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Conflict, Territory and the Frontier Economy: Smuggling in the Alps of Dauphiné During the 18th Century

Anne Montenach

Translation : Caroline Mackenzie

- 1 Historical and anthropological research over the past 20 or 30 years has strongly challenged Braudel's vision of mountain communities as immobile, lacking in history and situated "at the margin [...] of the great tides of civilisation" (Braudel, 1949, p. 12; Fontaine, 2003; Albera, 2011). The high valleys of the Western Alps, like those of the Pyrénées, should no longer be seen as dominated and peripheral areas disconnected from the major commercial routes that crisscross modern Europe. On the contrary, they played a major role in these vast trading networks and, by their participation in licit and illicit activities, contributed to the "Ancient Regime's global economy" (Radeff, 1996).
- 2 During the 18th century, Dauphiné was seen as a "foreign" province (*province réputée étrangère*) located on France's border with Italian provinces.¹ For this reason, it offered many opportunities for widespread smuggling at many levels, whether as part of a simple strategy for survival, a capitalist enterprise or a trade war between states. In this scenario, the border becomes a paradoxical place that not only obstructs but also permits the passage of travellers. It is an area that offers resources and disparities. It allows states to affirm their new political powers, while creating opportunities for circumventing those very powers. At a time when the nation-state was particularly keen to establish its authority, the frontier regions of Dauphiné (France) and Piedmont (Italy) and, in particular, the high valleys of the Briançonnais and Queyras regions with their *privileges*² offer an excellent laboratory for observing territorial, economic and social strategies found in smuggling activities and the wide range of power structures in and around illegal trade. This article focuses on two specific products, the one heavily taxed (salt) and the other banned (calicos), both of which were much in demand from consumers in 17th- and 18th-century Europe. Here we will first study smuggling

and smugglers as a key element in a frontier economy and the need for official border controls and opportunities for transgression. Next, we will analyse the significance of “territory” in the development of illegal trade and the conflicts it generated, which in turn led to the emergence of a new relationship between the State and mountain communities. Finally, we will see how conflict can become a “productive moment” (Roitman, 2005, p. 22) in the frontier economy for both the authorities and the smugglers.

Privilege, prohibition and control of territory

- 3 In the high valleys of the Western Alps, the predominant economic activity was animal husbandry, for which salt was in high demand, leading to the development of a very active market between the plains and the mountains since the 14th century. In Dauphiné, as in the rest of the kingdom’s south-eastern region, salt was taxed under the “*petite gabelle*”³ system: The Dauphinois inhabitants were required to buy their salt supplies from an authorised warehouse. In 1715, the *Grand Escarton*⁴ was granted the *privilege*, which meant that salt could be sold for a lower price than elsewhere in Dauphiné. Similar privileged zones were established throughout the *petite gabelle*, a common practice under the Ancient Regime where the rule became the exception and exemption led to freedom from the king’s power to arbitrate (Hincker, 1971, p. 25; Kwass, 2000). In the Alpine valleys, the conflicts during Louis XIV’s reign had created great suffering for the inhabitants, and this, together with the need to guarantee the loyalty of frontier populations, explains why these *privileges* were renewed regularly until the fall of the Ancient Regime.
- 4 In view of these circumstances, the Dauphiné mountains offered a particularly favourable area for *faux-saunage*⁵ in the early 18th century: a rugged landscape and unpredictable weather that made surveillance difficult; a relatively poor population governed by an elite protective of its independence and *privileges* (Fontaine, 2003); a series of internal borders between valleys with and without *privileges* and between France and Savoy, which was still part of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia; different prices for salt (essential for daily life and local farming); and a network of roads that linked one valley to another and flouted political frontiers.

