

**Mario A. Iannaccone**

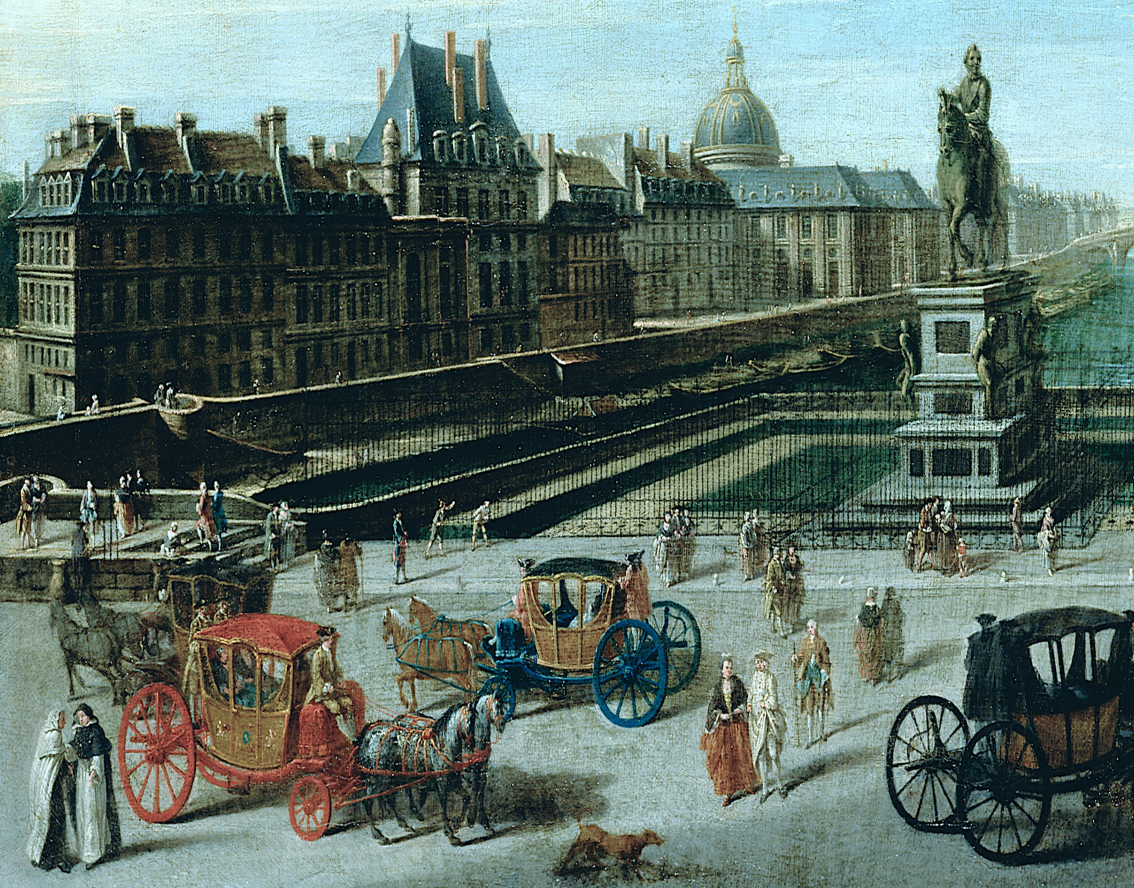
# **Origins**

**The roots of the  
Lefèbvre de Clunière family**





**This research on the origins of the Lefèvre family is a deepening and an extension of that of 2021 and makes use of broader historical and historical-genealogical documentation extending to French parish registers from the early 17th century. The hypothesis of connection with the Lefèvre d'Ormesson is verified by a number of elements, including the identity of function of the members of the two branches in the 18th century and the similarity of the two family coats of arms. The historian's task in this case is also to put forward a hypothesis on the exact moment when the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family may have split into a cadet branch.**





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**2022**

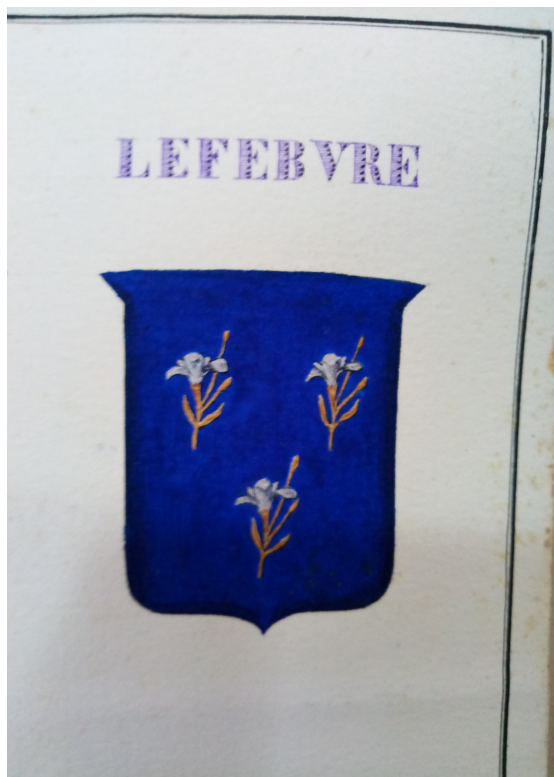
**Extended research**

Cover: Nicolas-Jean-Baptiste Raguenet, A View of Paris from the  
Pont Neuf - Getty Museum.









Hand-painted coat of arms found at the State Archives of Naples,  
Fondo Sassone Corsi, B.2-Ruffo di Bagnara.







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## Introduction

On the origins of the Lefèbvre D'Ovidio family, destined to play an important role among Italian entrepreneurial dynasties between the 19th and 20th centuries and beyond, there were until recently two hypotheses: one based on a clue linked to the identity of names leading to Holland, and one leading to France. The first hypothesis, based on cases of homonymy of French emigrants at the end of the 16th century, presented in the previous version of this study in 2020, must now be superseded, as new findings have emerged in the meantime. If it is mentioned here, it is only because it could be mistakenly taken up by later researchers as the concurrence of dates is singular. Whereas the second thesis, the one that through various, significant and concomitant clues connects its emergence to a branch of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family – nobles, high bureaucrats, ministers with predicate nobility dating back to the 16th century, also rich in cadet branches – is based on solid evidence.

The Lefèbvre family (today Lefèbvre D'Ovidio) certainly had as the place of its first origin Normandy (where the oldest Lefèbvre names can be found), then the Île de France; at a third time, part of it spread between the Dauphiné and Franche-Comté. The hypothesis defended here is that the Lefèbvre constituted a cadet branch of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson, a branch produced in the first decades of the 17th century that never fully detached itself from its trunk. The exponents of the former received positions in the high administration of royal finances both central and provincial, while those of the latter are well known to history for their apex roles in the same

structure. The hypothesis, as mentioned, is supported by clues, concurrences of dates and converging elements that will be listed and linked in this paper.

Since we are dealing with such distant times – the examination begins in the 16th century – it is difficult to have access to documents that constitute kingly evidence, but the discussion of clues and indirect evidence can still lead to the truth with a very good approximation.

Thus, the Franco-Italian branch of the Lefèbvre family, established in Italy from 1808 and later becoming Lefèbvre D'Ovidio from 1911, following the birth of the first child of Elvira D'Ovidio and Carlo Ernesto Lefèbvre, would cross with that of one of the most powerful families in France. This would account for some otherwise unexplainable anomalies, such as the marriage of a Peer of France, the Marquis Raoul de Raigecourt, during the monarchical period, to a daughter of the Lefèbvre, Flavie Lefèbvre (1813-1843), a marriage that would not have been part of the customs of the Marquises of Raigecourt had there not been, so to speak, a solid genealogical insurance. One must, for this, immerse oneself in the mentality of the time and the importance that was given to aristocratic genealogical lines.

The young Lefèbvre, born in Naples, married the Marquis Raoul Boisgelin de Raigecourt, Count of the Holy Roman Empire (1804-1889) when she was of childbearing age. If the young woman had not already been a noblewoman, the marriage would hardly have taken place, as any children that might have been generated would have entered the marquis' genealogy. The latter, at the time of the second marriage, had only one son who was still a child. Considering the infant mortality rate at the time, the possibility that a son begotten by Lefèbvre might survive if the marquis' first-born son died

prematurely had certainly been taken into account. At that point, the son of Lefèbvre could become the holder of the marquis and comital title linked to the mystical heraldry of the Holy Roman Empire and the marquis title linked to the equally ancient and sacred French title. As chance would have it, however, his young bride, whom he had joined in 1835, died in Naples in 1843 without leaving any children.

The Marquis de Raigecourt had descendants from the Marquis' first wife, Lucie de Leusse (1806-1828), who also died very young but after giving birth to two children, a girl, Marie Eléonore (1826-1855) and a boy, Gustave Émmanuel (1827-1916).

The same reasoning applies to the marriage between Carlo Ernesto Lefèbvre and Teresa Doria in Naples on 25 May 1847. At that time, Ernesto was wealthy but had not yet received the noble title of Count of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, a fact that would happen 7 years later, in 1854, with the conferral of the title on his father. Thus, it is possible that the marriage of Doria d'Angri was permitted to a bourgeois in the absence of knowledge of quarters of nobility as marriages between rich bourgeois and nobles were rare in France and Southern Italy before mid-century.

We must consider the fact that Teresa's siblings, descendants of a Doria d'Angri and a Caracciolo, were all exclusively with nobles of the Kingdom without exception. The exception would have been Teresa's marriage. One has to enter into the mentality of those times, its customs and conventions to fully understand these aspects that were not details at the time.



Let us then consider Teresa's sisters and their marriages:

Filomena Doria (1845-1900) married Marzio Mastrilli, Duke of Gallo (1843-1871);

Eugenia Doria (1828-1888) married Prince Giuseppe di Sangro, (1825-1909);

Maria Doria (?-1877) married Carlo Marulli Duke of San Cesario (1829-1877);

Giustina Doria (?-?) married Leopold de la Tour en Voivre, a noble descendant of the family of the Dukes of Bouillon (?-1905);

Vittoria Doria (1840-?) married Giulio Mastrilli, a nobleman from Naples (1839-?);

Luigia Doria (1837-?) married Antonio De Vito Piscicelli (?-?) a nobleman from Naples.

Thus, Teresa Doria's five sisters married members of Neapolitan or French aristocratic families. It is therefore highly unlikely that she herself broke this rule that was the norm for her family. This is a relevant fact that I will link to many others in this paper. The Neapolitan Code of 1819, loosely based on the preceding Cod Napoléon, stipulated that male and female children could not choose to marry before the age of twenty-five and also that family blood rights took precedence over marriage rights: in other words, aristocrats married aristocrats and at least until 1860, few exceptions are known among the most important families such as the Dorias.<sup>1</sup> And in France, the same applied.

This discussion contributes to the reconstruction of a family history that goes far back in time and is interested in the strategies and patterns of maintaining identity and ties over the

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<sup>1</sup> *Codice per il Regno delle Due Sicilie*, arts. 288, 294, 295.

centuries. Moreover, the history of the Lefèvre D'Ovidio family presents itself as a case of great interest precisely because of the alternating events, changes in rank and activity, that characterised its history over a very long period of time. As well as for the consistency of its industrial history in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies during the Unification period.





## **Part One**

### **Hypotheses on origins and family network extended family Lefèbvre de Clunière in Modern France**



## **Chapter 1**

### **The roots of the Lefèbvre family Historical-genealogical hypothesis**

Today, part of the genealogy of the Lefèbvre D'Ovidio family is largely known, having been reconstructed over the last ten years thanks to a series of studies that have also retraced and investigated the activity of the companies founded in Naples and Reign of the Two Sicilies in the first decades of XIX century, explaining, so, its singular importance and weight in the post-Revolutionary French, Bourbon and Unification period. This was a French family that played a key role in the industrial development – now unfortunately largely lost – of certain areas such as Terra di Lavoro, especially in the area of the former Duchy of Sora. Not the only family that played an important role – we can recall, for example, the Degas in Naples for equal importance – but the most conspicuous certainly due to the length of its history and the originality of the industries it created and which were personally directed for at least three generations in various important – crucial – industrial and technological fields. Before the Revolution, several of its members had important roles in the administration of the French Monarchy, at Versailles and in the provinces, especially in the departments of the Maritime Alps and then in Franche-Comté and in the Dauphiné.

After the Revolution, the centre of gravity of the interests of the branched Lefèbvre family settled back in Paris. The



capital was not chosen, as first thought, as a result of a move but as a return to a place where other branches of the same family, divided by one, two or three degrees of kinship, had lived for a long time, probably for at least two centuries. The centre of the family was right there and many facts prove it. Several members of the family received important positions in the provinces or moved to the south-west (Dauphiné, Franche-Comté, Alpes-Maritimes), giving rise to descendants who tended to return, perhaps after several generations, to Paris and in particular to the residential areas around Versailles and the centre of the city in Rue Chassée-d'Antin.

Here they could count on friendships, support and alliances that did not wane with the passing of decades and were perpetuated by the celebration of marriages between first and second cousins.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, a division can be observed: some of the Lefèbvre brothers, born after the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, remain in France and are linked to important members of the royal bureaucracy – central and peripheral – while others move to the capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies where only one will build a considerable fortune unrelated to the family's previous specialisations and positions in the bureaucracy.

In much more recent times, before the ennoblement for merits of work and loyalty achieved in 1854 by Ferdinand II (1825-1859), Charles Lefèbvre entered the small Neapolitan Constitutional Parliament where seated exclusively men with whom the King thought to have tight friendship ties. Subsequently, a great-grandson of Charles was united in marriage to the daughter of the academic and senator Francesco D'Ovidio (1849-1925). The latter's surname was

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<sup>2</sup> André-Isidore Lefèbvre, *Souvernirs*, AB, XIX 4480, v. 1, p. 15.

added to that of the Lefèbvre family, composing a new composite surname according to a rare procedure accepted for the exceptional merits acknowledged to D'Ovidio.<sup>3</sup> While this part of the story is now known, even in its genealogical aspects, there are still interesting questions about the origin of the family.

It is indeed possible to think that the Lefèbvre are a collateral branch of the well-known French Lefèvre d'Ormesson family. This hypothesis covers genealogical, historical and political issues. Apparently, the Lefèvre d'Ormesson and the Lefèbvre shared only a common surname in medieval France originally written as Le Fèbvre. Both the Lefèvre d'Ormesson and the Lefèbvre show fluctuations in the spelling of their surnames in documents; thus, five forms could coexist for the same persons, the last one Latinising, depending on the documents:

Le Fèvre  
Le Fèbvre  
Lefèbvre  
Lefèvre  
Lefebure (without accentuation)

Sometimes the spelling bears no trace of an accent, but this variability is common in the Ancien Régime period throughout Europe. Names were only fixed at the time when parish registers bearing birth and death dates were regularly compiled. This came about after the provisions of the Council

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<sup>3</sup> The custom of adding a second surname, from the maternal line to children is also attested in various cases in the Neapolitan bourgeoisie of the 19th century, as explained in Paolo Macry, *Ottocento. Famiglie, élites e patrimoni a Napoli*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2002.

of Trent in the second half of the 16th century and after the concomitant, though slightly later, keeping of municipal registers in the nation States a few decades later.

On the origin of the French Lefèbvre family that settled in Naples, there is a manuscript text deposited in the Naples State Archives, the work of a genealogist: it is entitled *MEMORIA per la famiglia Lefèbvre de Clunière. Quarto. Ava materna del Principe di Sant'Antimo, Gioacchino Ruffo di Bagnara*.<sup>4</sup>

This memoir was written when Senator Gioacchino Ruffo di Bagnara (1879-1947), nephew of Maria Luisa Lefèbvre (1823-1854), wished to present his titles of nobility to the judging commission that was to decide on his admission to the Knighthood of Malta. Her father, Fabrizio Ruffo di Bagnara (1843-1917), had been admitted as a Knight of Honour and Devotion. Consultation of the relevant archives does not show that the requested admission was successful for his son who, in fact, is not counted among the Knights of Malta and never held that title. The reason for this exclusion can be found in the fact that he was unable to prove, with documents in hand (this was required), an ancient nobility of the maternal line, namely Lucia Saluzzo (1846-1923) descended from a Lefèbvre and Gioacchino di Saluzzo. The duke had submitted his request in 1908; the following year, in 1909, he married Princess Flaminia Odescalchi (1882-1948), from an ancient family, but the marriage immediately entered a serious crisis and was annulled by the Sacra Rota in 1911.

In 1915 he married Michela Monetti (?-1936), who had no qualifications. However, this could not have prejudiced the outcome of the admission, as the judgement was made on the

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<sup>4</sup> State Archives of Naples, Private Funds, Ruffo Bagnara, I, b. 135.

ancestry of the candidate and not of his spouse. Here we can clearly see how the custom of marriages between aristocrats had fallen at the beginning of the 20th century.



Gioacchino Ruffo di Bagnara

As far as Lucia's mother was concerned, noble quarters were well documented on her father's side, i.e. that of Gioacchino di Saluzzo (1811-1874), count by title and awarded a second title of marquis, although this was later disputed. On his mother's side, one could easily find Bourbon documentation dating back to 1854 that made Charles Lefèbvre count by sovereign rescript, but what the commission judging the admission needed was to go back much further. Gioacchino Ruffo di Bagnara, as his father's eldest son, held many titles: Duke of Bagnara, Duke of Baranello, Prince of Motta San Giovanni, Prince of Sant'Antimo, Baron of San



Lucido, Neapolitan Patrician, Lord of San Lorenzo, Amendolea, Fiumara di Muro, Soletto and Gabella Catona since 1917. However, as mentioned above, being one-quarter descended from a Lefèbvre who was apparently of more recent nobility, he needed to present a *Memoria* to a commission of experts, whose judgement was unappealable. Hence the appointment of Sassone Corsi.



Centre, Gioacchino Ruffo di Bagnara between head gardener Tito Mercalli and Professor Giorgio Roster, (ca. 1906), Villa Lucia, Castellamare di Stabia.

## Chapter 2

### The research of Sassone Corsi

First of all, it is important to examine the soundness of the arguments brought in favour of the ancient Lefèbvre nobility. The *Memoria*, transcribed on parchment paper and reproduced in several copies, was the result of the work of Raffaele Sassone Corsi (c. 1880-post 1940), who was at the time an esteemed genealogist.<sup>5</sup> The latter was a lawyer registered at the Court of Naples but also a genealogist expert who was frequently called upon by Neapolitan noble families as a consultant to obtain recognition of titles of nobility and for matrimonial and inheritance matters. He was therefore trained in archival, historical and diplomatic research. In the case of the *Memoria* concerning the Lefèbvre family, however, his method turns out to be somewhat deficient and impressionistic, probably because he lacked supporting

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<sup>5</sup> His name and research are frequently cited in genealogical works. Sassone Corsi, Raffaele (19th-20th centuries); Naples. The 'Carte Sassone Corsi' were donated to the State Archives of Naples by Mrs. Adriana Sassone Corsi. The fund mainly testifies to her activity as an expert genealogist and therefore preserves a considerable amount of documentation produced and received for research and commissioned studies. The archive is housed in eight envelopes, the first three of which contain genealogies, notes taken from archival and bibliographic sources, memoirs, coats of arms, documents in copy and in original (birth, marriage and death extracts, processes of nobility, notarial deeds), relating to various families whose members requested Baron Sassone Corsi's expertise in order to obtain recognition of noble titles, or to be enrolled in the official lists of Italian nobility or to be admitted to the Sacred Military Sovereign Order of Malta.

evidence and documents that he himself considered difficult to find. Today, we are in a better situation and can use Sassone Corsi's insights to our advantage by filling in gaps and correcting what he could not prove.

The research, which lasted from 1904 to 1907, was paid for by Gioacchino Ruffo di Bagnara who wanted to prove the antiquity of the Lefèbvre noble quarter for admission into the Order of Malta. It was, according to Sassone Corsi himself, very difficult. After about two years of attempts, he had presented everything he had managed to produce. In the document, the author writes that he had not been able to investigate certain aspects of the family's noble titles in documentary form, although he says he is certain of this ancient nobility due to a network of clues.

Sassone Corsi's idea was that the French-Neapolitan Lefèbvre descended from the large Lefèvre d'Ormesson family, but practical difficulties prevented him from digging into the past and substantiating his hypothesis, which certainly came from suggestions by the then living Lefèbvre brothers, Carlo and Francesco (his sister Flavia, was abroad at the time and died in early 1905). He was also unable to trace the figure of Charles Lefèbvre, who was born in 1775 and had been dead, at the time of the research, for less than half a century even though his nephews were still living. In the case of Charles, the consultant resorted to fantasy rather than historical research or the so-called 'family novel', i.e. news that families pass on orally from generation to generation and which are often distorted although they always contain a kernel of truth. Both Francesco (1856-1908) and Carlo (1852-1921) may have been lavish with details of the family novel.

Moreover, Sassone Corsi decided not to travel to France to find documents because the journey would have taken a long

time: he would have risked going to many towns and villages without being sure of being received and finding anything significant. Therefore, he only relied on what could be consulted in Naples and in genealogical directories or books on the nobility of France. He wrote, it is true, several times in France to dignitaries, officials of the local bureaucracy, mayors and managers of municipal archives and tried to obtain original documents: family trees, affidavits, birth, death and marriage extracts, transcripts of parish registers. He obtained little, if not a few birth extracts and a few stunted records.

We know for certain that the genealogist did not have at his disposal that *Libro di memorie* or *Souvernirs* of Charles Lefèbvre (1775-1858) mentioned by his cousin André-Isidore around 1880 and consulted at the beginning of the century by the Soorian historian Achille Lauri (1884-1965) in Balsorano, in the Lefèbvre castle which at that time had passed to Flavia Lefèbvre's son, Illan of Casafuerte. Achille Lauri was nevertheless able to consult him in the Abruzzi castle shortly before the devastating Marsica earthquake of January 1915. If it was in the castle of Balsorano, where Lauri saw it, it was lost on that occasion. However, if we are to go by what Lauri reports, the manuscript did not contain any remarkable elements for the reconstruction of the family history. This meant that some facts were reconstructed by imagination.

Between Lauri and Sassone Corsi, the story is enriched. Let's see how.

The genealogist tells us, in his Manuscript *Memoria*, that Charles, rejected from his homeland following the Revolution of 1789, at the age of 14 and an 'orphan', came to Italy to seek his fortune.

The adverse events to which the ancient French nobility was subjected when, like a whirlwind, the wrath of the Revolution was unleashed on France, which demolished the throne and altar, uncovered tombs and destroyed everything that reminded one of the hated regiments – put the Applicant in a difficult position to search for documents that could prove the more than two hundred years of nobility of this ancient French house, its ancient quarter of nobility. Indicative of these difficulties – made even more difficult by the fact that the search had to be carried out in a foreign country, governed by a republican form of government and dominated by democratic ideas – is the fact that Charles Lefèbvre's birth certificate was found in Pontarlier (doc. I), whereas his death certificate declared him to be a native of Besançon, where nothing could be found (doc. III), because, perhaps, only of that country remained the vague, fearful memory in Charles Lefèbvre's childish mind, when in 1789, orphaned and at the age of fourteen, he had to leave France, to escape, as a nobleman, from the violence of the prevailing demagoguery. Forcing the Applicant to produce documents reflecting only the said Carlo Lefèbvre, (sic) he availed himself of the provision of Ordinances 52° of Title Receipt (*Codice Gerosolimitano* printed in Malta in 1782) which allows that "proofs of family origin from a priory other than that of the Pretender must be made according to the laws and customs of the Priory of origin".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Sassone Corsi, *Memoria*, Naples State Archives, Private Funds, Ruffo Bagnara, I, b. 135.





*A tile day in Grenoble* by Alexandre Debelle.  
Start of the Revolution in the region inhabited by Charles Lefèbvre.

In the story, Sassone Corsi speaks of his difficulties in finding information in a republican country governed by democratic ideas (we are in the period of the Third Republic when the so-called radical policy was implemented) where the nobility had been abolished by law even though it still existed and was recognised by the people and associations. Furthermore, Charles Lefèbvre's death certificate incorrectly bore the city of Besançon whereas he was born in Pontarlier and this had evidently set him back months because he sent enquiries to the wrong address.

For the rest, he had romanticised what had been written much more dryly in Achille Lauri's book. The latter,

transposing a 'family novel' handed down by the Lefèbvre family and no doubt originating from Charles himself, had simply reported that he had been enlisted in the Napoleonic armies where he had risen to the rank of captain. Only the enlistment had not taken place at the age of 14 but at 17. Instead, the genealogist had invented a daring escape of a 14-year-old orphan Charles, who had been forced to flee in order to "escape the violence of the prevailing demagoguery," and so had not been able to take his titles of nobility with him. Things had not turned out that way: his parents had not been killed, they had survived by changing towns and had died old; he had not taken his documents with him because he had been enlisted in the Doubs army and his father's house still existed. Sassone Corsi must have believed that romanticising the life of his French ancestor a little in relation to the hated Revolution might have some effect on the judges, even though they based their decisions on documents, diplomas, written texts and autographs. Nevertheless, the genealogist declared himself optimistic:

And, in the exact legal and customary interpretation of the requirements that the aforementioned order demands, and from the documents he presents for his bisavo (doc. IV Charles Lefèbvre family tree) – in which the recognition of ancient nobility and new royal favours concur – he will be able to see if he fulfils exactly what Order 22 of the same Title 2 received for knights of French origin requires, namely for these *"avent a prouver, qui leur Bisaieux paternels, et maternelles soyent gentilhommes de nom et d'arme, et leurs descendants; et ce partmoignages, titres, contracts, enseignements ou obissainces rendus aux Seigneurs. In autre faire blasonner les armes des quatre lignes..."* (SIC).

And then Sassone Corsi briefly reminds us what the obligations are for a knight of French origin to prove his nobility.

Gentleman of name and arms is noble, and noble of generous nobility, because such is indistinctly the nobility required by the statutes in which the name of fathers means all ascendants up to the stipe (St. XXII Rich.) – a stipe that the Sacred Order determined for the French in the bisavi (Ord. 22), for the English and Germans in the trisavi (Ord. 44) and for the Italians and Spaniards in that ascendant of ancestors living, respectively, 200 (Ord. 29) and 100 years (Consuet.) ahead.<sup>7</sup>

As we can see, the attestation of nobility, according to the rules of the various States or rather of the associations or commissions that defended the prerogatives of the aristocrats and that were (and are) endowed with courts of judgement, varied from a minimum of 100 years for the Spanish to a maximum of 200 years to reach great-great-grandparents for the French, Germans, English and Italians. Sassone Corsi therefore lacked papers proving an ancient nobility of at least 200 years counting from the applicant's birth, i.e. 1679, Bagnara Ruffo having been born, as we know, in 1879. The genealogist goes on to explain that his ancestor Charles Lefèbvre, having had to flee revolutionary France, had not been able to take any documents with him, implying that those documents with ennobling decrees must have existed somewhere.

After having reported on other issues concerning the demonstration of titles of nobility in Italy, which are of little interest to us here because they concern the Ruffo di Bagnara

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<sup>7</sup> Sassone Corsi, *Memoria*, pp. 2-3, in State Archives of Naples, Private Funds, Ruffo Bagnara, I, b. 135.

family, Sassone Corsi attempts a history of the Lefèbvre family, starting on pp. 12-15 of his Manuscript *Memoria*. He thus clarifies that, according to the laws in force in Naples at his time, it would have been sufficient for him to prove the nobility of his great-grandfather Charles Lefèbvre appointed Count of Balsorano by the King of Naples in 1854 for himself and direct descendants up to the fourth degree but considering the special statutes of the Order of Malta, which were stricter, he had to go back further.

And so it goes on:

But to demonstrate the preceding novelty of Carlo Lefèbvre de Clunière, he submits to the Supreme Authority of the Order that in the concession of the title there is no mention of a weapon because it is already one, i.e.: *azure to the silver cross accompanied on its head by three stars of azure* the noble house of Lefèbvre de Clunière used (See Doc. VI). That prior to this concession, the King of Naples elevated Carlo Lefèbvre to the high office of Peer of the Realm (Doc. VII) and received members of this family at the royal hand-kissing (See the *Araldo Napoletano*, p. 283, year 1882).<sup>8</sup> That the major families of the Kingdom, such as the Saluzzo (8 November 1840 – see Vo. 1° doc. IV) and the other Dogale Princely Doria family (14 November 1847, see Vol. VIII) were united in kinship with him, giving us of his nobility that tacit but important proof that Rogado mentions (Op, cit, p. 203) in the words: *'the dictate of the laws can make the Magistrates repute someone as Noble, but not that others take his daughter for a wife, or in other ways contract kinship with him, or in other needs of social life repute him as noble'*.

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<sup>8</sup> Maresca della Salandra G., *I Pari temporali del 1848, con alcuni riferimenti agli antichi parlamenti di Napoli e Sicilia*, in "Rivista Araldica", Year LVV-1957, pp. 405-417, Rome 1957.

The last sentence enunciates the principle that a nobleman could take a bourgeois for a wife but that, in that case, the spouse would not necessarily be ennobled for having contracted such a marriage, especially if belonging to a cadet branch. Sassone Corsi explains that the Lefèbvre de Clunière prior to the granting of the comital title made use of a coat of arms, i.e., in heraldic language, of a graphic representation "azure to the silver cross accompanied at the head of this by three azure stars" that must have been in an "Annex VI".<sup>9</sup> This blazon would have been in use by the already noble house of Lefèbvre de Clunière. Unfortunately, the file kept in the State Archives of Naples does not contain the document mentioned. This document was at the disposal of Sassone Corsi but, even if it was delivered by him to the Knights of Malta, it is no longer to be found in the file. Perhaps it was removed by some researcher during the last century. Sassone Corsi notes that *by virtue of this previous nobility*, the King of Naples 'elevated Carlo Lefèbvre to the highest dignity' of Peer of the Kingdom and received the family to the Royal hand-kissing, an honour granted only to the nobility of the Kingdom. Furthermore, Sassone Corsi continues, the ancient Doria and Saluzzo families were united in marriage with the Lefèbvre in the persons of Teresa Doria (1822-1911) married by Ernesto Lefèbvre (1817-1891) and Maria Luisa Lefèbvre (1821-1854) married by Carlo Saluzzo from whom was born Lucia Saluzzo (1846-1923), wife of Fabrizio Ruffo, parents of the person who was applying for knighthood: Gioacchino.

