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Introduction

In March 1789, amid the deep snow of a lingering winter, five dozen men from the tiny village of Charquemont in the eastern French province of Franche-Comté gathered to discuss their hopes and expectations for the upcoming meeting of the Estates General, a gathering of representatives from across France which was to convene that spring for the first time in 175 years. Like thousands of other communities writing their own petitions, known as *cahiers de doléances*, at that very moment, the Charquemont villagers had much to say to the impending convention.[1] Tax reform, the standardization of weights and measures, freedom of commerce – issues typically associated with the political upheaval that was about to unfold – ranked high among the demands in their fifteen-page petition.[2] But the Charquemontais were equally passionate about another subject: their forests. Still smarting from the imposition three decades earlier of alien and exacting French woodland regulations, Charquemont's petitioners used their *cahier de doléances* as an opportunity to demand an end to the crown's forest oversight. "The community alone [should] have supervision of

[1] Forty thousand parishes drafted *cahiers de doléances*, of which about twenty-five thousand remain in printed and manuscript form. The First and Second Estates – the clergy and nobility, respectively – drafted their *cahiers* separately. Gilbert Shapiro and John Markoff, introduction to *Revolutionary Demands: A Content Analysis of the Cahiers de Doléances of 1789* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 3, 114, 233.

[2] On the dominant grievance categories, see Shapiro and Markoff, "What Were the Grievances of France in 1789?" chap. 14 in *Revolutionary Demands*, 253–79.

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its woods," they insisted, and "state and private hunting and forest guards [should] be suppressed."[3]

Charquemont's petitioners were far from unique in expressing concern about their woodland resources. Communities from every corner of France registered forest-related grievances in 1789, including complaints regarding the price and availability of wood, outrage about the loss of grazing and gathering rights, and recriminations against the *Eaux et Forêts*, the royal agency in charge of overseeing the country's woods and inland waters.[4] Though diverse in their particulars, the remonstrances reflected France's escalating forest crisis and widening economic predicaments in the eighteenth century. Decades of demographic growth, particularly in the northeast, had catalyzed clearing for agriculture, intensified industrial fuel consumption, and driven up prices for essential goods like grain and firewood, while wages for labor stagnated from midcentury forward.[5] In response, landowners, of whom the crown and seigneurs (feudal landlords) comprised the vast majority, increasingly sought to suppress traditional forest rights and expand their proprietary authority. To profit from rising wood prices and to feed their industrial ventures, proprietors clamped down on centuries-old access rights in their holdings, expanded their use of guards, and appointed agents to oversee exploitation. At the same time, they inflated their claims on communal possessions and instituted forms of management that favored naval timber and charcoal production. The result was not only privation for communities reliant on woodland resources but also a marked transformation of the rural environment. Spaces long shaped by pasturing and wood gathering – with understories scoured by nibbling herds, canopies dominated by stagheaded *baliveaux* (tall trees retained to reseed the forest), and

[3] *Cahier de doléances*, Charquemont, 19 March 1789, preamble and articles 22–23, in Robert Jouvenot, "Les cahiers de doléances en Franche-Comté," in *Questions d'histoire sur la Franche-Comté, à l'occasion du 99e congrès national des Sociétés savantes*, ed. Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques (CTHS) Orientations de recherche (Besançon: CTHS Bulletin de la section d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, 1974), 245–49. All translations in the book are mine unless otherwise noted.

[4] Shapiro and Markoff, *Revolutionary Demands*, 419–25.

[5] On the historiography of the economic crisis, see Peter Jones, *The Peasantry in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 30–33. On demographic growth, see Jacques Dupâquier, ed., *Histoire de la population française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988), 2:75–78. Population increase was most marked in upland communities like Charquemont. André Fel, "Petite Culture 1750–1850," in *Themes in the Historical Geography of France*, ed. Hugh D. Clout (London: Academic Press, 1977), 226; and Jean Boichard, ed., *Le Jura* (Toulouse: Privat, 1986), 100–104.

