CHAPTER – 5
THE CRITICAL PHASE (1713- 1744)

The first half of the eighteenth century was a critical phase for the French population in North America. It was marked by a tightening of the Anglo- American noose for the inland settlements as the French population in Newfoundland, Acadia (Nova Scotia) and Isle Royale (Cape Breton) came under British control. On the other hand, from Canada centered on the St. Lawrence lowlands, French economic, cultural and military sovereignty expanded inland into mid- America, to the Gulf of Mexico to the south and the foothills of the Rocky Mountains to the west. Louis XIV’s reign had begun in 1661 with a ‘compact colony’ policy in Canada and ended in 1715 with an expansionist policy for largely strategic reasons. Historians have debated the wisdom of this change in policy –William J. Eccles declaring it to be the cause of French defeat in North America, while Jacques Mathieu and Cornelius J. Jaenen view it as a realistic policy of survival in the circumstances of the period.

The Treaty of Utrecht signed in 1715 between France and England signified a retreat for Canada, as it legalized the latter’s conquest of Acadia during the War of Spanish Succession. However, important though this retreat was from the larger perspective of Anglo- French rivalry in North America, its immediate impact on the future of Canada was rather limited. The economic and political linkages between Canada and Acadia, though growing over time, were still not central to the survival of either. The Laurentian colony had by this time developed as a largely self- sufficient, well- knit community capable of developing further in the same direction with the support of the mother

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Moreover, the French, in alliance with the natives, still controlled the greater part of the continental landmass from Quebec to Louisiana, and there was nothing to suggest that their position could not be further consolidated.

The reign of Louis XIV had proved to be a trend-setter in state support for Canada. Thus the process of developing the colony through vigorous intervention of the state, which, in fact, amounted to greater resources spent on it and more interest taken in the general welfare of the people, would not come to a halt under the successors of the 'divine right monarch'. As we would see in the course of this chapter, the period between 1713 and 1763 witnessed a continuation of the policies of paternalistic administration vis a vis the colony. This was, of course, related to the consolidation of the state in France, which was now well on its way to evolving into a modern nation-state, complete with the idea of welfarism as the state ideology.

Other developments favored the growth of the colony, too. In 1701, Canada had finally achieved a peace settlement with the warlike Iroquois, which would enable it to concentrate its resources on the growth of the colony. At the same time, the colonists had succeeded in maintaining the French-native alliance that was so vital to the security as well as economic development of the colony. Moreover, the Treaty of Utrecht would provide Canada a thirty-year period of respite in its rivalry with the English colonies. A combination of all these factors would enable the colony to further realize its potentialities as a well-established French community in North America.

Economic Development of Canada:

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2 Gilles Howard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701*, Montreal 2001 describes the conclusion of hostilities that had been initiated by Champlain in 1609. Also, see, ‘*New France and War*’ by Desmond Morton, Toronto 1983.
The last phase of Canada as a French colony was essentially a period of economic expansion, even if there were many bottlenecks in the short term. In the aftermath of the Treaty of Utrecht, the colony was faced with a series of problems without whose resolution any hopes of long-term development of the economy could not seriously be entertained. The fur trade, which had continued to be one of the most important sources of wealth for the colony, had stagnated around the turn of the century due to overproduction, on the one hand, and slackening of demand, on the other. Continuous warfare had also resulted in the diversion of the resources hitherto devoted to trade and other productive activities to the defense of the colony. Moreover, the internal network that had ensured the ever-increasing supplies of fur from the natives had also weakened during the period.

The Fur Trade: Revival and Expansion:

None of the problems mentioned above, however, constituted an insurmountable barrier to the revival of the lucrative fur trade; before long, the trade was to undergo a remarkable recovery. Fortunately for Canada, the overstocking of furs in Europe had come to an end by this time, due partly to the damage done by rats and moths; this revival of demand led to rapid recovery in the fortunes of fur trade, so that within a few years the enterprise was as profitable as ever. Nevertheless, the revival had its problems. As mentioned earlier, fur trade in Canada, though crucial for the revenues it generated, was much more than a purely economic enterprise. From the very outset, the colonists were faced with a situation where the alliance with the natives was indispensable for their very survival; the inherent vulnerability of the small French colony and the long drawn-

out contest with the English were the two principal aspects of this indispensability. The
natives provided the best furs to the colonists on a reliable basis due to their alliance with
the latter; they also helped keep the English settlers at bay. In fact, but for the native
military assistance in times of crisis, Canada would have been hard put to maintain its
control over the far-flung areas throughout the length and breadth of North America.
Thus, the control was more of a joint venture of the French and the natives than a purely
French affair. In any case, the transfer of the native loyalty to the English settlers was a
possibility that had to be checked because of its catastrophic implications. As we have
seen earlier, the natives did cross over to the other side rather frequently, even though the
French colonists continued to enjoy the loyalty of some of the most important native
tribes; thus the scales were so far tilted in favor of the canadiens in their tug of war
against the Atlantic colonies.

Owing to all these reasons, it was important for Canada to continue to pay more for the
native furs than would have been justified in a purely commercial exchange. On their
part, the native allies of the French had long been accustomed to a variety of European
goods without which they could scarcely manage their own affairs. During the period
under review in this chapter, the colonists continued to supply these goods to their native
allies at a subsidized rate at Fort Niagara, Fort Frontenac and Detroit. Other trading posts
in the more remote areas of the continent were also maintained for the same reason. The
subsidy thus doled out by the Crown was to the tune of 183,000 livres per annum - a
heavy burden on the colony. Though the fur trade continued to flourish under this
beneficent arrangement, the loss of Hudson Bay region to the English, stipulated by the
Treaty of Utrecht, had the effect of weakening the French position vis a vis their rivals,

4 Ibid. p. 120. The magisterial study in this domain remains Harold A. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada: An
Introduction to Canadian Economic History, Toronto 1956, revised edition of the 1930 study.
5 Ibid.
since the region produced the best furs in the whole of North America\(^6\). Moreover, the loss of the territory which the French had taken in 1685 from the London based company also deprived the colonists of the northern sea route, which was an alternative route to Europe. However, for the moment, the trade continued unabated, reaching an average of worth 200,000 livres per annum in the first decade after the Treaty of Utrecht\(^7\). In many ways, the trade had become more organized than it had ever been. Thus the voyageurs, who had the official sanction, had come to play more important a role than the coureur de bois, and they were fully supported by Vaudreuil, the Governor of New France, partly because he had his own stake in the lucrative trade\(^8\). Many coureur de bois, however, continued their operations, so that the Crown had to pass orders in 1714 and 1716, calling upon them to come back to the settlements from the forests; those who did so would be

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\(^6\) Adam-Shortt, ed., *Documents relating to Canadian Currency, Exchange and Finance during the French Period*, Ottawa 1925, p. 192. By this time, furs of other animals had also assumed great importance in the fur trade, though their compound supply was still less than that of beaver alone. These included wildcat, marten, bear, otter, moose and mink. Ibid. Apart from the loss of Hudson Bay furs to the English, about a quarter of the total furs, worth about 50,000 pounds, brought to Montreal were smuggled to New York by the various trade interests in order to earn higher profits. The coureur de bois were heavily involved in this contraband trade. Mason Wade, *The French Canadians*, Toronto 1955, p. 32.

\(^7\) C11A, 36, *Nouvelle Regie des Castors*, 1716, p. 433; *Au Roi et à nos Seigneurs de son Conseil*, 1716, p. 442. B, 39, *Le Conseil de Marine à Vaudreuil et Begon, 14 juillet 1717*, fol. 257. As earlier, the bulk of these furs were still used for making hats in France, though a third were further exported to Holland and Russia for the same purpose. Ibid.

\(^8\) *Rapport de l’archiviste de la province de Quebec, 1947-48*, *‘Vaudreuil et Begon à Pontchartrain, 16 septembre, 1714’,* pp. 274-75.; *‘Vaudreuil à Pontchartrain, 16 septembre 1714’,* p. 264. In fact, even a Recollet Father and a Judge were found to be involved in the illegal fur trade, and the latter was awarded imprisonment for a year for this offence. F3, 8, *Deliberation du Conseil de Marine, 18 octobre 1719*, fol. 182.

Very soon, however, the voyageurs themselves lost ground to others. According to Pritchard: “Early in the eighteenth century, habitants who ventured westwards once or twice in their youth before becoming immured on their small farms in the St. Lawrence Valley replaced the professional voyageurs. They were like their predecessors in name only. The few voyageurs who survived the economic force of proletarianization moved upward in New France’s social structure. Through partnership and marriage, they joined the class of fur trade merchants of Montreal, and by the 1720s the new voyageur-marchands, for so they were called, were consolidating their social and business positions in the colony by extending partnerships to military officers and post commandants who controlled access to trade at the western posts.” James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 104.
granted a general amnesty, the Crown declared. In the meanwhile, illegal trade continued unabated; the furs collected by the French traders continued to be diverted to the English colonies, which, of course, were equally keen on buying them, since it enhanced their profits and, at the same time, weakened their adversaries. The illegal trade had continued primarily because the monopolies granted to various companies were never enforceable in a strict manner. The infrastructure required to check all illegal trading simply did not exist; no amount of legal sanctions could, therefore, check the violation of the norms that the Crown sought to establish in the colony. This failure to effectively check what was described as contraband trade is another example of the relative freedom enjoyed by the colonists from the regulation of the state; the Crown could pass whatever orders it wanted to, but their implementation was never easy in the context of Canada. Ironically enough, none other than the governor himself was reportedly involved in illegal fur trade.

In 1718, the fur monopoly was granted by the Crown to the newly established Compagnie d'Occident, and the following year there was a merger of this company with the Compagnie des Indes. It needs to be pointed out that, even after the constitution of the company, a relatively large entity with supposedly greater capacity to regulate the trade, there remained ample scope for corruption in these transactions. Thus, the commanders of the various posts continued to benefit from the issue of licenses to their favorites.

The fur trade, whether legal or illegal, remained one of the three staples of North American trade with Europe, the other two being cod fish and timber. And it would

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10 The important role played by fur trade in the development of Canada has been one of the widely accepted themes of North American history. See James Pritchard, In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 150-161.
continue to be the mainstay of the Canadian economy right up to the end of the eighteenth century. We have seen that involvement in fur trade was quite widespread in the colony, though it was by no means universal, despite some accounts to the contrary.\footnote{One contemporary observer went to the extent of saying that ‘all Canadians, without a single exception, are traders’. This was obviously an exaggeration, though the popular nature of the trade is highlighted by many scholars. Thus Mason Wade calculates the total number of fur traders to be in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to have been in the region of 15,000- a very high figure considering the small size of the colonial population. Mason Wade, The French Canadians, Toronto, 1955, p. 32} Equally, it cannot be denied that participation in the trade had important consequences for the habitants, as far as their mode of living, their social organization and economic life were concerned; nor can it be disputed that contacts established with the natives for the procurement of furs had a discernible impact on the cultural practices of segments of the colony, as witnessed, for instance, in the case of the coureur de bois, who were repeatedly condemned by the more puritanical elements within the colony for having become ‘savage’ through those contacts.\footnote{On the problems of ‘running the woods’ and brandy trafficking, Cornelius J. Jaenen, The French Relationship with the Native Peoples of New France and Acadia, Ottawa 1984, pp.136- 147.} What is more, the fur trade had the effect of bringing the colonists in touch with more and more native tribes; the trade frontier continued to move westward as the supplies were depleted in the old regions with which the colonists were more familiar. Needless to say, this expansion of trade was not without its problems; by bringing the French into contact with more natives, who had their own time- honored interests in both land and other resources like furs, it opened the possibility of new conflicts with the western tribes. Here it should be remembered that the penetration of the continent by the traders, coureur de bois and the voyageurs, was accompanied by the advent of French explorers. It would be futile to speculate on the motives that guided them, since that did not have much impact on the outcome of their exploration. In this context, there can be no meaningful distinction between ventures
motivated by a genuine urge for geographical exploration and those motivated by purely mercenary considerations, and the two motives often converged for their mutual benefit. La Verendrye’s expedition into the western Canadian prairies, for example, was motivated and sustained by trade in hide and pelts. At any rate, the westward expansion of Canada brought it into conflict with the Outagamais, or the Fox tribe, who inhabited the area to the east of the Lake Michigan. We would discuss the conflict with natives in a later section.