Sassone Corsi therefore also indicates this element as proof of a nobility preceding the ennoblement granted to Charles

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<sup>9</sup> Sassone Corsi, *Memoir*, cit.

Lefèbvre. According to French and Italian armorial bearings, the words "azure to the silver cross accompanied at the head of this by three azure stars" should show an armorial with a silver cross in the middle and three azure stars arranged in a line above the cross. In the next image we have made a reconstruction of the blazon following the rules of heraldry.



Reconstruction of the coat of arms of the Lefèbvre de Clunière, Lefèbvre de Revel, Lefèbvre de Rochenu, Lefèbvre de Hauteville according to the rules of heraldic armorial bearings and according to the indications of the genealogist Sassone Corsi. The style and size of the cross could vary.

That these presumptions are true is deduced from the observation that Charles' father, Pierre Lefèbvre de Clunière, held, before the revolution (1775), the high office of receiver of the royal bailiwick of Pontarlier (Doc. III), i.e. one of those offices used by the kings of France to be given to the most distinguished and meritorious gentlemen.

The high positions held in the royal administration by Charles Lefèbvre's father and his ancestors were, moreover, similar to those held by the Lefèvre d'Ormesson who were ennobled in 1553 and came to hold even higher positions during the 18th century. The receivers of the royal bailiwick of Pontarlier were gentlemen and generally ennobled to the toga nobility, which explains de Clunière. But Sassone Corsi speaks of an even earlier nobility.





## Chapter 3

### Searching the right lineage

Sassone Corsi writes in an important passage of his *Memoria*:

That the Lefèbvre family had been noble in France since ancient times is not in doubt, noting from the accurate publication *Annuaire de la noblesse de France*, year 1888, p. 302, that all branches of this family trace their origin back to Sire Lefèbvre, who owned fiefs in Crecy in 1360. From irrefragable documents it appears that Nicola Lefèbvre, Lord of Branslicourt, in 1524 gave rise to four main lines, namely that of the Lefèbvre de Branslicourt, De Wadicourt, De Ligescourt and D'Estrees, which were further subdivided, giving rise to various other lines that were called: D'Hellencourt, Du Hodent, De Fontaines, Du Grosriez, Du Mesnage, Du Loncuiaidin, Du Merouseliers (?), De La Houssaye, De Sauveuses, D'Aboual, De Becourt etc.; all of which lines varied in their arms, retaining, however, always the main parts, i.e. the azure field and the three silver stars accompanied either by the fauna or the silver cross. It must therefore be admitted that the Lefèbvre de Clunières family was precisely one of these branches, which the accurate publication did not mention. As the document (?) shows, Pietro had four sons, the only survivor of whom was the oft-mentioned Carlo, who travelled to Italy after the French Revolution and had his ancestral nobility recognised with a special title.

The genealogical lines of the first four named families can be traced and reconstructed.<sup>10</sup> The Lefèbvre of Branslicourt and the Lefèbvre de Wadicourt are linked to the lordship of Abbeville and are a well-known family line. Another genealogical branch is made up of the Lefèbvre de Ligescourt, Lefèbvre du Grosriez et des Fontaines and Lefèbvre du Grosriez, secondary branches of a single family who were given *surnoms* according to the places and castles they owned, but were not linked to particular titles. They were, therefore, lords of Riez, Crécy, Ponthieu and Wadicourt and were, according to the publication, also related to the Lefèbvre and later Lefèvre d'Ormesson of which they constituted a sort of secondary branch.

Sassone Corsi's information is accurate and takes us back to the extreme complexity of the genealogies of the Ancien Régime and its rules. Unfortunately, the 1888 publication lacks documents and supporting evidence and can only be considered as a start for our journey.

There were several Lefèbvre families, some noble and some not. Sassone Corsi also raises an important question: were the Lefèbvre, who already held important positions as administrators of the Du Boffin family in the mid-17th century, also present in the Demanio, thus, were they one of the many branches of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family? <sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> M. Borel d'Hauterive, *Annuaire de la noblesse de France et des maisons souveraines de l'Europe*. 1888, Au Bureau de la Publication, year 44, Tipographie de Plon, Paris 1888, pp. 301-319.

<sup>11</sup> Étienne de Séréville - Fernand de Saint-Simon, *La Société française au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, Contrepoint, Dictionnaire de la noblesse française*, vol. 1, Paris 1975, p. 17.

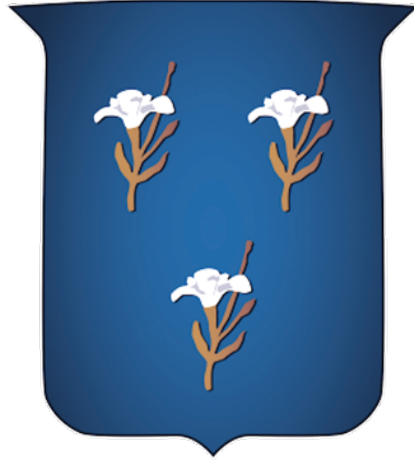
The question must be discussed, but it is supported by clues that are more than clues, starting with a very important one. Sassone Corsi had the blazon of the Lefèbvre de Clunière drawn. He had found a specimen evidently deposited in the royal archives that appeared as described in the heraldic repertories of the time, which spoke of 'Three gambutian field lilies in a sash on a blue background' with the inscription – in the outer band – bearing the words: 'Lex, Decus, Labor'.<sup>12</sup>

The inscription, found in genealogical repertories, is not found in the blazon drawn and coloured in watercolour and enamel and attached to the *Memoria* file in the State Archives of Naples. It is reproduced below in an improved version by the work of a modern graphic artist. As can be seen, it is an armorial presenting three 'gambuti lilies of the field in a band on a blue background' as stated in the text by Luigi Spreti, who, in turn, describes it. Therefore, the version presented by Bagnara Ruffo corresponds exactly to the one that was made for the ennoblement of the Lefèbvre by the King of the Two Sicilies and that was associated with the hereditary title of Count of Balsorano.

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<sup>12</sup> Vittori Spreti, *Enciclopedia storico nobiliare italiana: famiglie nobili e titolate viventi e riconosciute dal Regio governo d'Italia*, Unione Tipografica di Milano, Milan 1931, v. IV *ad vocem* Lefèbvre.

# LEFEBVRE



Lefèbvre family coat of arms  
(later Lefèbvre D'Ovidio).

If the phrases *Lex*, *Decus*, *Labor* are perfectly in keeping with Charles Lefèbvre's personality, the lilies certainly recall France, even if they are not lilies of France (hence linked to the royal family) but lilies of the field with a symbolic meaning that goes back to Luke's Gospel and means 'do not fear or worry about the future, but work for good trusting in good'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> "Behold how the lilies of the field grow: they toil not and spin not. Yet I say to you that not even Solomon, with all his glory, dressed like one of them. Now, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is there and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not do much more for you, people of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear?' Of all these things seek the heathen. For your heavenly Father knows that you need

Apart from the reproduction in this file, there are – at the moment – no other reproductions of this image, probably lost or ended up in some warehouse after the sale of the Lefèbvre properties, sales that took place in several stages between 1898 and 1915. Where they were drawn, and they certainly were, on the buildings, they were removed in the changes of ownership. But there is a first aspect that gives one pause for thought.

In order to explain this, it is worthwhile to return to Sassone Corsi's discourse, because this is the oldest extant historical-genealogical discussion of the family. The arguments he brings in the following passage are very important:

And here we point out that, if the favour of the Court could allow the Dorias and Saluzzos to bind themselves to a person who had recently been ennobled (and it is well known how jealous these two families were of their ancient nobility), it would certainly not have imposed this mend to an ancient and very noble French family. Indeed, we read on p. 16 of vol. VI of the work *Titre, Anoblissements, et Pairies de la Restauration 1814-1830* published by Viscount Albert Révérend, current editor of the aforementioned *Annuaire de la Noblesse de France*, that the Marquis of Raigecourt, Rolando Paolo Emanuele de Raigecourt de Gournay, Peer of France, married Onorata Gabriella Flavia of Balsorano, daughter of Carlo, on 18 June 1835: that is, when not yet on the head of Carlo Lefèbvre had rained the favours of the Royal House of Naples and all his nobility consisted in his surname.

The cited circumstance, namely the marriage between a Peer of France and Flavia Lefèbvre on 18 June 1835, is indeed

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them. Instead, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you in addition. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. To each day is enough its own punishment" (Lk 21:5-19).

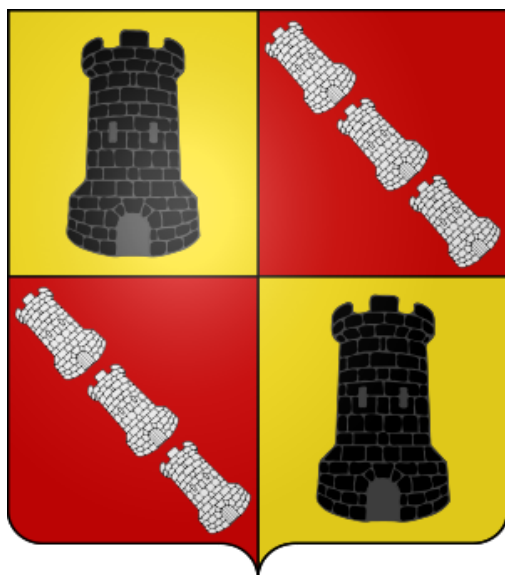
very significant and we have already mentioned it. There were other marriages between the Lefèbvre and members of the aristocracy of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, who were generally very jealous of their titles. In little more than ten years, between 1835 and 1847, the Lefèbvre became closely linked to the local aristocracy. It is hard to imagine that three such marriages would succeed without a previous title of nobility.

Here I develop the theme already touched upon and then return to the question of the Lefèbvre de Wadincourt family and collaterals mentioned by Sassone Corsi.

### **Lefèbvre-Raigecourt marriage (1835)**

The marriage celebrated in Paris in 1835 between Flavia Lefèbvre (1813-1843) and Raoul Boisgelin de Raigecourt-Gournay (1804-1889), Marquis and Count of the Holy Roman Empire, raises interesting questions. The groom was a Peer of France, a member of one of the oldest and most powerful families in the Kingdom. The legal obligation to marry a noblewoman on the part of the Peers of France had been abolished by the law of 29 December 1831, but it still existed in custom. Therefore, the first-born sons of the Peers of France carefully chose their consorts from young women from noble families. Raoul de Raigecourt's first wife had been Lucie de Leusse (1806-1828), a noblewoman of France, daughter of the Marquis Emmanuel del Leusse (1766-1829), who, before dying very young, had given birth to two children, one of whom was a son, the already mentioned Gustav Emmanuel.





Raigecourt blazon.

Lucie was noble, so the preservation of the quarters of nobility was assured. Is it possible that Raoul, Peer of France, decided to remarry a bourgeois, albeit a very rich one? Possible but unlikely, as already mentioned. Love marriages existed and dispensations were granted by families to marry bourgeois women, but a man in Raoul de Raigecourt's position, Peer of France from 19 March 1845, a role to which he was in any case destined by family, and part of the private councils of the post-Napoleonic royals, was almost obliged to marry a noblewoman respecting the conventions of rank. If Flavia Lefèbvre had not turned out to be noble, the marriage probably could not have taken place because it would not have been accepted. The bride and groom had been presented after a long marriage diplomacy that had kept Flavia's mother in France for a year during which she had frequented the most

exclusive salons and had been introduced to various suitors at dances and banquets. Often, in the mentality of the time, the demands of romantic marriage were reconciled with those of dynastic marriage.

The Lefèbvre family for a long time – more than a century at the time of Flavia's marriage – had held important positions in the administration of the State, especially in Pontarlier and Grenoble, but also in Paris, so is it possible that they did not belong to the Nobility of the Robes or even to an older nobility? Hard to believe. It is only a question of whether they were descended from the Lefèbvre family that had settled in Abbeville, mentioned above, or from a branch of it that had moved to Paris and had taken the name in the 16th century of Lefèvre d'Ormesson.

### **The Saluzzo-Lefèbvre marriage (1840)**

The aristocrat Gioacchino di Saluzzo, who was very jealous of his titles despite his 'liberal' passion, tied himself to Maria Luisa Lefèbvre (1821-1854). The marriage was celebrated in 1840, thus well before the ennobling in Naples of Maria Luisa's father. Saluzzo at the time held the titles of marquis and count. Marriages celebrated between nobles and rich members of the world of finance or commerce before 1848 were very rare. Easier to think that the punctilious Gioacchino knew of previous ennoblements of his bride's family as he often turned to aristocratic courts to have his titles validated and spent a lot of money to maintain the title of marquis.

## **The Doria D'Angri-Lefèbvre marriage (1847)**

We have already written about this marriage. But it is worth repeating a few concepts: Teresa Doria D'Angri (1822-1911) belonged on her father's side to one of the richest and most title-laden families in the whole Kingdom (in particular the Doria side that descended from the Venetian doge family), branched out in every Italian State and particularly powerful in the Kingdom of Naples as well as in Genoa (Doria) and Rome (Doria Pamphili). But equally prestigious nobility, and equally considerable wealth, came from the family of his mother, Giulia Caracciolo (1807-1890). It is therefore for the third time hardly credible to suppose that, in this case, the son of a bourgeois, Ernesto, who had no titles of nobility until 1854, however rich and powerful, could marry the exponent of one of the oldest and richest families with an aristocratic past in the Peninsula. Of course, this could all be part of a policy of wealth preservation, as Teresa's marriage to the eldest son of an innovative industrialist, who in 1848 was the Kingdom's most conspicuous taxpayer, and who was already close to ennobling, was judged an important and successful marriage for both families. However, one has to wonder whether it is possible that so many aristocratic families, which included marquises, dukes and counts, could so easily marry in both the female and male branches to a family that could not itself boast nobility.

This is one of the reasons argued by Sassone Corsi that brings us back to the fundamental question that we have already discussed above: there must have been a nobility of blood that had been maintained in the memory of the family, even if in daily use, being the Lefèbvre branch that we are dealing with a cadet branch, it did not give the right to use it.

The use of a title is one thing, the quarters of kinship are another, and it was these that Sassone Corsi intended to assert. The marriage between Teresa and Ernesto in 1847 had been celebrated two years after Charles Lefèbvre's entry into the Council of Peers where he had become the king's advisor on economic and financial matters, and seven years before the ennobling of the family. This, too, turned out to be a love marriage, as the declarations of love of the bride and groom, transcribed by his nephew André-Isidore in his *Histoire*, are unequivocal. Sassone Corsi again writes:

We would also like to note that in France the high offices dependent on the Finance Ministry were held in the highest name and constituted generous and transmissible nobility. We read, in fact, in vol. IV of the aforementioned work by Viscount Révérend on p. 273, concerning the Lefèbvre of Wadicourt 'Mantenu de noblesse comme fila d'un conseiller trésorier payeur des états...'.

And Rollario Romano vo [illegible] notes that S. Pius VI issued a bull on [...] and established that the Receiver of the Venetian (was) to be granted transmissible generous nobility [...] However, the position of Receiver of the Royal Ballroom of Pontarlier, which Pietro Lefèbvre had held since 1772, being superior to that of a treasurer of Artois, because they were directly dependent on the sovereign rather than on the Ministry of Finance, would have given him the generous nobility required by the statutes of the Holy Order if he had not already been a noble family. Order if he had not already been from a noble family. If, therefore, the well-founded presumption that the Applicant's maternal ancestor belonged to the ancient Lefèbvre family is not to be accepted, he now has good reason to hope that the evidence produced for this noble quarter will be favourably received; as he has proven for the family of French origin the nobility emanating from Tritavo instead of Bisavo, as required by the Statutes of the Sacred Order.

Sassone Corsi's reasoning is fully reflected in legal and historical literature, especially in the texts that regulated the titles of high officials such as Charles Lefèbvre's father, grandfather and great-grandfather had been. Of their functions we shall speak, but in the meantime we note that Albert Révérend's book, cited by the genealogist on pp. 270-267 of the 4th volume of the book *Les familles titrées et anoblies au XIXe siècle*, mentions several Lefèbvre and Lefèvre who had been ennobled between the 16th and 18th centuries for their function as Nobility de Toga and among these were the Lefèbvre de Branslicourt, descendants of a Nicholas Lefèbvre, and the Lefèvre d'Ormesson who nevertheless seemed to constitute a connected kin network.<sup>14</sup> If this ennobling did not take place, apart from the *urnoms* who were not, however, linked to particular and defined titles, it meant that there was a preceding and prevailing nobility. Thus, Pierre Lefèbvre, Receiver of the Royal Ballet of Pontarlier since 1772, held a higher office than a treasurer of Artois, because he was directly dependent on the sovereign rather than the Ministry of Finance and this would have conferred on him the generous nobility desired by the statutes of the Holy Order if he had not already been from a noble family

Then there is a branched Lefèbvre family that was largely ennobled in the 18th century and was probably connected by ancient descent with the Lefèvre d'Ormesson. In various genealogies, consulting Révérend's book, it is noted that the D'Ormesson genealogy is not complete in all its parts. If there is a dividing point between the Lefèvre d'Ormesson and the Lefèbvre, it must lie within the first part of the 17th century.

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<sup>14</sup> Albert Révérend, *Les familles titrées et anoblies au XIXe siècle*, Paris, pp. 270-267.



## Chapter 4

### The collection of evidence

The Lefèvre d'Ormesson are the most likely ancestors of the family that later became Lefèbvre D'Ovidio. A direct proof is the blazon. From the middle of the 16th century, the D'Ormessons have, as their own, a blazon on a background of *azure (azur)* with three lilies (*3 lis de jardin d'argent tigés et feuillés de sinople posés en pal*) in the field, gambuti (stelluti). The *lis de jardin* are the field lilies of the Lefèbvre family of Balsorano and are placed in the same position. Italian and French noble coats of arms show extreme variety, but these two coats of arms have striking similarities such that they can be considered identical, apart from a small graphic variability due to the fact that they were hand-painted. Furthermore, some branches of these Lefèbvre show three blue stars on a silver cross, and this heraldic symbol, too, has, as we shall see, its own weight.

In short, the coat-of-arms that Charles Lefèbvre wanted and obtained for his family was very clearly reminiscent of that of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family, if not actually identical. It is difficult to consider this a whim or an appropriation: there were very strict rules by which a nobleman of French lineage, even if ennobled in Italy in 1854, could not copy the coat of arms of another family in its entirety, especially one as important as the Lefèvre d'Ormesson. A kinship must have existed between the two families, perhaps distant in time when the branches split, but real and not forgotten. A current

member of the Lefèbvre D'Ovidio family, a D'Ormesson recently claimed to be aware of a kinship, however distant.<sup>15</sup> We have no document at present to support this hypothesis other than a series of very significant circumstances, but the similarity of the blazon can already be considered proof. Moreover, if the motto of the Lefèbvre of Balsorano was *Lex, decus, labor*, that of the Lefèvre of Ormesson was *Grande decus Gentis Lilia semper erunt*, where the word *decus* reappears.

It is also important to note that both families worked in the same field of tax collection: André Lefèbvre (1577-1665) was a magistrate of finance, as was his son Olivier Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1616-1685) and André Lefèvre d'Ormesson, lord of Amboile (1644-1688). Also, Henri Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1751-1808), Intendant of Finance in Paris, Contrôleur général des finances from 29 March to 21 November 1783.<sup>16</sup>

At that time, the Lefèbvre family, the one we are concerned with, worked, in its various branches, in that very French department and this lasted for over 20 years, first under the Ancient Régime and then under Napoleon. These are significant circumstances that deserve further investigation. One hypothesis, as mentioned, leads one to think that it may have been a long-detached collateral branch, which had lost the documents of its nobility (which had to be proved, especially at certain times, at the request of the King or particular commissions), which then found it again in the

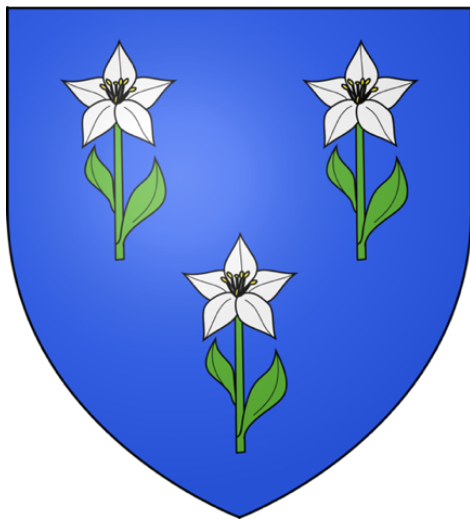
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<sup>15</sup> Personal communication to the author by Manfredi Lefèbvre D'Ovidio.

<sup>16</sup> Françoise Mosser, *Les Intendants des finances au XVIIIe Siècle Les Lefèvre d'Ormesson et le 'Département des impositions' (1715-1777)*, Droz, Geneva-Paris 1978.



Kingdom of Naples and recalled its past and claimed, in some way, kinship through signs such as the blazon.



The Lefèvre d'Ormesson family coat of arms.

It was, therefore, an interesting case of faithful preservation of memory. The one reproduced above is a stylised coat of arms belonging to the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family. As can be seen, the similarities are remarkable: the shape of the armorial is the same; the three lilies with stalks (gambuti or stelluti) are arranged in the same way, two at the top and one at the bottom. The differences may come, in this case, from the freedom of the graphic sign, but the five-petalled field lilies are the same, as is the blue background. The fleurs-de-lis in this image appear open frontally, in other cases, such as the family tomb of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson, the corollas are facing upwards,

exactly as in the blazon of the Franco-Napolitan Lefèvre (Lefèvre de Clunière).



Tomb of Lefèvre d'Ormesson.

The blazon of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family, identical to that of the Lefèvre de Clunière family, can be seen reproduced in the family tomb in the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris. Above, the entrance to the tomb and below, a detail of the blazon above.



At this point, it is worth taking a step back and examining in detail the possible ancestry of Lefèvre de Clunière.



## Chapter 5

### The beginnings: Touvet

The direct genealogical line of the first Lefèbvre, those who arrived in Italy in the early 19th century, emerges in documents in the mid-17th century. We are in the golden age of Louis XIV (1638-1713), when some 20 million inhabitants of the Kingdom of France felt they lived in a well-governed, ancient and powerful state, in what Pierre Goubert called 'the optimal balance' between population density and resources.<sup>17</sup> The first personage whose name, activity and date of death we know is called Michel Lefèbvre (1621ca-1670) and was administrator of the Barbarin estate at Revel Tourdan, on the road from Chambéry to Grenoble.



Touvet Castle.

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<sup>17</sup> Pierre Goubert, *L'Ancien Régime. La società, i poteri*, translated by Jaca Book, Milan 1976, pp. 50-51.

He married Marguerite Roux (1626ca-1667) in Touvet (Isère) and was administrator of the castle of Touvet, as presumably his father had been, as these jobs were passed from father to son. The locality of Touvet is pre-Alpine, a very small village that still retains ancient hamlets in its territory.

Five children were born to Michel and Marguerite:

Ennemond (born 1646)

Gaspard (born 1657)

Balthasar (born 1660);

Marie, whose birth and death dates are unknown

Joseph (1647-1728)

The latter became *châtelain* of the château Revel Tourdan and the château de Barbarin, before marrying. The surname Lefèbvre was still common in the spellings 'Le Fèbvre', 'Le Fevre' and 'Lefèvre', especially in the North-West of the Kingdom of France: Normandy, Brittany but also Picardy, and was also widespread in Paris with the branched Lefèbvre family.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> In the mid-19th century, a member of the family, André-Isidore Lefèbvre (1799-1885), noted that a cadence that he called Nordic persisted in the various generations of the family. The name is still widespread in northern France, in the current departments of Normandy (around 50,000), Picardy (around 22,000), Nord-Pais-de-Calais (100,000) and Île de France (10,000). In the Rhône-Alpes region, there are only 350 individuals with this surname, representing 30 to 40 households. Meanwhile, we note that most branches of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family were located in Picardy and Normandy in addition to Paris.



Du Boffin family blazon.

If Michel is "*fermier*", administrator of the castle and the large Barbarin estate that included arable land and fruit trees as well as livestock, his son Joseph is referred to in the available documents as "*châtelain de Revel*", a generic term that could mean, in this context, administrator of the castle of Revel or even "*castellan*" who had rented the castle from the owners and lived there with his family, the most likely hypothesis. At Revel near Tourettes, not far from Nice, there was the fortified fortress, of strategic importance, now reduced to a few ruins, and then the castle of Barbarin, large and ancient, in addition to the Château de Thuries of which we shall speak. So, a large property that was very important at the time because it was located on the border between marquisates and principalities.

The first building had belonged since the mid-17th century to the family of the Marquis Du Boffin, who abandoned it after 1789, when riots and violence led to its destruction. It was then used for at least a century as a quarry for salvage material.

Parts of it remain, ruins, on a rocky promontory 560 metres above sea level, but they are enough to give an idea of its former grandeur. Unfortunately, the documents it held were destroyed during the revolutionary raids. The castle of Barbarin, on the other hand, still exists today and is intact.<sup>19</sup>



Ruins of the Revel-Tourdan castle.

The Du Boffins, an important dynasty with numerous descendants, did not reside in Tourettes where the castle of Revel stood, but in Paris as was the custom among the old nobles who had long since renounced their freedom to live in the gilded idleness of Versailles, under the gaze of the king.

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<sup>19</sup> At that time, the lords of Revel were the descendants of the Du Boffin d'Uriage line, namely: a) Félicien du Boffin (1515-1581) and his wife Claudine de Viennmoise (1534-?); b) Félicien II du Boffin, Baron d'Uriage and Advocate General at the Parliamt of Grenoble (1560-1631), married to Urbaine de Vacher (d. 1635) and later to Jeanne de la Croix-de-Chevrieres, lady-in-waiting to the queen. Felicién II was a doctor of law and Advocate General at the Parliamt (De la Chenaye-Desbois, *La Dictionnaire de la Noblesse*, Tome III, Libraire-Imprimeur du Roy, Paris, 1774, p. 447).



Someone, therefore, had to administer the castle and its appurtenances, cultivated land, livestock, possibly a farm.<sup>20</sup>



What seems important is that both the lords of the castle of Barbarin, Octavien Emé de Saint-Julien (1551-1624), and his son Ennemond Emé de Saint-Julien (1605-1670), first baron of Marcieu, and his grandson Laurent Joseph, second marquis de Marcieu (1676-1742), held various posts in the Dauphiné parlement where Michel and Joseph's grandsons would go on to have careers. Although we do not know what exactly were the relations between the Lefèbvre, the Du Boffins and the

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<sup>20</sup> In 1606 Pierre Thaon, son of Philippe Thaon (died in 1635), married Camilla Michelotti (born in 1580), daughter of the Italian Melchiorre Michelotti (b. 1547) and Brigitte Doria. The lady inherited the fief of Revel in Tourette-Levens (site of the Revel castle), near Nice, and the fief of Saint-André, in Saint-André-de-la-Roche.

Marcieu, it is certain that the Lefèbvre descendants in Grenoble and Besançon, a few decades later, would hold administrative posts identical to the posts held by members of those families.<sup>21</sup> It would already appear here that the Lefèbvre were a secondary branch of the large Lefèvre d'Ormesson family that had been employed in this provincial castle.

The *châtelain* Joseph Le Febvre married Espérance Mistral (1670-1718). His wife's name is typical of the Rhone Valley and Provence and she also belonged to a noble family of the Dauphiné and Provence, the Counts of Mistral, although we do not know if she was a daughter of the Mistrals of that area. Several children were born from the marriage between Joseph and Espérance. One of these, christened Jean-François, born in 1680, was to be the ancestor of the Lefèbvre family of Naples. Other siblings were Marguerite Philiberte (born 1682), Philibert (1685), François (1687), Claude (1688), Joseph (1690) and a Marguerite born in 1695 (after another born and died two years earlier). Finally, an Angélique (1693). The presence of the names Philibert and Philiberte, both masculine and feminine, denotes, at this time, a cultural influence from neighbouring Savoy, then a Duchy of Savoy that had one of its capitals in Chambéry, even though the political capital was Turin. At the moment, the genealogical consistency of each of these descendants is unknown, which seems significant. The males gave rise to families that later diverged from the trunk that interests us. From Claude, Philibert, François may also have originated a lineage that explains the presence of so many Lefèbvre cousins in Paris and Versailles a few decades later. We are certain of other data: Jean-François, at the age of 38, in 1718, married Marie Anne Sibille (1696-1788), the 22-year-

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<sup>21</sup> Archivs du Dauphinate, Grenoble, 3E 1140.

old daughter of the apothecary and doctor of Revel-Tourdan.<sup>22</sup>



Barbarin Castle in Revel-Tourdan,  
where the first known Lefèbvre, Michel, worked.

Jean-François Le Febvre (1680-1764) and Marie Anne (or Marianne) Sibille lived in the village of Revel-Tourdan, most likely in the castle that was the only significant building in the village, in which Jean-François' father had already worked, as we know.

Their marriage was also fruitful: they had six children, some of whom lived to a ripe old age. Married at the age of 38, Jean-François inherited all the family fortune by 1729, when – his mother having already been dead for 10 years – his father

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<sup>22</sup> *Les LeFebvre*, genealogical research 2008. Even today, there are people in the village of 1,000 souls who bear the name Lefèvre (without the 'b' as in the 18th-century spelling).

also passed away on 30 September 1728. After that, or perhaps even before, Jean-François made a rapid career in the royal bureaucracy, so rapid that it cannot be explained without the intervention of powerful external support. In fact, he became *employé dans les affaires du Roi* starting in 1729, and within five years was appointed director of the *Dauphiné* bursar's office (*directeur des éconômats de Dauphiné*) in 1734. This was an extraordinary social ascent that involved studying law.