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irregular patches of scrubby *friches* – were converted into closely guarded plots of even-aged *haute futaie* (timber trees) or were cut down and replanted as high-volume coppices, felled on regular rotations, and oxidized on-site into charcoal fuel for iron forges.

The significance of these changes is hard to grasp in an age overrun by plastics and dependent on decomposed fossils. Well into the nineteenth century, France, like most of Europe, remained acutely reliant on wood as its principal energy source and as the essential building block of everyday life.[6] Drawn from a vast array of species prized for their distinct attributes, wood comprised the core of nearly every tool and fitting of agricultural, viticultural, and industrial production, from rakes, stakes, lathes, and crates to baskets, binding cord, footwear, and furniture. It enabled communications and commercial exchange via the bins and boxes, carts and carriages that carried people and commodities to their destinations. It facilitated France's maritime and military objectives in the form of ships, ramparts, and charcoal-smelted artillery. It formed the walls and frames of homes, barns, and outbuildings. Most of all, it served as the country's primary domestic and industrial fuel, even in areas where alternative combustibles like coal or peat were available. Forests themselves provided incalculable resources, including leaf litter for stable bedding; bark for tanning leather; and supplemental edibles and medicinals like mushrooms, sap, roots, and berries.

Seen in this light, the Charquemont petitioners' woodland complaints, together with the comparable objections in thousands of other *cahiers de doléances* in 1789, highlight the forest's fundamental position in France's economy in the early modern period and signal its importance in shaping the rural context of the Revolution. At a time of critical sylvan dependence, material concerns entwined inextricably with political ideals, influencing allegiances and molding expectations. Woodland stakeholders like the Charquemontais hoped the winds of political change would bring them greater freedom and ensure their right to manage and exploit the resource most crucial to their survival. Instead, the regimes that successively emerged from the Revolution would disenfranchise them still further, leading to economic suffering, outrage, and intensifying violence. By the middle of the nineteenth century, communal relations with the

[6] On wood's strategic importance, see Michael Williams, *Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory to Global Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 145–67; and F. T. Evans, "Wood since the Industrial Revolution: A Strategic Retreat?" in *History of Technology*, ed. A. Rupert Hall and Norman Smith (London: Mansell, 1982), 46–48.

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forest administration would be at their nadir, even as the nation's groundbreaking woodland policies expanded their sway beyond France's borders and into its colonial regimes.

This book investigates the history of forest politics in France over a span of nearly two centuries, from the pinnacle of Louis XIV's reign in the 1670s to the cusp of the Second Empire in 1848. Encompassing some of the country's most transformative moments, this *longue durée* perspective poses some challenges, not least of them the scope of the research required. But forests are long-lived entities, and understanding the origins, evolution, and impact of the interests that shaped them requires an extended frame of analysis.

Focused on the intersection of environmental anxieties – the expansion of arable soil, mounting firewood and timber shortages, and other concerns – with the aims of an increasingly bureaucratic, fiscally desperate French state, I trace the emergence of an autocratic, centralized approach to conservation, the suppression of customary and communal rights, and the rise of proprietary individualism amid forests decimated by economic pressure and political tumult. At a time when woodland access was considered "a necessity as vital as bread," as another *cahier de doléances* put it, and firewood was as strategically vital a commodity as oil is today, the determination of who would control France's forests and how they would benefit was a matter of life-or-death importance.[7] To make sense of this struggle and its consequences, I probe periods of exceptional upheaval as well as the relatively overlooked interstices when new woodland policies took hold.

Geographically, the book is grounded in Franche-Comté, a former Habsburg territory in eastern France that was conquered by Louis XIV in 1674. Comprising the departments of the Doubs, the Jura, and the Haute-Saône, Franche-Comté has long been one of France's most densely wooded and remote areas.[8] Far from the nation's major arteries, coiled hard against the Swiss border, it is regarded as something of a backwater by French cosmopolitans, who start humming the Jacques Brel tune "Vesoul" when I name my region of study. In Brel's rendering, the

[7] Quote from the *cahier de doléances* (grievance petition) of Bourbévelle (Haute-Saône), 17 March 1789, in Charles Godard and Léon Abensour, eds., *Cahiers de doléances du bailliage d'Amont*, vol. 1 (Besançon, 1927), 218.

