

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-62129-8 - Mastering the Market: The State and the Grain Trade in Northern France, 1700-1860

Judith A. Miller

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Mastering the Market

The State and the Grain Trade in Northern France, 1700–1860

Judith Miller's *Mastering the Market* is the first book to bring a long-term perspective to the historical study of French strategies to control the grain trade, rather than focusing only on the eighteenth century or the Revolutionary era, as previous scholars have done.

The grain trade – a crucial sector of the French economy – caused enormous concern throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Bread was the staple of French diets, so harvest shortfalls frequently triggered periods of unrest. The royal government had no effective means of drawing foodstuffs into restless cities during these times.

Professor Miller shows how successive regimes developed strategies to dominate the baking trades, influence prices along vital supply lines, and amass emergency stocks of grain that could meet months-long demand. She shows that as free-trade ideologies developed, French administrators at both the local and national levels sought to reconcile these ideologies with the perceived need to control the market.

Miller draws on an extensive range of archival material from Parisian and Departmental sources to show – surprisingly – that free trade in grain was rendered workable only through the French state's intervention.

Judith A. Miller is Associate Professor of History at Emory University. She is a recipient of the Society for French Historical Studies' William H. Koren Prize for the best article written by a North American, and the Economic History Association's Alexander Gerschenkron Dissertation Prize. Miller has received fellowships from the National Endowment for Humanities and the Bourses Chateaubriand (French government).

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For my family, with love.

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Abbreviations

AESC	<i>Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations</i>
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
AHRF	<i>Annales historiques de la Révolution française</i>
EHR	<i>Economic History Review</i>
FHS	<i>French Historical Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Economic History</i>
JIH	<i>Journal of Interdisciplinary History</i>
JMH	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
JSH	<i>Journal of Social History</i>
RHMC	<i>Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine</i>

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Old Regime Weights and Measures for Wheat

Livre, poids de marc (Paris)	1.079 lbs
Livre, poids de vicomté (Rouen)	1.122 lbs
Livre, poids du roy (Honfleur, Harfleur)	1.165 lbs
Boisseau (Rouen)	22.75 liters
Boisseau (Paris)	13.01 liters
Boisseau (Le Havre)	39.1 liters
Mine (Rouen)	91 liters
Somme (Rouen)	330–340 lbs
Setier (Rouen)	182 liters
Setier (Paris)	156.1 liters
Muid (Rouen)	21.84 hectoliters (app. 3,747 lbs)
Muid (Paris)	18.73 hectoliters (app. 3,214 lbs)

“Mémoire sur l’unité des poids et mesures dans la généralité de Rouen . . .,” n.d., ADSM C 2120, p. 64; Ronald Edward Zupko, *French Weights and Measure Before the Revolution: A Dictionary of Provincial and Local Units* (Bloomington, 1978); Horace Doursther, *Dictionnaire universel des poids et mesures . . .* (n.p., 1850, reprint ed., Amsterdam, 1945); Arundel de Condé, “Mesures de capacité dans les foires et marchés, *Circuits commerciaux: Foires et marchés en Normandie* (Rouen, [1975]), pp. 229–30; J.H. Alexander, *Universal Dictionary of Weights and Measures* (Baltimore, 1850), pp. 55–6. A hectoliter of grain generally weighed between 76 and 80 kilograms.

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Acknowledgments

Ray Bradbury has written that if you consulted only your intellect, you would never begin a friendship, nor would you would ever fall in love. Listening to your intellect alone is “nonsense.” “You’ve got to jump off cliffs all the time and build your wings on the way down,” he counseled. Perhaps he knew something about the less exalted voyage that begins with a dissertation and ends with a book. Certainly no graduate student can fully realize where a vague idea that a research paper generated might lead some years hence. This former graduate student did not. Fortunately, however, the path from research seminar to this book was one that brought more friendships than cliffs. That community of friends has helped build whatever wings were needed, and for such a gift, I am immensely grateful.

A number of fellowships have made it possible to think of Paris and Rouen as second homes. The Bourses Chateaubriand, Duke University, and Fulbright fellowships supported my dissertation research. Later, funding by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Economic History Association, the American Council of Learned Societies, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and Emory University permitted me time at archives in France and the Library of Congress and as a visiting fellow at the Center for European Studies at Harvard.

Once in France, I had the great fortune to find a community of scholars with whom I have enjoyed intense discussions, archival forays, French Historical Studies banquets, and numerous *kirs* at the end of the day at the Petit Berry, a site that has had as deep an influence on the field of history as the salles Soubise and Clisson.

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This project took several more years than expected to complete. In fact, that it is completed at all is something of a miracle. In 1990, I began to fall ill. Two years later, I was diagnosed with leukemia. In 1993, I received a bone marrow transplant from my brother, Robert Miller. An extraordinary medical team – Robert Geller, John Wingard, Kent Holland, Ira Horowitz, Mary Potter, and Ingrid Evans, among many others – saw me back to health.

My family took turns flying and driving to Atlanta to care for me for many months. Without their unflinching love and support, I could not have survived. This book is dedicated to them.

There are also three friends whom I met years ago at Duke whose companionship has been as necessary and sustaining as the wings Bradbury described – Melinda Reagor Flannery, Steven Wilf, and Charles Maier.

I am not sure that a book can in any way repay the energy and sacrifices of these medical teams, friends, and family members. I hope that its completion is at least a tribute to their faith that wings could be built and that I would fly, even if the cliffs were ragged and steep.