Had he been helped by someone? It is difficult to explain such an ascent except by interventions that came from Paris or some closer capital like Grenoble, where appointments were decided. This career greeted his entry into the high provincial bureaucracy and presupposed either toga nobilitation or a previous title of nobility.<sup>23</sup> Without military merit, it was difficult to obtain such a title without belonging to an important family network, which does not always show up in documents. Documentation, especially in France in certain periods before the Revolution, is very patchy. It is precisely the shadowy part of the Lefèbvre family of that period, which often gives evidence of its existence especially in Paris with the frequent appearance of relatives and cousins, that attracts the researcher's attention and suggests that the Lefèbvre of the Dauphiné must have been part of a more ramified circle scattered in various provinces of the Kingdom's territory due precisely to the antiquity of the family itself.

The title of 'Director of Finance' of the Department imposed

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<sup>23</sup> Provisions d'offices 1720-1790. V/1/ Jean-François Le Fèbvre. Conseiller maire de la communauté de Revel-Tourdan. Provisions des 21 & 28 juillet 1723 (V/1/255 pièces 29 & 61). Secrétaire greffier de la communauté de Revel. Provisions du 29 mars 1737 (V/1/311 pièce 85). Conseiller secrétaire greffier de la communauté de Revel. Provisions du 26 août 1736 (V/1/306 pièce 365).

obligations but also considerable privileges, as mentioned: good income, good contacts, a house suitable for receiving the small nobility of the place, the necessity even to travel.

A royal edict of 1638 had transformed the Parliament, endowed with its own specificity unique in the Kingdom, into a veritable Court of Accounts with about sixty officials.<sup>24</sup>



Barbarin Castle.

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<sup>24</sup> René Favier, *Le Parlement de Dauphiné*, Presse Universitaire de Grenoble, Grenoble 2001.



## **Chapter 6**

### **Other lineages: Lefèbvre de Wadicourt, Du Grosriez and des Fontaines**

At this point it is also worthwhile to say a few words about the other branches of the Lefèbvre that are mentioned by Sassone Corsi, starting with the De Grosriez and leaving the others for the next chapter.

#### **Lefèbvre du Grosriez (Picardy)**

From various sources – Sassone Corsi's text but also old family memories regarding symbols and Heraldic Designs that can be found in silverware and furnishings – there is mention of a coat of arms with three stars. The three stars could refer to the lineage of Nicholas Lefèbvre de Branslicourt, while the lilies, more recent, to that of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson. What we can think is that the first family was older while the second, the D'Ormessons, related to the first, emerged between the late 15th and early 16th century, and that therefore a kinship exists even if distant in time.

Of all the Lefèbvre families, the only one with the three stars in its coat of arms is the Lefèbvre du Grosriez family of Picardy. This family, in fact, had formed several branches all established in Picardy:

- a) the Branslicourt (original trunk)

- b) the Wadicourts
- c) Ligescourt who had settled in Abbeville, Picardy, in the early 17th century
- d) the Wadoucourts (sic) actually do not match this name

This Lefèbvre branch is named by Sassone Corsi precisely because of the three stars on the blazon shown to him by the Neapolitan Lefèbvre heirs as proof of kinship. Were they separate branches of one large family?

For the time being, let us stick to these four *surnoms* that did not amount to any other title than the informal title of *seigneur de*. The only branches that still existed in the 19th century were the Ligescourt (with the d'Ellencourt branch) and the Wadicourt (subdivided into du Hodent, des Fointaines and du Grosriez), plus of course the d'Ormesson who were related to the former but had played a more important historical-political role in the history of France.<sup>25</sup> Once again, the division must have occurred much earlier, around the end of the 16th century. As for the three stars on the coat of arms, the only thing that can be said is that various early 21st century Lefèbvre family sources recall the existence of early silverware and family objects bearing that particular mark.

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<sup>25</sup> Notice généalogique sur la famille Lefebvre Du Grosriez en Picardie, Au bureau de l'annuaire de la noblesse, Tip. An. Paris, 1888.



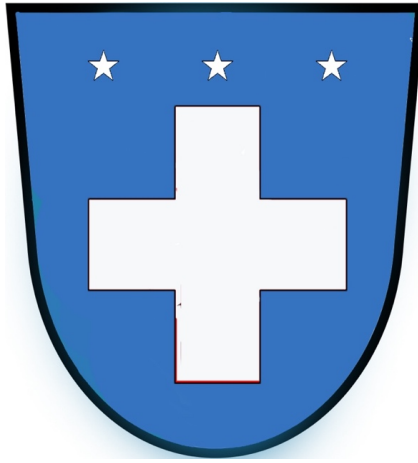
# LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ

EN PICARDIE.



ARMES : d'azur, à la fasce d'argent, accompagnée de trois étoiles d'argent; au chef d'or, chargé de deux pals de

The Lefèbvre de Wadicourt branch of the family, collateral to the D'Ormessons and often marked in documents simply as 'Lefèbvre', also presents many interesting elements. In the course of generations, its members took on different *surnoms* that were sometimes transmitted, sometimes not, sometimes skipping a generation, depending, evidently, on whether or not certain positions were held. It seems clear that the Lefèbvre family with these different *surnoms* (and others) was a single family: what remained constant, apart from the surname, was the inheritance of the profession of clerk and lawyer, sometimes of very high rank, of the Finances.



The descriptions we possess allow us to easily reconstruct the original blazon of all the Lefèbvre branches.

There were various types of blazons used by the different family branches that could also evolve as a result of alliances, the breaking of alliances, the acquisition of offices and more. The earliest coat of arms of the Lefèbvre was the one mentioned by Sassone Corsi, i.e. a coat of arms on a blue background that contained a silver cross and three silver stars at the head (see image above). The remaining element is the three silver stars transformed into lilies. If it was modified later, it is probably due to role acquisition and the branching out of the Lefèbvre family.

These Lefèbvre were also lawyers in the central parliament. For example, Charles Lefèbvre de Wadicourt (1642-1694), lord of Grosriez, lived his entire life in Abbeville (Somme) in various positions.<sup>26</sup> They were included in the *Annuaire de la*

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<sup>26</sup> *Notice généalogique sur la famille Lefebvre Du Grosriez en Picardie*, Au bureau de l'annuaire de la noblesse, Paris, 1888, pp. 15-16.

*noblesse de Paris* published in the capital in 1888. This Charles Lefèbvre married Jeanne de Ponthieu (1645-1672) in 1670 and apparently had only one son, François (1672-1718) married to Anne Marie Pappin (1688-1761).

## ♂ François LEFEBVRE

🕒 Sosa : 128

- Né le 4 octobre 1672
- Décédé le 10 août 1718, à l'âge de 45 ans
- Greffier

### Parents

- Charles LEFEBVRE DE WADICOURT 1642-1694 (Greffier)
- Jeanne DE PONTHEIU

### Union(s) et enfant(s)

- Marié le 14 mai 1713 avec Marie-Anne PAPPIN DES FONTAINES 1672- dont
  - ♂ Charles LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ ET DES FONTAINES 1715-1790
  - ♀ Anne-Thérèse LE FEBVRE 1718-1812

### Notes

#### Notes individuelles

Fit enregistrer les rmoiries dans l'Armorial général de France (généralités\par d'Amiens) suivant le certificat de Charles d'Hozier du 08/08/1698

## ♂ Charles LEFEBVRE DE WADICOURT

🕒 Sosa : 256

- Né le 3 août 1642
- Décédé le 14 novembre 1694, à l'âge de 52 ans
- Greffier

### Parents

- Jacques LEFEBVRE DE WADICOURT, Sieur du Grosriez 1605-1673
- Louise CRIGNON

### Union(s) et enfant(s)

- Marié le 8 décembre 1670 avec Jeanne DE PONTHEIU dont
  - ♂ François LEFEBVRE 1672-1718

### Frères et sœurs

- ♀ Elisabeth LE FEBVRE 1647-

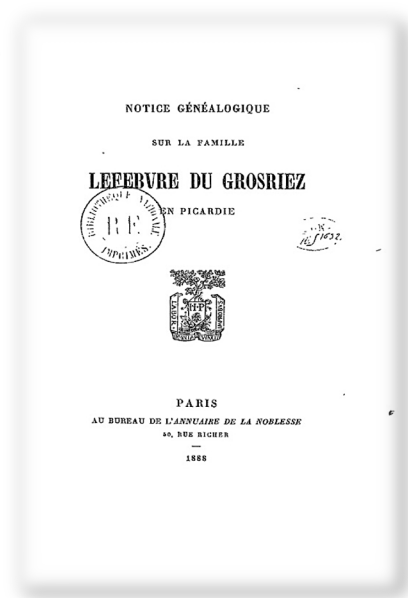
### Notes

#### Notes individuelles

Greffier en chef de l'élection de Ponthieu, grenier à sel d'Abbeville,\par Foresmontiers, et chambre deRrue

From the four sons of the latter couple, one, Charles Lefèbvre de Grosriez (1715-1790) generated a lineage called Lefèbvre Grosriez de Fontaine, which survived until recent times but became extinct in the male branches at the end of the 19th century. The De Wadicourt title is reported for Charles, but not for his son François Lefèbvre (1672-1718), who nevertheless possessed a blazon registered in the Armorial Général de France. As mentioned above, François married Anne Marie Pappin des Fontaines in 1713 and thus the surname Du Grosriez des Fontaines was enriched with his bride's name. This was passed on to his eldest children. Anne Marie Pappin was originally from Fontaines in the Dauphiné. This provenance shows that the Dauphiné was constantly one of the poles of life for the Lefèbvre family in the nuclei that interest us, along with Paris.

François did the same job as his father, the *greffier*, a term used at the time to describe a clerk in a court. This shows how the cadet branches of the Lefèbvre family could also take on relatively 'humbler' jobs in the provinces, such as the administration of a castle or an agricultural estate. But François and Marie Anne Pappin des Fontaines had four children, one of whom was named Charles Lefèbvre du Grosriez et des Fontaines (1715-1790), a lawyer in the Paris parliament: he held an office in Paris equivalent to that held by the other Lefèbvre in the Dauphiné. Fairly complete genealogical research of 1888 exists on this family.



The Lefèbvre du Grosriez, where the last predicate was a locative, bore in their coat of arms the three stars named in some Lefèbvre documents, like the blazon shown above, and lived in Abbeville, in the Somme, halfway between Amiens and the river mouth. These Lefèbvre had 7 branches with many descendants thanks to the fecundity of the marriage of Charles du Grosriez (who therefore no longer bore the *surnom* Wadicourt) with Marie-Marguerite de L'Estang de Richemont (married in 1742) from whose union 14 children were born, of whom only 5 names are known, 2 boys and 3 girls (why the other names are not available is unknown, probably most of them having died in infancy).

Charles Lefèbvre du Grosriez des Fontaines was Avocat au Parlement central in Paris, he was King's Councillor, magistrate and secretary, certainly at different times. At that

time there was a Lefèbvre, in the Dauphiné, not related to the family we follow, who was *Avocat au Parlement* in Grenoble. It is difficult not to think that this Lefèbvre (who was not a descendant of Michel Lefèbvre but of Nicholas Lefèbvre de Branslicourt), was, however, not related to the family of the latter because of cousinship ties.<sup>27</sup>

This Lefèbvre worked as a lawyer authorised to deal with Parliament, like the Lèfèbvre from Revel-Tourdan, which, in its various branches, which we will discuss later, i.e. De Clunière, De Rochenu, De Revel, etc., had lawyers, tax magistrates as well as landowners. As can be seen, there is an astonishing regularity: the Lefèbvre were a family in which the position *Avocat du* (or *au*) *Parlement* is found with remarkable frequency. This cannot be an accident. Even more significant is the fact that François-Charles Lefèbvre des Fontaines (1747-1819) in 1816 obtained the letter of confirmation of nobility and held the position of *Avocat du Parlement* in Grenoble, the very city where the Lefèbvre descendants of the châtelain of Revel had exercised their office, another singular 'case'. This concentration of Lefèbvre lawyers with equal functions in the local parliament is curious and needs to be explained.

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<sup>27</sup> Much of the information I take from René Favier, cur., *Le parlement de Dauphiné des origines à la Révolution*, Presses universitaires de Grenoble, Grenoble, 2001.

## ♂ Charles LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ ET DES FONTAINES

🕒 Sosa : 64

- Né le 8 juillet 1715
- Décédé le 4 février 1790, à l'âge de 74 ans
- Avocat au parlement, greffier en chef, conseiller du Roi, magistrat, secrétaire

### Parents

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- François LEFEBVRE 1672-1718 (Greffier)
- Marie-Anne PAPPIN DES FONTAINES 1672- (Greffier)

### Union(s) et enfant(s)

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- Marié le 29 janvier 1742 avec Marie-Marguerite DE L'ESTANG DE RICHEMONT dont
  - ♂ François-Charles LEFEBVRE DES FONTAINES 1747-1819
  - ♂ Charles-Claude LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ 1752-1818
  - Charles-Maurice LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ ET DES FONTAINES, *Sieur d'Aboval* 1757-
  - ♀ Marie-Marguerite-Charlotte-Emilie LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ ET DES FONTAINES 1758-1780
  - ♂ Charles-Alexandre LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ ET DES FONTAINES 1762-1819
  - ♂ ? LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ ET DES FONTAINES
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### Frères et sœurs

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- ♀ Anne-Thérèse LE FEBVRE 1718-1812

Some branches of these Lefèbvre later became extinct. At present, the 'three stars' also mentioned by Sassone Corsi remain a significant element. Curiously, the popular tradition of Isola del Liri designates as 'Lefèbvre house' an ancient house in the locality of Carnello, where a Lefèbvre factory once stood. According to historian Bruno Ceroli, in a private communication to the writer (July 2018 and July 2020), Charles Lefèbvre used to live in that building when he arrived from Naples, from the beginning of the century until 1818, and is said to have had his coat of arms carved on the stone lintel of the doorway of this house. This decoration is still present:

however, their arrangement is not that of the blazon and the 'stars' are turned into corolla decorations. It may be that the information handed down in Isola del Liri that the man had his coat of arms carved does not correspond to the truth, but it still conveys the idea that he was already part of an aristocratic family at the time. There would be no reason for such local news to persist if it did not come from some authentic knowledge dating back at least a century and a half.



Lintel with the three stars of 'Casa Lefèbvre',  
Carnello, Isola del Liri.



## Chapter 7

### Cadet branch hypothesis

We have established, by consulting genealogical documents such as Albert Révérend's text, *Les familles titrées et anoblies au XIXe siècle*, and the *Annuaire de la Noblesse de France*, that there were links with the Lefèbvre descendants of Nicholas de Branslicourt and that at some point the lines became blurred. What we can say now is that that family was connected to the Lefèvre d'Ormesson and that the Lefèbvre de Clunière were connected to the latter as the blazon shows. We must find a point of junction or separation, seen in reverse, between the second and third families.

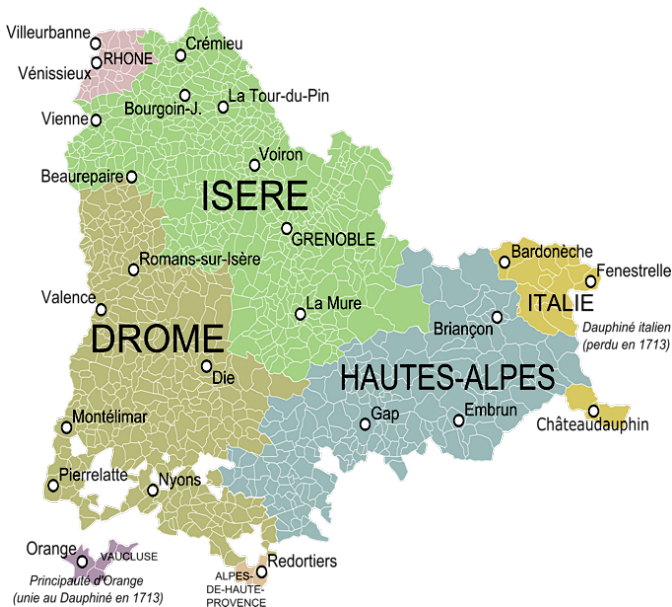
The rise of the Lefèbvre of the Dauphiné cannot be explained except by previous contacts, and perhaps much would be explained by a better knowledge of the figure of Michel Lefèbvre who died in 1670. The branches of the various Lefèbvre families descended from the main one, which was more in the limelight of history and known for the *surnom* attached to the D'Ormesson title and castle, show extensive second- and third-degree kinship relations that were probably kept in mind as was the mentality of the aristocratic classes of the Ancien Régime. There is still no certainty above all as to who was the grandfather of Joseph Lefèbvre born in 1647 and died in 1728, father of Michel Lefèbvre born in 1621. But we shall discuss this in the remainder of this text.

To recapitulate: the hypothesis that the Lefèbvre are a secondary branch of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson from the mid- to

late 16th century is supported, as we have seen, by three fundamental elements:

- a) the *blazon*;
- b) *belonging to the same administrative circles that had their centre in Versailles*;
- c) *the attendance of administrators or lawyers and officials in the Central Parliament and the Provincial Parliament of the Dauphiné.*

This historical and cultural region had, among other things, the most important provincial parliament in France.



The Dauphiné (Dauphiné) in the limits of the 18th century.

However, we need to understand – if this hypothesis is true – where the cadet branch might have originated from, since we currently have no documentary evidence and the name of Michel Lefèbvre's father is unknown. In the Lefèvre d'Ormesson dynasty of finance bureaucrats and ministers, two characters may attract our attention: André Lefèvre and Olivier Lefèvre. It should be noted that it was only at the height of this generation that the d'Ormessons stabilised the spelling of their name from Lefèbvre to Lefèvre, thus removing the 'b'.

Let us look at their biographies, briefly introducing the origin of this family: the first member of the Lefèvre, later d'Ormesson, was Pierre Lefèvre born in 1439, father of Jean Lefèvre (died 1530). From here descends Olivier (1525-1600), secretary to the king, who received the comital nobilitation in 1553 hinging on the castle of Ormesson. However, these generations remain little known, and the collateral kinships are equally unknown at the moment, even if the tradition cited by Sassone Corsi wants these Lefèvre, as we have said, to be related to the already known branches. It is therefore necessary to find other traces and clues of kinship, apart from the striking similarity of the blazon.

## ♂ Pierre LEFÈVRE

- Né - Ormesson, Enghien-les-Bains (95)

### Parents

- Pierre LEFÈVRE †1439/ (Laboureur, fait reconnaissance en 1439 au Conétable de Montmorency pour la terre qu'il possède dans la paroisse d'Ormesson.)
- ??

### Union(s), enfant(s), petits-enfants et arrière-petits-enfants

- Marié avec ?? dont
  - ♂ Jean LEFÈVRE †1530 Marié avec Madeleine GAUDART dont
    - ♂ Olivier 1er (anobli) LEFÈVRE, secrétaire du roi 1525-1600 Marié en 1559 avec Anne d'ALESSO, dame de Lezeau 1540- dont :
      - ♀ Marie LEFÈVRE 1560
      - ♂ André 1er LEFÈVRE d'ORMESSON, sieur d'Ormesson 1577-1665
      - ♂ Nicolas LEFÈVRE, seigneur de Lezeau

### Sources

- Personne: Jean-Louis Beaucarnot / Apollon

### Aperçu de l'arbre



## André Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1577-1665)

The rigorous if *amateur* family historian André-Isidore Lefèbvre (1798-1889), author of *Souvenirs* written from 1874 onwards, begins his account with André Lefèvre d'Ormesson. He did not know of Michel's existence and states, when writing in the second half of the 19th century, that he lacks documents to take his family's memory further back. We can then try to answer in a more reasoned way whether Michel Lefèbvre was really related to André Lefèvre d'Ormesson. We ask ourselves: did the two belong to a collateral branch of the many Lefèbvre who held posts in the bursar's office in other regions such as Picardy, Somme, Dauphiné and Île de France? The book *Les Intendants des finances au XVIII siècle. Les Lefèvre*

*d'Ormesson et le 'Departement des Impositions (1715-1777)* shows us many members of this family, more or less well known, who worked for long years in the provinces and ended up detaching themselves from the main nucleus located in Paris and, symbolically, at the Château D'Ormesson.<sup>28</sup>



André Lefèvre d'Ormesson.

André Lefèvre d'Ormesson was born in 1577 and died in 1665. He was the son of Olivier (1552-1600), ennobled as a marquis, secretary to the King and president of the Chamber of Accounts (Chambre des Comptes), thus a high finance

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<sup>28</sup> Françoise Mosser, *Les Intendants des finances au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les Lefèvre d'Ormesson et le Departement des Impositions (1715-1777)*, Droz, Geneva-Paris 1978.

official. His mother Anne d'Alesso (b. 1540) was the daughter of Jean d'Alesso, *seigneur* de Lezeau, and held the position of Adviser to the King (Conseiller du Roi) and Maître ordinaire in the Chambre des comptes, thus also a financial role that was passed on to her son-in-law.

André Lefèvre married Anne Le Prévost (1585-1652), a Parisian, who was baptised in Saint-Jean-en-Grève in Paris. The two had the following children:

- Anne Marie Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1606-1654) married Philippe de Coulanges (1595-1659) in 1626.
- Olivier III Lefèvre d'Ormesson, lord of Ormesson (1616-1686) married Marie de Fourcy (1625-1685) on 28 July 1640, by whom he had three children.
- François Lefèvre d'Ormesson (born 1619) whose marriage and descendants are unknown.
- Jean-Michel Lefèvre d'Ormesson (born ca. 1620), whose marriage and lineage is unknown: *he could be the point of junction between the families.*
- Others were born whose names are unknown between 1621 and 1626.
- Simon Lefèvre d'Ormesson, lord of Estrelles (born 1626), married Anne Le Mairat in 1656, from whom he had descendants.
- André II Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1610-1636).
- Nicolas Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1613-1679).
- Madeleine Lefèvre d'Ormesson.
- Anne Lefèvre d'Ormesson.
- Elisabeth Lefèvre d'Ormesson.

Between 1620 and 1626 there were other births. But what interests us is that Jean-Michel could be that Michel who took charge of the château de l'Isère, which then gave rise to a cadet branch of which the Lefèbvre could be descendants. Genealogies often do not carry the middle name, which, in many cases, is given as the first name or real first name in documents.

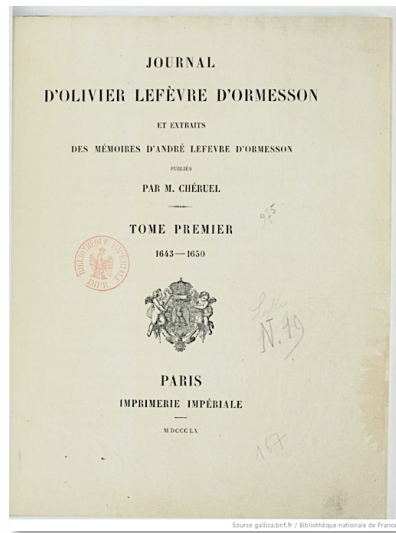
André's family had bought the Château de Ormesson but he lived more or less permanently in Paris. His children were almost all born in the city in what are now the 4th and 5th arrondissements, where the Sorbonne and Saint Chappelle are located. He was the first important magistrate in the family, a jurist, a statesman in the central administration, and Anne Le Prévost also belonged to a rich family of ennobled magistrates. The ennobling of the Lefèvre family took place in 1553 by King Henri II (1519-1559). André's brother Nicolas Lefèvre de Lézeau (1581-1680) was married with only one daughter and lived in Paris while his sister Maria (1560) did not marry and probably entered a convent. At this point they acquired the *surnoms* d'Ormesson from the location of the Château d'Ormesson in the Marne Valley.

Notice in the previous image, in the portrait of André, the three legged field lilies that were incorporated into the family coat of arms from 1553. Everything suggests that André was the originator of the Lefèbvre branch that later worked in the King's finance and state administration sectors. There are documentary gaps in the life of this couple. André and Anne had 10 children from their marriage celebrated in 1604. André, however, seems to have had five more children whose names are not known with certainty. About the fate of these we do not know: natural children were usually assured a position away

from their family of origin but still lived up to their lineage and were then legalised and recognised. In case of necessity —death of children born of marriage – natural children could be recognised and thus rejoin the official genealogy. These were quite frequent occurrences.

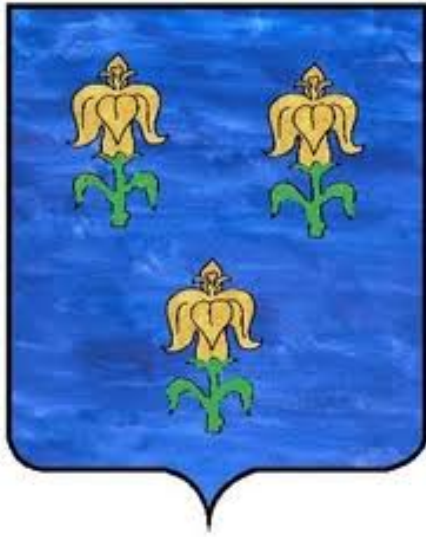
The children of André and Anne Le Prevost were born between 1606 and 1625, and thus the dates of their fertility coincide with the date of birth of Michel Lefèbvre, born in those years, probably before 1621. It is well known that many genealogies between the 16th and 17th centuries are incomplete, and therefore it can be assumed – but this is only a hypothesis – that André may have fathered Michel out of wedlock but recognised him and then, as was the case in those instances, sent him away and engaged in less important administrative activities in castles in the eastern province of the Kingdom. Other individuals appear in the collaborative genealogies that have appeared in recent years, individuals who cannot be named. Michel's family would, however, have retained those connections, adhesions and help that enabled him to become a castle administrator, acting as the owner. And then, within two generations, the family would be brought back to Versailles where André's descendants worked.





At the moment we can consider this news a mere supposition, especially since we do not know whether there was another woman in the life of André, who outlived his wife by 13 years, after Le Prevost's death. The continuing relations, in Versailles, of the Lefèbvre de Clunière and the Revels with central financial circles in which the Lefèvre d'Ormesson worked do not appear to be the result of chance but a sign of deep and ancient ties. The cadet branch of the Lefèbvre de Clunière, as soon as it was granted, also took up the coat of arms, symbolically linking itself to the Lefèvre who had their centre in the castles of Ormesson and Amboile as well as Versailles.

Olivier left a very interesting *Journal* dealing with political and economic issues but also with frequent travel, acquaintances, accidents.



Lefèvre d'Ormesson coat of arms.  
Armorial de Paris, 17th century.

The blazon drawn in Charles-René Hozier's *Armorial*, compiled in the 17th century, shows an even more significant resemblance to that of the Lefèbvre de Clunière.<sup>29</sup> In fact, it is the same coat of arms. A newer version can be found on the genealogy site [genealnet.com](http://genealnet.com) uploaded by a member of the French family and this is even more similar to that of the Lefèbvre de Clunière.

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<sup>29</sup> Charle René d'Hozier (1640-1732), *Volumes Relies du Cabinet des titres: recherches de noblesse, armoriaux, preuves, histoires généalogiques. Armorial général de France, dressé, en vertu de l'édit de 1696*, XXIII Paris, II vol. National Library of France. Manuscripts.



### **Olivier Lefèvre**

A few more words about a possible candidate for ancestry, Olivier III Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1616-1686), son of André lord of Ormesson and Amboile who married Marie de Fourcy (1625-1685), daughter of Henri de Chesy, President of the Court of Accounts at the Royal Court, and Marie de la Grange-Trianon. Olivier was intendant of the généralités de Rouen, Riom and Soissons, councillor at the Parliament (1636), Maître des Requêtes au Conseil d'État (1643), deputy magistrate to the intendant of Paris (1650), intendant in Picardy (1656) and then at Amiens et Soissons (1662). As a judge he was involved in the famous trial of the superintendent Nicolas Fouquet (1615-1680) in 1662-1664. His impartiality during the trial saved the accused from beheading by proving the conspiracy hatched against him to such an extent that he refused to grant the death penalty that had been demanded. This sense of justice would cost him dearly: he lost his

intendance in Picardy in 1664 and the King did not allow his father to become councillor of state. He continued to petition the King for a seat on the Council of State until almost his death. In 1667, he sold his position as Maître des Requêtes for 234,000 French lire. He retired to the Château de Ormesson, where important people such as Madame de Sévigné, Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine and Bossuet visited him. Very rich, he left more than a million French gold lire at his death. Known to be the author of a long *Journal*, started in 1643, and to have written, together with the magistrate Guillaume de Lamoignon, *L'Art d'orner les jardins*. However, circumstances and dates make us discard this branch as the possible origin of the Lefèvre D'Ovidio.



Olivier Lefèvre d'Ormesson.

Another André Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1644-1684) was intendant of finance in the provinces. In 1676, he married Éléonore le Maître de Bellejamme (1653-1681), by whom he had two sons who continued the family tradition: they were intendants of finance in Paris and in the provinces, particularly in Lyon and Franche-Comté, in Grenoble. Grenoble is an important city in our history because it recurs many times. André worked in the Parliament building where the Lefèvre family, whose history and genealogy we will follow in more detail later.

Henri Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1681-1756), married to Catherine La Bourdounnaie (?-1758) and had a son, Marie-François (1710-1775), who was the first marquis by letter patent. This means that the previous ennobling, that of the mid-16th century, was less bureaucratic in nature and was linked to the word of the King. Only from this generation and from the year 1758 did the d'Ormessons become marquises with all the privileges of the case and the inalienable and inalienable right to bear the title of Marquis d'Ormesson, which not even the King could revoke.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Jean-François Solnon, *Le D'Ormesson au plaisir de l'État*, Fayard, Paris 1992.



