to them at Christmas and other holidays.⁸

⁵ Lecaron, "Origines," 7:112-13, citing MS "Coutumes de la ville," AN, KK10.

⁶ See, for example, *Reg. BV*, 7:61.

⁷ Henri de Carsalade du Pont, *La Municipalité parisienne à l'époque d'Henri IV* (Paris [1971]), p. 43.

⁸ *Reg. BV*, 2:307, 344, and 344n; 3:160.

In 1574 the allotment of candles and spices was replaced by a cash payment.⁹ In addition, the city councillors enjoyed certain legal and fiscal prerogatives. In 1538, for example, the king granted them the right of *committimus* (the right to have lawsuits tried in the upper courts) and an exemption from the tax on salt for personal and household use.¹⁰

Many of the functions of the Hôtel de Ville overlapped those of the officers of the Prévôté of Paris appointed by the king. Often referred to simply as "the Châtelet" because they had their offices in this medieval fortress, the officers of the Prévôté protected royal interests in the city and exercised police and judicial functions in the name of the king. The term "police" must be understood here in its broadest sense. The officers of the Châtelet were responsible not only for the maintenance of public order and the prosecution of criminals, they were the supervisory agency for all matters relating to the general health, security, and prosperity of the city's inhabitants. As such, their responsibilities frequently coincided with those of the Hôtel de Ville in the marketplaces, ports, and other areas of the city where questions of public health and welfare were at issue. In addition to these duties, the Châtelet functioned as a tribunal for both civil and criminal affairs, and its decisions could be appealed only in the Parlement of Paris, the highest judicial body in the realm.

The highest officer of the Châtelet, appointed by the king, was the prévôt, but since the prévôt was an important nobleman, the position was primarily honorific. It was the prévôt's

⁹ Ibid., 7:221, 215. The prévôt des marchands received £280, and the échevins, procureur, greffier, and receveur received £140. The city councillors were also paid in coin after this date, but the size of the payment is not known.

¹⁰ Ibid., 2:308. The value of these privileges was limited. The great majority of city officers already enjoyed the privilege of *committimus* because of their status as royal officers, and, according to Martin Wolfe, the salt tax was not burdensome in the sixteenth century (*The Fiscal System of Renaissance France* [New Haven, 1972], p. 335). The city councillors were allowed the measure of one *sétier* (equal to several hundred pounds) of salt free of tax, but Wolfe's calculations show that the tax on even such an enormous purchase would have amounted to less than £3.

first assistant, the *lieutenant civil* who oversaw the day-to-day administrative routine of the city. A *lieutenant criminel* was responsible for matters of police and criminal justice, and beginning in 1544 a *lieutenant particulier* was appointed to relieve the *lieutenants civil* and *criminel* of some of their increasing burdens. Under the direction of the *lieutenant civil*, the *commissaires enquêteurs* of the Châtelet (literally, examining officers; functionally more like policemen) tended to the daily routines of civil order and welfare.¹¹

Just as they overlapped in functions, the Prévôté of Paris and the Prévôté de la Marchandise overlapped in personnel. Between 1535 and 1575, at least four of the men who served as *lieutenants civils* and *criminels* were also city councillors, échevins, and even prévôts des marchands.¹² Concern was occasionally expressed about a conflict of interest between the functions of municipal officers and those of the king's officers in Paris, but this issue was not taken very seriously.¹³ Throughout this period a very large proportion of the city officers were by profession officers of the administrative and judicial agencies of the crown, and any attempt to avoid duplication of personnel in civic and royal office would have drastically changed the character of city government.¹⁴ Neither the king nor the entrenched city hierarchy stood to benefit from such a change.

The Parlement of Paris was primarily a judicial body, the

¹¹ Gaston Zeller, *Les Institutions de la France au xvi^e siècle* (Paris, 1948), p. 175.

¹² Thomas de Bragelongne, Martin de Bragelongne, Jean Morin, and Nicolas Luillier. All but the first were prévôts des marchands as well as échevins and city councillors.

¹³ *Reg. BV*, 5:3 and 3n. Since the *Traité de la police* of Nicolas de Lamare (4 vols. [Paris, 1705-38]), historians have tended to view the Châtelet and the Hôtel de Ville as competitive and in continual conflict. Carsalade du Pont used the example of the early seventeenth-century prévôt des marchands François Miron, who was simultaneously *lieutenant civil*, to disprove this notion, but he appears unaware of these earlier precedents of multiple officeholding in the Châtelet and the Hôtel de Ville (*Municipalité*, p. 41).