[8] The tiny Territoire de Belfort in Franche-Comté's northeastern corner is not included in this study because of its geographic isolation and historical dissimilarities.

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Haute-Saône capital stands for the absurd lengths one goes to for love. Yet in the realm of forest conservation and debates over environmental policymaking on the national scale, Franche-Comté and its inhabitants played a central role. A site of strict state initiatives and fierce resistance until well into the nineteenth century, Franche-Comté's bitterly fought forest battles – sometimes waged against trees themselves – enduringly influenced conservation initiatives both within France and abroad.[9]

Given their dominance in Franche-Comté, forests unsurprisingly figure strongly in the region's historiography.[10] Studies of woodland geography, exploitation, and conflict constitute a sizeable subgenre of Comtois history unto themselves.[11] Despite their indispensable findings, however, these works for the most part focus on the local picture, to the exclusion of wider political and economic developments in France. In the hopes of speaking to a readership unfamiliar with Franche-Comté and even those unschooled in France's turbulent revolutions, this book attempts a more ambitious, compound approach: keeping the experience of the Francs-Comtois at the center of the frame, I scrutinize the national reform efforts and ideological agendas of lawmakers, landowners, rural stakeholders, and self-styled "improvers," to explore larger questions about the failures and successes of natural resource allocation, environmental conservation, state formation, and revolutions broadly speaking. Why do conservation policies forged in the name of the public good engender resistance?

[9] On France's colonial forestry, see Mathieu Guérin, *Paysans de la forêt à l'époque coloniale: La pacification des aborigènes des hautes terres du Cambodge, 1863–1940*, Bibliothèque d'histoire rurale (Caen: Association d'histoire des sociétés rurales, 2008); and Diana K. Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007). See also Peter Vandergeest and Nancy Lee Peluso, "Empires of Forestry: Professional Forestry and State Power in Southeast Asia, Parts 1 and 2," *Environment and History* 12, nos. 1 and 4 (2006): 31–64, 359–93.

[10] See, for example, Antonio Gonzales and Pierre Gresser, *Nouvelle histoire de la Franche-Comté et des francs-comtois*, (Pontarlier: Éditions du Belvédère, 2014). Jean-Luc Mayaud, *Les secondes républiques du Doubs*, Annales littéraires de l'université de Besançon 338 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986); R. Locatelli et al., *La Franche-Comté: À la recherche de son histoire (1800–1914)*, Cahiers d'études comtoises 31 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982); and Maurice Gresset, *La Franche-Comté à la veille de la Révolution*, Collection du bicentenaire de la Révolution française 8 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1988).

[11] In particular, see the prodigious œuvre of François Vion-Delphin, Franche-Comté's foremost forest historian, including François Vion-Delphin et al., eds., *Les hommes et la forêt en Franche-Comté* (Paris: Editions Bonneton, 1990); François Vion-Delphin, "Le braconnage en Franche-Comté: Une pratique populaire au XVIIIe siècle," in *Forêt et chasse*, ed. Andrée Corvol (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 201–11.

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How did the ideology of private property come to supplant customary rights and collective usage of common pool resources? How did Comtois communities manage to sustain their traditional practices, despite persistent repression and unfavorable odds, throughout the long revolutionary period and into the twenty-first century? And why does France today, despite its pioneering efforts at forest regulation, have some of the most fragmented and, from a commercial standpoint, underutilized woodlands in Europe?[12]

To address these questions, I draw on extensive archival research and documentary evidence, from grievance petitions, policy proposals, and police reports to legislative debates and lawsuits. I also look to the land and its utilization. Traveling amid Franche-Comté's tiny hamlets, especially in the upland Doubs and Jura, I have been struck time and again by their physical isolation and the challenges inhabitants must have faced in surviving. Burrowed in the depths of a valley, wedged into a river gorge, or huddled atop a rocky plateau, these communities had to make the most of the soil and woods around them. They developed multifaceted and collective modes of exploitation, including silvopastoralism, selective timber felling, and *fruitières* – cheese-making cooperatives – that reflected the constraints of their environment as well as prevailing hierarchies of distribution and status among local denizens. Socially, ecologically, and legally complex, and specific to each village, these arrangements perpetually confounded state and seigneurial attempts to impose a more uniform system of management.