The clues gathered thus lead us to suppose that the main and oldest branch, from which the others, mainly engaged in the administration of the State, extended, descended from the Lefèvre known as d'Ormesson. All the other Lefèbvre named here, and especially those named by Sassone Corsi, are to be considered more distant in time. But one important detail must always be remembered: the rich and crowded family tree of this family contains a few constants, and one is the proximity to State positions mainly linked to the world of central administration, at Versailles and Grenoble.

### **Antoine-François Lefèvre (1651-1712)**

Antoine Lefèvre cannot be the origin of the line that originated with Michel Lefèvre for anagraphic reasons: Michel was born before 1621, Antoine in 1651. However, his commitments in the central and provincial administrations are, once again, of interest to us, since when he died, still young, it

was in those administrations that Joseph and Pierre Lefèvre began their careers at Pontarlier and Grenoble. So, a kinship is more than likely and they may have had an ancestor in common. The two Lefèvre who occupied posts in the same offices in Grenoble probably had a cousin relationship. Master of Requests at the Council of State from 1684, intendant of the generalities of Rouen, Riom, Soissons, Antoine wrote a *Mémoire sur l'état de la généralité de Riom* in 1697. On 21 December 1682, he married his cousin Jeanne Françoise Lefèvre de La Barre (proof of the branching of the Lefèvre family), daughter of Antoine Lefèvre *sieur* de La Barre (1622-1688), one of his predecessors at the Auvergne intendance, governor of Nouvelle-France from that year. The marriage contract, signed on 20 December 1682, testifies to the wealth of the two branches of the Lefèvre family (or Lefèvre: the name fluctuation remains): 150,000 gold lire the groom and 120,000 the bride. In the course of his career, this Antoine Lefèvre lord of La Barre was *Avocat au parlement* of the Dauphiné in Grenoble, just as Lefèvre de Clunière would be a few decades later.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Antoine Lefèvre, Sieur de la Barre, was born in Paris in 1622. His parents were Antoine Le Febvre de La Barre and Madeleine Belin. His father was a councillor at the Parlement (court of appeal) in Paris and prévôt des Marchands(fr). Around 1643, La Barre married Marie Gascon. They had a daughter, Marie (1644-1716). On 10 September 1645, La Barre married Marie Mandat. They had four surviving children: Robert Lefèvre (1647), François Antoine, lord of La Barre (1650-1727), Marguerite (1651-1725) and Jeanne Françoise (1654-1735). In 1646 La Barre was appointed councillor of the Parliament and appointed Maître des requêtes (master of requisitions) in 1653. He was intendant in Paris during the Fronde civil war. He was then in turn intendant of Grenoble (Dauphiné), Moulins (Bourbonnais) and Auvergne.

From this union were born Jeanne Marguerite Lefèvre (1685-1744), who was to become the wife of a president of the Paris parliament, Jean Baptiste Charles du Tillet, Marquis de La Bussière (1687-1744). In 1666 he was appointed councillor of the Grand Conseil after the resignation of his elder brother André (1644-1684), shortly before his death. In 1684, he became Maître des Requêtes de l'Hôtel du Roi. He was then intendant of the generality of Rouen (1684-1695) and then of Riom (1695-1704) and finally of Soissons, until his death on 21 February 1712.



Antoine Lefèvre,  
was the King's intendant in Grenoble.

The *Mémoire* of 1697, written by the Intendant d'Ormesson, is the result of an important research, the collation of 31 different enquiries that the King had asked him to carry out in the Kingdom and that was intended to enable the Duke of Burgundy to have a better knowledge of the different parts of



his future kingdom. The idea had come from Paul de Beauvilliers, Duc de Saint-Aignan, who was looking after the prince's education. The series of offices held by Lefèvre is impressive, and all in the financial sphere.



## **Part Two**

### **Society and relations of the Lefèbvre de Clunière family**



## **Chapter 8**

### **Landing in Grenoble**

The preceding discussion has led us to consider the Lefèbvre de Clunière family's ancestry from the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family very likely rather than from the Lefèbvre de Branslicourt family, indicated by Sassone Corsi, for a number of reasons:

- a) does not have the same coat of arms as the Lefèbvre subject of this study
- b) the centre of gravity of its members' activities is in territories far from those of the Lefèbvre
- c) had no significant activity in Paris unlike the Lefèbvre

And yet the repertories and texts on the history of the French aristocracy cited above do not exclude a connection of Nicholas's family with that of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson, but in very ancient times.

On the other hand, the Lefèvre d'Ormesson have the following significant points:

- a) this is a family that worked in the same field as the Lefèbvre, the civil financial administration for centuries;
- b) acted in the same places, including Franche-Comté and especially Paris;
- c) The blazon of the Lefèbvre family covered by this study

is identical to that of the well-known Lefèvre d'Ormesson family.

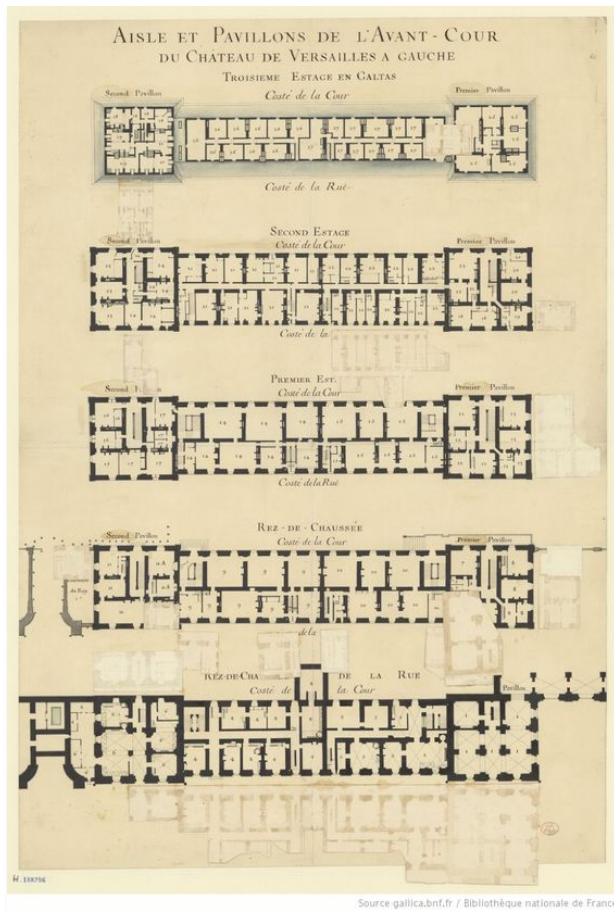
Other reasons make it more than plausible that the nobility was older than that testified to in 1854 and among these is the fact that marriage links with French and Italian nobility were not possible or were in any case very difficult without the prerequisite of antecedent ennobling. It can therefore be said that Sassone Corsi was right on several points but not in indicating the family descended from Nicholas Lefèbvre de Branslicourt as the one that directly generated the Lefèbvre we are dealing with.

Let us now return to the couple formed by Jean-François Le Febvre (1680-1764) and Marie Anne (or Marianne) Sibille (1696-1788) and their lives for the details that are known to us. They married and lived for some time in the village of Revel-Tourdan, where his father had been born and where he continued to be the administrator and inhabitant of the castle of Barbarin, the only place where a 'castellan' of his rank could live as the village was a military outpost. Later, they probably moved to the Château de Thuries.

In 1729, Jean-François and Marianne moved to Grenoble when he received the prestigious appointment as clerk, *employeur*, in the local administration first and then, rising through the ranks, as *avocat* and *counterleur* of the local advisory and administrative bodies at the Parliament of the Dauphiné. We must imagine for the Lefèbvre of this generation a wealthy life with privileges and honours. During the Ancien Régime, the province of the Dauphiné comprised the current departments of Isère, Drôme and Hautes-Alpes. The capital of the province, Grenoble, had 15,000 inhabitants,

a considerable population compared to the average size of cities at the time. Situated on one side of the river Isère, leaning against the hill on which the local Bastille still stands today, it had schools, a theatre, several royal academies, institutions in which one could study and a rich social life, a lively aristocracy that enjoyed concerts and dancing evenings. The city was built along the ancient Via Francigena, the road that had connected Paris with Rome since the early Middle Ages. Along the Via Francigena, pilgrims travelled to the Holy Land for pilgrimages, but an important branch road also led to Santiago de Compostela. Some of their children were born and baptised in that city.

His office at the Grenoble Parliament entailed functions of control over the finances of the Dauphiné, with a margin of discretion for current expenditure. Men with his office had to travel to Paris, sometimes twice a year, when summoned for assemblies of local representatives or to receive direct orders from the highest-ranking officials in the hierarchy. Members of the powerful Lefèvre d'Ormesson family played important roles in the Versailles offices in charge of these functions.



Plan of the Versailles wing where the tax offices were housed. Bibliothèque de France.

Grenoble, at that time, was inhabited by a prosperous bourgeoisie of administrative, commercial and artisan extraction specialising in the production of gloves and textiles. During the course of the century, the production of gloves for the markets of Switzerland and the Italian States had increased tenfold from 15,000 pairs per year at the beginning of the century to 160,000 per year and this had produced



considerable prosperity in the city, so much so that the Dauphiné enjoyed great prosperity until 1788; at that time, as many as 64 artisan factories were active in the city and the surrounding area. Its main feature was its commercial and cultural links with western Italy through Savoy and the marquisate of Saluzzo.



The children of the Lefèbvre couple grew up in the quiet, elegant town and were most likely educated there by tutors and then at the local Jesuit College, which was active from 1622 to 1763.<sup>32</sup> The education of sons at this boarding school was practically obligatory for the city's wealthy families. Of the six children, all distinguished by their surnames and locative nicknames, the first André Lefèbvre was born in 1719; a second, Henry Jean-Baptiste, baptised on 24 June 1721, left some traces of himself in documents as a landowner and owner of at least three houses: one near Bourget, one in Rochenu and

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<sup>32</sup> Which later became the College Royal where Champollion, the decipherer of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, taught.

one in Revel.<sup>33</sup> Third was a female, Catherine (1723), who made a good marriage to a notary named Ennemond Salomon and had numerous offspring. We note that André, Henry, Charles and Joseph are names that recur with singular frequency in the Lefèbvre family of the Dauphiné as in the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family.



The church of Saint-Hugues in Grenoble where Joseph and Pierre Lefèbvre were baptised.

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<sup>33</sup> Andrée Collion, *Autrefois Primarette. 121 à 1890. Une commune du Viennois*, private edition 2002, p. 318.

Of the 11 children birthed by Catherine, some 100 years later, a nephew, André-Isidore Lefèbvre, reported news of only one who he knew had died in the war during Napoleon's expedition to Egypt. The great majority of those great-uncles had given rise to descendants who had then drifted away to form independent families that a century and a half later had in some cases died out.

Fourth born to the couple was Jean-François, born in Grenoble in 1730. Next came the twins Joseph and Pierre born on 28 February 1733 in Grenoble and baptised in the parish of Saint-Hugues. In 1734, François was born. Births were declared in documents with the family name 'De' according to French custom and this meant the possession of a place of which they were *seigneurs*: a village such as Bourget, a farm, a locality. When the twins were born, Jean-François was qualified as Director of Bursars of the Province.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Grenoble Municipal Archives, Alphabetical Rep., Old Series GG 105. The twins Joseph and Pierre are qualified in this document as 'sons of the director of the provincial bursars'. The parish archives of Saint-Hugues are accessible at: [archives-isere.fr](http://archives-isere.fr) under the heading: Grenoble/Saint-Hugues. répertoire alphabétique. Coll. Communale 9NUM/AC185/70 - 1716-1768. On the prerogatives of these officials see AA.VV, *Contrôler les finances sous l'Ancien Régime: Regards d'aujourd'hui sur les Chambres des comptes*, Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique E-book Paris 2011.



## Chapter 9

### Noblesse

Indirect tax and stamp duty officers and controllers-in-chief of customs received favourable financial treatment. Their income was calculated with a fixed amount, which varied, and according to the volume of tax revenue. They had concessions in the houses that were rented or bought at reduced prices from the Demanio. The houses in which the Lefèbvre lived in Besançon and Grenoble were built at the behest of the State. In Pontarlier, officials lived near the customs facilities in the Grand Rue.



Pontarlier, Grand Rue. At the end, the city gate.

Moreover, the Dauphiné of that period was a much larger area than it is today and also included parts of today's Italian territory reaching as far as Turin and Cuneo: a wealthy area, devoted to trade with the neighbouring Duchy of Savoy and Spanish-occupied Italy, a peasant area but with pre-industrial sites of manufacturing and craftsmanship. It was not uncommon for the inhabitants of this area to know Italian or to understand it and this may explain the family's later projection towards Italy.

At this point in his life, Jean-François Lefèbvre was defined by the title *De Clunière* (nobility of robe), a professional nobility of royal officials employed in the public administration in the judicial and fiscal fields who were often already nobles when they rose to the highest posts like François.<sup>35</sup> Normally, the new honorary title was conferred after a certain period in which one had served the King; the conferment entailed the payment of a *taille*, a one-off sum, and in theory could be resold but subject to stringent rules that did not make it easy to pass on.<sup>36</sup> The legal conferment, with the addition of an honorary lease – he now signed himself Jean-François Lefèbvre de Clunière – must have taken place the year before he entered the Dauphiné Parliament, to become effective in 1762. Evidence of this is a noble privilege dated 1761 linked to a place called Clunière, not far from Grenoble, of which he evidently had possession. The title "de Clunière" (sometimes "des Clunières" in the plural) was transmitted to Pierre's eldest

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<sup>35</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *La Noblesse d'État. Grandes écoles et esprit de corps*, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1989.

<sup>36</sup> However, he no longer appears in the names of Charles Flavien Lefèbvre Clunière's successors. Roland Mousnier, *The Institution of France under the Absolute Monarchy 1598-1798*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1984, p. 324.

son whose descendants begin to appear in documents as "Le Fèbvre (de) Clunière" while the other sons took equivalent *surnames*.

It was in fact the general rule that those who had served the King for at least 20 years over two generations became nobles of the robe. The legislation regulating this was extremely complicated, but it was fundamental. This suggests that Jean-François' father, Joseph Lefèbvre, was also a high-ranking royal official, as well as an administrator of the Du Boffin family, and this brings us back to the vast Lefèbvre d'Ormesson family and, perhaps further back in time, also to the Lefèbvre family of Normandy according to the hypothesis defended by Sassone Corsi.

Pierre Goubert, historian of the forms of the French Ancien Régime, writes about the acquisition of the dignity of the toga:

Indeed, conditions vary from one office to another, from one province to another and from one period to another. The only constant is that of the venality of offices, which are bought, bequeathed and sold at a high price. [...] certain offices made their holder immediately and entirely noble, on the condition that he held them for twenty years or that he died still 'in office'. These were the most sought-after and expensive offices. The others, however, only conferred a 'gradual nobility': for the novelty to be definitively acquired for the benefit of the descendants, at least two generations had to exercise it for a period of twenty years (with the usual rule of 'death in office') [...] Parliaments made their councillors, their 'king's people', and not infrequently their chief chancellor, immediately noble (immediately or in the second generation).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Pierre Goubert, *L'Ancien Régime. La società e i poteri*, translated by Jaca Book, Milan 1990, p. 210.

## Weddings

The first important marriage, for the future development of the family, was the one contracted between André Lefèbvre (1719-1817) and Jeanne Magnard of whom we do not know details of her life, except that there was a branched Magnard family in the area whose genealogy is incomplete today. The two had three children, one of whom, Joseph-Isidore (1759-1836), was the father of a memoirist in the family, André-Isidore (1799-1887). As a young man, Joseph-Isidore held very important positions in Paris and attended the Palace of Versailles. It was only when he was nearing middle age, due to the drastic political changes that continued to take place and the change of some leaders, that he suffered a considerable social downgrade. He probably suffered the most among the Lefèbvre of his generation, tried his luck abroad but failed to rise again and finally accepted a more humble but dignified post in Puy-le-Dome, where there was another Lefèbvre family descending from the Lefèvre d'Ormesson. In his last period he settled in Voiron and after a few years, in 1831, he left the scene. Others, especially the cousins of the De Clunière branch, had happier fortunes.

Joseph-Isidore's twin brother, Pierre Lefèbvre (1733-1808), had a brilliant career, becoming *avocat* of the Grenoble Parliament after studying law. The only place he could study close to home was Valence where young *Grenoblois* were trained. Previously, Grenoble had hosted a university that was later suppressed and merged with that of Valence.





Historic centre of Le-Puy-De-Dome.

Unfortunately, the historical archives of these universities have been severely damaged and mutilated over the centuries and Pierre's inscription could not be found.

Meanwhile Jean-François, after an industrious life, died at the age of 84 in December 1764. On 6 August 1763, he had made a will in Revel, where the family evidently continued to own a house (the village consisted of a few hundred souls scattered over farms), in favour of his surviving children. This information is reported by the descendant André-Isidore, who claims to have the documents he speaks of in his hand, probably also the birth and death certificates, and is in any case confirmed by consulting the archives.<sup>38</sup>

During this period, the spelling of the name was stabilised

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<sup>38</sup> Fond André-Isidore Lefèbvre, BNF, AB XIX 4480, I, pp. 15-17.

from Le Fébvre to Lefèbvre (sometimes Lefèvre) and this is how it is marked in documents. Pierre married at the age of 29, in 1772, Gabrielle Maillard (1747-1795), originally from Pontarlier, born in 1747 and daughter of Claude B. Maillard *avocat au Parlement*.<sup>39</sup> Witnesses to the marriage include François Blondeau (b. 1748), "advisor to the king, judge of the waters and forests at the *bailage* of Pontarlier", probably brother of the future Napoleonic general Antoine Blondeau de Charnage (1747-1825) at the head of the Doubs Regiment (Franche-Comté) in which Charles Lefèbvre, Pierre's son, was to serve as captain.<sup>40</sup>

Blondeau held other positions: he was mayor of Baume-les-Dames and *avocat au Parlement* in Grenoble. He was part of the highest local administration and his presence at the ceremony suggests that Pierre had made important friendships and improved his social position even in comparison to his father.<sup>41</sup> Blondeau was a *baillie*, a bailiff judge in charge of enforcing justice and supervising the administration of state lands (*domaine royal*). From the beginning of the 18th century, when his sphere of competence was defined, the bailiff had mainly financial and fiscal control tasks. At the time of his marriage, Pierre was already *avocat au Parlement* in Grenoble.

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<sup>39</sup> Like Lefèbvre, Maillard (or Maillart) is also a name concentrated in the north of the country (Nord, Aisne, Pas-de-Calais, Oise, Normandy) and widespread in Rouen and Nantes. The presence of different *enclaves* in homogeneous areas is generally explained by French historians as the result of population movements during the religious wars of the 16th-17th centuries. A group of 'northerners', State officials, would have repopulated an area stripped by emigrations and epidemics following the religious wars of the Iron Age.

<sup>40</sup> Albert Révérend, *Armorial du Premier Empire*, I, Picard et Fils, Paris 1894, p. 133.

<sup>41</sup> Registers of the Parish of Saint Benigne & Saint Etienne of the town of Pontarlier. Marriage Deed No. 594.

In 1777, when his son Nicolas-François-Joseph (who died at the age of one year) was born, Pierre Lefèvre was defined *receveur du domaine du Roy au barau de Pontarlier*, and *controleur des actes à Besançon*. He was thus a member of the bureaucracy of the Parliament of Grenoble and a *receveur d'impôts de stamps* at Pontarlier, where there was a customs house that intercepted goods leaving and entering the Duchy of Savoy, a position that guaranteed a certain and constant income and was worth hundreds of thousands of French lire at the time.<sup>42</sup>

He held more than one office and was also an administrator with notary control functions in Besançon.<sup>43</sup> Pierre moved to Pontarlier in exchange for a more advantageous economic position even though the location was less prestigious. In Pontarlier, he was the only person in charge of the office and therefore had the rank of highest manager (second level, apparently).

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<sup>42</sup> Roland Mousnier, *The Institution of France under the Absolute Monarchy* 1598-1798, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1984, p. 307.

<sup>43</sup> Pontarlier Parish Registers, Baptism No. 1396, 27 April 1775. Genealogical Research - Les LeFèvre, 2008, p. 8.



Parliament of the Dauphiné  
where members of the Lefèbvre family worked.

In the elegant and prosperous city of Besançon – which had a population of around 25,000 in 1775 – he held a further office and moved there around 1790 to Rue Neuve while keeping a house in Grenoble on Rue de Réunion. This was not an actual emigration, but a move within the same region, a rather typical move, moreover, of that France still dominated by stability and the permanence of the same families for many generations in the same territory.<sup>44</sup> Lefèbvre's line therefore extended its interests to two areas of eastern France: the Dauphiné (Grenoble) and Franche-Comté (with Besançon and Pontarlier).

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<sup>44</sup> Pierre Goubert, *op. cit.*, p. 60.



Sala della corte d'appello del Parlamento del Delfinato, Grenoble.

### Family leases

Pierre Lefèbvre worked at the Parliament and his ennobling fell under the matters regulated by the *Droit Annuelle* or *Loi Paulette* (1604), which allowed, through the payment of an annual tax, his office to be passed on to his children.<sup>45</sup> With regard to the name 'de Clunière' or 'Clunières', which appears in documents on a regular basis, it must be said that members of the high central and provincial bureaucracy could bear the name of a locality linked to an office and this seems to be the case. A 1761 publication, *Nouveau Code de taille et de reuceuil*, names three localities called Clunière in the villages of Aiguzon, Lage and Pourret.<sup>46</sup> The name added by the

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<sup>45</sup> Jean-Christian Petitfils, *Louis XIV*, 2002, Perrin, Paris, pp. 54-57.

<sup>46</sup> *Nouveau Code de taille et de reuceuil*, III, Praul, Paris 1761, p. 282.

Lefèbvre must have been linked to Pourret (near Grenoble).<sup>47</sup> Judging by its isolated location, Clunière must have been a locality with a farm or grange. The issue of family farms, however, is not confined to France alone; during the 19th century, it was also found in that department of the Alps known today as Valle d'Aosta.

André-Isidore Lefèbvre, recalling the births and names of some of the no less than 22 children born to Jean-François Lefèbvre and Marie Anne Sibille (one of whom was his grandfather André Lefèbvre de Revel), writes next to many male names, but not female ones, 'de Clunière': this makes us realise once again how this was a nickname of dignity and office that was transmitted through the male line as a noble title.<sup>48</sup> But other names appear alongside De Clunière. The 6 male sons of Jean-François gave rise to as many lineages, all of which are now extinct except De Clunière. In the hierarchy of honours, therefore, a title such as De Revel indicated a dignity not of the ducal, comital or marquis type but 'of Toga' that precluded, often, or preceded, as seems to be the case here, other titles of honour. Below is a diagram of the branches originated by the sons of Jean-François (1680-1764):

- a) André Lefèbvre 'de Revel' (no. 1719), title passed on to his son Joseph Isidore (1758-1836)
- b) Henry Jean Baptiste 'de Hauteville' (d. 1721), no descendants
- c) Jean-François Lefèbvre 'de Duchalay' (b. 1730-1815), no descendants

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<sup>47</sup> The notarial deed that must have regulated the purchase of the property in Clunière is currently missing.

<sup>48</sup> Archive Nationales CARAN, Paris: AB XIX 4480-4483 Fonds André-Isidore Lefèbvre. Livre Premier 1680 à 1822.

- d) Pierre Lefèbvre 'de Clunière' (b. 1733), title passed on to his son Charles Lefèbvre (1775-1858)
- e) Joseph Lefèbvre 'de Rochenu' (twin of the previous one, born 1733-1817), title passed on to his son Honoré Lefèbvre de Rochenu (1777-1826)
- f) François Lefèbvre 'de Sibille' (1734), no descendants

The Lefèbvre family enjoyed privileges under the ancient law of the Kingdom of France where the names served to differentiate the different family lineages. During the 19th century, only two lineages would continue: that of the Lefèbvre de Clunière and that of the Lefèbvre de Rochenu, the latter dying out in 1887 with the death of André-Isidore Lefèbvre born in 1799.

We are certain that Revel, Rochenu, Hauteville, Duchalay and Clunière were Lefèbvre estates. A local study of period documents mentions Rochenu as a grange, a cultivation unit, a farm, owned by Joseph Lefèbvre, which was entrusted to a Mr Claude Bland and then to a Sieur Roux Antoine: Joseph therefore rented or gave in usufruct an agricultural property that he visited from time to time.<sup>49</sup> There is also a large property in the commune of Primarette, in Isère: even today, a road marks out a large stretch of cultivated land with a house and forest in the middle. The owner of this place was André Lefèbvre, *Sieur de Revel*. If he was the 'lord' of Revel, he certainly had to live in a fortified building, in a Revel castle, the prerogative of being the 'lord' of a place. André Lefèbvre was 'lord of Revel', a place, like Duchalay, Rochenu (which

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<sup>49</sup> Andrée Collion, *Autrefois Primarette de -121 avant J-C à 1890. Une commune du Viennois*, private edition 2002, p. 60; p. 75; p. 308; p. 318; p. 369.

can be linked to a farm not far from Grenoble but no longer in existence) and Hauteville (today Hauteville-Lompnes), a town about a hundred kilometres from Grenoble where Henry Jean-Baptiste later moved. So, there was a castle in Revel, more than one in fact. Documentation on these buildings is sketchy and it is not known who, in fact, held possession or concession for a number of years. In addition to the Château de Revel and the Château du Boffin, there was a third, the only other building to be the seat of a 'lord' and that was the Château de Thuries, a dwelling worthy of a *seigneur*. Since most of those who lived in the Château du Boffin are known, we can add this place as the probable home of the Lefèbvre.



The Château de Thuries,  
probable country residence of the Lefèbvre de Revel family.



The 18th-century documentation of this building was destroyed during the French Revolution, but this is the only place that can be called a château in this locality whose owners are unknown for large parts of the century, unlike the château of Revel and Barbarin. Moreover, the fact that many of the locals today are called Lefèbvre makes it clear that this is much more than a hypothesis. The Château de Thuries today is a high-class restaurant and hotel and is run by a family bearing the surname Lefèbvre.

Catherine Lefèbvre (1723-1798), who died in Bossin (Isère) – a country town now abandoned – where she lived, remained Lefèbvre until the end of her life like all the women in the family and did not bear the *surnoms* like the first-born sons. As is well known, according to the regulations of the time, females acquired a new name through marriage, or otherwise remained in their maiden name because they could not acquire positions in the royal, central or provincial administration.<sup>50</sup> In place of a local lordship, they were settled with a dowry, sum or possession upon marriage. Offices and titles passed to the sons, either the eldest son who retained the principal title, or the cadet sons who could take, as is the case with this family, other *surnoms* linked to places, becoming 'lords of'.

In summary, all of Pierre's sons thus bore 'surnoms' (as André-Isidore Lefèbvre calls them) of locative type, as origin, and of dignity as cause. His nephew André-Isidore, who is

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<sup>50</sup> These lands, in the 16th century, were attributed to Ludovico II Marquis of Saluzzo, President of the Senate of Grenoble, and many of them still belonged, two centuries later, to his descendants. Rinaldo Comba, *Ludovico II marchese di Saluzzo. Condottiero, uomo di Stato e mecenate (1475-1504)*. Soc. Studi Stor. Archeologici, Saluzzo 2005.

very precise about honorary titles and offices, wrote in his memoirs about Charles that he belonged to the branch of the Lefèbvre family known at the *time* as 'de Clunière'.<sup>51</sup> He perhaps meant that the family from that time began to be known by that title. We know that, for a time, Pierre Lefèbvre is 'connu sous le nom de Clunière' and worked in Paris at the headquarters of the Ministry of Finance in the same offices where, moreover, Henri Lefèvre d'Ormesson had important management roles at the same time.<sup>52</sup>

This proximity explains the close acquaintances between the Lefèbvre and various important families in the royal administration. André-Isidore's parents were linked by close friendship with a gentlewoman from the royal circle, Madame Juliette Récamier, whom we shall meet again later in our account. Meanwhile, Pierre Lefèbvre de Clunière in Pontarlier consolidated his position by also becoming supervisor of customs.<sup>53</sup>

A map from the early 18th century, reproduced below, shows how the fortified town had a main road, the Via Francigena, where goods had to pass by stopping at the customs installations that are visible outside the town, in the case of the image we refer to the low buildings on the left. There the wagons were examined and passage fees of various

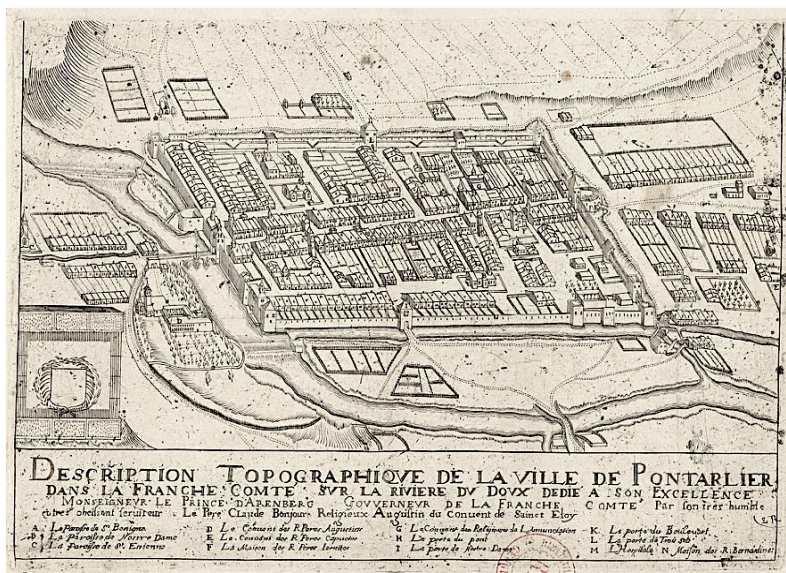
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<sup>51</sup> AB XIX 4482, vol. IX, p. 271. Charles-Flavien's sons did not use the title 'de Clunière' for over 50 years. This reappeared in use at the end of the 19th century.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* Serge de Maistre, *Henri IV d'Ormesson, contrôleur général des finances*, Lacour-Ollé, Nîmes, 2018.