The importance of fur trade is thus an established fact of Canadian history. However, there is an important school of historiography that seeks to elevate this trade to the level of a cardinal feature of the relationship between France and Canada, as also between Europe and North America, on the whole. H. A. Innis was the well-known author of the ‘staples thesis’ that provides a more or less deterministic explanation for the European occupation of North America; fishery, fur and, later on, timber are considered here the principal elements of the economic relationship between Europe and North America, which, in turn, determined the course of European involvement in the continent.

There are a number of problems with this argument. In the case of Canada, the cod fishery was more important financially than the fur trade, though it remained a largely seasonal European exploitation during the French regime. This was more so from the point of view of France. While it is true that the fur trade occupied a dominant position

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14 Rapport de l’archiviste de la province de Québec, 1947-48, Vaudreuil à Pontchartrain, 16 septembre 1714, p 264; Vaudreuil au duc d’Orléans, 1716, p. 293. The Fox Nation were opposed to the French exploration in the west, since that would have eroded their role of middlemen in the lucrative fur trade. It was only by 1734 that they were finally crushed by the colonists. For a detailed discussion on this issue, see Louise Phelps Kellog, The French Regime in Wisconsin and the North-West, Madison, Wisconsin, 1925.
15 See Harold Adams Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, Toronto 1930. Also, his Problems of Staple Production in Canada, Toronto 1933.
in Canadian economy, it is doubtful if it ever became anything more than a marginal element of trade, as far as France was concerned. Thus, in the decades preceding the Conquest, when annual fur traffic had reached an average of about one million livres, its share in the trade of the mother country was still miniscule, as France had at this time an international trade worth about 300 million livres and a colonial trade of 140 million16. Moreover, France had less important a role in the organization of the fur trade than Canada, a point that goes against the ‘staples thesis’.

Innis developed his theoretical approach more than forty years before the world systems theory was proposed by Immanuel Wallerstein. New France, like Canada later, was seen as the hinterland of a core society situated in Europe—France, England—for whose benefit it was to be exploited. Thus its society would remain essentially a resource-based community founded on extractive processes and primary industries. The colony looked to the mother country for the impetus, capital and technology for resource exploitation, according to this model. However, in the fur trade, both the impetus and the technology were based in the colony. The role of France in this trade was secondary and the benefits accruing to it were also marginal. This fact, though not central to our work, should, however, be kept in mind, as it would play a crucial role in deciding the importance

16 Maurice Filion, La Pensee et l’action coloniale de Maurepas vis a vis du Canada 1723-49, Ottawa 1972, p. 82. See also Fernand Braudel et Ernest Labrousse, eds., Histoire economique et sociale de la France, Paris 1970, II, 499 ff. Some of the other objections raised to Innis’ work have been discussed by a number of scholars. Thus, W.J. Eccles has accused him of having failed to look into the crucial archival material in the possession of the Hudson Bay Company that remained one of the main repositories of furs for a very long time. See J.M. Bumsted, Interpreting Canada’s Past, Toronto 1986, the article by W.J. Eccles titled, A Belated Review of Harold Adams Innis’s The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 98. It has also been suggested that the fur trade constituted a minor share in the foreign trade of Britain as well, with less than half a percent of total imports. Murray G. Lawson, Fur: a Study in English Mercantilism 1700-75, Toronto 1943, pp. 70-72. As he puts it: “In short, in the eighteenth century... it was actually of no real importance either to the English or the American economy.” Ibid. It is equally erroneous to assume that the beaver trade was the main interest of entities like Comapagnie de la France, established after the demise of the Compagnie des Indes Occidentales in 1674. Rather, the Company relied on profits from slave trade and West Indies trade, and gave over its monopoly on lease to La Chesnaye. Yves F. Zoltvany, Aubert de la Chesnaye, Charles, Dictionary of Canadian Biography, II, Toronto 1969, p. 29.
attached to the colony by the mother country. The Treaty of Paris (1763), which ceded Canada to England, while retaining the French control over sugar islands in the Caribbean, was profoundly affected by the strictly limited economic importance of the colony for France. The marginal role played by the fur trade in French economy tilted the scales against New France. Wheat and timber industry assumed importance only under the British rule, as Britain needed these commodities more than France. On the other hand, France did not lose her North American fishery in 1763.

Development of Shipbuilding, Iron Forging and Other Industries:

There is plentiful evidence to argue that the Laurentian colony made serious efforts during this period to achieve a measure of self sufficiency by pursuing economic development in other areas as well, since it was only through a more vigorous commercial and industrial pursuit that the colony could justify its raison d’etre in the eyes of the Ministry of the Marine. As we would see, the decades following the Treaty of Utrecht did witness important developments in this regard, though Canada remained a financial liability for the home government right through the Conquest of 1763.

We had seen in an earlier chapter how Canada, under the able guidance of Talon, had embarked upon an ambitious programme of ship-building towards the end of the seventeenth century. Though the programme had achieved only moderate success, and the more ambitious projects had to be shelved due to lack of sufficient expertise and the shortage of labor, some of the smaller vessels were successfully launched through these efforts. Whereas shipbuilding had continued in a small way even after the departure of the Intendant from the scene, it was kept on the backburner during the War of Spanish Succession (1703-1713). The enterprise got a new lease of life as a result of the initiative
taken by Intendant Begon in the 1720s, and a number of ships of considerable size were successfully launched. It was, however, Gilles Hocquart who, following the example of his predecessor Talon, conceived of a grand ship-building enterprise in the colony. Under his able, though sometimes overzealous, guidance no less than twenty-one ships were launched within a period of two years, and the Crown was successfully persuaded to provide modest subsidies for the enterprise\textsuperscript{17}. The success achieved by the Canadian shipyards was, however, in the category of smaller ships, with a displacement of fifty to two-hundred tons, used primarily as merchant vessels. The more grandiose projects under which naval ships with a much larger displacement, ranging from five hundred to a thousand tons, were sought to be constructed proved to be unworkable at this stage. The reasons for this are not far to seek\textsuperscript{18}. The colony had only limited supply of the labour required for large industrial undertakings, and much of the technology and expertise had also to be imported from France, thus rendering the construction of larger naval vessels unviable. However, in 1742, the royal shipyard at Quebec launched its largest merchant ship, with a displacement of 500 tons, and it won universal acclaim in France\textsuperscript{19}. Thus it could be said that the colony had achieved considerable success in becoming self-dependent in this regard; this success compares favorably to that of the English colonies, where again it was mostly the smaller vessels that were built successfully\textsuperscript{20}.

\textsuperscript{17} Memoire du roi à Beauharnois et Hocquart, 8 mai 171, fol. 521. The subsidies offered ranged from 100 to 500 livres according to the size of the concerned ship. Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} See Jacques Mathieu, L'échec de la construction navale royale à la fin du régime français, Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers, 1968, pp. 24-34.

\textsuperscript{19} B, 68, Memoire du roi à Beauharnois et Hocquart, 1er mai 1739, fol. 34.B, 76-1, Maurepas à Levasseur, 11 avril 1743, fol. 19.

\textsuperscript{20} W.J. Eccles, France in America, Toronto 1973, p. 123. Eccles ascribes the failure to build the naval vessels to the fact that 'the Canadian forest did not provide enough knee timbers of adequate size and the requisite soundness for such ships.' Ibid.
During the period under review, Canada also witnessed the rise of other important industries; chief among these was iron-forging. We would recall how finding minerals had been one of the principal motives behind the French colonial enterprise in North America, and how Cartier was ‘taken for a ride’, so to say, in the case of gold and diamonds. Fortunately, iron was discovered at St. Maurice near Trois Rivières in 1670, though iron smelting started only in 1732, when the St. Maurice Iron Works was established for this purpose. The iron ore found at the site was considered to be as good or even better than that available in Europe at the time, and, therefore, the prospects for the upcoming industry were deemed to be relatively good. Since the technology and expertise required for iron-forging were not available within the colony, the Crown had to take the initiative in this regard; which it did by deputing Poulin de Francheville, an experienced man in the field, to take over the responsibility in the colony, and by offering an initial subsidy of 10,000 livres for the enterprise. Within a year of its inauguration, the St. Maurice Iron Works was able to produce high quality iron products, though the industry suffered a setback in the death of Francheville. However, the iron industry did not die along with its proprietor. The Crown took a second initiative in 1737, when it deputed Olivier de Vezins for the purpose of reviving the industry. Although this second attempt at iron-forging turned out to be more lasting, and iron products like pots and pans, axes and other tools were successfully made, the industry eventually ran into financial difficulties, owing, by 1743, close to 190,000 livres to the royal treasury, forcing it to declare bankruptcy in that same year. Despite this apparent failure,
however, the Crown did not give up on its effort to promote iron industry in the colony,
and decided to take over the enterprise directly in its own hands. Henceforward, it
earned more success in terms of production, and it continued to supply the colony with
many of its requirements, including cannons and cannonballs. Nevertheless, the
enterprise could not become economically viable, and its continuation was contingent
upon royal subsidies. Thus early in the history of the colony, state intervention in the
colony was seen as necessary because private enterprise alone could not ensure
development. The role of the state as a beneficent entity in both and social and economic
matters was gradually implanted in the *Canadien* mentality. Would it always be so?
The Canadian experience with iron-forging shows that, with support from the mother
country, even advanced industries could be founded in the colony. That the colony was
able to produce at least some of the iron implements and utensils it needed was by no
means a mean achievement; that the iron industry remained unprofitable is beside the
point. Given the small size of population in the colony, it was only natural that economies
of scale could not be practiced in a heavy industry like iron-forging. By the eighteenth
century, even before the rise of industrial revolution, Europe had become quite advanced
in the manufacturing of iron, and the scale of production was already quite large, spurred
on by the increasing demand for iron from various sectors, including shipbuilding. The
technical know-how and the intensification of capital that accompanied the increased

25 *Arret du Roi, ler mai 1743*, fol. 51.
26 Despite the fact that it was a losing venture economically, the quality of goods produced was at par with
those produced anywhere in Europe or North America in the eighteenth century. See Joseph Noel Fauteux,
Kalm has also spoken favorably of the Canadian iron industry. See Adolph B. Benson, ed., *Peter Kalm's
produced in the colony in the eighteenth century have borne out the fact that they had the same standard as
those produced in Europe. See Henry Miller, *Canada's First Iron Castings*, Mines Branch Information
Circular IC 209, Ottawa 1968.
levels of production were impossible to match in a small colony. Neither the technical expertise nor large supplies of labor was available to Canada to achieve a breakthrough in iron industry. In addition, there was no ready market to sustain high levels of production. Therefore, it is rather specious to argue, as some scholars have done, that the Canadian iron industry was 'inefficient', since the comparison with Europe is fundamentally flawed. If at all a comparison is to be made, it should be made with the English colonies, which again were not producing iron as efficiently as the factories in Europe. The relative weakness of industrial enterprises like iron-forging cannot, therefore, be attributed to any inherent flaws in the economic or political organization of the colony. Nor is there much justification for arguing that France did not encourage industrial activities in the colony, since, as we have seen, the Crown consistently provided the technical expertise as well as capital in the form of subsidies for the fledgling industry; there was nothing more it could do in the given circumstances.