Whether state, communal, or private holdings, forests were defined and governed in terms of use rights, rather than terms of exclusion. The uses, exercised communally or in cooperation with other clearly defined groups or individuals, fell into three categories: rights to wood (firewood, timber, and small wood for tools and crafts); rights of pasturage (in woodland clearings, on understory grasses, and on acorn, beech,

[12] Private ownership accounts for more than 75 percent (12.4 million hectares) of France's forests. Public holdings (state, regional, departmental, and communal) constitute the remaining 4 million hectares. In Franche-Comté, by contrast, private forests comprise 47 percent of the region's forest cover and average less than 2 hectares in size. For data, see Institut national de l'information géographique et forestière, Inventaire forestier, *Le mémento: La forêt en chiffres et en carte*, 2013, http://inventaire-forestier.ign.fr/spip/spip.php?article583, 8–9; and Schéma Régional de Gestion Sylvicole, "Forêt et sylviculture en Franche-Comté," April 2006, 25. On the underexploitation of Franche-Comté forests, see Service régional de l'information statistique et économique, Direction Régionale de l'Alimentation, de l'Agriculture et de la Forêt, Franche-Comté, "Fiche thématique – forêt," May 2010, 3.

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and other nut mast), and "secondary rights," including rights to gather sod and fruits. Each of these general categories, in turn, comprised a vast diversity of activities that differed in nature and nomenclature across Franche-Comté and more variably still across France.[13]

Despite these rights and the communal husbanding of resources and labor that made them function, rural life remained precarious, particularly in the windswept and stony uplands. State and private efforts in the nineteenth century to establish manufactures of glasses, clocks, and tobacco pipes in the Doubs and the Jura helped, but the success of this supplemental "winter work" was still not enough to supplant the silvo-pastoral economy nor reduce the intensity of forest dependence. Forests – or, rather, access to forests' vital benefits – represented the difference between feasibility and despair.

As the following chapters will show, it was this urgent reliance on their forests that rendered Francs-Comtois so hostile to interference and turned them adamantly against external rule. After Louis XIV forcibly annexed the territory in 1674, Franche-Comté's woodlands were slowly and painstakingly reorganized by France. Implementation in the province of France's 1669 *Ordonnance des eaux et forêts* – a landmark of comprehensive, top-down timber controls and woodland management – took nearly five decades, by which point new and sometimes contradictory regulatory schemes were coming to the fore, each bearing the imprint of particular political exigencies, economic theories, and material anxieties. The middle years of the eighteenth century saw the propagation of physiocratic decrees to encourage clearing of forests for agriculture,

[13] The right and practice of feeding of pigs on nut mast, for example, was known variously as *panage*, *porcage*, *glandage*, *glanage*, and *glandée*, each of which had a different, specific meaning. Other terms expressed a complex series of steps in pursuit of a particular benefit, as in the *droit d'écobuage*: the right to clear woods and obtain sod by carving up, drying, and burning sod on-site. On the common rights of Comtois forest users prior to 1789, see Georges Plaisance, "Les droits d'usage forestiers et leur vocabulaire," in *Colloque sur la forêt*, Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon 88, Cahiers d'études comtoises 12 (Besançon: Les Belles Lettres, 1966), 209–18; Michel Vernus, *La vie comtoise au temps de l'Ancien Régime*, vol. 1 (Lons-le-Saunier: Éditions Marque-Maillard, 1988), 70–79; and Suzanne Monniot, "Le role de la forêt dans la vie des populations franc-comtoises de la conquête française à la révolution, 1674–1789," *Revue d'histoire moderne* 12, nos. 29/30, n.s. 6 (1937): 449–68.