<sup>53</sup> Moreover, one of the meanings of *Maillard*, which originated as a nickname, is 'official in charge of collecting basic taxes'. There were large families of the petty toga nobility especially in the north of the country.

kinds (depending on the goods) were determined by specialised officials and then paid and then checked by the manager. Pontarlier at that time had only 3,000 souls but was renowned for the production of absinthe, a distillate that enjoyed considerable consumption until it was banned in 1915.



Topography of Pontarlier,  
a fortified and customs transit town.



## Chapter 10

### Family strategies in the trauma of the Revolution

When Charles was born in 1775, Pierre is defined in his role as 'receveur du domaine du Roy au Barau de Pontarlier' after his previous post that lasted from 1770 to 1776.<sup>54</sup> Although he had a house in Grenoble and one in Besançon, where some members of his large family probably stayed to live, for a time Pierre and his wife lived exclusively in Pontarlier. It was here that some of the couple's numerous children were born: some died very young, others lived long lives.<sup>55</sup> Charles was to become the most successful member of this family in the 19th century.<sup>56</sup> The parish register records his birth on 4 April 1775:

Charles Flavien fils de Monsieur Pierre le Febvre Clunière [...] et dame Gabrielle François Maillard son épouse [...] est né le quatre avril mille sept cent soixante et quinze et le lendemain a été baptize, son parrain a été monsieur François Bonaventure...<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Parish register. Pontarlier. Bapt. N. 1081.

<sup>55</sup> S.v. *Carlo Lefèbvre*, in Achille Lauri, *Dizionario dei cittadini notevoli di Terra di Lavoro*, Forni, (anastatica 2015), Bologna 2012.

<sup>56</sup> This is the case of Marie-Jacinthe Bonaventure (born and died in 1773), Nicholas-François (born and died in 1777) and Etienne Dominique Hypolite (lived a month and died in the summer of 1784). Municipality of Besançon, Civil Status Offices. François Noël was born and baptised on 18 November 1781. Another son, Charles François Edmond (Ennemond), was born in 1786 and died in 1790.

<sup>57</sup> Parish register. Pontarlier. Bapt. N. 1081. [Saint Benigne]. It should be noted meanwhile that the bureaucratic spelling still bore the separation of the article "le" from "Febvre", which would later become

Charles Flavien son of Monsieur Pierre Le Fèbvre Clunière and [...] of Madame Gabrielle François Maillard, his wife [...] was born on 4 April 1775 and was baptised the next day, his godfather being Monsieur François Bonaventure...

The parish where the baptism registers are kept is Saint-Benigne built with the characteristic Doubs façade: an imposing narrow front, like a keep, in three orders, which also serves as a bell tower. As first-born son, Charles was entitled to the title De Clunière.



Parish of Saint-Benigne in Pontarlier (Doubs) where were baptised Charles, Auguste, Gabrielle and Noël.

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one in the name, while the patrician "de" falls away and the name appears completed by a simple "Clunière".

Only a year later, in 1776, Auguste was born, followed by Denise Gabrielle (1779-1822) and François Noël (1781-1850).

In 1786 94-year-old Marie-Anne Sibille Lefèbvre died in Grenoble where she was buried and the house passed into sole ownership to Pierre. On 4 May 1790, Monique Flavie was born with a twin brother, who died at the age of 6 on 20 March 1796.<sup>58</sup> At the birth of these last two children, Gabrielle Maillard was 43 years old.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Not to be confused with Monique Flavie Lefèbvre, Pierre's sister and his survivor, see ADD, Besançon. Sous Series Q 6Q/909. Mutations après décès. No. 250 7 November 1808.

<sup>59</sup> ADD, Besançon. Sous Series Q 7Q/148. Returning to the meaning of the title 'De Clunière' or 'Clunière' (a locality in the ancient possessions of the Marquises of Saluzzo), it specifically indicated a 'specialised' place in the countryside, marked by a bridge, a mill, an oven or a building with a specific function. Etymology can tell us something about this. The origin of the name Clunière (with or without the accent) seems to be close to that of Cluny (geographically not far from Grenoble) which, like Clunie and Cluney (and the derivative Clunière), are names of Gaelic origin meaning 'field', 'fertile and laughing place' (*Gael*. Cluanag = *irl*. Cluain). They are most common, in various forms, in England, Scotland, Ireland, but some occurrence is also found in France where the best known form is that of Cluny, linked to the famous and ancient abbey. In short, Clunière must have been an ancient estate, in all probability fortified, to which a dignity of *noblesse de robe* was attached, expressly destined for the administrators of the state property and the officials of the Grenoble Parliament. A branch of the Lefèbvre family, the one featured in our story, attached itself to the one that stood in the champagne of Poirret, near Grenoble. The other two Clunières are hundreds of miles away and it is not credible that they are connected to them. Henry Harrison, *Surnames of the United Kingdom: A Concise Etymological Dictionary*, The Mobland Press, London 1912-1918 (Repr. 2005), p. 84.

## **Joseph Lefèbvre at Versailles**

As for Joseph Lefèbvre de Rochenu (1733-1817), he married Marie Anne Anselme (ca. 1740-1808) on 24 May 1775, by whom he had three children:

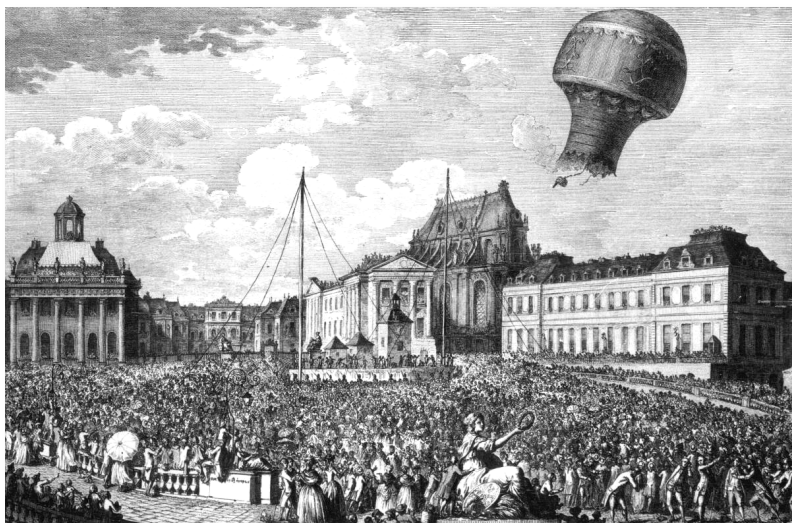
- a) Marie Anne called 'Annette' Lefèbvre, born in Versailles in 1776
- b) Honoré Lefèbvre, born in Versailles in 1777
- c) Rosanne Lefèbvre, born in Versailles on 20 March 1783

The noble locative title Rochenu passed to Honoré. The data provided by André-Isidore, which he took from documents he had in his possession and from which he copied, as he repeatedly did, first of all disprove the claim that Annette and Rosanne were twin sisters, as reported in inaccurate genealogical directories. On the contrary, Rosanne was a good seven years younger than Annette. The documents cited by André-Isidore contain other interesting information: at least two of the three children of Joseph Lefèbvre de Rochenu and Marie Anne Anselme were born in Paris, specifically in Versailles where Joseph lived and worked in the administrative offices run by the Lefèbvre d'Ormesson family and where Henri Lefèvre d'Ormesson became Minister of Finance in the same year as Rosanne's birth, 1783. Rosanne was also born a few months before the ascent of the first balloon, which took place on the esplanade in front of Versailles on 17 September 1783. We can therefore assume that Joseph and Marie Anne Anselme with their young children witnessed the historic event.

The fact that Annette and Rosanne were born in Versailles is not without significance. At that time, the grand château and



other buildings connected to the palace were home and office buildings. The present city of Versailles did not yet exist. Everything suggests that Joseph's daughters were therefore born *inside* the palace where he worked as Intendant of Finances.



After the Revolution, when many bureaucrats, nobles, administrators and politicians had to flee because they were linked to the Monarchy and therefore 'compromised' by the new regime, Joseph took refuge in the Dauphiné with his brothers in Primarette, Isère. He therefore avoided Grenoble – where there had been riots and royal officials had been threatened and beaten – as well as Besançon and Pontarlier where administrators were largely replaced, especially in high positions. André took refuge in Primarette while his son Joseph stayed there for the period of the Terror with his family and then returned to Paris. Once the period of the Terror was

over, the Napoleonic consulate, a prelude to the Empire, offered greater stability and security.

On 26 October 1796, Joseph married his 20-year-old cousin Annette in Paris. At the time, he was 37 years old, had an important career behind him and could offer security and comfort. They went to live in a beautiful house in the capital on Rue Chassée d'Antin. Up to that point, Joseph had kept his job. Despite the Revolution, some central administrations were not immediately removed. Count Taillepied de Bondy (1741-1822), already his superior, was confirmed. Before returning to the life of Joseph and Annette and revealing other details, it is worth making a brief digression.

In the events recounted we find some of the secrets of the Lefèvre's later social rise: the centrality of Paris and family solidarity. For while it is true that some, compromised with Louis XVI, had to move away from the capital, others, from a later generation, remained in Paris, making careers, with ups and downs, putting down solid roots in the environment of the technical bureaucracy that did not change as regimes changed. Not only that: the Lefèvre, a considerably branched family that always had five or six people active in each generation, helped each other. They possessed a very pronounced solidarity among themselves so that no one ever fell socially, no lower than the level of the average State employee, but this would only happen in the next century after the monarchies of the Restoration.<sup>60</sup> This will help them overcome difficulties and stand up for themselves in the most difficult times.

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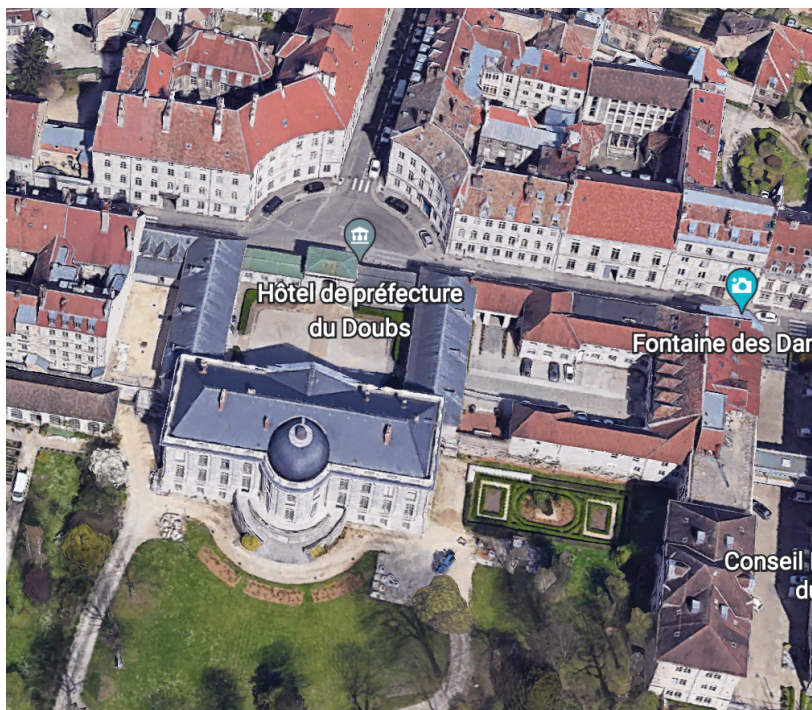
<sup>60</sup> On the intergenerational solidarity of France's noble families, see Éric Mension-Rigau, *Enquête sur la noblesse. La permanence aristocratique*, Éditions Perrin, Paris 2009.



Versailles, birthplace of Annette and Annette Lefèbvre.  
Early 19th century.

One of the houses where the Lefèbvre family lived for many years in Besançon still exists. The old Rue Neuve 5 now renamed Rue Charles Nodier is located near the Palais de la Prefecture, an area built around the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century.

It is a solid house with an inner garden, on the corner of the semicircular square facing the palace, an area inhabited at the time by senior officials of the royal administration. The writer Charles Nodier (1780-1844) would later be born in the same street, hence the change of name. In the following image, the façade of the house can be seen, the first on the left at the entrance to the side street. In the following images, the house in its urban context.



The area where the Lefèvre family lived during the 18th century.



The elegant façade of the house at No. 5 Rue Neuve then Rue Nodier.





Besançon, Rue Charles Nodier.  
The entrance door: a courtyard can be seen inside.

A solid, stone house built in the very early Classicist style of the mid-17th century when the town became a key element of the region's system of fortifications and an urban redevelopment plan was initiated that demolished medieval buildings.<sup>61</sup> The floor of the dwelling is the first.

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<sup>61</sup> Claude Fohlen, *Histoire de Besançon*, t. II, Cêtre, Besançon 1964 pp. 55-68.

The other named place that the family frequented during this period, as mentioned, is La Perriere in Primarette (a village of 700 souls today), very close to Revel-Tourdan.



The hill of La Perrière in Primarette (Isère) once owned by the Lefèbvre family. One notices a farm that, despite the passage of time, still retains old cores.

The area is still agricultural today. In the oldest houses of the village, the Lefèbvre of various branches met sporadically for a few years until the middle of the century. In this location, they had a large farm with livestock and crops.



The hill of La Perrière in Primarette (Isère),  
once owned by the Lefèbvre family.

The relations with Paris of these high bureaucrats of the Province of Franche-Comté were continuous. On this subject, Françoise Mosser writes in her book on central and provincial public administration, *Les intendants des finances au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*:

In charge of important departments, the intendants of finance were very active characters. They ran their offices in Paris, worked with their principal assistants, watched over the affairs of their departments, in Paris or Versailles, met regularly with the controllers-general for a particular job. They had them come to Versailles to attend councils or sit on commissions: and if the King moved, they were obliged to move at very short notice to get to the place where the court was, or for a council or for work with a minister, and to return to Paris to attend to the affairs of their departments (...) They also kept up a very important correspondence with the various departments of the financial administration and in particular with the intendants of the provinces, whom they received



regularly when they came to Paris. They gave them an audience on fixed days.<sup>62</sup>

The provincial intendants with their retinue of lawyers and collaborators had to go to Paris several times a year. This shows how numerous the opportunities must have been for the provincial Lefèvre to get to know the intendants-general, controllers, ministers and also the Lefèvre d'Ormesson who worked in Paris, in Versailles. A portrait by Marc de Villiers Jacques-Joseph Aved gives us an exemplary image of the appearance and dignity of these characters.



Joseph Aved, *Portrait de Marc de Villiers, Première Commis de Finance* (Getty Museum, NY).

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<sup>62</sup> Mosser Françoise, *Les Intendants des Finances au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les Lefèvre d'Ormesson et le "Département des Impositions (1715-1777)*, Droz, Geneva 1987, p. 226. Translation by me.

The portrait of Joseph Aved (1702-1776) gives us the type of the central finance manager. A serious and compact man, in his wig and office attire, holding before him papers and records and probably a Code of Laws to determine accounts. This is how the Lefèbvre must have looked in this generation.

We have seen that Joseph Lefèbvre became Intendant of Finance of the Dauphiné. The highest-ranking in this hierarchy was the Intendant General of Paris, but a provincial intendant was also a prominent figure. He had to consult with the *Maîtres des Requêtes* (literally the Manager of Requests, i.e. an administrative magistrate) and the Intendant General, both of whom resided in Versailles. It is worthwhile then to say a few words about these offices. In the times of French absolutism, the *Maîtres des Requêtes ordinaires de l'Hôtel du Roi* held a prestigious and also expensive office that required, for its maintenance, the payment of a one-off tax ranging from 100,000 gold lire in 1710 to 200,000 in 1750 and that underwent a further increase in the second half of the century.

To take office, one had to attend a course at the Parliament and at the *Chambre des Comptes* for 6 years. Only children of magistrates could halve the course years by attending 3 years. In the early days these officials also ran the *Tribunal des Requêtes de l'Hôtel*, later reduced to some honorary use. The judges of this court had a judgement of last resort in matters of seals, books, printing and also in the execution of arrests requested by the King's Council. The *Maîtres des Requêtes* collaborated with the Chancellor of France, on whom they depended, and performed justice tasks through the Seal and the *Conseil des Parties*. They held quarterly meetings with the Deans, whose head had the rank of Councillor of State. These magistrates were members of the Paris Parliament, but no more than 4 at a time. They could only be judged before the

assembled chambers of Parliament. Officials and members of the Royal Government were taken from this nursery: the Councillors of State, the Intendants of the Provinces, the Intendants of Finance, the Intendants of Commerce, the Controllers General of Finance, etc. They numbered 98 in 1689, 88 in 1723, 80 under Louis XV in 1752. The *Maîtres des Requêtes au Conseil d'État* were members of the Council of State. Therefore, according to these rules Joseph, being the son of a provincial magistrate, had to attend for at least three years at the *Chambre des Comptes* a kind of school where one was initiated into the more difficult arts of fiscal management. The courses were probably not continuous but required a periodic trip to Paris.

The work was learnt in the city of residence while the periodic examinations were carried out in the building in Paris, of which few pictures remain, such as this one from the late 17th century.



The high school of central and provincial Finance Intendants that was by necessity of office attended by Joseph Lefèbvre. Guazzo by Israel Silvestre (1621-1691). Bibliothèque de France, Gallica BNF.

## Intendentes des Finances

The intendants of finance were agents of the financial administration of France in the Ancien Régime. They organised and controlled the collection of state taxes and assisted the king's action in fiscal matters at local parliaments, the main one being that of the Dauphiné. They controlled royal lands and distributed direct taxes. They also exercised the financial protection of communities (towns) and royal and clerical establishments (manufactures, abbeys, schools, farms and factories) and collaborated with provincial intendants to decide on measures useful for economic progress in the

management of roads, forests, manufactures and education. The function of Intendant of Finance was created in 1552 (the name was coined in 1556). The Intendants formed a collegiate Ministry of Finance in a number that fluctuated several times and in 1661 consisted of three persons. From 1690 onwards, they became officers subordinate to the Directorate General with stable, lifelong offices, thus ensuring the continuity of the Finance Administration, and this stability for life with a sort of heredity of office ensured by various laws was maintained until 1793. In 1777, their central functions were transferred to the Maîtres des Requêtes.

They enjoyed considerable autonomy in the exercise of their departments, corresponding directly with the Chancellor of France, the Secretaries of State and the provincial finance intendants among whom were the Lefèvre, while their superiors were the Maîtres des Requêtes Lefèvre d'Ormesson. It happened that, on particular occasions, the intendants met informally to prepare dossiers to be presented to the Royal Council of Finance. Their importance and rank continued to increase until the reign of Louis XV and remained stable under Louis XVI and Louis XVII. Each intendant of finance headed a department and was in charge of taxation, bridges and roads, forests and state property.

### **Contrôleur général des finances**

Under the Ancien Régime, the Comptroller General of Finances was the ministerial head of royal finances (after the abolition of the post of Superintendent of Finances in 1661). He was in charge of administering State finances, the most famous of whom was Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Controller from

1665 to 1683. The function had been created in 1547, with two holders who had to control the expenditure carried out by the Treasurer De l'Épargne, then the true master of royal finances.

Originally, the task of the Comptroller General was not one of administration or governance, functions reserved for the superintendents of finance, but only of verification. In 1661, the last superintendent, Nicolas Fouquet (1615-1680), was arrested. Colbert was then appointed head of the Finance Administration with the title of Intendant General and, from 1665, with that of Controller General (Contrôleur général). At this date, 1665, the office became transmissible but also revocable according to the will of the sovereign.<sup>63</sup> The function was very well remunerated, around 220,000 gold lire.

The Controller General was a member of the Privy Council, the Royal Council of Finance and the Royal Council of Commerce. Besides financial administration (treasury management, tax collection, minting, etc.), he directed the entire economy and a large part of the provincial administration. In fact, it was on his proposal that most of the provincial intendants were appointed.

Hence, a close parental alliance is the only circumstance that can explain the very fast rise of Joseph Lefèbvre and his son to the intendance of the Dauphiné, as the appointment came directly from Versailles. Unlike other ministries, general financial control was organised collegially. It was divided into several departments, the most important of which was actually headed by the Comptroller General. At the end of the Ancien

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<sup>63</sup> This function suffered only one interruption during the period of the so-called Polysynodia (1715-1718). Jacques Necker headed the Finance Administration between 1776 and 1781 and between 1788 and 1790, flanked by the Contrôleurs généraux, receiving the titles of Directeur général du Trésor royal and Directeur général des finances.

Régime, there were six central financial intendants. The staff of the Comptroller General's office was relatively large, especially compared to that of other ministries. The offices were mainly located in Paris, where the financiers were housed in dwellings that were either inside the palace or immediately outside, in the ever-growing city of Versailles. With these the Controller had to deal frequently. Besides Versailles, the Comptroller General also had offices in Paris, at the Palais Mazarin, rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs (today: National Library of France and National Institute). This is where Joseph had to go periodically as the duties of the Intendants General of the province prescribed.



Another place frequented by Joseph Lefèbvre and Isidore Lefèbvre. The grand Palais Mazarin, second location, after Versailles, of the offices of the Comptroller General of Finances. Bibliothèque de France, Gallica BNF. Author unknown 18th century.





## Chapter 11

### Joseph-Isidore in Paris

André Lefèbvre (1719-1817), son of Jean-François and initiator of the De Revel line, is one of the lesser-known figures in the family genealogy. We know that he lived in Paris and was a lawyer and official in the Parisian administration, married a woman from Lyons, Jeanne Magnard, then moved to other cities including Troyes and finally Paris. The family memoirist knows little else about him. The first news can be found after the Revolution. Certain features of his life are reminiscent of André Lefèvre (1718-1768), author of entries in D'Alembert and Diderot's *Encyclopaedie*, whose life is known very little, although his birth in Troyes in May 1718 and death in Paris in May 1768 are indicated. It could be the same person, since not even the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, which has edited a biographical file on him, knows how to base the date of death on certain arguments: there are no documents and the date is given 'by tradition' while a list of works attributed to an André Lefèvre (or Lefèbvre the spelling changes in books) is certain.<sup>64</sup> If we cannot therefore identify this André Lefèvre with François' son, we can, however, wonder whether the portrait of a 'Lefèvre' cannot be traced back to Joseph-Isidore's father rather than the encyclopaedist André. The dates coincide, the painting is only hypothetically associated with the man of letters from Troyes (*peut être André Lefèvre*, we

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<sup>64</sup> [https://data.bnf.fr/fr/10618900/andre\\_lefevre/](https://data.bnf.fr/fr/10618900/andre_lefevre/)

read in the card), but it could also refer to another personage living in Paris, namely André Lefèbvre (sometimes Lefèvre) de Revel.



Is it André Lefèbvre de Revel?  
"Ecole du XVIIIème siècle, Portrait d'un notable  
tenant un livre, huile sur toile, marquée Lefèvre".

Joseph-Isidore Lefèbvre de Revel, born in 1759, made a position for himself before the Revolution and worked in the central offices of the administration in Versailles. In the course of his life, he also experienced the loss of everything he had gained due to the Revolution. This fall, due to insurmountable historical reasons, forced him to struggle in the second half of

his life in an attempt to regain what he had lost. His cousin Charles, 16 years younger, on the other hand, took life as an adventure and had the freshness to face serious difficulties with the strength of youth.

Joseph-Isidore grew up and studied in Paris and then, already at a young age, began working as secretary to Count Jean Baptiste Adéodat Taillepied de Bondy (1741-1822), several times Prefect in the central areas of France, Receiver General of Finances before the Revolution and his protector in the years following the Restoration.<sup>65</sup> From 1784 to 1789, he spent the best years of his life in this position: young and in a promising career – he earned well – he was introduced to the circles of the financial administration, at Versailles and at Palais Mazarin, thus being able to hope for further advancement.

The two Lefèbvre branches descended from François Le Febvre, who were in Paris, were the Rochenu and the Revel and it was not until the early 1790s, but still during the period of the Revolution, that the Lefèbvre de Clunière brothers were added: Charles, Auguste and Noël known as Léon all came to Paris.

André-Isidore points out that the first link between the Lefèbvre family and a very wealthy and important family, the Récamier, came about thanks to his father who was a friend of Monsieur Jacques-Rose Récamier (1751-1830), the banker who occupied a splendid house in Chaussin d'Antin (later Mont Blanc, 7). The acquaintance between the two was fostered by Taillepied de Bondy, whose friendly acquaintanceship with the Lefèvre d'Ormesson are known to recur in this story. This

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<sup>65</sup> He married the noblewoman Marie Catherine de Foissy (1747-post 1771) by whom he had five children. One, Pierre-Marie Taillepied, Count of Bondy (1766-1847), became Prefect of the Seine during the Restoration.

friendship had convinced him to buy a large house with a garden at number 5, right next to that of the Récamier. The fact that the Lefèbvre de Revel and the Récamier lived next door indicates an intimate friendship and sharing the same social class. It was an exclusive area of Paris where dwellings were rich, spacious, built of stone and brick and surrounded by large gardens. The city proper had not yet arrived in this area, which still blended into the countryside despite being very close to the centre.



Area of intersection between Rue Lafayette and Rue Chassée d'Antin, where the Lefèbvre house stood. It was an area of houses with gardens taken here at a time before the buildings were built when the Château de Porcherons, in the centre, was the most important. (Gallica BNF).

By the time André-Isidore wrote his memoirs, begun in 1870, when he was in his early seventies, these two buildings had already been demolished, as had the Château de Porcherons, which can be seen in the centre of the watercolour

reproduced above. The whole area had changed completely and the buildings demolished during the Napoleonic urban renewal and then during the Haussmannian gutting. There were, however, prints and drawings that recalled its outline and appearance. We will return to this area.



Banker Jacques-Rose Récamier.

Also living in Paris was Joseph Lefèbvre de Rochenu, who married Marie Anne Anselme (who died in 1808), producing, as we know:

- Marie Anne Lefèbvre (Annette, 1776-1857)
- Honoré Lefèbvre (1777-1818)
- Rose Anne Lefèbvre (Rosanne, 1783-1856)

They too lived, like the Revel branch, in the house next to the Bernard-Récamier house. Although we are less informed about Joseph's career than Joseph-Isidore's, the fact that the former's daughters grew up in rue Chassée d'Antin in the same house shows that they held similar and equally prestigious positions and that the two families occupied the same building in two different flats. Theirs is a world that has unfortunately disappeared, although we are able to know its rituals that included Sunday walks, Mass, concerts, shows and afternoons chatting over cups of chocolate, then a very expensive drink. We know from André-Isidore's memoirs that from 1785 until 1798 Annette and her elder sister Rosanne assiduously frequented the home of Juliette Récamier, who had befriended Jeanne Magnard and Marie Anne Anselme, the sisters-in-law married to the Lefèbvre brothers. Juliette was happy to stay in their presence and regarded herself as an aunt or older sister. She invited them to play in the garden of her house and to have chocolates in the elegant salon frequented by men of letters and poets, jurists and politicians. When Rosanne moved to Naples, she returned the favour by hosting the woman who had meanwhile fallen out of favour with Napoleon and was subsequently embittered by the monarchs of the post-Charles

X period.<sup>66</sup> Once the days of the Terror, which put their families at risk, had passed, they had landed in a quieter era in France – certainly not in the rest of Europe – but not without its pitfalls. Annette Lefèbvre descended from the Rochenu branch and married Joseph-Isidore de Revel when the young man was appointed Receiver General.<sup>67</sup> The two did not marry in Paris but in Viègne (Isère) in the cathedral of Saint-Maurice on 20 October 1796, probably for security reasons: Paris was in the aftermath of a coup d'état and the political situation was tense.<sup>68</sup>

While her husband left for Italy, Annette remained in Paris with her sister Rosanne and their children, Azélie (1798-1850) and André-Isidore (1799-1887), both born in Versailles.<sup>69</sup> His sister Rosanne was at that time the fiancée of Charles-Flavien, whose memory – his cousin writes – he lovingly kept in his heart. The marriage was intra-familial because they were first cousins and was also admitted by the Church after a dispensation. It was also not unusual in those days for men to be at least fifteen years older than women because they needed to consolidate a position before marrying. Azélie is described as lively, impulsive and talented. She married a provincial lawyer, Alfred Sylvestre, generating a family line away from Paris.

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<sup>66</sup> AB XIX 4480, vol. I, p. 18m and passim, vol. II and passim.

<sup>67</sup> Pierre-François Pinaud, *Les receveurs généraux des finances, 1790-1865 étude historique: répertoires nominatif et territorial*, Droz, Paris-Geneva 1990, p. 84.

<sup>68</sup> AB XIX 4482, vol. VII, p. 38.

<sup>69</sup> AB XIX 4480, vol. III, p. 213. Here André-Isidore specifies that he was born on the 15th of February, Year II, i.e. 3 February 1799 in Paris. And he specifies that Léon Lefèbvre is Charles Lefèbvre's brother. Azélie was born in 1798 and died at the age of 52, on 5 February 1850, AB XIX 4481, vol. V, p. 81. Other sources tell us that they married in Paris in 1798, when he was 39 and she 22.

André-Isidore remembers that since Juliette could not be a mother since for reasons of economic convenience she had married her own biological father, she had become attached to Azélie and himself as if they were substitute children, which is why they often went to her house or to the country house not far away in Clichy. More a chateau than a house, in truth, and with a large and celebrated garden surrounded by fields, groves and irrigation canals.



Saint-Maurice Cathedral, Vienne (Isère). Here, Annette Lefèbvre and Joseph-Isidore were married on 20 October 1796.





*Juliette Récamier* in 1805, drawing by François Gérard.