Apart from shipbuilding and iron forging, Canada also attempted to produce tar that was needed for shipbuilding and other purposes. As in the case of many other industries, the first efforts to produce tar in the colony were taken by Intendant Talon. By 1720, the industry was developed enough to meet the local needs, and, in the following decades, it was even exporting pitch and resin, byproducts of the industry, to Europe. Small-scale industries with less requirements of capital and technical expertise such as tanning, brick and tile making also witnessed considerable development, and were able to fulfill the demand within the colony. Woodcarving had also acquired the traits of a full-fledged

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craft in the colony. Though weaving did not emerge as an organized industry, homespun cloth was produced by women for local consumption. Thus, in terms of identity and autonomy, the Canadiens did not constitute a 'shadow society' whose sense of independence and uniqueness was obscured by foreign ownership and cultural penetration.

Agriculture: Consolidation and Expansion:

Whereas the last fifty years of Canada as a French colony were important for the development of trade and industry, agriculture remained the primary occupation of the vast majority of colonists, and it is to this area that we must turn our attention now. We have discussed in the earlier chapters the introduction of seigneurial system, the establishment of farms along the St. Lawrence and other distinctive features of agrarian society and economy in Canada. The period under review witnessed considerable expansion of agriculture in the colony, and, within a decade or so after the Treaty of Utrecht, practically all the land in the existing concessions was brought under cultivation, necessitating in the process the creation of new seigneuries. In 1729, the Crown passed the orders for the creation of new seigneural concessions to accommodate the growing demand for land. Soon after this, a number of new seigneuries were granted behind the existing ones along the river. In addition, the Governor and the Intendant sought to expand cultivation by bringing the area along Lake Champlain and the Richelieu under

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28 See Jean Palardy, *The Early Furniture of French Canada, trans. from the French by Eric McLean*, Toronto 1963. Similarly silver carving had also developed well in the colony, and some of the works produced in the eighteenth century are preserved to this day and speak of the high standards of silversmiths. See Ramsay Taraquair, *The Old Silver of Quebec*, Toronto, 1963.

the seigneurial regime. Twenty seigneuries were granted in this area. However, even these new concessions were not enough to accommodate the rising demand for land, and, therefore, the authorities created seven new seigneuries along the Chauderie, a southern tributary of the St. Lawrence.

The creation of new seigneuries led to considerable expansion of cultivable land in the colony; from 26,146 arpents in 1721, it went up to nearly 75,000 arpents in 1739. During the same period, production of wheat increased from 283,000 bushels to 635,000 bushels. This was obviously a rapid expansion in agriculture that provided a strong impetus to Canadian economy. However, it must not be imagined that all the new seigneuries were successfully settled. Those in the region of Lake Champlain and the Richelieu were too distant from the chief settlements of the colony for generating enthusiasm in the grantees. Accordingly, very little of the land in these seigneuries was brought under cultivation.

By this time, cultivation in the vicinity of cities like Quebec and Montreal had become a well-established phenomenon, and most of the land under cultivation here dated back to the seventeenth century, mainly to the post 1663 period. A large number of farms in this region were held by Canadian-born farmers, whose fathers or grandfathers had originally settled the land. This, in turn, would bring into play the natural attachment of the habitants to the soil. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the habitant was certainly

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30 Gl, 461, Recensements de 1721, 1739, 1746.
31 Ibid.
not an upstart trying to eke out an existence from the soil but an established farmer as a member of a socio-cultural group, with its roots deep in the country.  

It was a characteristic of the colonial society that land was settled, small villages and parishes were created not by significant immigration from France but by internal migration from the original seigneuries on both sides of the St. Lawrence River between the planks of Orleans and Montreal. The 'frontier' was not distant as in the later American experience, but quite proximate, consisting of another range of concessions back from the riverine settlement towards the Canadian Shield or Laurentides in the North and the Appalachian ranges to the south. Parish and family networks were sustained as available arable land came under cultivation, forming a solid block settlement. This unique colonization experience was the foundation of a homogenous, distinct francophone society, conscious of its unique absorptive experience in blending diverse French regional peoples into a colonial entity.  

Whereas in many cases farms had become smaller as a result of division among the heirs, the average size of a farm in the colony was still in the region of 100 arpents. There were many factors working against a more efficient agriculture; restrictions on sale of land mandated by the coutume, scarcity of labor and the small size of market within the colony all worked against improvement in agricultural operations. There is reason to believe that the techniques of farming used by the habitants were not quite as advanced as those used in Europe at the time. Thus, crop rotation was not practiced in the colony on a significant

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32 In fact, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the Canadiens had acquired such a distinctive character that Bougainville, an aide of Montcalm, was led to say: 'It seems that we are of a different nation, even an enemy one.' Bougainville; cited L. Groulx, *La Naissance d'une race*, Montreal 1919, p. 239-40.

scale; the use of manure was highly restricted; selective breeding was again not widely practiced in the colony. Perhaps the most important reason behind this backwardness of agriculture was the virtually unlimited supply of land in the colony. The habitants cultivated a piece of land without crop rotation or without leaving it fallow, as long as it remained fertile. Once the fertility of the soil in a farm was exhausted, it was left for pastureland, and fresh land was brought under cultivation. Of course, the land left for pasturage could be brought back under the plough, as and when it regained its fertility. The initial high fertility of the virgin soil was also perhaps responsible for the relative backwardness of agricultural practices; the initial seed- to -yield ratios were sometimes as high as 1 to 20, though the average was closer to 1 to 10. It took many years for these high yield averages to come down, and the farmer could reap a rich harvest in the meantime. Therefore, the agricultural practices prevalent in Canada were essentially dictated by the peculiarities of the agrarian situation in the colony.

34 Economy and Society during the French Regime to 1759, ed. Michael S. Cross and Gregory S. Kealey, Toronto 1983, article by Richard Colebrook Harris titled ‘the Habitants use of the land’ p. 23. There were two kinds of rotation in practice in Europe and North America. In France, wheat or barley were followed by oats, peas and a year of fallow to allow the land to recover its fertility. There was another kind of crop rotation called two- course rotation meaning a year of wheat followed by one or more years of fallow practiced by the Midi. However, the habitants, for the reasons mentioned above did not use either of the two methods on a large scale. Ibid.

35 PAC, MG I, Serie C11 A, Archives des Colonies, Paris, Correspondence Generale, Canada, VII, De Meulles au Ministre, 28 September 1685. Nevertheless, the use of manure was not entirely unknown. Especially the green manure in the form of fodder crops was used to fertilize the land. See Robert Lionel Seguin, L’ Équipment de la ferme canadienne au XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, Montreal, 1959, p. 40.


37 Richard Colebrook Harris has this to say on the Canadian agricultural practices: ‘ the abandonment in North America of several fundamental techniques of European agriculture stemmed less from the facts that many of the immigrants had been urban poor and that, at the level of individual farmers, contact with Europe ended when the Atlantic was crossed, than from the discovery that land was as plentiful in North America as it was scarce in Europe. In France a peasant with eight or ten arpents of land could feed his family and his livestock and produce a modest surplus for sale only if he tended his land carefully. To neglect manuring or to shift a rotation from three to two courses was to court disaster. If an advance in technique resulted in the short run in improved living standards, in the long run it usually led to a smaller farm, and when this contraction took place, the peasant could not abandon the innovation. North American agriculture, on the other hand, quickly became extensive. It mattered relatively little if soils in one field were worn out as long as there was empty land nearby. Because agricultural production per man almost certainly rose in North America the change was not necessarily atavistic, but rather a change from one
these problems, the average habitant enjoyed relatively high standards of living, due mainly to the sheer size of his landholding.

At this stage, there were no significant changes in the crops sown by the habitants. Thus wheat, which was the staple in France, had remained the staple in Canada as well, accounting for three-fourths of the total land under cultivation. Owing to a short growing season, the habitants could grow only one crop a year. Apart from wheat, the colony also produced some barley, peas and oats, which were even exported to West Indian islands. Whereas both barley and oat were grown for the cattle, in times of distress barley was consumed by the habitants themselves. Interestingly, the habitants had not as yet developed a liking for corn, grown extensively by the natives; nor had they developed any liking for potato. This shows that even as the habitants were getting more and more rooted in the North American soil, they had so far retained many of the food habits they had brought from France, though, of course those in closer touch with the natives would perhaps be less resistant to the local influence.

Tobacco was the one North American crop, however, that had gained wide acceptance within the colony. By the end of the French regime in North America, smoking was quite common among all sections of the society and among all age groups, including children. It was grown in the home garden of most farmers, and was thus a household agricultural system to another which lasted as long as land remained plentiful. See, Economy and Society during the French Regime, Michael S. Cross and Gregory S. Kealey ed., Toronto, 1973. Article by Richard Colebrook Harris. 23.

38 There was some diversification of agriculture in Canada by the end of the French regime but it had not gone very far with wheat and pulses accounting for only slightly less share of the total agricultural produce than they had done at the beginning of the eighteenth century. PAC, MG1, Serie C11,XXX, Vaudreuil et Raudot au Ministre, 14 November 1708, p.3 Seguin, L' equipment de la ferme canadienne au XVIIe et XVIIIe siecles, Montreal 1959, p. 40-42; Nicholas Gaspard Boucault, Etat present du Canada (1754)', in Rapport de l'Archiviste de la province de Quebec, 1920-21, p. 20.

produce\textsuperscript{40}. Indeed, some people had become addicted enough to it to invite condemnation from the more puritanical observers. By 1739, some 216,000 pounds of tobacco was being grown every year in the colony, its production having shot up fourfold in less than twenty years\textsuperscript{41}. Though the strong flavor of the Canadian tobacco was not much preferred outside the colony, where people had become used to it, this did not preclude moderate exports of the produce\textsuperscript{42}. The case of tobacco here is more or less comparable to that of alcohol among the natives, who had grown rapidly addicted to it, after it was introduced in North America by the European settlers.