Figure 1: Brigades and salt warehouses in the Dauphiné Alps (18th century)

MADE BY HUBERT PROAL

- 5 Although of lesser importance for daily life than salt, Indian calicos were introduced into Europe during the 16th century. They were very popular with consumers in the 1660s and 1670s and created a new trend in contemporary French society. Thanks to the wide range of patterns and colours, quality and lightness of fabrics, exotic designs and reasonable prices, they allowed customers to adapt swiftly to changes in fashion (Lemire, 2011, p. 33 et sq.; Riello, 2013, p. 112-116). Quickly imitated in Europe, Indian calicos soon rivalled the rich fabrics produced by France's silk and wool manufacturers, whose position at court allowed them to take their arguments to the King's Council: On 26 October 1686, the Council decreed an embargo on cotton fabrics "painted in India" and on the printing of white cotton. Between 1686 and 1759, these prohibitions were reinforced by more than 100 edicts, decrees and declarations. However, consumer demand was so strong that it encouraged the development of massive smuggling in the kingdom's terrestrial and maritime border areas (Kwass, 2014). Dauphiné was a particularly attractive area for smuggling in the 18th century and became the theatre for a black market in banned calicos. Furthermore, it was close to Geneva, which was rapidly becoming a European hub for producing cotton fabrics and a clearing-house for imported calicos, and its frontier with Savoy could be crossed in many places with impunity, all of which contributed to an endemic increase in smuggling activities. The leading merchants in Lyon, Geneva and Grenoble sold both authorised merchandise and smuggled calicos and took advantage of their social position to ensure that the local parliamentary elite overlooked any suggestions of misconduct. In the countryside, smuggling operations were in the hands of large armed gangs, in particular after the 1720s, and the *Ferme* agents were powerless to prevent their activities.

- 6 The introduction of the *Ferme* system and of the *petite gabelle* in Dauphiné can be seen as part of a larger strategy for the extension of state authority – usually through the consolidation of “national” territory and the installation of frontiers, with Vauban and Colbert the main instigators (Virol, 2003; Bitterling, 2009) – and for appropriation by the crown of a proudly independent border province. A number of measures, in particular those regulating commerce, sought to reinforce the presence and authority of the state in Dauphiné. The prerogatives of the Grenoble Parlement, champion of provincial liberties, were restricted one by one, a policy initiated by Richelieu, through the creation of tribunals for matters relating to the *gabelle*. In 1691, new courts specifically for hearing cases on trafficking were established, which further eroded the Parlement’s *privilege* of hearing all criminal and civil cases against the rights of the king. Furthermore, the Commission of Valence was established in 1733 in order to act as the court of appeal for crimes involving contraband (Favier, 2002, p. 192). In addition, the salt warehouses – which acted not only as stores but also as tribunals – and the brigades began to personify, for the Dauphiné inhabitants, the presence of both the State and the tax regime.
- 7 Meanwhile, the *Ferme* introduced a number of sedentary and mobile brigades to police tax collection. In the early 1730s, the Intendant for Dauphiné, Gaspard Moïse Augustin de Fontanieu, reported that the Mountains Surveillance Department had five brigades at its disposal to control Queyras and the upper valley of the Durance, but he thought this was insufficient “to successfully supervise the many gorges through which [the bands] travel”.⁶ Two brigades located at Entre-deux-Guiers and Pont-de-Beauvoisin were responsible for supervising the frontier with Savoy, which ran along the River Guiers. This river “can be forded from one end to the other and in all seasons”. A Regiment of Invalides was garrisoned at Pont-de-Beauvoisin.

Figure 2: The River Guiers and the frontier between Dauphiné and Piedmont **MADE BY HUBERT PROAL**

- 8 These brigades patrolled the whole territory and would, on occasion, carry out searches. These were far from popular with the local inhabitants who saw them as a manifestation of the royal taxation regime. The agents set up ambushes at the crossing points (ridges, valleys and gorges) used by smugglers, but winter conditions and bad weather made these missions particularly unpleasant. In these games of cat and mouse, smugglers could easily change their routes or trick the patrols. In May 1736, a brigadier and two guards stationed at La Madeleine were informed that a cargo of untaxed salt would be carried from Briançon to Oisans. They pretended “to go to the village of Lauzet, as it was Sunday, and attend mass”, and then “doubled back over the top of the mountain in order to arrive incognito and ambush us as we entered the *privilege zone*”.