André-Isidore remembers with nostalgia that time of innocence when he had other children as playmates in those enchanted places. He remembers the Theatre of the Seraphim, the Chinese Shadows and the Capuchin Garden later razed to the ground to build Rue de Napoleon. The young Lefèbvre girls occasionally received visits from the Lefèbvre de Clunière brothers who had committed themselves to military careers or Grand Armée duties, such as Noël, who had joined

the secret service in Venice. Pierre Lefèbvre de Clunière had held office in the Dauphiné Province as long as he could, hoping to pass it on to his eldest son, Charles. But it was not possible for him since Grenoble and the surrounding area were among the first, apart from Paris, to be swept by the Revolution, with a warning in 1788 in Grenoble and then with the serious turmoil of 1792 and 1793 in the Doubs and Franche-Comté with revolutionary tribunals set up in Besançon and Pontarlier. As a result, while his parents and other uncles took refuge in the deep provinces and the countryside, the enterprising Charles, like his younger brothers Noël and Auguste, moved to the capital. While Noël and Auguste remained in the army, Charles, who had left it, probably lived in some rented flat or with some friends, although we have no news about this, and frequented the home of his cousins the Lefèbvre sisters. A good acquaintance of the Récamier was Henri Lefèvre d'Ormesson who, although no longer Receiver General, maintained business and some offices in Paris.

Young Charles, after his military experience, devoted himself to the lucrative subsistence trade for the French army in the countryside, but without joining the official subsistence ranks so as to have more freedom of manoeuvre, in this way he managed to put away considerable sums before getting married. He became attached to his cousin Rosanne to the point of becoming engaged, also helped by Annette, who looked favourably on her sister's marriage to Charles.

The inhabitants of the Chaussée d'Antin house managed to pass unscathed through the bloody Revolution up to the stages of the Consulate and the Empire, always remaining close to Parisian high society which, in the case of the administrators, was less affected by the slaughters of the guillotine than those

who actively engaged in politics. This is why we can follow their stories even in the fifteen years from 1793 to 1808, when the last generation grew up and they were all together in that large house that was gradually being surrounded by other residences as the countryside disappeared.



The Théâtre des Séraphines in Paris where children's shows were given. Annette and Rosanne Lefèvre – and then the former's son, André – used to go there accompanied by Juliette Récamier and a rich company of children from the entourage of the banker Bernard, Madame de Staël and the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family.

Before the Revolution, Joseph-Isidore also owned a beautiful holiday home that is named by his son, although he does not specify the location. He says it was frequented by his wife Annette and sister Rosanne and that he would drive back and forth between the countryside and Paris in his shiny *cabriolet* pulled by a horse. Considering the context, we can

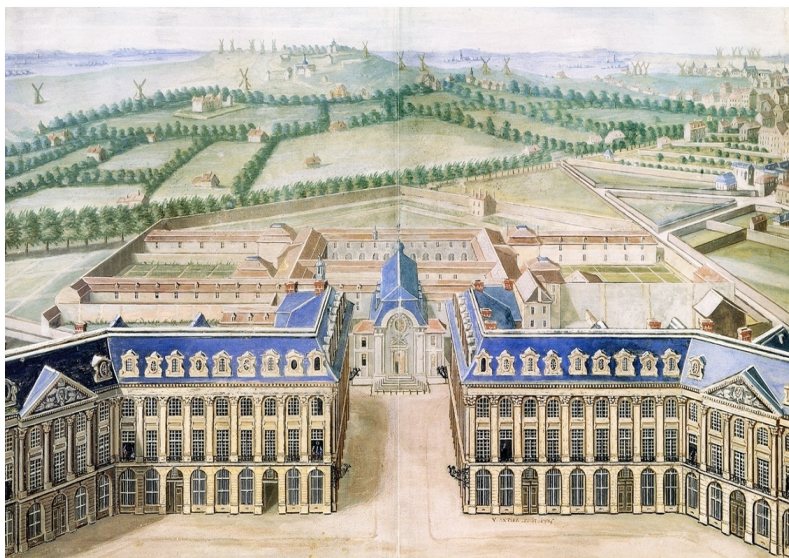
guess that it was near Clichy where Récamier had a palace that was a veritable palace, where he invited the Lefèbvre of various generations. Among the young people who frequented the family were August Simon Bérard (1783-1851), son of the Thomas Simon Bérard who had been guillotined in 1794, and Aurore Leblanc, daughter of a high-ranking treasury bureaucrat.



August Simon Bérard (1783-1851).

One of the places particularly dear to the Lefèbvre family were, according to André-Isidore, the gardens of the Capuchin Convent on the Place Vendôme, which bordered the area of the Chassée d'Antin dwellings. The convent and its gardens were demolished under the Empire in 1806 to make way for the Rue Napoleon which later became the Rue de la Paix. They made time to live and enjoy these magnificent gardens before

those drastic changes. Of the large Capuchin building, only the back façade survives today, while the advanced bodies have been removed.



The Capuchin Convent and gardens open to the public frequented by two generations of Lefèvre, then demolished in 1806.  
Carnevalet Museum.



## Chapter 12

### Clichy and Rue Mont Blanc

In order to understand the hidden kinship of the Lefèbvre de Clunière family, we must go back to study the life they led in Paris between the Revolution and the early Empire, in particular the lives of the two branches Clunière and Rochenu, and return to the figure of Récamier. As we know, several members of the Lefèbvre family of the Rochenu and Revel branches had moved to Paris for about 30 years. Their knowledge of the central administration leaves open the hypothesis that these two Lefèbvre branches, after a process of provincialisation, due to the positions held in Franche-Comté, Dauphiné and Grenoble by the Clunière branch, rejoined in Paris where there was another, more powerful branch, a kinship dating back to the end of the 17th century. Of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson, the Lefèbvre de Clunière adopted the coat of arms in 1854, giving a clear sign of kinship, however distant in the past.

His cousin Joseph-Isidore, 16 years older than Charles, was prodigal with advice and generous in providing contacts for the young man. At the time, he was working in subsistence administration with Taillepiéd de Bondy and Pierre Lagarde and was well-connected in financial and governmental circles in the capital. Thus he introduced the young man to the former bureaucrat and banker Jean Bernard (?-1828). A brother of Charles, Jean-François Lefèbvre (1781-1850), already worked in the same circles crowded with royal bureaucrats whose



expertise was also used in the Napoleonic administration. When Jean-François' tenure began we do not know exactly, but certainly after the Revolution and towards the end of the 18th century.

Jeanne-Françoise Julie Bernard, better known as Madame Récamier, was born in 1777 in Lyon but her family had moved to Paris when she was a child. Her acquaintance with Joseph-Isidore, Honoré (Léon) and August Lefèbvre was due to the fact that they were in the same branch in which her father, Bernard, an executive in the royal finances and a senior bureaucrat in the tax administration, worked. Joseph-Isidore worked at the Banque Récamier, as well as living close to the family home, which explains, as we have seen, why the Lefèbvre de Clunière also went to live there.



Jeanne-Françoise Julie Bernard,  
better known as Madame Récamier.



Although still wealthy, Bernard had fallen from favour in 1789 and what many thought was his daughter, Juliette, had been given in marriage to the banker Jacques-Rose Récamier (1751-1830), 26 years his senior, but who was, as mentioned, her real father. Using the cover of marriage – she was born out of his affair with the banker Bernard's wife, Julie Matton – the girl received her considerable wealth. In 1798, Récamier bought two large buildings in the Rue du Mont Blanc, formerly owned by Jacques Necker (1732-1804), Louis XVI's Minister of Finance, who was also replaced in the last revolutionary phase by Lefèvre d'Ormesson. When Necker retired to Coppet in Switzerland (Vaud), he left the large house to his friend Récamier on favourable terms.



L'hôtel de Montmorency, rue de la Chaussée d'Antin then Rue du Mont Blanc before the mid-18th century. The house of the Récamier and Lefèvre families stood on this street.

*Palais Necker* no longer exists today. It too was built in 1775 on Chaussée d'Antin Street to the design of architect Mathurin Cherpitel (1736-1809). It was a quiet and elegant street, surrounded by walled gardens and prestigious houses, close to the mansion of the Montmorency family and those of other great families of France. Necker had then extended it with another building overlooking a street that led in a *cul-de-sac* to the rue *Basse-du-Rempart*. After its purchase, the Minister's residence was decorated by the architect Louis-Martin Berthault, who was among the creators of the Empire style and 'étrusque' furniture and accessories.

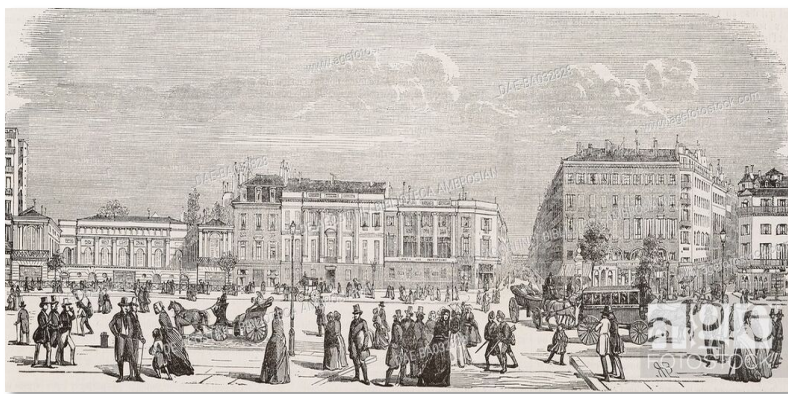
He sold everything in 1798, as mentioned, to Jacques-Rose Récamier. Later the property passed to the banker François Mosselman. The name Rue du Mont Blanc was given to the street during the Napoleonic period, but the final building transformation was much later than the mid-19th century. Up until 1798, Madame de Staël had dominated the scene on that street, before and after her marriage. Her political and literary salon remained in Paris until 1805 when she moved to Coppet as she was expelled by Napoleon.

As for Juliette, the then young and beautiful woman, admired, cultured and a great conversationalist, also enjoyed great wealth on her mother's side, the daughter of a Parisian banker.<sup>70</sup> Bound by a necessarily white marriage, she indulged

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<sup>70</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. V, *passim* pp. 111-207, a vivid and documented account from the pen of André-Isidore Lefèbvre in which the memoirist probably reported first-hand accounts heard from those who had known Récamier well, may be useful. A still interesting intellectual biography of the woman is Édouard Herriot, *Madame Récamier et ses amis*, Plon-Nourrit, Paris 1909; while a recent summary biographical study is Françoise Wagener, *Madame Récamier 1777-1848*, Flammarion, Paris 2001 (1990).

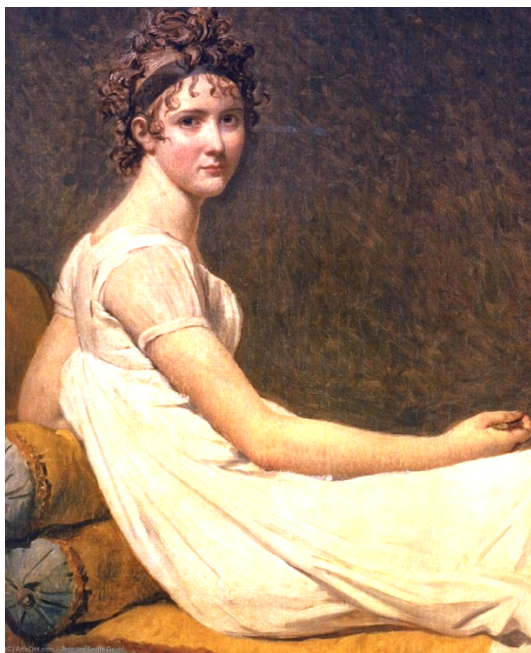
in lovers, the most famous of whom were René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) and Pierre-Simon Ballanche (1776-1847) who were also frequenters of the *salon* on Rue Chaussée d'Antin and acquaintances, in turn, of the Lefèbvre and the Lefèvre d'Ormesson. Charles, when he settled in Naples and made his fortune, invited Juliette and Ballanche to his residence on the Riva di Chiaia.



Rue Chaussée d'Antin, 1845. The houses in which the Lefèbvre families lived were those on the left. Behind, the large gardens that would later be removed.

With the friendliness and ability that distinguished her to understand the most suitable forms of culture of the period, artists, poets and men of letters, she succeeded in making her house the centre of Parisian taste and culture of the time. It was she who brought together the *gallant society* in the most important *salon* in Paris at the time, heir to the many 16th- and 17th-century salons recounted by Benedetta Craveri in *La civiltà della conversazione*, in which careers and marriages, misfortunes and fortunes, were decided during the Ancien Régime. Equally popular was his salon in the Château de

Clichy. In these places, where financiers, nobles, politicians, writers and artists met, the art of the Directory and the Empire style was forged.



Madame Récamiere, by Jacques-Louis David (detail).  
Louvre Museum.

Récamier herself dressed 'à la grecque', spreading the fashion of antiquity that was part of the cultural policy of the new Napoleonic Caesarism. The year 1800 marked the apogee of Jacques Récamier being appointed Régent de la Banque de France. Soon afterwards, both he and the other former royalists who frequented the salon (such as Adrien de Montmorency) fell into disgrace.

For about 12 years, from 1796 to 1808, the Madame Récamier's *salon* was the social centre of Paris, where business friendships were forged, political alliances made and marriages arranged. Sons and grandchildren of Pierre took advantage of this by forming friendships that would serve them well throughout their lives. And here we observe, in the Lefèbvre family, a behaviour characteristic of family groups that ascend and tend to become dynasties: the ability to create lasting ties with high-ranking circles and to transmit from generation to generation the value of the practice of maintaining good relations. We know that, among others, the *salon* was frequented by members of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family, by Pierre Lagarde with whom a Lefèbvre worked for a long time, and by the Marquis Raigecourt whose son years later married Charles Lefèbvre's daughter, as well as by the Necker, Montomrency, Chateaubriand and the banker Bernard. In the Paris of the time (a city of around 500,000 inhabitants), the environment was rather small if measured by today's yardstick, because small was the world of the nobility and high bureaucracy. The Lefèbvre managed to enter with skill and *savoir-faire* right into the heart of that world of which they had been, in one branch of their family, provincial exponents and in other branches settled in Paris, exponents of the central administration.



The residence of the Lefèvre family in the early 19th century stood here: Rue Chaussée d'Antin.

That gilded atmosphere, that sense of power and stability that had been maintained in Paris even at the beginning of the Consulate and Empire, dissolved in 1805 for many people in the financial world, when several banks went bankrupt and the situation of French credit plummeted due to Napoleon's protracted wars and also the continental blockade imposed mainly by England. Thus came the bankruptcy and ruin of the network in which Joseph worked. The bankruptcy of Récamier, 'a banker renowned for his probity', writes the historian Thiers, 'produced the most terrible sensation', because he succumbed 'more a victim of circumstances than of his financial conduct'.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Adolphe Thiers, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, I, Pauline Paris 1855, p. 129.

André-Isidore's father, who was a bank official at the time, was dragged into the whirlpool. The blame that swept over Récamier also swept over him who was forced, after several attempts to find an occupation commensurate with his former importance, to expatriate 'to seek, on foreign soil, the means of subsistence that he now lacked on his native soil'.<sup>72</sup> These banking dynasties would later be largely replaced by the power of the Rothschilds, who financed the kingdoms of the Restoration. The Récamier would be definitively banned from Paris in 1811. She returned in 1814 after the emperor's abdication and lived in a house near the Palais Royal. The sisters Annette and Rosanne Lefèbvre remained friends with both Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier throughout their lives, the former dying in 1817 and the latter in 1849.<sup>73</sup>

But let us go back to the previous era, when Juliette invited the Lefèbvre sisters, Rosanne and Annette, still young, with their parents, to the large palace in Clichy where they stayed as guests for days, in a setting that in the memories of those who saw it, and for what we know, was splendid. Looking at maps of the time, we can see what it was like at the time of these visits: a large, French-style garden, sloping down from north to south, with fountains, water features, ponds with extensions on the other three sides. The château in the centre of the park was leased by the Récamier family from 1796 to 1806. It was then sold to the Marquis de Lévis, who sold it to an unscrupulous property developer who allegedly divided the park and grounds into lots and demolished the central building, reselling its stones and marble: because of this fact, no vestiges of a building that

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<sup>72</sup> AB XIX 4480, vol. I, p. 29.

<sup>73</sup> In addition to these two daughters, Lefèbvre 'de Rochenu' also had a son from his wife, Auguste Lefèbvre, who died while still young in 1826 in Perrière. AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, p. 42.

was described as magnificent survive today. Its gardens stretched from Rue Martre to Rue Paris, reaching as far as Boulevard Victor Hugo. One can therefore understand the wonder and sweetness of the memories of the Lefèvre sisters.

If the château de Clichy has been lost, Mme. Récamier's salon is still well remembered. At Clichy, meals were accompanied by musical and dance performances and the guests, as had been the custom in centuries past, did not disdain to improvise farces either. The book *Mémoires sur la vie privée de Napoléon, sa famille et sa cour* by the Emperor's first chamber valet, Louis Constant Wairy, recounts a famous anecdote.<sup>74</sup> One day, the 'savage of Aveyron' had been invited to the palace, accompanied by Monsieur Itard, who had been the one who had tried to rescue him, acting as his tutor and benefactor. The 'savage' was a boy who had been abandoned at a young age in the forests of Auvergne and had survived for many years by eating fruit, vegetables and animals, but he did not speak, he could only articulate a few guttural words. The *sauvage's* visit to Madame Récamier's château took place in the early 19th century. Attracted by the variety and abundance of food, which he began to devour with avidity, the young man cared little for those present. When dessert was served and he had filled his pockets with delicacies, he slipped away and walked out of the dining room while everyone was distracted by a heated discussion between La Harpe and the astronomer Joseph Lalande, about the latter's atheistic views and the singular taste he had for eating spiders. Suddenly a noise from the garden made Itard jump out of the hall: he saw the boy running across the chateau lawn partially stripped of his clothes.

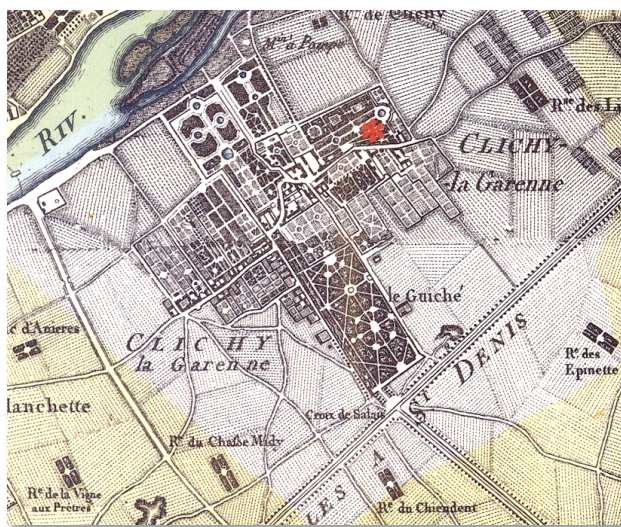
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<sup>74</sup> Louis Constant Wairy, *Mémoires sur la vie privée de Napoléon, sa famille et sa cour*, Garnier, Paris 1830, vol. III, p. 48.



When he reached the wide path of the park, planted with huge chestnut trees, he tore his last robe in two and climbed the nearest tree with the lightness of a squirrel, sitting down among the branches.

A few pages later, the rural atmosphere of Clichy at the time is described. One day, Madame Récamier suggested taking a walk in the village. After a few detours, the group was lured by the chords of a fife, a violin and a tambourine that led them to the riverbank where, in a tavern, a wedding was being celebrated. These events took place during the years when the Lefèbvre de Rochenu and Lefèbvre de Revel frequented the castle. Were they in the large group of guests mentioned by Wairy? We like to think so.

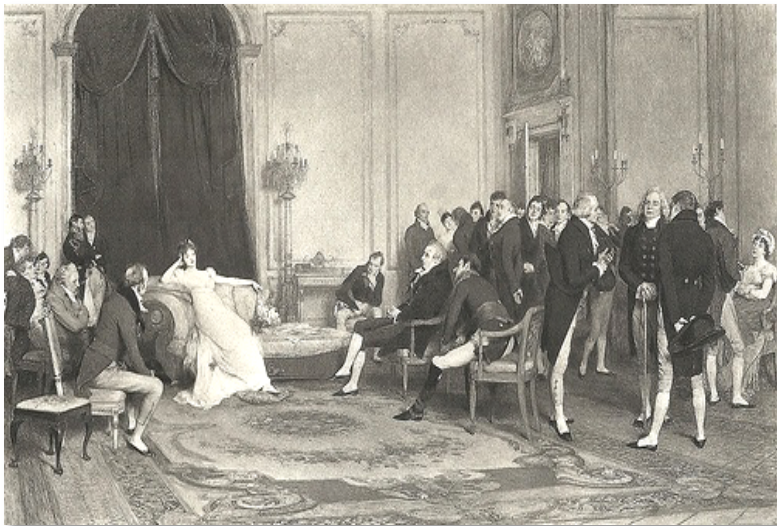


Of course, the Lefèbvre brothers and their wives knew that an important event in French history had taken place there. In Clichy, in fact, the coup d'état of 18 Brumaire 1799 (9 November) had been organised a few years earlier during secret

preparatory meetings in which the powerful Joseph Fouché, Minister of Police during the Directory, the Consulate and the Empire, as well as Joseph Bonaparte had also participated. Fouché wrote in his *Mémoires*:

Lucien réunit Boulay de la Meurthe, Cabanis, Emile Gaudin, et assigna à chacun son rôle... dans la maison de campagne de Madame Récamier. Lucien va combiner les mesures législatives qui doivent coïncider avec l'opération militaire.

The strategy of 18 Brumaire was therefore planned at Clichy and Jacques-Rose Recamiér granted a loan to Napoleon Bonaparte. The coup will succeed and will reward the conspirators with great promotions: Napoleon will go from general to First Consul, Lucien Bonaparte will become Minister of the Interior and Jacques-Rose will get a position as Director of the Banque de France. As for Juliette, her fate will be more humble.



Madame Récamier's salon where the coup d'état of 18 Brumaire was decided in 1799.

After a few years, she began to openly disagree with the authoritarianism of the Emperor, a sentiment shared by most of the guests at her *salon*, among whom were several royalists.



Madame Récamier's salon in Clichy.

Napoleon was crowned Emperor in December 1804 and began to view with suspicion those who sympathised with the Bourbon dynasty. La Récamier fell into disgrace for having refused four times to accept a position as lady-in-waiting at Napoleon's court. It was considered an insult by the man who had wrested the iron crown, which had been Charlemagne's, from the hands of the Pope. She took the offer as an advance from the Emperor who wanted to make her his mistress or a lady of his entourage.

The Emperor's wish was brought to the lady by Minister Fouché, who travelled to Clichy in a carriage and a retinue of soldiers requesting an audience to speak to her in person.

When she refused, which he certainly did not expect, he became angry despite the fact that she had sweetened her reply with every oratorical precaution. Fouché erupted in a violent and cowardly display of anger and shouted abuses at the woman, leaving Clichy never to return, as Juliette's adopted daughter Amélie Lenormant wrote. From that day in 1805, the *salon* was forbidden to Napoleon's friends, and many of its frequenters over the next months and three years left. Some friends, along with their families, were exiled from Paris by Bonaparte not because they were directly affected by measures but because they were part of a group whose most illustrious members were removed from office.<sup>75</sup> Among those who were indirectly affected were friends of Récamier, such as Joseph-Isidore Lefèvre. Despite this, the situation did not deteriorate for a few years, but the terrain became increasingly treacherous. The woman resisted in the house on Rue de Montblanc. She was still part of a gilded but politically less influential world that included, among others, the literati Chateaubriand and Ballanche.

André-Isidore's memoirs attest that his grandfather, André (1719-1817), who died at the venerable age of 98 in Primarette on the estate of La Perrière, held important positions at the court of Louis XVI, in Versailles, and that he moved to the Dauphiné after the Revolution to lead a retired life and avoid the risk of being the object of revolutionary violence. The Lefèvre d'Ormesson of that generation had as their leading personality the very powerful Henri Lefèvre Count d'Ormesson (1751-1808) who served as Minister of Finance

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<sup>75</sup> Amélie Lenormant, *Souvenirs et correspondances tirés des papiers de Mme Récamier*.

between Necker and Calonne in 1783. After the death of the latter, André had to leave Paris while the Lefèvre family (in the Rochenu, Revel and Clunière branches) preferred to move to Italy and partly to the French provinces. However, as mentioned above, from time to time they returned to Paris. Henri's son, Henri François de Paule Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1785-1858) married Henriette Ernestine de Grouchy (1787-1866) in 1807 and gave a big party in Paris to which hundreds of people were invited. The De Grouchy family served the Emperor as they were also a military dynasty. Henri d'Ormesson, after the arrests to which he had been subjected by the officials of the Reign of Terror until October 1794, had resumed his duties as municipal administrator and official of the department of Paris in a technical capacity and kept away from political matters.

In 1794, however, a member of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family, Louis François (1753-1794) son of the former President of the Paris Parliament, Louis Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1718-1789), had been guillotined. A member of parliament, he protested against the acts of the Constituent Assembly and was arrested as a royalist in December 1793. He was brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal and sentenced to death for signing a protest against the suppression of provincial parliaments on 20 April 1794.

It is also hard to believe that there is no connection between the death of Henri Lefèvre d'Ormesson still in charge of an important branch of tax administration in 1808 and the decision to move away from Paris taken by various members of the Lefèvre de Clunière, de Revel and de Rochenu family

in the same year.<sup>76</sup> The date of 1805 (Récamier's departure from Napoleon's court and the bankruptcy of Bernard's banks) and the date of 1808 (death of Henry d'Ormesson) were important. The bankruptcies of 1805 marked a breaking point between the old and the new France.

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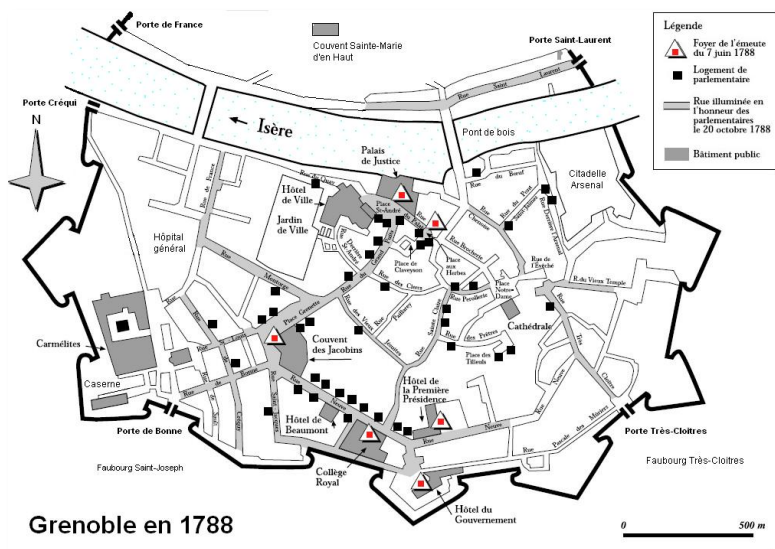
<sup>76</sup> Serge de Maistre, *Henri IV d'Ormesson, contrôleur général des finances*, Lacour-Ollé, Nîmes, 2018; Françoise Mosser, *Les Intendants des finances au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les Lefèvre d'Ormesson et le "département des impositions" (1715-1777)*, Droz, Geneva-Paris, 1978.

## Chapter 13

### A difficult era (1792-1808)

Let us therefore return to Charles Lefèbvre and follow his career and movements more closely with new information than that contained in other books in which he appears. As we know, the de Clunière branch established in the Dauphiné had only moved to the capital at the turn of the century to reconnect with other family branches that had remained in Paris. All were descended from the sons of Joseph and Marie Anne Sibille. The last to make this move was Charles. Throughout the 1790s, the Lefèbvre family lived in the large house in Rue Chassée d'Antin divided into flats.

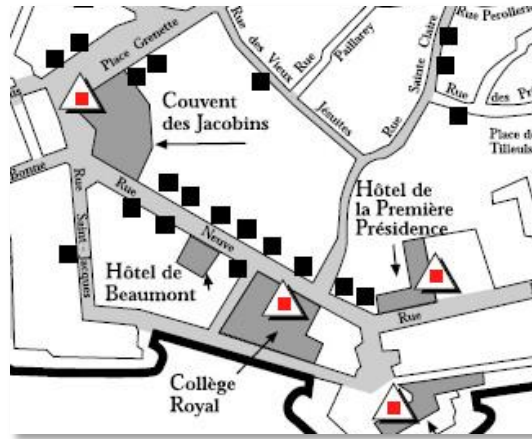
In Grenoble, the first signs were seen on 7 June 1788 when a mob attacked Louis XVI's troops in what is still remembered today as the *Journée des Tuiles*, the day of the tiles. Following the riots, the States General of the Dauphiné were organised on 21 June, considered to be the real start of the Revolution, when it was decided to put an end to the Parliament of Grenoble and its royal privileges and, at the same time, abolish the offices of the officials who administered it, including, therefore, those of the Lefèbvre. These events, which were intended to put an end to certain privileges by bringing certain problems to the King's attention, took a turn that none of the first rebels would have imagined as they overwhelmed the whole world they knew.



The sites of the Grenoble riots of 1788, with marked (black squares) the houses of the people who worked at the parliament. There is also the house that the Lefèbvre family owned in Grenoble on Rue de la Réunion when part of the family had started living in Besançon on Rue Neuve.

The royal counter-move was intended, in essence, to cancel part of the administrative autonomy that was traditionally conferred on that part of France. In the years that followed, however, characterised by appeals and legal disputes between the central state and the local administration, some of the bureaucrats who formed the backbone of the state in the province continued to work as if the kingdom were to continue. During the riots of 1788, the mob made violent demonstrations under the houses of many officials working in the parliament. Among the houses targeted was that of the Lefèbvre because systematically all parliamentary officials were subjected to insults or mistreatment in their homes, one after the other.