¹⁴ See Chapter 2, on professional activities of city officers. The Edict of Fontainebleau of October 1547 forbade royal officers to hold civic office, but little attempt was made to enforce the edict (see *Reg. BV*, 3:100).

highest of the sovereign courts, but it also had a legislative role from which it derived a role in the administration of the capital. Unlike the Châtelet, however, the Parlement played a role in city affairs that did not normally involve day-to-day administrative activities. Though its mandate was a broad one, the Parlement of Paris was too busy functioning as the highest sovereign court of the kingdom to concern itself on a regular basis with municipal business. Moreover, its structure was ill-suited to the performance of administrative tasks. The role of Parlement was rather that of overseer and intermediary, intervening at will when a problem in the city or a potential crisis came to the attention of the *parlementaires*. Concerned with everything from the price of firewood or the danger of plague to the choice of officers for the local militia, directives issued by Parlement during the sixteenth century aimed at the maintenance of order in the city and the well-being of its citizens. The execution of these directives was left to the municipality, but the *parlementaires* kept a watchful eye on the city, and records of the city council contain a number of letters from Parlement reprimanding the municipal officers for laxness in their duties.¹⁵

The other sovereign courts and other agencies of the central administration—the military governor of Paris, for example—occasionally intervened in municipal affairs in a manner similar to that of the Parlement. The king and his councils also kept a close watch on the business of the Hôtel de Ville

¹⁵ J. H. Shennan (*The Parlement of Paris* [Ithaca, 1968], pp. 86-97) gives a generally good overview of the intervention of Parlement in municipal affairs, but the importance of the role of Parlement in city affairs appears disproportionately large because it is viewed in isolation from the other jurisdictions in the city. The origin of parliamentary intervention in municipal affairs is unclear, but Gaston Zeller (*Institutions*, pp. 179-80) assures us that this authority was commonly exercised in towns having Parlements in the sixteenth century. Zeller's assumption is that the Parlements were able to dominate the city agencies by their greater dynamism and prestige, rather than because of any explicit authorization. Paul Robiquet, on the other hand, attributes the calm acceptance of the "rather haughty influence of Parlement" by the city officers to the overlapping membership of these two bodies (*Histoire municipale de Paris* [Paris, 1880], 1:297).

and frequently sent letters to the prévôt des marchands and échevins to direct their activities. As one might expect, the monarchy was particularly active in municipal affairs during times of civil strife or when war threatened. The king's intervention on such occasions was not limited to matters of supreme importance; he dictated even such details as curfew hours in the city and the size and patrol patterns of the night watch.¹⁶ The king's interest in municipal affairs, moreover, extended to purely domestic concerns: commercial policies, provisioning, even necessary repairs to the sewer system might occasion missives from the sovereign to the Bureau de la Ville. Indeed, city records for the first three-quarters of the century indicate that the impetus for major public works projects and reforms of public administrative agencies, as well as measures for the maintenance of public order and tranquility, was nearly always provided by either the king or Parlement rather than by the Hôtel de Ville.¹⁷

The important role played by the monarchy in municipal affairs was not new in the sixteenth century. As the favored residence of the Capetian kings and the nucleus around which they built their kingdom, Paris had never known the independence from superior authority enjoyed by other municipalities with similar roots in the merchants' guilds of medieval towns.¹⁸ That the city was denied administrative independence did not mean that the Capetian monarchs did not further the creation of a municipal government in Paris. Quite the contrary: the kings and the merchants of the Paris Hansa recognized very early the mutual benefits of close co-operation, and the gradual extension of the powers of the Hansa was the product of a long series of accords between the monarchy and the merchants.¹⁹ By the late thirteenth cen-

¹⁶ See, for example, *Reg. BV*, 7:368-70.

¹⁷ A notable exception is the formation of a consular court in 1563 (*Reg. BV*, 5:321, 352-56).

¹⁸ Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities* (Princeton, 1952), pp. 179-80.

¹⁹ Raymond Cazelles, *Nouvelle Histoire de Paris de la fin du règne de Philippe Auguste à la mort de Charles V* (Paris, 1972), pp. 107 and 117; Lecaron, "Origines," 7:105-106.