7

- 9 Snippets of information gleaned from official reports of searches provide insights into the daily life and situation in the mountains described by men who were, for the most part, native to the “country” (Roche, Michaut, 1970, p. 219). These have little in common with descriptions by travellers for whom the high mountain areas still seemed, in the early 18th century, an “absolute trial”, a “physical, psychological and social challenge” (Bourdon, 2011, p. 217), until the “Alpine myth”, an idealisation of the landscape, inspired more enchantment than fear (Reichler, 2002, p. 239). Reports by the brigades rarely mention the difficulties of irregular terrain, steep slopes or the undoubtedly very rudimentary – or indeed non-existent – nature of some paths, though references to weather conditions were common. For *gabelou* (customs officer) and smuggler alike, the mountains had become a place where the residents felt totally at home, while offering opportunities for an infinite variety of illegal activities.

Playing with space, conflict and negotiation

- ¹⁰ Savoy was a major hub for smuggling both salt and calicos. Geneva merchants established warehouses full of banned fabrics produced by the local calico workshops or reconsigned from the sales of Indian trading companies in Lorient, London and Amsterdam. On 21 July 1603, the Duke of Savoy and the Republic of Geneva signed the Treaty of Saint-Julien, in which they agreed that goods from Geneva could be transported through the Duchy of Savoy without paying customs dues or taxes. This opened up new opportunities for gangs of armed smugglers to bring fabrics into France. On 5 January 1355 (Treaty of Paris), the River Guiers became the 25-kilometre long frontier between Dauphiné and Savoy that could easily be crossed at any one of the 20 natural fords before it joined the Rhône. In theory, this border followed the riverbeds of the Guiers and the Rhône, but at periods of high and low flows its exact route was difficult to identify (Bonnin, 1993, p. 25). In addition, both states laid claim to the entire river bed, which created a new source of discord throughout this region and requiring heavy surveillance, until the Treaty of Turin (1760) established that the frontier ran through the middle of the Guiers. The most famous of these frontier “incidents” occurred during the night of 10/11 May 1755: The famous smuggler Mandrin was arrested by 500 soldiers from the La Morlière Regiment while he was hiding in the Château de Rochefort-en-Novalaise, not far from the Savoy frontier.⁸ Strung along this contested frontier, the villages of Les Écheltes, Pont-de-Beauvoisin and Saint-Genix-sur-Guiers regularly gave shelter to important merchants involved in illicit trade.⁹
- ¹¹ Contraband salt also travelled from Savoy through Dauphiné’s mountainous regions. Trade in Peccais salt¹⁰ between France and Savoy was authorised by a treaty between King Philip VI of France and Count Aymon of Savoy in 1335 (Bergier, 1982, p. 183; Le Goff, 1960). In the 16th century, this trade was disrupted when Savoy became an enemy of France, but by the 17th century new regulations were introduced and regularly reconfirmed. Whereas the *gabelle* system substantially raised the price for French consumers, Savoyards were able to buy French salt at cost. Furthermore, the duchy’s agents, who were responsible for calculating supplies of salt, deliberately overestimated the figures for inhabitants and livestock, so that 20 to 25% more salt was delivered than was required (Blanchard, 1937). Excess supplies were smuggled into France and, in particular, Dauphiné. Complaints by the French authorities about the practice of “*reversement et retour*”¹¹ were made throughout the 18th century, particularly because, since Richelieu’s day, each new war had led to an increase in taxes on salt, and salt had gradually served as an excuse for war (Hocquet, 1984, p. 341): Between 1700 and 1706 alone,¹² the Grenoble Parlement found 190 men – mostly from Dauphiné – guilty of *faux-saunage* (Bonnin, 2001, p. 113). It was not until the Constituent Assembly¹³ decided in 1790 to halve the price of salt that this trend was reversed with more salt being smuggled out of France to Savoy.
- ¹² While the region around the River Guiers was the smugglers’ preferred area of activity, the Valley of La Maurienne offered an alternative route to Oisans by crossing numerous passes. Farther south, they brought salt in from Piedmont, taking advantage of variations in price on the one or the other side of the frontier. The Treaty of Utrecht, which took Oulx, Val Cluson and Château-Dauphin out of the *Grand Escarton*, did not put an end to the centuries-old trade between the valleys.¹⁴ These border territories had