This state of interregnum between the old and the new regime lasted until the period of the Terror, 1793, which inaugurated the most violent season, leading to the deaths of countless people, disrupting lives and careers. In the course of that terrible year, dozens of employees and high officials of the monarchy were murdered, taken by mobs from their homes one by one. Therefore, the abandonment of Grenoble was more than justified. This is why Pierre Lefèbvre moved to Besançon where his family had a house in the Rue Neuve and where he raised his younger daughters alone, with the help of governesses, after the death of his wife in 1795. Apparently, his wealth status – unlike his social status – did not suffer. At that time he was already a pensioner and this pension was not revoked. Charles, on the other hand, left to serve in the Army and was certainly followed by his younger brothers Honoré, August and François 'Léon' Noël. The latter, as we shall see, remained an officer at least until 1808 in Venice, while the career of Auguste and Honoré, whom we shall find again under the Restoration as officials in the central administration, is less clear.

After the death of his wife, Pierre lived the last years of his life in comfort, severing his ties with Grenoble, which had become an unsafe place for representatives of the former royal administration. From the city, known for its adherence to revolutionary ideals and its 'progressivism', came strongly radical exponents of the revolutionary regime, such as Jean Joseph Mounier (1758-1806) and Antoine Barnave (1761-1793). The latter, in his political activities, attacked the Monarchy, the institutions, the clergy, the Church but also the provincial parliaments and its officials by threatening them with death.

With the dictatorship of the years 1793-1794, the hierarchical line between Paris and the periphery and the departmental administrations was strengthened. The law of 14 Frimaire Year II gives absolute supremacy to the Convention, the heart of the application of revolutionary law in all parts of the country and simplifies the executive line by giving the districts a political function. The people's representatives on mission in the departments are able to quickly sanction violations of the hierarchical principle thanks to the exceptional powers vested in them by the Convention. With the consulate, from 1796, two more obstacles to revolutionary politics were removed: the electivity and collegiality of local administrations. This meant, for a family like the Lefèbvre, the loss of any security and role in the Province while hopes were maintained in Paris.<sup>77</sup> Hence the adventure of various members of the family within the new revolutionary administration, with missions abroad; and secondly with the recovery, after Napoleon's defeat and the

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<sup>77</sup> Stefano Mannoni, *Une et indivisible. Storia dell'accentramento amministrativo in Francia, vol. I: La formazione del sistema (1661-1815)*, Giuffrè, Milan 1994, p. 458.

monarchical restoration in 1815, of those who had remained loyal to the crown and were reintegrated into the new post-Restoration administration. In the aftermath of the 14 frimaire and Consulate laws, the network relations that were still present in the capital were important, while those that had been formed in the provinces were cancelled.

In 1793, seeing no future in continuing the family business, Charles enlisted, or was forced to enlist – in those days the difference was subtle – in the Garde Nationale of Doubs, an inland region of Franche-Comté. This was a 'bourgeois' militia that one joined on a voluntary basis or by forced conscription.<sup>78</sup> At a time when everything seemed questioned, arms and adventure became a possible field of affirmation. According to Achille Lauri, an approximate 20th-century biographer, the first to attempt a biography of Charles but using scarce and imprecise information, the young man decided to enlist because he was 'dragged along by the political events of France', which suggests necessity of some kind or conscription.<sup>79</sup>

At the age of 18, appointed captain, he was engaged in at least one campaign of the battalion commander Charles-Antoine Morand (1771-1835), Napoleon's future aide-de-camp and also a native of Pontarlier (according to others of Montbenôit, 14 kilometres north of Pontarlier). He was a distant cousin of Charles on his mother's side of the family, the Maillards. According to Achille Lauri, the young man 'distinguished himself in war campaigns' and during the siege of Mayenne (Maine and Loire) earned a sabre of honour for

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<sup>78</sup> Roger Dupuy, *La Garde nationale, 1789-1872*, Gallimard, Paris 2010.

<sup>79</sup> Achille Lauri, *Carlo Lefebvre e l'industria della carta nella Valle del Liri con un'appendice sul castello di Balsorano*, Sora 1910, p. 3.

his courage.<sup>80</sup> Lauri provides no further information but, significantly, his words are identical to those reported by André-Isidore Lefèbvre in his unpublished memoirs. The latter, in turn, claims to have learned these facts from the oral accounts of his uncle Charles, who transcribed them in his own hand in a diary, a 'family book' already mentioned. The source is therefore Charles himself. Lauri claims to have read this information in the 'big book' kept in Balsorano before 1910. Many catastrophic events took place at the castle of Balsorano in the first half of the 20th century, where Charles' book was kept until it was lost when the castle partially collapsed in the 1915 Earthquake and was damaged by fire.<sup>81</sup>

Let us return, then, to the wartime vicissitudes of young Charles. According to André-Isidore, Charles, as soon as he enlisted, was immediately appointed captain of a Company of Volunteers from Doubs, Franche-Comté, in the ranks of the battalion commanded by Morand. The latter was to become a long-time general of the French armies. At this stage, during the campaign in Germany, he supported a siege from 14 April to 23 July 1793 at Mainz, a siege in which Charles also participated.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* The term 'honour sabre' denotes a special type of military honour 'out of order' also known as a 'weapon of honour'. These are special weapons that officers or groups of soldiers bestow on a soldier or officer who has distinguished himself or herself for some particular reason or for significant acts of arms. They are characterised by more elegant than average workmanship and high quality materials. This tradition, once in use in major European or American armies, was lost during the 19th century (also due to the change of equipment) and has now been superseded by the establishment of more 'uniform' orders and decorations such as stars, medals, insignia.

<sup>81</sup> No trace of it could be found in any public or private archive between Rome, Sora, Isola del Libri or even in the possession of Charles Lefèbvre's descendants.

<sup>82</sup> AB XIX 4482, VII, p. 47.



General Charles Antoine Morand,  
related to the Lefèvre family on his mother's side, Maillard.

The city was besieged for three months by the Prussians and the Austrians and finally there was the surrender of the French troops. The besieged French army in Mainz was released by the Prussians on the promise not to attack foreign armies again. It arrived in Nantes on 6 September 1793, under the command of General Kléber.



was released, writes Lauri, 'by acclamation'. Despite the insistence of his friend Morand, who wanted him at his side in the army, he renounced his military career probably for a point of honour.<sup>83</sup>

The term Revolutionary Tribunal (Tribunal Révolutionnaire) does not refer to a generic institution but to an actual tribunal set up in Paris on 10 March 1793 at the Conciergerie at the behest of Georges Jacques Danton, which up to 31 May 1795 issued over 2727 death sentences, more than half of the cases it dealt with. One concerned, as we have seen, Louis François Lefèvre d'Ormesson who was guillotined in 1794. Charles was brought before the same Parisian court at the end of its period of existence, which was dissolved on 31 May 1795.<sup>84</sup> He was one of the 40% of the accused who managed to escape a death sentence and an even smaller minority who escaped conviction altogether. Once the danger was over, and he was cleared of all charges, he remained for some time in the house of Chassée d'Antin and then obtained, like his brothers, delicate positions: for the next 13 years he was a civil administrator of increasing rank.

Such episodes of accusations and trials were not uncommon in the revolutionary climate; all it took was for a soldier to refrain from killing someone disliked by the revolutionary commissioners or to show qualms about desecrating a church and risk being denounced as a 'counter-revolutionary'. The episode concerning Charles happened in 1795. That he was still a soldier that year we know this from a certain document: on 26 April 1795 (7 Floréal Year III), Charles presented himself at the Besançon offices to denounce the death of his

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<sup>83</sup> AB XIX 4480-4483, p. 15.

<sup>84</sup> Jean Tulard, Jean-François Fayard, Alfred Fierro, *Dizionario storico della Rivoluzione francese*, transl. It., Ponte alle Grazie, Florence 1989, p. 907.

mother, Françoise Gabrielle Maillard, who lived in the town at Rue de la Réunion, near the town hall, and died at the age of 48.<sup>85</sup> On that occasion, he presented himself with the title of Captain of the Grenadiers of the XII Battalion of the First Empire's Civil Imperial Guard. In the following months, after his acquittal at the Revolutionary Tribunal in Paris in May, he took his leave.



The Lefèvre house in Grenoble was located in what is now the old town 'near the Commune'. The City Hall is on the right: the house is probably the first on the left, the one that can be seen completely. The photo was taken at the end of the 19th century.

An uncle of André-Isidore, whose surname was Grand, told his nephew that he had received confirmation of these details from the living voice of the young man's father, Joseph-Isidore, and that of General Morand when the latter lived in Fontainebleau. Indeed, Grand 'liked to repeat that if he

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<sup>85</sup> Municipality of Besançon, Civil Status Offices. April 1795.



continued his military career he would become a grand marshal of France'.<sup>86</sup> Charles' royalist convictions must have caused him the problems mentioned. It could also have been a sentence concerning the king, something that cast doubt on his loyalty as a revolutionary. That Charles' ideology was never Jacobin or republican we know for sure; in any case, he decided to end his military career by avoiding the stigma of expulsion. In Paris, he was able to count on a network of contacts and important relatives, some of whom had been expelled from the central and provincial financial administration and some of whom had been readmitted. They were about to take up service in the new republican and imperial institutions after having been engaged for generations in the royal administrations. It was also common for families engaged in civil (and also military and diplomatic) administration to return to the place where the most important decisions were taken after long-term, even multi-generational assignments in the provinces.

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<sup>86</sup> Archive Nationales CARAN, Paris: AB XIX 4480-4483 Fonds André-Isidore Lefèbvre. Livre Premier 1680 à 1822.



## Chapter 14

### Jacques Necker

The Parisian Lefèbvre's circle of friends also included, as we know, the family of the Genevan Jacques Necker, who was Minister of Finance a few years after Henri Lefèvre d'Ormesson. He was the father of Madame de Staël, who considered herself a sort of aunt, like Juliette Récamier, of the Lefèbvre sisters. The Lefèbvre, Lefèvre d'Ormesson, Nécker and Rècamier families frequented the same *salons*.



Jacques Necker

Necker began working for the Banque Girardot in Geneva and then in Paris, proving himself competent and taking on increasingly important tasks. Having won the confidence of the bankers Thellusson & Vernet, he joined them in 1756 and the *house* was renamed Thellusson, Vernet & Necker. He married a pastor's daughter, Suzanne Curchod, in 1764 and the two initially resided in the Hôtel d'Hallwyl, the headquarters of the Thellusson, Vernet & Necker bank. In 1766 their daughter, Germaine Necker (1766-1817), later known as Mme. de Staël, was born. Necker continued to increase his fortune in Paris as a banker and finance writer and was finally appointed by Louis XVI as Director General of the Royal Treasury and Minister of Finance in 1776. He succeeded in modernising the Kingdom's economic organisation by applying his theories and annulled the liberalist recipes of his predecessors. In August 1788, he became Minister of State.

When the States General opened – he is the one who summoned them without obviously imagining what would happen – Necker began to talk about finance but the deputies only had the issue of voting at heart. Afterwards, Necker refused to attend the royal sitting of 23 June 1789 in which Louis XVI set the limits of the concessions he was ready to grant to the deputies of the Third Estate, and so the King himself dismissed him, accusing him of being too compliant. The minister then left France but soon afterwards, perhaps also as a consequence of this, there was the uprising of 14 July, a narrow uprising in reality concerning the politics of the moment, but which took on a strong symbolic significance with the storming of the Bastille. As Necker was appreciated by the Parisian people, King Louis recalled him on 16 July and appointed him Prime Minister of Finance. Later, during the Constituent Assembly, the deputies rejected Necker's financial proposals, and Necker in turn

opposed financing the deficit by issuing coupons (*assignats*). Sharply criticised by the king's entourage, Necker resigned on 4 September 1790 and retired to his estate in Coppet in the canton of Vaud, where he died in 1804.



Madame de Staël friend of the Lefèbvre de Rochenu and de Revel, mid-18th century generation.

A friend of the Lefèbvre family, as mentioned above, was Germaine, who was married in 1786 to Baron Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein (1749-1802), a member of the Swedish petty nobility and Sweden's ambassador to France. By him – and perhaps not also by two lovers – the woman, later known as Madame de Staël (1766-1817), had five children who were educated as Swedes but in France.

Madame de Stäel belonged to the same generation as the Lefèbvre brothers, sons of Pierre and sons of Joseph André, and was 11 years older than Juliette Récamier (born 1777). According to André-Isidore's memoirs, her parents and the other Lefèbvre uncles shared places and salons, walks and amusements between the Montmorency house, Rue Chassée-d'Antin and Rue Saint-Bernard, where the Lefèvre d'Ormesson lived.



Rue Saint-Bernard, Hotel Lefèvre d'Ormesson, Paris.  
Photo taken between 1869 and 1902.

After the crisis of 1798, there remained another bank owned by a person very close to the Lefèbvre family who played an important role in all the affairs of the Caisse du Compte Courants and in the foundation of the Banque de France. He was that Jacques Récamier who had become, in 1798, one of the architects of Napoleon's banking system and who had been, in turn, a friend and supporter of Joseph Necker until his departure.

At the end of 1798, he founded with Alexandre Barrillon (1762-1817) the bank called Syndicat du Commerce, also based in Rue du Mon Blanc, the street where the Lefèbvre and Bernard families lived. Moreover, Barrillon and Récamier became suppliers to the French armies and had to teach young Charles, after his discharge, the work that he then carried out for over fifteen years in Italy. Everything he learned in that hard but formative experience enabled him to enter into the confidence of the kings of the restored Bourbon monarchy in Naples. Together with other important figures, in March 1800, Récamier was the animator of the 'Négociants réunis' initiative (and others like it), which aimed to finance the armies of the Kingdom and Italy. From December 1800, operationally from January 1801, he was the director of the Bank of France, a post he occupied until 17 October 1806 in the aftermath of the Battle of Jena (15 October 1806) when Napoleon inflicted a major defeat on the German troops and shortly afterwards (21 November) decreed the Continental Blockade.

Starting in 1805, for various reasons, his personal bank, the Récamier Bank, began to get into difficulties along with Bernard's. In all likelihood, one of the reasons was the serious debt exposure to English bankers or merchants with whom it had become impossible to continue relations due to the Continental Blockade (with its trade sanctions). This was also

the period of the most assiduous acquaintance between the Récamier and Lefèbvre families, which began in 1798 and ended in 1811, when Juliette had to leave Paris to take refuge in the province of Châlons-sur-Marne with Marie Joséphine Cyvoct.<sup>87</sup>

Let us record another fact. Apart from the Château D'Ormesson, the family of the powerful administrators of the King's finances, the Lefèvre, had as their base the Château de Saint-Fargeau, which is located in Franche-Comté, one of the areas where the Lefèvre de Clunière were active.



The Château de Saint-Fargeau, which belonged to the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family, is located 35 kilometres from the Château de la Bruillère in Douchy purchased by Charles Lefèvre.

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<sup>87</sup> The young Marie Joséphine Cyvoct was to become his adopted daughter. André-Isidore Lefèbvre's sister Annette was also very close to Récamier and it was she who gave her brother the news of Juliette's death in 1849, AB XIX 4481, vol. IV, p. 55. Marie-Josephine's sister, Amelie Lénormant Cyvoct, who wrote a biography of Récamier, was to be one of the closest friends of Flavia Lefèbvre, Charles' daughter.



In 1828, Charles Lefèbvre de Clunière bought and had the château De la Brulière in Douchy, 35 kilometres from Fargerau, completely renovated.<sup>88</sup>



Coppet Castle was the last refuge of Madame de Staël and Juliette Récamier who died there in 1808 and 1849. It was visited at least three times by the Lefèbvre family.

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<sup>88</sup> Benzoni Juliette, *Cent ans de vie de château*, I. La Belle Époque, Paris, C. de Bartillat, 1992, pp. 38-39, 49, arch. pers.



## Chapter 15

### Financiers

A study by Louis Bergeron reconstructs the history of a financial institution called Caisse des Comptes Courants, founded on 11 Messidor Year IV (28 June 1796) by Augustin Monneron (1756-1826) and Jean Godard. The Lefèbvres were involved in this activity together with the Récamier family. The founders appointed 75 shareholders who, over the course of about 4 years, raised a capital of 5 million gold francs, including one L. Lefèbvre.<sup>89</sup> This group of 75 shareholders, Bergeron writes, constituted a privileged elite that operated with secrecy. Among them was Récamier, who held 10 shares of 5,000 francs each and became one of the people in charge of running the bank. This first company, which lasted until the 10 Nivôse Year VII (30 December 1798), was followed by a second company and all these subscriptions flowed into the new Banque de France founded in January 1800 at Napoleon's behest. The state of the documents makes it impossible to know how much this 'L. Lefèbvre' had invested. Not all subscribers are reported as having invested. Together with the Caisse des Comptes Courants, the Banque territoriale (founded in April 1799) and the Comptoir Commercial (also known as the Caisse de Jabach and founded in 1799), the Caisse d'Escompte du Commerce became one of the four major banks

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<sup>89</sup> We know that he was an associate of the Récamier and Bernard, so it can be no other than a Lefèbvre, probably Joseph Isidore who used his cousin Léon as a front man.

founded under the Directory Council and participated in the financial reorganisation of the country, while the creation of the Banque de France was already taking shape. This period of banking liberalism lasted until 1803, when Bonaparte assigned the Banque de France a centralising role in credit control and the issuing of money.

Founded on 4 Frimaire Year VI (24 November 1797) at 5 rue Ménars in Paris, the Association for the Prosperity of Commerce, nicknamed Caisse d'Escompte du Commerce (henceforth CEC), took advantage of the great freedom left to merchants who wished to found a private bank. The purpose of the institution was to facilitate trade, speed up circulation and provide insurance in commercial transactions. Whereas the Caisse des Comptes Courants (henceforth CCC) required three signatures for the merchant to transform a bill of exchange into metallic money, the CEC was content with only two signatures (the merchant and the purchaser) with much more advantageous rates. The articles of association of the Caisse provided for a capital increase chosen by the various 'associés' shareholders, who were negotiators (négociants), large merchants and bankers.<sup>90</sup> Each share was worth 10,000 francs as a subscription to the capital. The first issue comprised 200 shares or 2 million in capital. Initially, 47 joined, forming a capital of less than half a million francs, which was half a failure.

After one year, at the end of 1798, the promised return per share was 13% but the number of members peaked at 103. The

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<sup>90</sup> These include, for example, the Jubié brothers, textile industrialists from the La Sône region, in connection with the Basque shipowner Pierre-Léon Basterrèche, but also Antoine-Narcisse Lafond, the son of a Parisian wine merchant, who administered the Caisse for a time, as well as the financier André-Daniel Laffon de Ladebat.

directors of the Caisse devised a new method to interest a possible new member: if he pledged real estate, in exchange for it, mortgaged, the Caisse would offer 20 notes of 500 francs and then reduce the contribution in precious metal. By the end of 1799, the number of members had risen to 253; by the end of 1800 to 355; by 1801 there were 596, amounting to a capital of 24 million francs, of which 6 million was covered in metal cash. The Fund was therefore highly profitable and the value of the bills of exchange discounted exceeded 150 million francs a year. In October 1798, the CCC went through a crisis: one of its founders, Augustin Monneron, fled, taking almost 2.5 million gold francs with him. The managing director, Martin Garat, received substantial compensatory aid from the Caisse d'escompte du commerce. The first Caisse d'escompte du commerce banknotes, which were not legal tender but anticipated the first emergency issues of State-guaranteed banknotes, began to circulate and be exchanged between merchants. At the end of 1801, the government forbade the Caisse from increasing its capital, wishing to protect the development of the brand new Banque de France, also a private bank. In October 1802, the 'London Courier', a British newspaper, reported that the French government was trying to destroy the Caisse by presenting bills of exchange for 3 million francs at the counter in rue Ménars in a single day, but these were honoured. A few days later, a detachment of soldiers occupied the house that housed the CEC offices, seized all the books and papers, escorted the employees out and closed the offices.

At the beginning of 1803, negotiations for a merger with the Banque de France began, but many disagreements arose among the partners. In January, Jean Poulard, the general agent for the Fund's current accounts, disappeared with a large sum, but, strangely enough, there was no panic on the part of

customers. It was the second shortfall in just under two years.

On 8 August 1803, the terms of the merger were decided: each share in the Caisse would entitle the Lefèbvre to 5 shares in the Banque de France. The dissolution took effect on 24 September 1803 and a little over a year later the Lefèbvre family took up residence in the Rue Menars where the bank's headquarters had been established.



Léon Lefèbvre, a.k.a. François Noël Lefèbvre, made a career in the central administration, earning a Legion d'Honneur and a prestigious post, and showed himself, from a very young age, to be able and courageous. The fact that he was 17 years old at the time does not seem to be an obstacle since administrative positions could be taken at that age.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> For example, Henri Lefèvre d'Ormesson, a bachelor in law, was appointed councillor in the Paris Parliament on 4 July 1768 at the very age of 17. Serge de Maistre, *Henri IV d'Ormesson*, éd. Lacour, 2018, p. 27.



Hôtel de Toulouse, Paris. Since 1800 headquarters of the Bank of France, formerly the Casse des Comptes Courants.

The activity in the CCC would explain how it was possible for the Lefèbvre family to quickly become part of the banking elite in late 18th century Paris and how this activity continued, for Charles, in Naples where he was qualified at the beginning of his activity precisely as a 'banker'.<sup>92</sup> Charles was to become,

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<sup>92</sup> I recount in full the story of Charles Lefèbvre in Naples and his activities, including the claim that he was a banker – although he

as we shall see, an economic and even financial advisor to the kings of Naples and an intimate of the banking family par excellence of the modern era, the Rothschilds. The latter began to grant loans to the protagonists of European politics at the time, right in the middle of the Napoleonic wars, and a particularly important year seems to have been 1805-1806.<sup>93</sup> However, the real Rothschild banking house was opened in Paris in 1811 (and with a stable structure in 1817) by Jakob Mayer Rothschild (1792-1868) in Rue Lafitte which is located, and not by chance, where the banking houses and the houses of the high bureaucrats of the State were clustered, in Rue Chaussée d'Antin. Thus, within a few hundred metres of each other stood the houses of Bernard, Récamier, Lagard and the Lefèbvre.

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practised this activity in a non-continuous form – in the book *The Lefèbvre D'Ovidio. A dynasty between the ages*, in volume I.

<sup>93</sup> Niall Ferguson, *The House of Rothschild. Money's Prophets* (1798-1848), Penguin London pp. 64-80.



## Chapter 16

### Naples 1799-1806

Shortly before General Jean Étienne Vachier, known as Championnet (1762-1800), entered Naples, an insurgent brigand nicknamed Fra' Diavolo had led a revolt, been captured and then executed in the public square. It had happened on 3 November 1799. This fact had taught the French plenipotentiary that not all the inhabitants of that city had accepted the liberators, as they liked to call themselves, with open arms. That seaside metropolis, refined and wild at the same time, continued to arouse opposing feelings of fear and fascination. The place that would be the theatre for a whole century of the Lefèbvre family's life had been in a period of dramatic political convulsions for a decade. It had all started with the flight of Ferdinand IV of Bourbon on 22 January 1799 and the establishment of a republican regime inspired by the principles of the French Revolution: the Neapolitan Republic proclaimed by the Jacobins of Campania, which anticipated the French who aimed to establish an occupation government in the Neapolitan area. Forced to flee Naples in 1794 and repaired to Oneglia, which had been conquered by the French and where he was a revolutionary commissioner, Filippo Buonarroti enlisted in the Sanità militare.

The army rushed down the peninsula and arrived in Naples on 21 January under the command of Championnet. Two days later, by decree of the general, Carlo Lauberg was appointed president of the provisional and constituent government of the

Neapolitan Republic. Together with Eleonora Pimentel Fonseca, he founded the revolutionary propaganda newspaper *Monitore Napoletano*, which celebrated the advent of an era of freedom and equality. Lauberg was an Italian born in Teano, the son of a Walloon who had served in the Bourbon army and was a chemist by profession.<sup>94</sup> Like many exiles who returned home, he too showed excessive harshness against his compatriots and so, because of this, he was replaced by the moderate Ignazio Ciaia on 25 February 1799. Afterwards, he went to France, took the name Charles Jean Laubert, and continued to work as a chemist.



Entry of the army into Naples, 21 January 1799.

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<sup>94</sup> His Academy of Chemistry in Naples turned into a sort of Jacobin club frequented by pro-Republican students. An open Freemason, he founded the 'Patriotic Society' or 'Jacobin Society of Naples' with other lodge brothers.

The republican government sent its representatives (the so-called 'Neapolitan deputation') to the Directory in Paris. Among its first proposals, included in the *General Instructions*, were the 'subversion of feudalism' and the Jansenist-inspired project to create a national church independent of Rome. Everything, however, remained in the state of the first organisation because on 13 June 1799, those who rebelled against the French Revolution exported to Naples, and in particular the so-called Sanfedist Army, which had a substantial popular base and was led by Cardinal Fabrizio Ruffo (1744-1827), reconquered the Mezzogiorno, returning a large part of the territories to the monarchy of the Bourbons, who had meanwhile taken refuge in Palermo.<sup>95</sup>

After this reconquest, the Bourbons prudently remained in the Sicilian capital and even the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs, headed by John Acton (1736-1811), remained in Palermo. However, some administrative bodies were set up in Naples. At the end of the summer, the government of Naples was entrusted by Ferdinand IV to Cardinal Ruffo, who held the office of lieutenant and captain-general of the Kingdom of Sicily citeriore. On 27 September 1799, the Bourbons conquered Rome, ending the Roman Republic and returning the Pope. But the peace did not last long: less than two years later, in an attempt to stop the French advance and secure the Kingdom's northern borders, the Bourbons were defeated at Siena by General Joachim Murat (1767-1815). This was followed by the armistice of Foligno (18 February 1801) and the Peace of Florence between the Bourbons and Napoleon, which freed many of the approximately 1,300

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<sup>95</sup> The most up-to-date study on this character is by Massimo Viglione, *La Vandea italiana*, Effedieffe, Milan 1995.

Jacobins imprisoned in Naples.<sup>96</sup> In the aftermath of the Peace of Amiens (1802), the Bourbon court settled in Naples again. Less than three years later, under the impetus of Naples' aggressively expansive military policy, the French returned to the slopes of Vesuvius and occupied the Kingdom: this was at the end of 1805.

The plenipotentiary appointed by Napoleon was Joseph Bonaparte (1768-1844), who entered the city on 14 February 1806 and was greeted with hostility by the population. While he awaited his appointment as King, he created a moderate government according to Napoleon's directives, commissioning Louis Saliceti (1757-1809), an old Jacobin, to reorganise the police and General Regnier to suppress an Anglo-Bourbon insurrection in Sicily. Joseph Bonaparte did his best: he organised the territory according to the French model, dividing it into provinces, districts and communities. He appoints a Council of State of 36 members; separates the royal treasury from the State; expropriates monastic property and relaxes taxation. He intends to abolish the remnants of feudal taxation but has little chance of enforcing these laws as he would need a lot of time, which he will not be granted. He also introduces some elements of modernity in the judicial system, which will persist, by instituting the Code Napoleon. His intervention in the school system is directed towards the foundation of special schools with a technical orientation. In Naples, he began some important works: he demolished a suburb of mediaeval houses in front of the Royal Palace to create a large symbolic space, a space of power but also of hygiene; he also continued the construction of via Toledo, proceeding, with other minor works, to redevelopment.

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<sup>96</sup> Of these, 124 were sentenced to death, including Francesco Mario Pagano, Pimentel de Fonseca, Pasquale Baffi, Domenico Cirillo, Giuseppe Leonardo Albanese, Ignazio Ciaia, Luisa Sanfelice and Michele Granata. But not for all of them was the sentence carried out.

Renovation that did not always bring benefits, if it is true that the new quarters, not respecting the slope that allowed the sewage to drain, caused problems that the city would later suffer with serious health crises and cholera epidemics.<sup>97</sup> However, he began to improve the suburban road system by inaugurating the construction of the Ottaviano and Poggioreale roads and the road to Calabrie.<sup>98</sup> The Council of Civil Buildings (16 October 1816) was responsible for building cemeteries, promenades, public buildings and monuments. Corso Napoleone was built and the Capodichino hill was flattened where the city's Campo di Marte was created, suitable for military parades and war exercises.<sup>99</sup>

After the Peace of Tilsit he was appointed King of Naples and no longer of the Two Sicilies. In December 1807, after the British proclaimed the continental blockade, Napoleon planned a Spanish expedition to put Joseph on the throne of Madrid. At that point, Napoleon's brother reluctantly left Naples. On 31 July 1808, Napoleon succeeded him with his brother-in-law Joachim Murat (1808-1815), who was above all a military man by training and temperament. In these years, while more than half of the Peninsula was conquered and then controlled by Napoleon directly or with governments established by him, and the other half was entrusted to the Emperor's brother-in-law, the Lefèbvre adventures in Italy began.

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<sup>97</sup> Silvana Bartoletto, *La città che cambia. La trasformazione urbana della Napoli preunitaria (1815-1860)*, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, Naples 2000, pp. 40-41.

<sup>98</sup> Alessandra Bulgarelli Lukacs, *Rete stradale ed opere pubbliche durante il decennio francese in un inedito rapporto di Pietro Colletta*, in 'Archivio storico per le province napoletane', III, s. a XVIII 1979.

<sup>99</sup> Gino Doria, *Murat, re di Napoli*, Grimaldi & C., Cava dei Tirreni 1966, pp. 71-72.



## Chapter 17

### The Lefèbvre in the Kingdom of Naples

During the French Decade there were several people with the surnames Lefèbvre or Lefèvre present in Naples following the French. There is a Mariano Lefèvre who appears in a single naturalisation document, but he was probably mistranscribed, as the name 'Mariano' does not exist as an equivalent in French but there is 'Marie' as a middle name.<sup>100</sup> There is Isidore-Lefèvre mentioned and there is Charles. According to the recollections of his nephew André-Isidore, Uncle Charles had an elegant bearing, could speak, was intelligent, resourceful and courageous. In addition, as we know, his family had built up a network of relationships that enabled him to obtain and maintain a civilian post 'in the administration of the armies'.