There is ample evidence to suggest that the colony enjoyed an abundance of fruits and vegetables produced by practically every farmer. This would obviously have had the effect of augmenting the supplies of nutritious food available to the common people. Thus, beans, carrots, lettuce cucumber, cabbage, onions and a host of other vegetables were extensively grown in the colony\textsuperscript{43}. Similarly, apples, plums, pears and cherries were grown in large quantities\textsuperscript{44}.

There were no restrictions on fishing in the colony, and the St. Lawrence provided abundant supplies of fish for the habitants, another supplementary food available without any cost at all. However, owing perhaps to the scarcity of manpower in the colony,

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Quebec, 1920-21, Boucault, 'Etat present,' P. 20. Apple was the most common fruit grown by the habitants, and its production in Canada was said to equal that in Normandy. Ibid. However, peaches and apricots that were popular in Europe could not be grown in Canada due to extreme winter conditions. See A. B. Benson, ed., The America of 1750: Peter Kalm's Travels in North America, New York 1937, II, 508-09. However, there were probably some peach trees, as they have been mentioned by Gideon de Catalogne, though their number must have been really small. PAC, MG I, Serie C 11 A, XXXIII, Cataligne, Memoire sur Canada, 7 novembre 1712, p. 299.
fishing was practiced mainly for private consumption and not for commercial purposes, though some efforts were made to realize this potential\textsuperscript{45}. The availability of virtually unlimited pastureland was highly favorable to the rapid growth of livestock in the colony. As stated earlier, Peter Kalm has mentioned how most of the pastureland in the colony had once been agricultural land and would revert to cultivation in future\textsuperscript{46}. He has also mentioned that grass and clover were planted in the meadows, and that Canada had better pastureland than the English colonies\textsuperscript{47}. Thus the habitants had no dearth of fodder for livestock. Between 1721 and 1739, the number of horned cattle in the colony went up from 23,888 to 38,821, which is a significant increase, though it does not appear that the availability of cattle for agricultural and ancillary operations increased during the period. However, considering the fact that the population of Canada even at the end of the period was somewhere around 70,000, the figure for livestock certainly represents a highly favorable ratio for agriculture as well as for supplementing the food supplies of the colony. An average farmer owned no less than five to six cows and two oxen; prosperous farmers owned up to twenty cattle\textsuperscript{48}. When we consider the fact that at least a part of the milk, butter, cheese and meat produced in the farm was consumed in the household, this clearly brings out the picture of a society where even the ordinary people were relatively well fed\textsuperscript{49}.

\textsuperscript{45} Several stations were built for fishing, especially for seal, whose skin and oil were equally useful for the colony. In 1744, nine posts produced eighteen hundred barells of oil. There was also some collaboration with the French fishermen who visited the coastal areas on an annual basis. Cl1 A, 83, \textit{Etat des huiles de loup- marin}, 1744, p. 353. Charles de La Morandiere, \textit{Les Français au Labrador au XVIIIe siècle}, Acadamie de Marine, Vol. II, pp. 246-57.


\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
Implications of the Presence of Horses:

The presence of a relatively large number of horses in the colony during the eighteenth century was undoubtedly a reflection of general prosperity.\(^{50}\) It is important to note that horses, though employed in agriculture and drafting, were also a symbol of status in Canada, as they were in Europe at that time. In sharp contrast to France, however, where it would have been beyond the means of a humble farmer to afford a good horse, many habitants owned one or two horses each, along with a foal.\(^{51}\) It is important not to underestimate the value attached by the colonists to horse. In medieval societies, including Europe, horse riding was frequently associated not just with economic status but also with the political and military status enjoyed by groups or individuals. In fact, in many societies, horse riding was explicitly prohibited for commoners. Even though this was not the case in France, there can be no denying that in eighteenth century France, horse riding was considered the prerogative of the privileged classes. In this context, it is interesting to note the tension generated in the colony around the issue of horse ownership. Thus, Chapmpigny saw the habitants' purchase of horses from New England as wastage;\(^{52}\) the church often complained about the habitants' horse riding activities deemed to be disrespectful to its own authority, and horse riding was banned in the

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\(^{50}\) There were no horses in the colony before 1664, and Pierre Boucher's account of the colony makes no mention of horses. See Pierre Boucher, *Histoire veritable et naturelle des moeurs et productions du pays de la Nouvelle France*, ed., C. Coffin, Montreal 1882, p. 137.


\(^{52}\) PAC, MG 1, Serie C 11 A, XVII, Champigny au Ministre, 26 May 1699, p. 87. Indeed, there was a move in the English colonies themselves to ban the sale of horses to Canada. Thus in 1700, John Nanfan, who was the governor of New York between 1701-02, wrote to Robert Levingstone, secretary of Indian affairs, informing him of the said ban: 'By the Last post from hence there was an order of councell sent you under Dr. Staats court prohibiting all horses (to be understood of both species) being sent to Cannada out of this Province, till my Lord Bellomonts arrivall or further order, which I hope you will see duely executed for I think it of great conseqience to the future benifitt of this place.' Gilder Lehrman Document Number: GLC03107.00543.
vicinity of the church. Much of the concern of the authorities regarding horse riding emanated from what they considered was the lack of discipline among the habitants. But that is precisely the point. Horse riding was, unconsciously perhaps, associated with recalcitrant behavior on the part of the masses. Interestingly, it was even claimed by the officials that excessive horse riding was fast turning the habitants effeminate- the very opposite of what the latter themselves might have imagined.

Apart from cattle and horses, the colony also had a fair number of other animals like pig and sheep and poultry. Pigs were important because they supplied the most easily available variety of meat to the habitants. They needed relatively less care, requiring little shelter even in the winter. Though sheep were considered less profitable by the habitants and were less common than pigs, they were raised in many parts of Canada. Poultry constituted another source of food for the habitants. Quite apart from all this is, of course, the fact that there was no restriction on hunting in the colony, which was undoubtedly a favorable situation for the colonists.

Material Conditions of the Canadiens:

Despite significant increase in the population of the colony, scarcity of labor remained a perpetual problem. The average farm depended mainly upon the supply of family labor,
though hired labor was at times procured either from the existing workforce available in the colony or by contracting engagés, indentured laborers, from France. Perhaps, the number of farmers employing hired labor never exceeded fifteen percent or so. For the rest of the habitants, hired labor was either too expensive because of short supply or simply superfluous, with family labor considered sufficient for agricultural operations. The engages should not be seen as the proletariat in the colony. Most of them would have been marginal people in France willing to travel, and in many cases, settle in a distant colony. Rather than looking upon their contract binding them to some colonist for a certain number of years as a symbol purely of servitude, one needs to recognize that it was this initial period that gave them the experience and the wherewithal to establish themselves as independent colonists in due course. Since land was freely offered to them at the end of their tenure with their employer, any enterprising engage would see an improvement in his situation over time, the transition from engage to habitant being common though not universal. Similarly, we need to make a distinction between the life of an engage and that of a Negro or native slave, though the latter were never very common in the colony. There had been several proposals to import Negro slaves on a large scale, but they were abandoned for various reasons, the most important being the harsh winter of Canada considered too inclement for them.

However, it would be anachronistic to paint Canada as an egalitarian society to the denial of differences in socio-economic status. There were several socio-economic layers among the habitants, with the more prosperous among them having perhaps larger farms,

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more cattle head and horses and other symbols of prosperity. Some of these differences were undeniably due to the fact that all the colonists did not start from the same initial position. There would have been some starting from a relatively better position, perhaps carrying more cash at the time of their arrival in the colony, and there would have been others more or less penniless on their arrival. Whereas land itself was freely available, other factors of production such as cattle, labor, etc. would naturally have been more readily available to those who could pay for them. Probably, the larger families would also have an advantage in terms of the supply of labor, as would be the colonists who had come earlier than others. The chronology of settlement assumes importance because clearing of forestland was an arduous process that would take years and even decades in the case of any colonist with a grant of hundred arpents or so. Evidently, there were wide differences among the habitants in the cleared land owned by them. The more established ones sometimes owned as much as hundred arpents of cleared land, while the newcomers with fewer resources might have to be content with less than one fifth of that. It has been suggested that in order to sustain itself an average family of six required at least fifteen arpents of cleared land. Only five to six arpents out of these would normally be reserved for wheat, the rest going either to barley, peas, etc., meant for cattle feed, or to

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56 There was another kind of labour available to the well off habitant family. According to this system, boys and girls belonging to the poorer sections of the community were sometimes accepted in the relatively rich families as domestic help. They were taken care of by the adopting family in terms of their food, clothing and shelter until they turned adult. Ordonnances, commissions, etc., etc., des gouverneurs et intendants de la Nouvelle France, 1639-1706, 2 vols., Pierre - Georges Roy ed., Beauceville, 1924, Vol. I, p. 311-12, Ordonnance de l'Intendant, 17 March 1707.

57 Economy and Society during the French Regime, ed., Michael S. Cross & Gregory S Kealey, the article by Richard Colebrook Harris, p. 31. A hundred arpent farm produced about 300 minots. Out of these, 200 minots went towards the payment of various dues and only 200 remained with the habitant. This was still a big harvest, and the farmer could have something like 100 minots for sale. Besides, there would be livestock and dairy products for sale. Altogether, the habitants could earn an average of 500 livres from his farm. Ibid.

58 Ibid. 30.
pastureland. Since the average production per arpent was around nine minots, there would be no more than fifty minots of wheat at the end of the harvest season. Eight minots would be needed for sowing the next crop; three and a half would go towards paying for the milling of grain; approximately two minots would go to the church; and two or three minots would be needed for the payment of seigniorial dues. By the time all these charges were paid, the family would be left with thirty-four minots of wheat. In a family of six, the average consumption would be about six pounds a day, at which rate the produce would be just enough to feed the family for a year. This would obviously be bare minimum survival, and Peter Kalm has aptly remarked that such people survived on bread and water while they took ‘all other provisions such as butter, cheese, meat, poultry, eggs, etc., to town to get money for them ... to buy clothes and brandy for themselves and finery for their women’. It is obvious, therefore, that some colonists lived more or less at the level of survival. However, even these probably lived in a better condition than they would have had in the mother country, where many of them would have been landless laborers in the French countryside, a kind of rural proletariat. Owning the land they cultivated and deriving enough from it for their sustenance would still be regarded as an improvement for such people. Moreover, the variations were not in the ownership but the settlement of land. As the new colonists cleared more and more land over the years, they gradually rose to the level of well-established habitants. This upward mobility was more or less assured, as long as the colonists took a healthy interest in clearing the land. Therefore, even when a

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
colonist was initially in a lower socio-economic stratum, he could realistically hope to get rid of his difficulties in the near future. Assuming that one man could clear about one and a half acres of land a year, the settlement of a farm with fifty arpents or so cleared would obviously take a number of years, even with a large family and hired labor, wherever the latter could be procured. Once this was achieved, however, things would be relatively easy for the habitant.

Thus, given the large measure of upward mobility, the colony was a relatively egalitarian enterprise. Among the ordinary farmers, the differences in socio-economic conditions could not have gone too far even by the end of the French regime in North America, which is quite understandable, given the fact that the main factor of production, that is land, was freely available to the colonists. While other factors mentioned above could and did make a difference, they could not influence things too far. In any case, most of the habitants and their descendents by now saw an improvement in their socio-economic conditions. This was, perhaps, the origin of the oft-repeated complaint that in Canada 'everyone was a monsieur or madame'. The Canadian society of the eighteenth century, therefore, shared at least some of the benefits of a frontier society more or less in the same way as the English colonies of North America, the most important being the free availability of land in a pioneer society.