their own concept of time and were indifferent to political decisions that transformed what was once legal merchandise into contraband and, as a result, practices in these outlying areas were often out of kilter with political and administrative regulations.

- 13 From a wider perspective, the tax-free zones of Briançon and Queyras became major centres for smuggling after 1715, despite the presence of *Ferme* brigades. Smugglers extended their territory into areas that could never be supervised by a few men, no matter how well they were positioned. This raised the question whether the *Ferme* and the central government were really committed to fighting a relatively wide-ranging smuggling network. These smugglers were in fact less violent and dangerous than the gangs operating along the Guiers, a region where the landscape and weather conditions were more effective at limiting the activities of criminals. Fontanieu, who was very knowledgeable about his province, was not fooled: On the contrary, he thought that “we will never succeed in stamping out” smuggling in Dauphiné and added that it was “being encouraged by nature in such a mountainous region” (Dubois, 1932, p. 183).
- 14 Fontanieu’s correspondence and reports to the Controller General and the Intendants of Finances, as well as his memoirs, described the Guiers Valley as a source of violent and repeated smuggling activities that were difficult to control even with armed agents as the smugglers were aided by both the province’s inhabitants and its parlement. The large gangs that sometimes harassed the region during his period of office were followed, in the 1750s, by armed bands led by Mandrin and other more or less famous leaders. During the 18th century, these smuggling networks were gradually reorganised into large well-structured troops covering a wide area in all the frontier regions (Ferrer, 1998, p. 90). They were particularly feared by the authorities because many of their members were deserters who “had served [in the armies]”¹⁵ of France, Savoy and Piedmont and “were hired by gang leaders at a fixed rate per voyage”.¹⁶ These men had no compunction in attacking or even killing *Ferme* agents. In his memoirs, François Flandrin, Captain General of the *Fermes* in Voiron, describes 32 repression campaigns during the period 1750-1782: He was shot four times, while three agents and two smugglers died during these missions (Flandrin, Favier, 2009). The use of violence, for which the perpetrators were regularly sentenced to death, also explained how the gangs received assistance from the “countryside”; “what the smugglers cannot have with inducements”, wrote Fontanieu to Fagon in December 1724, “they obtain by fear and threats, which they spread and carry out, of burning and looting against anyone who dares to stand against them or helps to hinder them”.¹⁷
- 15 Nevertheless, smuggling should not be interpreted uniquely in terms of resistance to the tax regime and its territorial construction, as in the case of the “salt wars” in the Pyrénées (Ayats, 2002, p. 258-262). As a source of revenue for the local population, smuggled goods, and particularly calicos, were a key factor in the commercial practices of important merchants who engaged in licit and illicit trading. With regard to dealings between mountain communities and the State, smuggling was a key factor in the negotiations for maintaining salt *privileges* throughout the 18th century, which appears to be a way of avoiding open conflict. In a “massively incorporated world”, to use Jacques Revel’s words, the *Grand Escarton*’s 19 communities in the Briançon and Queyras districts banded together and signed trading agreements with the State offering a collective service – their loyalty to the crown and defence of the frontier – in return for a collective *privilege* – a low tariff for salt (Revel, 1987, p. 226-227). In these negotiations, *solliciteurs*¹⁸ and other intermediaries played a key role, as did the networks of

patronage or clientelism through institutionalised lobbying.¹⁹ The *Grand Escarton* and its Parisian lawyers acted as a pressure group working both as a body – as understood under the Ancient Regime – and as an organisation (or, in Douglass North’s words, a “group of players”) within this institution – or game plan – that is lobbying (North, 1990). Throughout the negotiations, the question of contraband was ever-present, as a threat or as an ultimatum, but it never served as an excuse for not renewing the *privilege*. In total, the enormous sums paid by the *Grand Escarton* (nearly 40,000 livres between 1721 and 1738) could be seen as regular payments for the right to smuggle, which was implicitly tolerated by the elite and the State as a means of, and as a guarantee for, the loyalty of the inhabitants in the frontier region and for high sales of salt from the *privilege* warehouses.