For examples from specific communities, see Archives nationales (hereafter AN) Q/1/181 6(b) Forêt de l'hôpital du Gros Bois [Doubs], Procès verbaux de reformation de la dite forêt, 3 November 1727; and *Cahier de doléances*, Buffard, 17 March 1789, in François Vion-Delphin and François Lassus, eds., *Le bailliage de Quingey en 1789: Les cahiers de doléances* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1989), 179.

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initiatives to increase supplies of naval timber, and innumerable surveys to assess the country's fuel crisis and compute the wood consumption of saltworks and ironworks.[14]

When the Revolution began, legislators aspired to streamline these initiatives and issue an updated version of the 1669 Ordinance that would address France's current and pressing forest concerns. However, their ambitions were thwarted by the nearly impenetrable web of rights in nearly every woodland, large or small, as well as by the rapidly shifting and increasingly discordant political landscape. A 1791 decree decentralizing forest oversight – a popular but poorly conceived solution to the otherwise impossible legislative morass that forest reform represented – only muddled the picture, as did revolutionary lawmakers' subsequent issuance of dozens of other forest decrees, and the nationalization and sale of ecclesiastical and émigré noble properties from 1790 onward. Taking the helm in 1801 after ten years of relative forest free-for-all, Napoleon revived Old Regime controls and reinstalled a powerful woodland bureaucracy. Nonetheless, no substantive replacement for the 1669 Ordinance was attempted until the 1820s, when deepening wood shortages and a resurgent state bureaucracy finally gave rise to a new Forest Code (*Code forestier*). Rigorously enforced from its promulgation in 1827 forward, the Code remains in effect in amended form today.

Each of these efforts, particularly the 1827 Forest Code, were justified in the name of the *bien public* – the public good. But Franche-Comté's woodland inhabitants rarely saw it that way. Rather, to a remarkable extent, they resisted nearly every endeavor to regulate externally the resources they regarded as their own. Whereas policymakers and political theorists insisted that eliminating customary rights and replacing them with state and private ownership was crucial to France's moral and material regeneration, the Francs-Comtois sought to preserve what they had and restore what they had lost. Their tactics ranged from lawsuits, petitions, poaching, and pilfering to arson, assassination, and outright rebellion. Though Franche-Comté communities were divided over how the forest's benefits should be allocated and who

[14] On the surveys, see Bertrand Gille, *Les sources statistiques de l'histoire de France: Des enquêtes au XVIIe siècle à 1870* (Geneva: Libraire Droz, 1964); Bertrand Gille, "L'enquête sur les bois de 1783" (paper presented at the Actes du 88ème congrès national des sociétés savantes, section d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, Clermont-Ferrand, 1963), 627–46; and Bertrand Gille, "Un recensement des usines comtoise en 1744," *Revue d'histoire de la sidérurgie* 2 (1961): 257–76.

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should arbitrate them, most agreed that an abstract, centralized model of administration was not desirable.

Over the course of the "long revolution" from 1789 through 1848, rural inhabitants' hopes of achieving liberty, property, and equality on their own terms at first surged, then soured. Residents in the tiny Doubs hamlet of Rouhe, for example, petitioned the Estates General in March 1789 to say that "the *maîtrises* [the crown's provincial forest bureaus] are onerous to all communities," and that they "eagerly desire the suppression of these jurisdictions."[15] Fifty-nine years later, having been subjected to an overall *extension* of woodland restrictions in the intervening decades, Rouhe's aggrieved denizens took a more confrontational approach. Seizing the opportunity afforded by the political chaos of 1848, they took two forest guards hostage and demanded their resignations, asserting that "they were free; they no longer wanted guards, they would administer their woods according to their own will" – in short, that they were the "masters of their woods."[16]