Visitors to Canada in the eighteenth century were generally surprised by the level of prosperity among the habitants, in the sense that most of them were well fed and well-dressed. That would be the criteria for prosperity for the masses in the eighteenth century Europe and North America. The Jesuit Father Charlevoix paid two successive visits to Canada in the early part of the eighteenth century, and has left an excellent account of the
social and economic conditions in the colony. One of the most important things that emerges from his accounts is that the soldiers as a class were probably less well off than *habitants*, though the larger picture of social and economic well-being is true for them as well. According to Charlevoix:

> Everyone has the wherewithal of existence here; one pays little to the King; the habitant pays not the taille; he has cheap bread; meat and fish are not dear; but wine, cloth and all things that must come from France cost a great deal. The gentlemen and officers who have only their pay and who are charged with families are the worst off. The women usually bring no other dowry to their husbands than much wit, love, their charms and a great fertility; for God bestows upon the marriages in this country the benediction that he gave to those of the patriarchs; to provide subsistence for such numerous families requires that one also leads the life of the patriarchs, but the time of that has passed. There is more noble blood in New France than in all our other colonies together. The King still maintains twenty-eight companies of troops of the Marine, and three staffs. Several families have been ennobled, and several officers of the Carignan-Sallieres Regiment have remained there, so that the country is peopled with gentlemen, of whom the greater part are not at their ease. They would be still less well off, if trade were not permitted to them, and if hunting and fishing were not here open to all.

63 L.P. Kellogg, ed., *Charlevoix’ Journal of a Voyage to North America*, Chicago 1923, Vol. I, p. 245-47. Elsewhere, Charlevoix noted the good physical appearance of the *Canadiens*, due presumably to better supplies of food, but also mentions the dearth of a very rich class in Canada, by which he probably meant the kind of high nobility and big merchants he was familiar with in France. As he puts it: "there are no rich people in this country; and that is unfortunate, for there is a great fondness for keeping up one’s position there, and nearly no one amuses himself by thrift. Good cheer is supplied, if its provision leaves enough means to be well clothed; if not, one cuts on the table in order to be well dressed. Our Creoles have benefited by the change. Everyone here is of good stature, and the best blood in the world is to be found in both sexes; lively wits, gentle and polite manners are common to all; and boorishness of language and manner is unknown even in the backwoods." Ibid. 116-17. Thus the habitant, according to Charlevoix, was almost an eighteenth century European gentleman, and not a half-starved, ill-dressed, unsophisticated peasant. The relatively better socio-economic status of the *habitants* was also mentioned by Lahonton, several decades before Charlevoix, which provides further evidence on the issue. According to Lahonton: "None must say habitant, for the title of peasant is no better received here than in Spain, whether because they pay neither sel ni taille and have the liberty to hunt and fish, or because their easy life puts them on a level with the nobles." R.G. Thwaites, ed., *New Voyages to North America by Baron de Lahonton*, Chicago 1905, I, p. 34-35. It is important to note here the emphasis put by Lahonton on the freedom to fish and hunt, which was in stark contrast to the conditions in France, and was, therefore, mentioned by most observers from Europe. Whereas his contention that the *habitants* were ‘on a level with the nobles’ is not
We have noted it earlier that trade, especially the fur trade, was followed by very large sections of the society in Canada, and was an important source of income for people who were not primarily traders. Charlevoix's comments are thus only a corroboration of this trend in the colony. The relatively high fertility of women, as mentioned by Charlevoix, was no doubt a reflection of the increased availability of food in the colony, since it is a known fact that in the pre-industrial societies prosperity was reflected more in higher population than in higher standards of living. There were moments of distress in Canada, whenever crops failed or supplies from France failed to come, but the increased availability of the basic requirement, that is food, was the rule. The lack of restrictions on fishing and hunting was certainly an important factor augmenting the food supply. Interestingly, Charlevoix then goes on to discuss what he regards as lethargy and lack of initiative on the part of the habitant, who was complacent with what he already had, and was not overly concerned about getting more:

'After all, it is somewhat their own fault if they suffer misery; the soil is good almost everywhere, and farming is not degrading. How many gentlemen in all the provinces of France would envy the lot of the simple habitants of Canada, if they knew it. And those who languish there in shameful poverty, can they be excused for not embracing a profession which only the corruption of morals and of the most sane maxims has degraded from its ancient nobility? We know no healthier climate in the world than there; there is no special sickness, the countryside and forest are full of marvelous remedies, and the trees distill balms of great virtue. These advantages should at least retain those whom Providence has caused to be born there, but frivolity, aversion to assiduous and

meant to be taken too literally, and would simply suggest an increased socio-economic status, the spirit of independence, noted earlier, had much to do with it. That the Canadiens were, on the whole, less submissive than the masses in France is mentioned even by the political authorities in the colony. Thus Vaudreuil, in 1725, noted a 'spirit of mutiny and independence' among the habitants. See APQ, Correspondence de Vaudreuil, Vaudreuil 'a Maurepas, 18 mai 1725.
regular labor, and the spirit of independence have always made a number of young men leave, and
have prevented the colony from peopling itself.

It is not a mere coincidence that Charlevoix blames whatever 'misery' was there in the
colony on the 'frivolity', 'aversion to assiduous and regular labor', and the 'spirit of
independence' on the part of the habitants, for this was a recurring theme in any number
of clerical accounts of the colony. The spirit of independence that the habitants seem to
have displayed was, of course, the most shocking behavior, as far as the elite observers,
whether clerics or members of nobility, were concerned. It is no doubt true that the
average Canadien was less submissive to his social superiors than his counterpart in
France, and the reasons are not far to seek. The habitant was an independent farmer in his
own right owing 100 arpents of land on an average, had enough to feed himself and his
family, could afford a horse or two, and played a crucial role in the defense of the colony.
Moreover, there were far less social and economic restrictions on him in Canada, with the
entire community living in a world where little separated it from the ever present frontier.
All these factors were bound to create a spirit of independence in the habitant, though it is
difficult to determine in what ways 'frivolity' and 'spirit of independence' acted as
barriers to economic progress of the colony.

That this frontier society was relatively more prosperous is, therefore, more or less
beyond doubt, in so far as the ordinary colonist was concerned. To be sure, Canada did
not possess great aristocrats, merchants, etc. the way France did. However, it did have an

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64 Ibid. p. 245-47. Interestingly enough, Charlevoix attributes these supposed faults of the Canadiens to the
influence of the native culture, and thus recognizes that they indeed had a character far different from that
of the Frenchmen of his days: "These are, Madame, the faults with which most often and most justly the
French Canadians are reproached. They are also those of the Savages. It seems that the air which one
breathes in this continent contributes to it, but the example and habit of its natural inhabitants, who put all
their happiness in liberty and independence, are more than sufficient to form this character. Ibid. Thus, as
we have discussed earlier, the native cultures had had a far-reaching impact on the Canadiens, and it was
the French-native intermixture that had gone into the making of a distinctive identity for the colony.

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increased level of prosperity for the common people, which was reflected in their food and dress. While the new settlers with only a few arpents of cleared land might have survived mainly on bread, most others were well supplied with meat, fish, poultry, vegetables, fruits and dairy products. By the eighteenth century, the habitants were weaving enough cloth out of flax and wool for their own consumption, and a majority of households owned a spinning wheel. The relatively better dressing of the habitants would later be commented upon by the British observers immediately after the conquest of the colony. For example, this is how a British officer commented upon the people of Montreal after its conquest in 1760:

‘..From the number of silk robes, laced coats and powdered heads of both sexes, and almost all ages, that are perambulating the streets from morning to night, a stranger would be induced to believe that Montreal is inhabited entirely by people of independent and plentiful fortunes." It should be pointed out that by the end of period under review a Canadian aristocracy had come into existence. Many of the seigneurs and high officials in the government of the colony were by now born and brought up in the colony itself, rather than being first generation migrants from France. The wealthier among the habitants, the captains of the militia and perhaps some traders constituted the rest of the dominant classes in the

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65 Arthur C. Doughty ed., An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758 and 1759 by Captain John Knox, 3 vols, Toronto 1914, Vol. III, p. 605. There were other similar observations made by the new comers: “A stranger would take Montreal to be a city inhabited by none but the rich and idle. They are all finely powdered, walk with their hats under their arms and wear long coats adorned with tinsel lace, buttoned down to the extremity. The ladies in general are handsome, extremely gay and well bred.” Louis Des Cognets, Jr., Amherst and Canada, Princeton 1962, p. 292. The testimony of the English observers makes ample sense once we take into account Father Charlevoix’s comparison between Canada and English colonies: “The English colonist amasses means and makes no superfluous expense; the French enjoys what he has and often parades what he has not. The former works for his heirs; the latter leaves his in the need in which he is himself, to get along as best as they can. The British Americans dislike war, because they have so much to lose; they do not humor the Savages, because they see no need to do so.” L.P. Kellogg, ed., Charlevoix’ Journal of a Voyage in North America, Chicago 1923, I, p. 117-18.
Of course, the status of high government officials like the Governor or Intendant had always been much higher than the rest of the people\textsuperscript{67}; so was the case with the larger seigneurs and the high officials of the church. However, by this time, the bulk of this class was well on its way to 'Canadianization', often condemned by the Frenchmen, and this growing identification with the hopes and aspirations of the colony would obviously go a long way in creating a spirit of unity among all sections of colonial society. This is not to suggest that such a unity in the colony was necessarily conceived in oppositional terms with the mother country. However, the affirmation of a Canadian identity was by now a well-established fact in the colony.

In the course of this thesis, we have seen that the Canadiens as a community were primarily agricultural in nature\textsuperscript{68}. What was the effect of this agricultural nature of the Canadien society? It facilitated the association of Canadianness with rural agricultural life and virtues— the 'agriculturism myth' adopted by nationalists, especially the clergy. There developed a supposedly a natural association of a peasant vocation with 'race', a providential mission. This was most clearly restated in the twentieth century by Canon Lionel Groulx:

\textsuperscript{66} It is obvious that the idea of wealthy itself was different in Canada, in comparison with France, where a wealthy man was expected to have an annual income of at least 100,000 livres. High government functionaries and other members of aristocracy had usually incomes in excess of that figure. In this sense, there were hardly any rich people in the colony, but the middle-income group was considerably large. And this was probably the reason for the generally better condition of the ordinary colonist.

That there was considerable upward mobility in the colony is borne out by the fact that, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, no less than one third of the seigneuries were held by the habitants. See Guy Fregault, \textit{La civilization de la Nouvelle-france}, Montreal 1969, p. 184. Thus the seigneurial system in Canada was not similar to that in France, and about one sixth of all seigneurs had to forfeit their lands because of failure to settle them with people. The income that the seigneur could hope to earn from his land was never really substantial, and that partly accounts for the lack of a very rich element in the colony. See, Mason Wade, \textit{The French Canadians}, Toronto 1955, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{67} The Intendant's salary alone was to the tune of 12,000 livres. Trade was another important source of income for him and other high officials.