Conflict as a “productive moment”

- 16 In order to control or, on the contrary, circumvent the frontier, those involved in contraband or its repression used a variety of tactics – which turned their conflicts into “productive moments” (Roitman, 2005) – as a source of innovative practices for controlling territory and protecting illicit trade. In the case of contraband calicos, the decision to set up a network of *Ferme* brigades and control posts in the frontier provinces was soon revealed as quite inadequate for preventing the passage of large bands of armed smugglers on horseback. Campaigns to counter smuggling soon took on the appearance of out-and-out war, pitting the rural police force and royal troops against smugglers who were often more brigands than traders.
- 17 Intendant Fontanieu’s correspondence and memoirs are a rich source of information about how armed campaigns were used to combat illegal contraband between 1724 and 1738. Upon his arrival in Dauphiné in 1724, he was faced with the problem of smuggling. Realising the importance of safeguarding the frontier with Savoy, he initially decided on a campaign of repression against the purveyors of contraband. Although still not prepared to engage in war or the use of force, he nevertheless decided to “disrupt the commerce of traders”, the principal clients for banned merchandise, “by [threatening] long prison terms and [undertaking] rigorous investigations” and arresting gang leaders.²⁰ An important element in this campaign was the Alpine valleys. While in no way comparable to the high mountains around Briançon, they nevertheless remained very rugged. Fontanieu made several references to these obstacles: It was impossible, he wrote as early as 1725, to hope to “crush [the smugglers] entirely” ... “in such mountainous and difficult country”.²¹ “[I]mpassable in winter” for soldiers,²² the mountains were accessible in summer by “paths” known only to the local population, and “it would require an entire army to control all the passes and gorges”.²³ The analogy, or indeed the homology, of savage mountain landscape – “the nature of the countryside that cannot be defended” – and its habitants, long seen by town dwellers (administrators and intellectuals alike) as violent and averse to social order, was implicit (Walter, 2004, p. 49; Debarbieux, Rudaz, 2010, p. 36-37): “what could we do”, wrote Fontanieu, “with a few companies of grenadiers who are mocked by the locals as they climb the steep, craggy slopes”?²⁴
- 18 The first breakthrough came in the summer of 1732. At the time, the killing of two *Ferme* agents by the gang headed by Jean Barret, which operated in the area between Savoy and Vivarais, forced Fontanieu to accept that armed retaliation was now

necessary – he uses the word “war” many times in his correspondence. Realising that *Ferme* agents were powerless and that it was “impossible to place troops in every mountain gorge”, he submitted a proposal for the supervision of river valleys by soldiers to the Controller General.²⁵ As a tactician, he argued that the province’s hinterland could be patrolled by a combination of infantry and dragoons (foot soldiers on horseback) to be deployed as dictated by the landscape.²⁶ In addition, Fontanieu thought it was important to ask for more troops from the Intendants of neighbouring provinces and the King of Piedmont, who finally agreed to send soldiers.²⁷ The second breakthrough came in 1738, when the armed gangs again stepped up their activities in Dauphiné. Drawing on his 15 years of experience in using armed force against smugglers, he submitted a report to Controller General Orry in which he expressed his disillusionment with the efficacy of *Ferme* brigades and royal troops in combatting armed gangs. He put forward a new proposal that once again described the specific geographical features of his province. Dauphiné being surrounded, he wrote, “on almost all sides by the Alpine high country, we should not fool ourselves into thinking that smuggling can be prevented by guard posts, because there are so many ways of crossing the mountains, and these are better known to the smugglers than to our agents; as a result, the smugglers have the ability to change paths for more inaccessible routes at any moment in their journey”.²⁸ He suggested that the *Ferme* set up cavalry brigades composed of two companies of 50 dragoons to operate not along the frontier but in the province’s hinterland. Meanwhile, the *Ferme* offices would be staffed by agents authorised to receive taxes and a handful of soldiers who were “to avoid any unequal resistance” for their own safety.²⁹ After having sought, in vain, to make Dauphiné’s river and road frontiers impenetrable during the early years of his mission, Fontanieu noted that “there is no way that we can hope to eliminate smuggling in Dauphiné by placing agents at the frontier posts.”³⁰ No action was taken on his proposals.