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<sup>100</sup> Decree of 29 November 1815. State Archives of Naples, MGG, f. 1160. Carlo Mariano Lefèbvre (Charles Marian Lefèvre) was naturalised in the summer of 1816 but does not appear to be related to the Lefèbvre family that this book deals with. On naturalisations: Roberto Zaugg, *Guerra, rivoluzione, xenofobia. L'espulsione dei francesi dal Regno di Napoli (1793)*, in Franco Salvatori (ed.), *Il Mediterraneo delle città. Scambi, confronti, culture, rappresentazioni*, Viella, Rome 2008, pp. 299-321. J. Baillou, C. Lucet and J. Vimont, *Les affaires étrangères et le corps diplomatique français* Editions du CNRS, Paris, 1984; *Archives Nationales de France, Fonds des Affaires Etrangères. Correspondance consulaire, Naples*, vols. 867-903. Ruggiero Romano, *Il commercio franco-napoletano nel secolo XVIII*, in Ruggiero Romano (ed.), *Napoli dal Vicereame al Regno*, Turin, Einaudi, 1976, pp. 67-122.

Part of this network of relations was family-based and some of its links we know: they led to other branches Lefèbvre that had moved before the mid-18th century to Versailles and Paris and had played a part, as we have seen, in the pre-revolutionary and even Napoleonic financial world.

Based on these experiences and networks, André-Isidore Lefèbvre tells us, Charles 'was sent on an important mission to Venice' where he stayed 'for a long time', at least two or three years.<sup>101</sup> Unfortunately, we know very little about his Venetian activities, and this is the least known, indeed completely obscured, part of his life. If so, his mission must have been secret, probably engaged in operations related to armaments and the passage of gunpowder on ships carrying supplies. We do know, however, that during this period he was among the army's subsistence suppliers, which explains why he does not appear in the ranks of Murat's army and administration: his post was a private one.

Moreover, his brother 'Léon' (François-Noël), who worked in the police office of the occupying army from 1806, would be active in the lagoon city in the following years. The two had taken different paths, although they both worked for the French armies. Léon began his work in Venice when Charles was already in Naples. At different times, the two found themselves in Venice probably working with the same people.

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<sup>101</sup> AB XIX 4480-4483, Fonds André-Isidore Lefèbvre. Livre Premier 1680 à 1822.





The fall of Venice in 1797. Charles Lefèbvre was present.

The years from 1797 to 1804 are the least known period of Charles' life. We know that he lived in Venice for a long time from the spring-summer of 1797, i.e. from the fall of Venice conquered by the French. He often returned to Paris and travelled to Naples, Bari, Foggia and Lecce. As a supplier to the armed forces specialising in materials for hospitals (gauze, bandages, medicinal powders, syrups, herbs, plasters, medicines and also medical tools such as pliers, scissors, and instruments for field hospitals), he frequently travelled to the places where the most important quartering positions were established and there organised supplies in cooperation with the military.<sup>102</sup> At first, Charles followed the Revolutionary

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<sup>102</sup> That he was a private contractor and not attached to the army is shown by the fact that his name does not appear in the works that list all the military officials in the army, see Virgilio Ilari - Piero Crociani - Giancarlo Boeri, *Storia Militare del Regno Murattiano (1806-1815)*,

Army commanded by Napoleon, which advanced, city after city, until the capitulation of the Serenissima on 12 May 1797. The great army needed civilian *fournisseurs*, agents who, like Charles, bought on the market at the best price.

After 1804, when the revolutionary army had transformed into the Napoleonic Grand Armée, Charles shifted his interests to the capital of the then Kingdom of Naples. He arrived at a crucial moment when, at the fall of Ferdinand IV, the so-called French Decade (lasting from the occupation of 1805 to the fall of Murat in 1815) began under the regimes of Joseph Napoleon (1806-1808) and Joachim Murat. In Naples, Charles arrived with the French troops and stayed throughout the Murat period. In 1804 – presumably thanks to Récamier – he met Jean-André Vauchelle (1779-1860), Commissioner of War for the occupying troops, with whom he formed a friendship that would last a long time. Vauchelle is a constant presence in André-Isidore's diaries and it was he who believed in Charles' abilities to the extent of entrusting him with increasingly important tasks.<sup>103</sup>

Between 1804 and 1805, Charles resided in Naples in a territory first at war and then almost pacified, but by force. According to his nephew André-Isidore, his work was well remunerated because it was very risky. The nephew gives the impression that he knows but does not know everything. Some of Charles Lefèbvre's missions must have been very confidential in nature, of the kind that leave no trace in the records. At the same time, Joseph-Isidore, who had had a long

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Widerholdt Frères, Novara 2007.

<sup>103</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. IV, p. 156. J-A. Vauchelle was to write a *Cours élémentaire d'aministration militaire*, (Dauphine, Paris 1829) in several tomes that was to be very successful. He continued his career under successive regimes and was awarded the Legion of Honour in 1847.

career with Taillepie de Bondy and Pierre Lagarde, also came into Vauchelle's confidence. His father had worked with Necker, Lefèvre d'Ormesson and others. In short, the family, although partly monarchist in political ideology, had a solid reputation. Charles had for this disgraced cousin a brotherly feeling that was fully reciprocated.<sup>104</sup> During the years when Charles travelled between Venice, Northern Italy and Naples, Joseph-Isidore had remained in Paris but the two, according to the son of the last, had always kept in correspondence.

In 1805, from being a simple external 'fournisseur' of the French armies, Charles became a 'chef de service de subsistances militaires à l'armée de Napoléon', a senior officer in the subsistence services but not in the army, which is why his name is not on the enlistment rolls. It was thanks to this development that he was allowed to live in a flat in the large Calabritto Palace, where Joseph Bonaparte's administration had settled and where Joachim Murat's would also settle. The choice of this palace also had a symbolic meaning: it belonged to Frenchmen who had made their fortune there. It stood a short distance from the Chiaia shoreline, with its clear sandy shore and laid out with an elegant tree-lined promenade in 1809.

Charles managed many men under him, organised trips throughout Southern Italy as far as Calabria and Sicily still ravaged by wars and revolts. He was contracted to supply basic necessities, but at that time he was also supplying the hospitals that Napoleon's armies had installed south of Naples.

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<sup>104</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. IV, p. 157.



Calabritto Palace at the end of the 18th century.

From reading André-Isidore's family history, we learn that in 1805 Charles wrote a letter to Joseph-Isidore in which he extolled the opportunities that Italy could offer to the enterprising and the willing. So, the latter began to think about joining his own fortune to that of his cousin. The start date of his cousin's work is 26 October 1805, as we already know, and it is not a coincidental time: in the previous months, in fact, several banks had failed in Paris so that the network of friendships and protections that existed around Joseph-Isidore had crumbled and many had left Paris. In 1805, Henri Lefèvre d'Ormesson was also dismissed from all duties, and again the

dates do not appear coincidental. Especially if we consider that the exodus of the Lefèbvre family to Naples took place immediately after their death in Paris on 12 April 1808.

The crisis of Jacques-Rose Récamier's bank, which had started in early 1805, had turned out to be very serious, a crisis that led to the bankruptcy of the institution in the autumn of that year. Récamier decided to expatriate and in fact remained outside France for several years. In 1811, Juliette also went into exile and never returned to live permanently in France, preferring Switzerland. During this difficult period, among those closest to her were Rosanne and Annette.<sup>105</sup> We know that Joseph-Isidore, with two still young children, had found himself without work after the bankruptcy of Banque Récamier, and that he finally decided to follow his cousin to Italy. It was a journey undertaken out of necessity at the no longer green age, especially for that time, of 46, in an entirely new environment.

### **1808: Pierre Lefèbvre dies**

Before returning to the events surrounding Charles, it is worth recalling what happened in 1808. In that year, the old Pierre Lefèbvre, the patriarch who had remained in Besançon, died.<sup>106</sup> Everything suggests that he divided his inheritance as he felt close to death: in fact, not even a month passed between

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<sup>105</sup> AB XIX 4482, vol. VII, p. 39.

<sup>106</sup> These documents were transcribed in the memoirs of André-Isidore Lefèbvre and were later recovered between 2009 and 2010 and then in 2012 in the course of archival research that corroborates the accuracy of the ancient family historiographer on whose reliability we will have many opportunities to confirm.

his last autograph deed of 20 April and his death on 16 May 1808. According to the civil register, the elderly parent lived in the large house at Rue Neuve 4 in Besançon where the Lefèbvre family is attested at both numbers 4 and 5, in two separate houses. There is no further mention of the house in Rue Réunion in Grenoble where the mother had died: the city centre had been affected by building work, what can be guessed is that the house had been sold at that time.

The brothers named in the division of the inheritance were François-Noël, who was at the time on a mission in Venice; Jean-François, living in Paris; Charles, on a mission in Naples; Françoise Gabrielle, married Grand, living in Besançon and, finally, the young *demoiselle* Denise Monique Flavie (1790-1863). Another brother, Auguste (1776-1830), is not named in the deed: he had probably been liquidated in some other way of his inheritance. As for 18-year-old Denise Monique Flavie, she took part in the division of assets but under the guardianship of her sister Françoise-Gabrielle because she was still a minor. Only the two women were therefore present at the reading because the brothers were all away.

It appears from these documents that Pierre had provided for the liquidation of his sons' share of the inheritance that belonged to their mother's estate. In 1808, they received the liquid sum – not modest at the time – of 12,000 gold francs each: Jean-François in Paris and Charles in Naples before Etienne Framery, in his capacity as Imperial Vice-Consul of the Consulate General of Naples.<sup>107</sup> With that amount of money, one could buy a house, even if it was not a large one, or secure an income capable of making a decent living. On 1

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<sup>107</sup> ADD, Besançon. Sous Series 3E - 1/35 du 6 juin 1808. Procuration; ADD, Besançon. Sous Series 3E - 1/35 du 11 juin 1808. Procuration.

August 1808, an inventory of the goods contained in the man's house was compiled and this document clearly mentions all five living children, the three boys, Jean-François, François-Noël and Charles, and the two girls, Denise Gabrielle and Monique-Flavie.<sup>108</sup>

Also missing in this document is any mention of Auguste. He was, after all, a difficult character and had developed ideas and a different lifestyle from his brothers. He was an original, a protester, a freethinker and an atheist, unlike his relatives, who were fervent Catholics. It is therefore possible that he was at odds, for some reason, with the family.

### **The difficulties of Joseph-Isidore**

In the pages in which André-Isidore writes this news, drawing on his father's *Journal de Voyage*, he reminds us – *en passant* – that his father, on his way down to Italy, had stopped to visit some uncles, his father's siblings including Maximilien Lefèbvre and Alexandrine Lefèbvre, who lived in Saint-Symphorien, Rével and La Perrière, names that testify to the extreme branching out of the family over two generations. In the same places today, more than two centuries later, several families with this name survive, evidently distant descendants of the main trunk. He then made a long stopover in Milan where he stayed for a few weeks, coming into contact with the rich colony of French people, and there he was joined by the news of the birth of his third daughter, Jeanne Ernestine, on 12

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<sup>108</sup> ADD, Besançon. Sous Serie 3 E 1/31 du 20 juin 1807; 1/31 du 14 septembre 1807; 1/31 du 20 avril 1808. ADD, Besançon. Sous Series 3E - 1/35 du 19 août 1808. Inventaire au domicile de M. Pierre Lefèbvre.

December 1805. He was also joined by Marcel Duval, who warned him that the Récamier bank was totally bankrupt and that he could no longer count on it to work. On 16 February 1806 in Florence, he met Dareste, his friend and distant relative, whom we will meet again later in our story, and was comforted by a letter he received from Perrière in which his uncle, known by the nickname 'Hauteville', encouraged him to be strong.

He then left for Naples where he was met by Charles who had the opportunity to explain to him in detail the nature of the job he had proposed to him: to supply the troops with medical supplies in the territories south of Naples. It was not a desk job, far from it: it involved uncomfortable and dangerous journeys on horseback or by carriage through hostile territory. At that time, what was already called 'brigandage' was very active, but was in fact Sanfedismo, the resistance to the anti-monarchical and anti-religious policies of the French. Alongside this was the common banditry.

Joseph-Isidore left Naples after a few weeks' stop heading south, probably in the company of other men, with wagons and soldiers in tow. He was weaker and less resolute than Charles, but also considerably older: at the time of these first journeys, as mentioned, he was already 46 years old. He had had to accept that job out of necessity, but he began to hate it from the outset and entrusted his own difficulties to a diary – which unfortunately has only come down to us in small part through his son's entries.

André-Isidore, who read his father's first notes written in the summer of 1806, describes his state of deep fatigue and various difficulties. Accustomed to Parisian life and quiet work, the man did not adapt to that hard life in the torrid climate of Southern Italy. He went through a deep crisis and



began to meditate on leaving the job: he was not cut out for it, he felt tired and psychologically prostrated. André-Jean Vauchelle, a long-standing family friend, accompanied him on some of these trips. His presence is the reason why Joseph-Isidore allowed himself to be persuaded by Charles: Vauchelle was an important member of the French bureaucracy, a friend of François de Paule Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1785-1858) whose expertise was used by several regimes; his friendship guaranteed secure employment in Italy and France.

Joseph-Isidore tried to hold on. His travels, based in Naples, continued for another year and a half between the summer of 1806 and the early months of 1808. In the meantime, his son André-Isidore had fallen ill, probably of a lung disease judging by the treatment he was given: thermal baths in a resort in the centre of France where he stayed throughout the summer of 1807 with his mother Annette. Among other stops, the two had visited Madame de Staël in Coppet. Juliette Récamier was also present when the Lefèvre visited her. During the same trip, little André-Isidore was taken to Revel where his great-uncle Pierre de Clunière lived (it was his last months of life) and his sons Jean-François de Duchalay and François Lefèvre de Sibille, who had not married and remained bachelors. Very different from Charles, they would lead a quiet provincial existence without moving from the area in which they were born. They would enter a cone of shadow from which they would emerge from time to time on the occasion of relatives' visits, deaths and inheritance matters.

## The Adventures of Joseph-Isidore

On his return from his first voyage in September 1806, Joseph-Isidore was involved by his cousin in another kind of military supply: food and comfort supplies. According to his nephew, food supplies were a more lucrative business than hospital subsistence because the volumes to be supplied were higher. So, Joseph-Isidore took up his duties on 25 November 1806, replacing Charles who had temporarily left Naples to take up the post of official in charge of *Administration des Vivres* of the *Commisariat des Guerres* in Terra d'Otranto. His logistical bases (with warehouses and offices) were located in Trani, Barletta and Lecce.<sup>109</sup> Here too, his task was to contact suppliers, establish prices and supply conditions, and ensure that the army, on its frequent journeys, never ran out of essential goods.<sup>110</sup>

Joseph-Isidore took over for his cousin on an exclusive basis in Naples throughout 1807 and 1808, undertaking arduous journeys – often in the company of Vauchelle – as far as Barletta and Brindisi. He also went to stay at Palazzo Coscia Partanna where Vauchelle lived.<sup>111</sup> However, during this same period, between 1807 and 1808, Vauchelle is known to have been entrusted with a very delicate mission, which is recounted as follows by one of his biographers:

He was barely 30 years old when he was entrusted with a mission of the greatest importance. Corfu, which we had conquered, was

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<sup>109</sup> Maria Sofia Corciulo, *Dall'amministrazione alla Costituzione. I consigli generali e distrettuali di Terra d'Otranto nel decennio francese*, Guida Editori, Naples 1992.

<sup>110</sup>. Cf. vol. 4 p. 170 ff.

<sup>111</sup> Again, in March 1812, Joseph-Isidore left for Brindisi together with Vauchelle AB XIX 4481, vol. IV, p. 159.

threatened and blockaded by the British fleet. An important supply of explosives had been shipped from the Adriatic ports. It was then announced that, due to theft and losses, there was a shortage of firearms ammunition on the island. It was to Mr. Vauchelle that the government of Naples, or rather that of France, entrusted the task of going to the authorities there, to obtain approval, to check whether there was sufficient explosive and, if it was lacking, to ascertain the real causes that had produced it. He embarked at night on a fragile dinghy and happily passed through the British fleet, began and successfully completed his mission.<sup>112</sup>

Soon afterwards, however, he was captured by a Turk and freed after some time thanks to the intervention of a certain Apollon, a friend of the Sultan. Following this mission, he is assigned to 'important services' in Naples and becomes *Ordonnateur*, i.e. general manager of army logistics. Then his assignments took him to Sicily.

Unfortunately, the highly confidential nature of these actions and the lack of documents prevent us from saying more now. We ask ourselves one question: does the mission that engaged Vauchelle in the Venice area with supplies stranded in Corfu have anything to do with the confidential 'mission' that engaged Charles and that Lauri speaks of?<sup>113</sup> We ignore it for the moment. On 14 August 1808, meanwhile, Joseph-Isidore was able to invest part of the proceeds of his work by entering into a partnership with Monsieur Charles-Antoine Béranger, who had set up a printing works on the Riviera di Chiaia, known as *Stamperia francese*, thus laying the foundations for the Lefèbvre paper empire.<sup>114</sup> The

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<sup>112</sup> M. Ploix, *Étude Historique sur M. Vauchelle*, Auguste Montalant, Versailles 1860, p. 8.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> AB XIX 4480, vol. I, pp. 23-24.

resourcefulness that he lacked to continue the enterprise – he would leave Naples in 1816 to take up a modest post in Puy-le-Dome – was to be Charles', who would turn the attempt into a success.

### **François Noël and Pierre Lagarde**

To understand how the Lefèbvre family's fortune was founded, we must at this point focus on another of its exponents: François-Noël, one of Charles's brothers, who was also named for his collaboration with the Caisse du Comptes Courants. We know that in those years at the turn of the century, he was carrying out an assignment in Venice, in contact with the powerful Pierre Lagarde (1763-1837), an assignment whose delicate nature cannot be known and which is probably related to Vauchelle. Lagarde is one of those figures who had the ability to remain influential and hold important positions beyond the change of governments and regimes, such as Charles de Talleyrand; indeed, we will find him in prominent roles even in the post-Napoleonic period.

At the beginning of 1807, 25-year-old François-Noël moved to Venice to work with Lagarde, 'commissaire générale chargé de la police de Venice et de l'Adriatique', as an 'employé dans les bureaux', thus reporting directly to Lagarde.<sup>115</sup> He had previously performed the duties of army supply officer.<sup>116</sup> The

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<sup>115</sup> ADD, Besançon. Sous Series 3E 1/31 du 20 juin 1807; Ferdinand Boyer, *Pierre Lagarde, policier de Napoléon à Venise en 1806*, Rome, Paris 1957. Some reports compiled by Lagarde and addressed to Napoleon can be found in this book.

<sup>116</sup> Catalogue of the Historical Library of Andrew Dickson White: The French revolution, Part 2, Cornell University Libraries 1894, p. 174.

bureaucrats of the Bourbon financial administration represented a sympathetic group and Lagarde, like the Lefèbvre, came from a family of *Riceviteurs du domaine du Roi* and had been a subordinate of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson, Calonne and Necker. His father was in the same profession as Pierre Lefèbvre and Bernard's family. As organiser of the gendarmerie, François-Noël was sent first to Amiens, then to Milan, then to Venice where he organised and led the police and intelligence activities as *Directeur General*. He thus became a high-ranking member of the security and information services, what we now call the *intelligence services*. His jurisdiction included not only Venice and the Venetian hinterland, but also dependent territories in the Adriatic Sea such as the coasts of Istria and Croatia.

After the Napoleonic defeat, he was one of those officials who, like Joseph Fouché and above all the aforementioned Charles de Talleyrand, managed to stay in power by becoming minister and commander-in-chief of the National Guard under Louis XVIII. He managed to hold important posts even after the July Revolution, until his death, residing in Paris until after 1814. François-Noël remained *employé* until 1814 when Lagarde's police office was closed and the executive returned to Paris, then settled in Lyon as a state administrator.<sup>117</sup>

After carrying out his duties to Charles' satisfaction (he spent his time mainly in Lecce and returned two or three times a year to Naples), Joseph-Isidore was promoted to *attaché* at the Ministry of Finance of the Kingdom of Italy in the last months of Murat's government, a position that would earn him the considerable sum of 12,000 francs a year.<sup>118</sup> But what happened

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<sup>117</sup> Ferdinand Boyer, *Pierre Lagarde policier de Napoleon à Venise en 1806*, 'Rassegna storica del Risorgimento', pp. 88-95. Ibid, p. 88.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

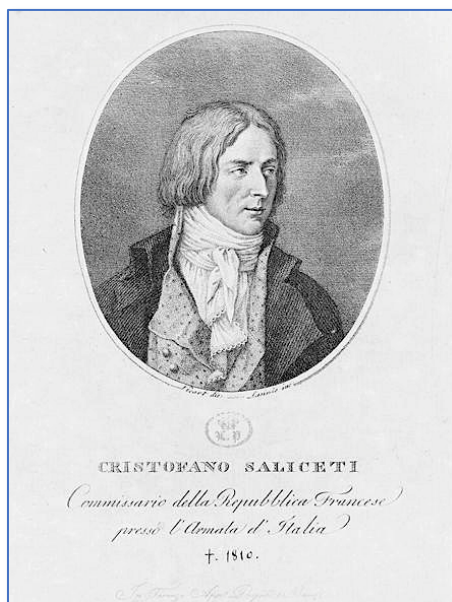
immediately afterwards, with the conclusion of Murat's affair, caused a new reversal of fortune for Joseph-Isidore.

### **The parable of Joachim Murat**

In the meantime, let us briefly review Murat's story in Naples, the scene of Charles' first successes. He entered Naples on 6 September 1808 on parade, followed by his wife Carolina and children. First, the newcomer conquered Capri, which remained in the hands of an English contingent. The Kingdom of Naples was besieged by the Austrians, the British – who had a protectorate over Sicily – and the anti-Napoleonic French, and was also plagued by rebellion and turmoil. Murat suffers within a deaf but not very strong opposition also because the people are tired, the petty bourgeoisie impoverished by the consequences of the continental blockade and the languishing trade. Several aristocrats collaborated, hoping for an attenuated version of the Jacobin revolution. Murat appointed Giuseppe Zurlo, Marzio Marzilli, created Duke of Gallo by Murat, the Minister of Justice Francesco Ricciardi and the Minister of the Interior Giuseppe Capececiatti to the government. Minister of Police was Antonio Saliceti, drawn from the ranks of the Carbonari.

Vincenzo Cuoco and Giuseppe Poerio were members of the Council of State. In his policy of centralisation, Murat in 1808 removed all privileges from the municipality of Naples by purging the local bureaucracy – and this caused him no few dislikes – he also reduced the prerogatives of priests and religious orders and introduced divorce. His best activity was in the field of public education where he established high schools in addition to the pre-existing parochial schools.

Caroline established the College of Miracles for noble girls, which was to have a long life. On 30 May 1807 Joseph Bonaparte, King of Naples and Sicily, instituted two Royal Colleges for the Province of Naples, and one for each Province, dedicated to instruction in the Sciences and Liberal Arts. The Royal College of Naples was placed at Gesù Vecchio, vacated by the Jesuits expelled the previous year. The College could be attended by internal and external pupils, including non-nobles. On 28 February 1812, the Royal College became the Liceo del Salvatore.



Cristoforo Saliceti, owner of the Palazzo Policastro then passed to the Caracciolo and Doria d'Angri families, and finally to Teresa Doria Lefèbvre.

Murat had the library in Naples and those in the monasteries restored, established the asylum in Aversa and an Agrarian chair, built bridges and roads and reclaimed the Coroglio marshes in the then sparsely populated Bagnoli area. In the city he opened roads such as Foria, San Giovanni a Carbonara, and roads to Posillipo and Bagnoli and continued some works begun by Joseph Bonaparte. He then divided up the larger feudal possessions and, from 1811, granted noble titles and *maggioraschi* (vast landed estates) to his collaborators to encourage modernising action.

However, his policy in certain areas worsens the situation because he liquidates feudality from a legal point of view while leaving intact the baronial estates that are no longer limited by the sovereign's power (since they no longer have feudal obligations to the sovereign). He then instituted protectionist duties and even subsidies. Some sectors benefit, others less so. Brilliant is Zurlo's financial policy that reorganises the tax system to the disadvantage of the wealthy classes. On 3 January 1813, Murat announced that he had balanced the budget but also resorted to forced donations (thus a kind of trickery). In his final years he also reorganised the land register.

In 1809 the Napoleonic order seemed to be achieved when the Peace of Vienna was signed (Schönbrunn, 14 October 1809). At that point, Murat occupied Southern Italy and Calabria and organised an expedition to drive the British out of Sicily. When Napoleon married Maria Luisa of Austria in 1810, Murat was disappointed: he did not agree to Napoleon's alliance with the Habsburg dynasty. Back in Calabria, Murat ordered General Paul Grenier (1768-1827) to land in Sicily, but he refused because he was loyal to Napoleon's directives. Hence the defeat of Scaletta.



He then exempted all foreigners not yet naturalised, including Frenchmen, from military service. While Napoleon's army leaves the Kingdom of Italy, Frenchmen holding military or civil posts can stay without changing passports. Murat took part in the Russian Campaign showing loyalty to Napoleon even though the two were getting along less and less well: Joachim sought his own autonomy. He also took part in the German campaigns, but reluctantly, by now he was attached to his Southern Kingdom. There followed the victory of Dresden, in which Murat participated, and then the defeat at Leipzig which was the beginning of Napoleon's end.

Convinced that he could undertake an independent policy, which Napoleon disliked, Murat proposed peace treaties with the Austrians, which Vienna did not ratify, as they included the renunciation of Ferdinand's throne. On the 26th of the same month, however, the end of the naval blockade restored some oxygen to the gasping Neapolitan economy. Murat, in order to win popular favour, relieves taxes, encourages trade and excludes foreigners from all offices. But the population is no friend to him. The Bourbons regained strength and the liberals continued to demand the English-style constitution that even Ferdinand had had to concede. Among the last important acts for Neapolitan construction during Murat's reign was the start of work on the new, large, monumental cemetery at Poggioreale, begun in 1814 and completed in 1837, when it was inaugurated.<sup>119</sup>

When news arrived of Napoleon's escape from Elba, his brother-in-law declared war on the Austrians (with whom he had made peace) and proclaimed that he wanted to unify Italy. Within a few weeks, until the final defeat at Tolentino, his fate

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<sup>119</sup> Cesare de Seta, *Naoli*, Laterza, Bari-Rome 1981, p. 215.

was sealed. After Pietro Colletta and Michele Carascosa signed the Treaty of Casalanza (20 May), i.e. the surrender, Murat fled, hoping to fight with Napoleon. He waited in Corsica until he landed in Pizzo Calabro on 8 October with a few men, where he was captured by Captain Trentacapilli who dragged him off to prison. Murat did not want to be judged by a court, he confessed and gave himself up. He is then shot.

Charles managed to remain a collaborator in Joseph Bonaparte's French army of occupation (1806-1808) and then in the army of the Napoleonic monarch of the Kingdom of Naples Joachim Murat (1808-1815). They are two formally different institutions but the civil leaders are the same. There is a continuity that did not affect Charles; he worked continuously during the French Decade and, surprisingly, continued to work afterwards. Having become a well-known and important figure in the hierarchy of the army's suppliers, he was given accommodation in Palazzo Calabritto, the seat of central power in Murat's Kingdom.

Meanwhile, in 1812, the importance of Bernard and other French bankers – as already mentioned – declined. Its function was supplanted by that of the Rothschild Bank, founded in Paris in 1811 by James Mayer de Rothschild (1792-1868), Rothschild Frères. Within a few years, James Mayer became an advisor to the Emperor. Later, in 1821, a brother, Calmann Mayer Rothschild (1788-1855) would be invited to Naples to found a branch of the bank while the French branch would finance first the restored Bourbons and then the various incarnations of the French government.

## In time

As the decades and then the centuries passed, the links between the named families loosened, starting with the more than likely progenitor Jean Michel Lefèvre of the D'Ormesson family, born between 1620 and 1621 to André Lefèvre d'Ormesson and who followed, like many others, the fate of a cadet son, seeking a suitable occupation. If he is, as it seems, the point of connection between the Lefèvre d'Ormesson and the Lefèbvre de Clunière, then we have reconstructed his entire lineage since this is not known elsewhere.

Until the end, the Lefèbvre family maintained correspondence and frequently visited Madame de Staël (1817), Pierre Lagarde (1837), Juliette Récamier (1849) and Jean-André Vauchelle (1860), all three of whom were guests in Naples. Vauchelle lived almost all his life in Versailles, where he also became mayor, and wrote books on the administration and subsistence techniques of armies. Contact was maintained with the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family when Charles and his son Ernesto travelled to Paris, as was often the case. After the Unification, Ernesto lived in Paris for a few years, mainly between 1861 and 1865. Traces of encounters are mentioned by Emmanuel-Marie Henri François-de-Paule Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1808-1882) and Emmanuel Marie François Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1844-1922) when André-Isidore mentions distant relatives in Paris.<sup>120</sup> The latter in his memoirs also mentions a *célèbre famille Lefèvre* who did not belong to the now extinct branches of Pierre's descendants and who had

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<sup>120</sup> AB XIX 4483, vol. VI, passim.

worked, one specifies, in the financial administration.<sup>121</sup> Thereafter, relations seem to have been lost.

Apart from this – people's relationships can be volatile with no ties to place or office – the link of the Lefèbvre de Clunière with their early past is written in the coat of arms designed in 1854, which is identical to that of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson. This was a claim of belonging that must have been clear to all contemporaries and of which family members of the time must have been well aware.

In conclusion, here we have reconstructed a complex web of evidence that, even in the absence of the final 'document', indicates to us that that identity was also an identity of blood and genealogy going back centuries.

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<sup>121</sup> AB XIX 4482, vol. IV, *passim*.

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