\textsuperscript{68} For an insightful analysis of the agrarian system in the last decades of the French regime up to the mid-eighteenth century, see Allen Greer, \textit{Peasant, Lord, and Merchant: Rural Society in Three Quebec Parishes 1740-1840}.
"At first sight, what mystery surrounds this grand race vested by its faith and its ethnic ascendancy with such a weighty vocation... it bears on its brow the seal of the predestined through whom divine deeds are performed."

His magisterial work, *La Naissance d'une race*, combined national or ethnic sentiments with a sense of group awareness, spiritual mission, providential protection and eventually some feeling of relative deprivation and victimization. From the colonial period flowed the isolationism, close-knit family networks and self-sufficient life style that became important in the maintenance of self-identity. This feeling of community and commonality has been defined by John Porter as characteristic of a 'charter group'.

Nature of Government and Political Freedom: The Case of Popular Disturbances:
The absence, or at least inadequacy of, political freedom in pre-Conquest Canada has often been cited by a certain genre of historians as one of the established facts of North American history. For this school of historians, Canada was governed in an authoritarian manner by an absolutist French monarchy that controlled virtually all the terms of political debate in the colony to the utter exclusion of the people who had little political freedom, even less acumen, to participate in the political life of the colony- a completely docile population in comparison to the intrepid, freedom loving, self-dependent English colonists, the founders of the 'great republic'. In this section, therefore, we propose to examine the popular modes of protest and political representation in the colony to come to a more realistic assessment of the prevailing political situation in the colony. It goes without saying that politics in pre-modern society is not, strictly speaking, comparable to that in the modern world. However, to the extent politics is a discourse of power

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organized around state, whether primitive, pre-modern or modern, its presence is felt across societies. In the case of Europe in the eighteenth century, from where Canada inherited the modes of political protest, George Rude has this to say:

"Popular disturbances... tend to take the form of direct action and the destruction of property rather than of petitions or peaceful marches or demonstrations; and this was as true of peasant rebellion as it was of industrial machine-breaking, the imposition of the 'just' price in food riots or the 'pulling down' of houses or the burning of their victims in effigy in city outbreaks. Yet such targets are generally carefully selected and destruction was rarely wanton or indiscriminate. Such movements tended to be spontaneous, to grow from small beginnings and to have a minimum of organization; they tended, too, to be led by leaders from the 'outside' or, if from 'inside', by men whose authority was limited to the occasion. They were generally defensive, conservative and 'backward-looking', more concerned to restore what had been lost from a 'golden' age than to blaze the trail for something new; and accordingly, such political ideas as they expressed were more often conservative than radical and they tend (with some notable but rare exceptions) to be borrowed from conservatives rather than radical groups."

In the colony, popular disturbances tended to share some features with those in Europe, though on a much smaller scale, given the small size of population. It is important to point out that in many ways conditions prevailing in Canada were markedly different from those in France. Owing to the small size of the population and the sheer physical expanse of the colony, population density was much lower than in most parts of Europe. Of course, population tended to cluster in certain areas like Quebec, Montreal, but the need to occupy vast tracts of territory in the continent claimed by the colony precluded

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too much concentration of whatever population there was in any one place. Thus the colony did not have large urban clusters like those in Europe. Moreover, as we have pointed earlier, there were no taxes in the colony on the lines of France. After 1717, the Canadiens paid only customs tax and the tithe at the reduced rate of one- twenty-sixth of the produce. Apart from these, the colony did not have any burdensome taxes. Though the Crown made a proposal to levy some taxes on the colony, it agreed to give up the idea taking into account the developing nature of the community. In any case, Canada had far greater amount of freedom from social or political control than most parts of France. Popular outbursts in early Canada were related to immediate and local perceived injustices such as subdivision of parishes, imposition of rationing, bread shortages, inflated salt prices and a military measure requiring butchers to sell equivalent amounts of horsemeat and beef. The rioters’ demonstrations, with women playing a prominent role, were not aimed at overthrowing the constituted authority but rather were vociferous demands that authorities maintain a ‘just society’ and impose stability and equity. Government was conceived as responsible for maintaining ‘peace, order and good administration’ under the crown. In other words, the Canadiens would not tolerate unfair impositions and abuse of power but accepted legitimate constituted authority.

The challenges posed by the physical environment of the colony, the conflict with the Iroquois and the English colonies, the militarization of the community necessitated by

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72 By the early eighteenth century, France and Britain had a combined population of around 30 million. In the middle of the century, Paris already had a population of half a million, which made it one of the largest cities in the world at that time. George Rude, *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century. Studies in Popular Protest*, London 1970, pp. 8-18. On the other hand, Quebec at this time had a population of only 8,000. *Census of Canada, 1665-1871*, Ottawa 1876.

73 W.J. Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier 1534-1760*, Toronto 1969, p. 81. The customs duty at the rate of ten percent was imposed on imports like tobacco, wine and spirits. The earlier taxes on the export of beaver and moose hides were removed in 1717. Ibid.

these conflicts and the pioneer nature of the community also went a long way in creating cohesiveness and harmony within the colony. As the social distance between the authorities and the common people was not as great as in France, the chances of cooperation between the two were correspondingly higher. Especially by the last phase of the colony as a French entity, much of the administration was manned by the people born and brought up in Canada—people who would perhaps be closer to the average habitant than the new arrivals from France. This, of course, does not preclude differences between the rulers and the ruled in the colony, but only points to a heightened level of popular participation in the affairs of the colony.

Nevertheless, there were popular protests in the colony. And, as in the case of France, some of them were related to food shortages witnessed from time to time in the colony. Significantly enough, not all the shortages led to protests or riots; it was only when the shortage was considered to be artificially created by merchants and other economic interests in the colony that the habitants protested against it. Other shortages not due to any manipulation from groups within the colony typically led to feelings of solidarity among the habitants. During the War of Spanish Succession, there was an acute shortage of salt due to disruption of supplies from France, and the hoarding of the existing supplies by the merchants. The habitants around Montreal protested against it by organizing a demonstration against the erring merchants. Remarkably enough, the authorities responded without any delay, and pressurized the merchants to accept a lower price, considered reasonable by the habitants. Vaudreuil, the newly appointed governor, even

\[\text{The reduction in prices was effected by the governor of Montreal soon after the demonstration, though not without listening to the merchants' side of the price dispute. Yves Zoltvany,}\]

\[\text{Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, Governor of New France, 1703-1725, Toronto 1974, p. 47.}\]
obliged the merchants to return the 'unjust' profits they had already earned. This only goes on to show how popular pressure could influence the policies of the government in a significant way. In a situation where the colony was more or less dependent even for its defense against the English on the local militia recruited from among the habitants, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to ignore popular demands of this nature. While the war conditions at this time may have played some role in the quick resolution of the issue, it should not be imagined that the colonial administration was not similarly responsive during peace times. In 1705, there was another protest by the habitants over the same issue, which led to the detention of two habitants. Criminal charges were brought against them, and a trial was held. However, the only punishment meted out to the two was a warning and a small fine. This shows that even when the authorities tried to take some action against the protestors, their hands were tied due to a number of considerations, including the need to maintain a strong sense of community identity in the North American wilderness, where the sheer survival of the colony was threatened by conflict with natives and the English colonies.

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76 See, Vaudreuil to Pontchartrain, 4 November 1706, RAPQ, 1938-39, P. 163. Vaudreuil also pleaded with Pontchartrain not to take a serious view of the protest demonstration by the habitants, since it was the miserable conditions induced by an artificial shortage of salt that had driven them to do so. The loyalty of the people, he assured the Minister, was never in doubt, as they had dispersed after being told to do so. Interpreting Canada's Past, ed., J.M. Buted, Toronto 1986, vols 2, Vol. I, article by Terence Crowley, p. 107. However, Vaudreuil passed an ordinance calling upon the habitants not to repeat such behavior in future. Ordonnances, Commissions, etc., etc., des Gouverneurs et Intendants de la Nouvelle-France, 1639-1706, Beauceville 1924, p. 326.

77 RAPQ, 1938-39, Vaudreuil, Beauharnois and Raudot to Pontchartrain, 19 October 1705, p. 82. Unlike on the earlier occasion, this was not a crisis caused by the local merchants. Owing to war conditions, only one fourth of the total demand for salt in the colony had been sent from France. Ibid.

78 Ibid., Vaudreuil and Raudot to Pontchartrain, 30 April 1706, pp. 112-13. Also see, Pierre-Georges Roy, ed., Inventaires des ordonnances des Intendants de la Nouvelle-France conservées aux Archives provinciales de Quebec, Beauceville, 1919, I, pp. 5-8.
We have seen that the seigneurial regime in Canada was qualitatively different from that in France and that the burden of rents et hommages was very light in the colony.\footnote{Richard Colebrook Harris, \textit{The seigneurial System in Early Canada}, Quebec 1968, pp. 67- 70. Also see, \textit{Seigneurial Tenures in Quebec: The Examples of Sorel and St. Ours}, 1670- 1850. Regarding the general nature of agrarian relations in the colony, Louise Dechene has this to say on eighteenth century Montreal: <<Si, en france, la paysannerie d' Ancien Regime est definie par rapport 'a Ia classe qui l'exploite et la domine, au canada, la population rurale est autre chose: des petits proprietaires parcelliaires, 'a qui le regime demande un certain nombre de tributs - redevances, corvee, milices - mais qui, sur le plan materiel, beneficient d' une sorte de treve. >>.Louis Dechene, \textit{Habitants et marchands de Montrealau XVIIe siecle}, Paris 1974, p. 486.}

Militia service, compulsory for all adult males between the ages of sixteen and sixty, was organized under the command of the captains of militia and not the seigneurs.\footnote{It is argued by some scholars that the militia service was a source of friction in the society after 1715, since it was seen to be burdensome. However, for the period before that date, it is not considered to have been so. See Louis Dechene, \textit{Habitants et marchands de Montreal au XVIIe siecle },Paris 1974, pp. 355-61.\footnote{It is important to note that the habitants were not the only ones affected by the plan to construct this defensive wall. In order to finance it, the Crown had imposed an annual tax of 2,000 livres on Seminary of St. Sulpice and 4000 livres on other religious communities and inhabitants of Montreal. See, \textit{Memoire du roi 'a Vaudreuil et Begon}, 15 June 1716, RAPQ, 1947- 48, pp. 302-03. See also Camille Bertrand, \textit{Histoire de Montreal}, Vol. I: 1535- 1760, Montreal.}}