- 19 Through the introduction of prohibition and frontier controls, the State sought, to a certain extent, to implement Colbert’s policy for “territorialising” commerce. This initiative was never likely to succeed because the kingdom under Louis XIV and his ministers and the trading area of smugglers and their merchant clients did not cover the same territory (Salvemini, Zaugg, 2013, p. 316). Aware of the risk of raids, smugglers demonstrated their skill in finding new solutions by introducing an insurance system. In 1724, Fontanieu reported that in Dauphiné there were “several gang leaders in league with merchants wishing to trade in smuggled goods; they negotiated agreements based on the value of the goods to be carried from the frontier to their destination”.³¹ A few years later, he was able to give more details: “the more the smugglers’ activities were disrupted, the higher the cost of insurance”.³² For these “indemnified contrabandists”, the profits were commensurate with the financial risks involved in the event of raids, which would explain the violence in their skirmishes with *Ferme* agents. This practice, which compensated the merchants for their losses, also showed that the clients for contraband merchandise did not hesitate, particularly when they had a legitimate business, to make use of the traditional tools of legal trade to protect their commerce.
- 20 In conclusion, there remains a last “innovation” in this struggle against smuggling, in addition to arguments in favour of repression and repeated publication of the rules, in the accommodations that can be found in court reports. Although gangs of armed smugglers were certainly involved in criminal acts and were subjected to heavy

penalties, illegal trading by small-time *faux-sauniers* and by the city merchants should also be considered as part of their diversified daily activities. The participation of women who were usually punished less severely offered more original and widespread opportunities for handling legal and illegal merchandise for which consumer demand was growing throughout the 18th century. Because it took advantage of France's fragmented tax system and of embargos on imported merchandise, smuggling offered yet another way of exploiting – and implicitly confirming the need for the presence of – mountain frontiers, while simultaneously providing alternative options in an excessively regulated market (Clemente, 2013, p. 359). Oscillating between *privilege* and smuggling, conflicts and circumventions, these illegal practices should not be interpreted uniquely as a form of dissidence or rejection of the State. As so aptly stated by Serge Brunet, such an interpretation echoes “Braudel's *fixité* (immobility)”, which ignores all opportunities for negotiation (Brunet, 2007, p. 53).

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NOTES

1. This term is used by France's customs regime during the late 17th and 18th centuries. 'Foreign' provinces (*provinces réputées étrangères*: Artois, Brittany, Flanders, Guyenne, Saintonge, Languedoc, Provence, Dauphiné, Lyonnais) were not included in the customs tariff system established in 1664. Trade between these provinces and the unified customs area known as the five “*Grandes Fermes*” (the dozen provinces located in the northern core of the kingdom) was subjected to import and export taxes.

2. The *privilege* was a right or a form of tax relief on specific products that was granted to various towns and regions – Translator's note.

3. The *gabelle* was a tax on salt, for which the King held a monopoly. French provinces were divided into several groups that paid different rates for the salt tax. The *grande gabelle* covered mostly the northern core of the kingdom. In this zone, the salt tax was high, and the crown authorities fixed the amount of salt that the inhabitants were required to buy. In the *petite gabelle* regions, salt was moderately taxed, and there was no legal obligation to buy a fixed allotment of salt.