As in so many other kindred episodes, this revolt yielded mixed results. In the short term, Rouhe's citizens had the satisfaction of turning the tables on the state's hated woodland agents and seizing control for themselves. In the long run, the outcome was more ambiguous. The exuberance of 1848 was quickly quashed by a return to the status quo, the restrictions imposed by the 1827 Forest Code remained in place, and Francs-Comtois continued to leave the countryside in droves in search of urban opportunity. Even so, the bold defiance of Rouhe's residents and other Comtois communities compelled the state to acknowledge their concerns and gained them concessions they might not have gotten otherwise. After the hostage episode, Rouhe's previously denied customary claims on state and private lands were reexamined and converted to communal property. This maneuver, known as *cantonnement*, significantly reduced rights holders' overall forest access but accorded them full title to a fraction. Economically deleterious at the time because of the inadequacy of the reduced portion, Comtois communities' *cantonnements* earn them substantial revenues today through sales of surplus firewood and timber.[17]

[15] *Cahier de doléances*, Rouhe, 18 March 1789, in Vion-Delphin and Lassus, *Le bailliage de Quingey*, 108.

[16] AN BB[30] 359, Rapport du procureur général près la Cour d'appel de Besançon, April 1848.

[17] This revenue has earned them the reputation of "*communes riches*," free of municipal taxes and awash in perks like new appliances for residents. Philippe Klein, "La Franche-

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In the process of exploring the forest struggles of the Revolution and their legacy, three main arguments emerge. First, as the case of Rouhe suggests, peasant opposition to state forest policies produced greater gains than previously appreciated, even when it was crushed at the time. The outbreak of revolution in 1789, 1830, and 1848 catalyzed and capacitated resistance by giving woodland citizens new reasons, opportunities, and political and rhetorical tools to press their case. Although they remained for the most part at a legal and governmental disadvantage and were inevitably outgunned when military force was brought to bear, their tenacity gained them tangible results, especially over the long term.

Second, environmental conservation as it emerged out of the political, social, and economic transformations of early modern and modern France had less to do with farsighted ecological protection – an assertion that is often made in hindsight about both the 1669 Ordinance and the 1827 Forest Code – than with extending state power, suppressing sedition, and substituting commercial exploitation for communal utility. Although conservation has a generally positive connotation for most present-day readers, in practice it had frequently negative consequences for human communities and their natural surroundings.[18] Promoted in the name of state stewardship but premised on suspicion of rural inhabitants, the policies crafted by French governments from Louis XIV forward failed to preserve forests as they were intended.[19] Instead, they intensified antagonisms and exacerbated woodland abuses by rupturing local management regimes, criminalizing customary usage, and forcing inhabitants

Comté touche toujours du bois," *Pays comtois*, March–April 1997, 56. See also discussion in Robert Layton, *Anthropology and History in Franche-Comté: A Critique of Social Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 83–84. According to Layton, some villages adopted the practice of selling *affouage* timber and apportioning the revenues directly to inhabitants from 1969 forward, but by 1995 they were no longer doing so.

[18] This analysis is well established among social scientists of Asia and Africa. Most recently, see Oliver Wapulumuka, *Conservation Song: A History of Peasant-State Relations and the Environment in Malawi*, 1860–2000 (Cambridge: White Horse Press, 2011); Thaddeus Sunseri, *Wielding the Ax: State Forestry and Social Conflict in Tanzania, 1820–2000* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009); and Tim Forsyth and Andrew Walker, *Forest Guardians, Forest Destroyers: The Politics of Environmental Knowledge in Northern Thailand* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).

[19] On views of the peasantry as inherently destructive, see Peter McPhee, "'The Misguided Greed of Peasants'? Popular Attitudes to the Environment in the Revolution of 1789," *French Historical Studies* 24, no. 2 (2001): 247–69; Patrick Matagne, "The Politics of Conservation in France in the 19th Century," *Environment and History* 4 (1998): 359–67; and Frédéric Chauvaud, "Les répresentations morbides de la forêt au XIX siècle," in *La forêt: Perceptions et représentations*, ed. Andrée Corvol et al. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 367–74.

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