Moreover, corvée, forced labor, though retained in theory, was meant to serve the community as a whole, and not the seigneur in his personal capacity. In most of the cases, the habitants accepted unpaid labor, since it was seen to work for the betterment of the entire community, and, therefore, corvée was not an important locus of protest within the colony. However, in 1717, forced labor for building a defensive wall around Montreal elicited strong protests from a section of the populace.\footnote{Guy Fregault, \textit{La Civilisation de la Nouvelle France 1713- 1744}, Montreal 1969, p. 70. That this protest against corvée took place in exceptional circumstances and does not represent the general trend in the colony becomes clear once we take into account the distressing conditions in the countryside. This is How Vaudreuil described the conditions arising out of the drought in 1715- 16: << EN 1715 et en 1716, la seicheresse a ete si grande que les feux ont couru de tous costes dans les bois. Il n' y a point de exemple dans ce pays d' un incendie aussiy general, les racines des arbres ayant ete brulees jusqu'a deux pieds dans le terre. >> \textit{Vaudreuil et Begon au Conseil de Marine}, 14 octobre 1716, AC, C11 A.P. 36 : 28.} It is important to note that the colony was facing a distressing situation at that time. For two years at a stretch, there was a drought in the colony, and the habitants were faced with the very real prospect of starvation, or at least, severe scarcity, in the coming months.\footnote{Apart from this, there was...}
another reason for the protest, since the people residing in the rural seigneuries around Montreal did not see how a fortification around the city would benefit them. Be that as it may, this protest soon degenerated into armed demonstrations, though there was no violence during the course of these demonstrations. Vaudreuil was, however, alarmed enough to order the arrest of ten protestors, supposedly the leaders of the protest, and keep them behind the bars for a few weeks. Again, the punishment meted out to these prisoners went no farther, and within a few weeks all of them were released without any charges being brought against them.\footnote{Archives Nationales, Colonie C11 A, 38: 121, Vaudreuil au Conseil, 17 October 1717. Vaudreuil believed that putting the leaders of the demonstrations in prison for a few weeks was enough to deter them and others from getting involved in such activities in future. He did not want to take things too far believing that ‘les cachots de Montreal sont si affreux qu’ils courreroient risqué d’y perir’.}

Towards the end of the French regime in North America, there were some popular protests spearheaded by women. Thus, during the Seven Years War that led to the conquest of the colony at the hands of the British, there were again food shortages, which spurred a group of women to stage a protest before the Governor Vaudreuil. The Governor expressed his inability to supply the required quantities of bread or meat to the people, since the supplies had been severely disrupted due to the ongoing struggle against England. However, he assured them that he had done whatever was possible in the existing circumstances. He had ordered a wholesale slaughter of cattle as well as some horses for meat that was going to be sold at a reasonable price. It was during this meeting that women refused to eat horse meat saying that ‘elles avoient de la repugnance ‘a manger du cheval; qu’il etoit l’ ami de l’ homme; que la religion defendoit de les tuer et qu’elles aimeront mieux mourir que d’en manger.\footnote{Henry Raymond Casgrain, ed., \textit{Collection des Manuscrits du marechal de Levis}, 12 vols. Montreal and Quebec 1889-1895, Vol. I, \textit{Journal des compagnes des Levis en Canada de 1156 à 1760}, pp. 118-19.}’.
It comes out clearly from the nature of popular protests in Canada that they were not informed by any broader vision of political revolt or resistance. Rather, they aimed at maintaining the status quo and checking what were regarded as inefficiency or corruption on the part of the authorities. There is nothing surprising in this, as the democratic or revolutionary politics that later emerged in Europe was still nowhere on the horizon. In any case, there was a broad convergence of interests between the people and the authorities in Canada. To a certain extent, this was no doubt due to the inherently paternalistic approach of the French monarchy towards the colony. Unlike in the case of English colonies, there was hardly any economic exploitation of the habitants for the sake of the mother country. On the other hand, the Crown spent a good deal of money every year on the colony. This is not to argue that the Crown or its representatives in Canada were completely altruistic in their motives, but only to underline the fact that French colonialism in North America, while influenced by commercial considerations, was still not a mercantile venture aimed at earning profits for the mother country in the same sense as the Atlantic colonies were. Whereas the Crown did try to develop Canada as a profitable colony, it was willing to display perseverance in its efforts. Building a French empire in North America was probably more important for the Crown than immediate gains from the colony. The paternalistic approach of the Crown towards the colony precluded any significant ground for the conflict between France and the colony or even within the colony between the administrative authorities and the people at large. It would be superfluous to say that the French system of governance as applied to the colony was authoritarian, since that would be a purely technical approach to the entire issue. Unlike what is often argued, political conflicts between the rulers and the ruled are
not necessarily the product of authoritarianism. More often than not, they emanate from a divergence of interests between the two groups. In the absence of such a divergence, popular protest is likely to be a protest more for the restoration of what is perceived to be the rightful order than for the change of the system concerned. Thus the popular protests discussed above make it quite clear that the people were concerned about their welfare and they knew what to expect from the authorities. While the Crown had established the principle that ‘chacun parle pour soy, et que personne parle pour tous’; in practice there were significant departures from this general policy, especially in the context of Canada, where the principle was certainly more difficult to implement than in France. Thus the governor and other high officials in the administration of the colony sought to maintain their authority in the colony without alienating the public opinion beyond a point. Freedom by itself is, of course, merely an idea without any autonomous life of its own; it is the material conditions that create the ground for the rise of political movements aimed at securing more freedom from a political system. Since such conditions did not exist in Canada, it would be fruitless to wonder why there was no Canadian independence movement against France. Of course, such a struggle may have developed in future, if the colony had continued to remain under the French possession. The fact, however, is that it did not develop during the French regime.

In contrast with Canada, popular protest in the Atlantic colonies took a very different turn. What is often described as the Anglo-Protestant passion for freedom had, in fact,
very mundane origins. By the eighteenth century, the state in England had granted some participation to certain sections of the society. The system that had evolved cannot obviously be described as democratic in the sense in which we normally understand the word now, though there was a movement towards devising a system that would eventually define itself in the language of constitutional rights and duties vis a vis the state. Interestingly, this very system that is hailed an embodiment of ‘freedom’ was the cause of the economic exploitation of the colonies, which were seen to be merely a source of profit for the mother country. Thus, the very different course that political events took within the English colonies in North America cannot reasonably be compared with that in Canada. In the case of the former, it was the increasing clash of interests with England that ultimately led to the American Revolution. It was not the abstract idea of freedom but the dynamics of colonial framework within which the status of the colonies was defined that determined the course of things for the Atlantic colonies.

The Evolution and Consolidation of the Catholic Church:

In the earlier chapters, we have examined the role of the church in the colony in several areas of concern. As we have mentioned earlier, there is a strong tendency in the existing historiography to exaggerate the authority exercised by the church on the habitants. In this section, we propose to analyze the role of the church in defining the moral world of the habitants. An attempt would be made to see how far community in the colony digressed from the French-Catholic notions of morality as defined by the church and what was the response of the colonists to the efforts of the clergy in this regard.

At the very outset, it needs to be noted that the bulk of the habitants came from humble socio-economic background. Many of them would have been landless laborers in France, and whenever they did own land it would be much less than what they owned in Canada. There were of course seigneurs, clergy and administrators who had had a much higher
socio-economic status in the mother country. Conceivably, some of the soldiers in the troupes de la Marine, especially those in the officer ranks, would also have formed a class higher than the habitants. Whereas morality was defined traditionally by recourse to Judeo-Christian tradition, there is no reason to believe that it meant the same thing to people belonging to different sections of the colonial society. However, most descriptions about colonial morals and manners naturally deal with the common people who formed the vast majority of the population.

The church tried to influence the behavior of the colonists in a variety of ways. One of the most important issues to draw the attention of the clergy was the sale of liquor to the natives. The church was not against the use of alcohol per se, but it believed that the natives, who were not used to it, were falling into sin because of the use of liquor\(^{86}\). The natives had been innocent of the use of liquor and its arrival in their society through the instrumentality of the European traders and settlers had proved to be quite disastrous for them. Since they were unused to it, alcohol had a disproportionate impact on them\(^{87}\). The tussle had started right from the days of Bishop Laval, who spearheaded the campaign against the sale of liquor to the natives\(^{88}\). In fact, the Bishop came to develop

\(^{86}\) The notion of sin apart, it is a fact that the liquor traffic had a clearly negative effect on the native peoples. This is what Du Crux has to say on the consequences of alcohol among them: "... in addition to the drunkenness which it causes there come many grave and dangerous diseases, for their vitals are scorched by the brandy and injured by the quantities of wine and unfamiliar dainties with which they gorge themselves for several days at a time each year, on the arrival of ships from France. F. Du Crux, *The History of Canada, or New France*, Toronto 1951, Vol. I, p. 90.

\(^{87}\) It was alleged by some people that the fault actually lay with the natives, as they did not have any restraint in the use of alcohol. Thus, Pierre Boucher believed that the natives drank 'only to become drunk'. Cornelius Jaenen, *The Role of the Church in New France*, Toronto 1976, p. 78.

\(^{88}\) There is reason to believe, however, that the tussle between Governor Avouguir and Bishop Laval had its origins in a struggle for political power in the colony. The Bishop was interested in sitting on the State Council to which the former was opposed. Father Lallement, the well-known Jesuit missionary, is said to have told Avouguir that 'to remain long in office, he should seek to secure the friendship of Sieur de Petrea (Mgr. de Laval), issue no command unless that gentleman issue the same command with him nor affix his signature to any document unless the other affixed his signature first'. *Relations des Jesuites contenant ce qui s'est passé de Nouvelle-France*, (Quebec 1858), 1661, pp. 10-11. Archeveche de Quebec, Registre A, p. 180. Abbe Bertrand de la Tour, *Memoire sur la vie de M. de Laval*, Cologne 1761, p. 84.
serious differences with the Governor Avougour over the brandy traffic, and eventually got him recalled by the Crown. However, fur trade was to a large extent dependent upon the supply of liquor to the natives who were willing to sell their goods relatively cheap in exchange for alcohol. Thus it was a question of economic interest of the colony, since French refusal to sell liquor to the natives who by this time had become accustomed to it would have resulted in their losing out to the English merchants. For the church, however, it was an issue related to religion and morality. The church had been trying throughout the second half of the seventeenth century to impress upon the colonists the necessity to eliminate what it called a ‘nefarious traffic’. However, the efforts of the clergy in this regard had proved more or less useless, and the problem had continued unabated. During the period under review, there was not much improvement in the adherence of the local merchants and habitants to the wishes of the church with regard to liquor sale, primarily because it was a matter of the economic interest of the colony.

In 1721, Intendant Begon was again prevailed upon by the Bishop to renew the prohibition earlier passed against the ‘nefarious traffic’. However, this effort was no more successful

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89 In fact, the Relations of 1633, 1642 and 1643 had also condemned the sale of liquor to the natives, but had fallen short of calling it a sin. Relations des jesuites, 1643p. 36. By 1660, however, the issue had become much more serious, and the Relations presented a sensational, and highly exaggerated account of the effects of drunkenness: “You see drunken men killing each other, husbands burning their wives, wives dishonoring their husbands, fathers putting their infants to boil over the fire.” Ibid., 1660, p. 37. Also see, Lettres de la Mere Marie, II, p. 220.

90 See Cornelius Jaenen, The Role of the Church in New France, Toronto 1976, p. 83. Explaining the failure of prohibition efforts, Jaenen says: “The church had been as ineffective in dealing with this matter as had been the state officials who wished to curb excess and disorders, because it was not only a social or religious matter, but also, in the eyes of many, it was a crucial economic matter. The importation of wine and spirits was a significant portion of the metropolitan trade with the colony, and there was no disposition to control it, however strong the protests of the ecclesiastics or the complaints of the missionaries might be. Duties on wines from the Bordeaux region, Languedoc and the Canary Islands, on brandies from La Rochelle and Cognac, and on other spirits from the West Indies, for example, accounted for 49.2 percent of the revenues of the Domaine d’Occident in 1735, an amount which surpassed its revenues from the fur trade. In 1738, Quebec imported about three thousand barrels of wine and in 1753-54 Louisbourg alone received 7,288 barrels of Bordeaux wines. The economic magnitude of this trade explains the inability to enforce any effective curbs or restrictions. Ibid.