4. This was a group of two communities (*escartons*) of Briançon and Queyras.

5. The term was used only for smugglers of salt.

6. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF), Ms fr. 8360: Memoirs on the King's *Fermes* in Dauphiné, collected by M. de Fontanieu, v. 1731, f° 67 r°.

7. Archives départementales des Hautes Alpes, B 330, 27 May 1736.

8. Archives départementales de Savoie, 2 B 12148, 1755 ; Archivio di Stato di Torino, Paesi, Savoie, Incidenti con la Francia, Mazzo 1, n° 9, 1754-1756.

9. See Figure 2.

10. Developed in the 13th century, these salt flats lie along the Languedoc coast, 2 kilometres from Aigues-Mortes.

11. I.e. buying cheap in Savoy and selling again in France for a profit.

12. I.e. during the early years of the War of Spanish Succession.

13. The Constituent Assembly was the French national assembly when the French Revolution broke out in 1789.

14. This refers to the five valleys of Briançon, Queyras, Oulx, Val Cluson and Château-Dauphin, known as the *Grand Escarton*. Its assembly had the power to manage their tax, military and political affairs. See Figure 1.

15. BNF, Ms fr. 8382: Replies to letters from the *Contrôleur General* and the *Intendants des finances*, 1 June 1725, f° 96 r°.

16. BNF, Ms fr. 8390, 17 July 1732, f° 111 v°.

17. BNF, Ms fr. 8381, 7 December 1724, f° 72 v°-73 r°.
 18. Influential men at court whose objective was to influence royal policy – now known as lobbyists.
 19. Although anachronistic, this term well describes how communities worked together, by repeatedly paying large sums and maintaining representatives at the court, to preserve their *privileges* and influence royal power.
 20. BNF, Ms fr. 8381, 7 December 1724, f° 132 r°..
 21. BNF, Ms fr. 8383, 30 October 1725, f° 141 v°.
 22. BNF, Ms fr. 8387, 13 October 1729, f° 142 r°.
 23. BNF, Ms fr. 8389, 27 March 1732, f° 291 v°.
 24. BNF, Ms fr. 8387, 13 October 1729, f° 141 r°.
 25. BNF, Ms fr. 8390, 6 July 1732, f° 93 r°.
 26. BNF, Ms fr. 8390, 17 July 1732, f° 109 r° ; 24 juillet 1732, f° 118 v°.
 27. BNF, Ms fr. 8390, 30 October 1732, f° 222 r°.
 28. BNF, Ms fr. 8392, 28 August 1738, f° 325 r°.
 29. *Ibidem*, f° 326 v°.
 30. *Ibidem*.
 31. BNF, Ms fr. 8381, 7 December 1724, f° 130 v°.
 32. BNF, Ms fr. 8476: Memoir on smuggling, c. 1732, f° 65 v°-66 r°.
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ABSTRACTS

This article takes up the theme of “mountains and conflict” with a review of smuggling in the Dauphiné Alps during the 18th century. As a “foreign” and border province, smuggling was rife in Dauphiné and practised by a variety of inhabitants. For some, it was part of the daily strategy for survival, for others their normal commercial practice, while for states it became a bargaining chip in negotiations over trade wars. Paradoxically, the frontier was not only a barrier but also a passage, depending on the different scenarios enacted along its length: a resource, a porous fence, a key place for affirming state power, and an opportunity to circumvent state authority. At a time when nation-states were seeking to affirm their presence, the frontier between Dauphiné and Piedmont, and more specifically the border defining the *privileges* granted to the Briançon and Queyras districts, offers an excellent opportunity for studying the territorial, economic and social situations generated by the very presence of frontiers and the various forms of power relationships involved in or controlling illegal commerce. This article reviews the conditions surrounding the emergence of a black market in two products, the one heavily taxed (salt) and the other banned (calicos), both of which were in high demand by European consumers during the 17th and 18th centuries.

INDEX

Keywords: smuggling, border, territory, Haut-Dauphiné, Ancient Regime

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