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than others before it in arresting the sale of liquor to the natives\textsuperscript{91}. Incidentally, this was also the period when the fur trade had picked up after being depressed during the War of Spanish Succession. Any efforts to control the liquor traffic now had even less chance of success than they would have had earlier. In 1726, a similar attempt at the prohibition of liquor sale by Intendant Dupuy met with the same fate\textsuperscript{92}. In view of these successive failures, the church now decided to take more stringent action to control what it regarded as immoral conduct. Thus, in 1730, Bishop Dosquet withdrew confessional services from the violators of the ban on the sale of liquor to the natives\textsuperscript{93}. This was as far as the church could possibly go. By denying confession to those responsible for the ‘nefarious traffic’, the Bishop was demonstrating the commitment of the church to ensure adherence to what it defined as good moral conduct. In the event, this latest ban proved to be completely ineffective in its effort to check the brandy traffic.

Thus the church tried to play its role as the moral guardian of the colony quite seriously, as the prohibition on sale of liquor to the natives was at least partly motivated by concerns of the welfare of the community as well as the natives. Of course, one of the most important reasons behind the stringent position of the church on the issue of brandy traffic was the apprehension, whether justified or not, that it was bringing Christianity into disrepute, both by the example of French merchants who sold liquor and the converted natives who consumed it, and was making evangelical work even more difficult. Be that as it may, the church did show its serious concern about other forms of behavior which, in its opinion, were unbecoming of a truly pious Christian. Thus it

\textsuperscript{91} Edits, ordonnances royaux, declarations et arrets du Conseil d’ Etat du Roi concernnant le Canada, Quebec 1854- 56, vols. 3, III, pp. 439, 446- 449.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{93} Mandements, letters pastorals et circulaires des Eveques de Quebec, Quebec 1887, 2 vols. I, Mandement of November 26, 1730, pp. 535- 537.
attacked unscrupulous practices on the part of the merchants who often tried to profiteer at the expense of the rest of the community. Bishop Pontbriand, the last Bishop of Quebec as a French colony, admonished the merchants for their unscrupulous conduct:

'The towns, Our dearly beloved Children, are like the core or heart of this colony; would you become unjust members who would refuse the heart under attack the blood it requires? It is in the towns that you will find what is lacking in the countryside; it is in the towns that many of your children receive a Christian education; would you be so ungrateful as to violate the laws of precept gratitude which heaven will reward a hundredfold? It is in the towns that hospitals are open to receive you in your infirmities; grant to those houses which will ever be the august monuments of the piety of your parents, the help which they await with impatience; it is in the towns that justice settles your quarrels and renders to each what is rightfully his; it is there that resides in a special way the royal authority and where His Majesty maintains a large number of troops for the defense of this Colony, the maintenance of public tranquility and your repose; finally it is in the cities that the poor of the countryside take refuge and come to burden the citizens.'

It is important not to overlook the fact that this kind of moral authority exercised, or at least sought to be exercised, by the colonial church had a salutary effect in binding the entire community, in that it emphasized the good of the colony as against that of the few. Thus the power of the colonial church was not necessarily against the material interests of the community, since it was only by cooperation and unity that the colony could ensure its survival. This should not in any way be construed as evidence of the excessive authority wielded by the church in the colony, but should rather be taken as an indication of the fact that there was no fundamental clash of interest between the church and the community. In fact, the church itself was an integral part of the larger community.

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Another factor in maintaining the cohesion and unity of a Francophone Catholic population was the determined efforts of church and state to exclude the Protestants from the colony. Protestants were excluded from permanent residency in Canada from 1627 onwards, although some commercial contacts were tolerated. It was only by the 1730s that a limited number of Huguenots, as French Protestants were known, were permitted to reside in the chief towns on the condition that they behave as ‘good Catholics’, meaning they would hold no Protestant religious services, engage in no evangelization and display no outward signs of their religious convictions. In short, their commercial contribution to colonial life was welcome but not their religious practices. Thus the image of a pious homogenous Catholic community was not compromised. Jews were similarly excluded from public life95.

Marriage was another arena over which the church sought complete control. Since all marriages were Christian marriages, and there was no scope for what might be described as civil marriage, the community had little choice but to acquiesce into accepting the determining role of the church in some aspects of marriage. It is not out of place here to mention that marriage in eighteenth century Canada, as in France, was more of an alliance between families than between individuals. Accordingly, young men and women were not free to choose their partner. This system had the blessings of the church, which sought to maintain it as a symbol of its resolve to maintain the status quo in society. Related to this was the clerical effort to control all forms of interaction between unmarried men and women. Needless to say, the church was strongly against pre-marital sex, and, therefore, sought to control any close interaction between the young people. Of

course, not all notions of propriety regarding marriage or premarital relationship were
defined by the church. Many of them had explicit sanction from the society in general,
and their violation resulted in severe criticism from the entire community. Lahonton has
thus described the prevalent notions of morality with regard to the male – female
interactions:

"After a man has made four visits to a young Woman, he is oblig'd to unfold his mind to her
Father and Mother; he must then either talk of Marriage, or break off all Correspondence; or if he
does not, both he and she lie under Scandal. In this country, a Man can't visit another Man's Wife
without being censur'd, as if her Husband was a Cuckold."96

We have seen earlier that the average age of marriage in the colony was quite high for
both men and women, being respectively 26 and 22. In this kind of a situation, therefore,
restrictions on interaction between members of the opposite danger would be even more
difficult to enforce. The case of courieur de bois is of interest here. Apart from the profits
they earned through their forays among the natives living in the interiors of the continent,
it was a desire to live a free life that guided their behavior. The bulk of these courieur de
bois were single young men for whom the attraction of a native society that did not
observe any taboos on premarital sex was too difficult to resist. To some extent, their
behavior was thus an attempt to escape the moral strictures of the church, which regularly
condemned their manners and morals. In fact, the Jesuits even argued that it was the self-
indulgent conduct of these erring young men that was bringing the entire community into
disrepute in the eyes of the natives, thus making their conversion even more difficult. In
fact, these youths not only defied the authority of the clergy, but they also escaped from
the authority of the family, seigneurs and the captain of militia.

Moreover, the church, just as the Crown, insisted upon a compulsory early marriage for all residents of the colony. Some of the censure that came the way of the **coureur de bois** owed its origin to the widespread belief, upheld most tenaciously by the sections of the clergy, that their ‘immoral’ ways led them to resist a settled married life. However, the relatively higher age of marriage in Canada was partly due to deficit in the number of women in the colony, which was no doubt due to the very nature of migration from France. A large number of the first-generation settlers had come without their families, or they had migrated while still unmarried. Thus the bulk of the soldiers sent from France were bachelor and it was not easy for all of them to find a partner for themselves. Owing to all these reasons, a significant number of men could not get married. While this was obviously not to the liking of the church, there was very little that it could do about this problem. However, there were some cases where the intervention of the church played an important role in enabling soldiers to get married. In order to get married, a soldier required the permission of his officer, and this permission was often withheld for years for reasons best known to the latter. The problem had become serious enough to draw the attention of Bishop Saint Vallier who abolished the obnoxious requirement altogether, and declared that all marriages would be considered valid, as long as they followed all the norms laid down by the church. These norms included voluntary and reciprocal consent of both partners, consent of the parents of the bride and the bridegroom, public celebration of marriage with witnesses and the benediction of the priest at the exchange of the marriage vows and registration of marriages.

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97 *Archives du séminaire de Québec, Manuscrits 147( b), Advice to young man contemplating marriage*. Fols. 4v- 5. Apart from all this, Bishop Saint Vallier had other requirements for marriage, which, to his mind, represented a pious institution. Any desire to derive worldly pleasure out of a sacred institution was objectionable, as far as Saint Vallier was concerned. In 1691, he thus commented upon these issues: “As we have been informed that some persons present themselves at the Sacrament of Matrimony without intentions of piety, modesty and other required conditions, we enjoin all persons intending to marry to prepare for it through instructions in the matters which are necessary in order to receive this sacrament, and
Whereas the church had well defined norms for marriage, the community was not always willing to abide by them. One of the ingenious ways devised by some Canadiens to subvert the norms laid down by the church was to opt for what was described as marriage *a la gaumine*. In this method, the bride and the bridegroom would go to the church along with witnesses, and exchanged their vows when the priest gave his blessing to the congregation. This was then a marriage without any real blessing from the officiating priest, but in the eyes of those who chose this form of marriage it seemed to fulfill all the requirements of the ceremony. *A la gaumine* was thus a shrewd attempt on the part of the habitants to put the clergy out of the marriage business, possibly for economic reasons. This subversion of the norms of marriage is a typical example of how the plans of the church were often frustrated by a recalcitrant community that followed its religion as a matter of social custom, but was not overly worried to abide by the dictates of the church. The witnesses were there, the congregation was there and apparently even the priest was there with his blessing. And yet, the system had been subverted. The problem had become so serious that, in 1717, Bishop Saint-Vallier issued a prohibition against it:

"Having regard to the request of our promoter, and other remonstrances which were made to us, we declare excommunicated, by an excommunication consequent upon the act itself, and of which we reserve alone the power of absolution, all those who shall henceforth contract such detestable marriages... (We condemn) numerous young people, who despising civil and ecclesiastical laws, and contrary to the respect due to the church and their parents, have found at the instigation of the devil a detestable manner to contract marriages, which they call *a la gaumine* 98."
That Saint - Vallier should see here the 'instigation of the devil' was typical of the manner of the more puritanical members of the clergy for whom the slightest deviation from the norms was a fall from morality. However, it is obvious that the people did not always adhere to the norms developed by the church, and that is what really matters, for the labors of the church never succeeded in eliciting anything more than a partial approval from this fiercely independent society.

Despite all the efforts of the church to control the institution of marriage, deviations continued to occur. Bishop Saint - Vallier was critical of the conduct of some soldiers for what he considered their immoral act in entering into premarital sexual relationship with women in the colony. This was obviously a serious deviation from the point of view of the church that preached against 'sensuality' and 'licentiousness'\textsuperscript{\textdagger}. In fact, it preached continence even in marriage, which was strictly speaking meant for procreation and not

\textsuperscript{\textdagger} It seems plausible that what the church described as 'immoral' and 'licentious' behavior was quite widespread in the eighteenth century, as the expenditure on the wards of the state- who were generally children born out of marriage- was substantial. In 1736, it stood at 14,000 livres, with Quebec alone accounting for almost 8,000 livres, while Montreal and Trois Rivieres accounted for 5,000 and 1,000 respectively. While the high figure for Quebec may be due to the concentration of population there, it might also be related to the fact that the largest chunk of the troops in the colony was stationed in Quebec. This would suggest that the soldiers were probably more likely to indulge in 'licentious' behavior, partly because of the problems they faced in getting their officers' permission for marriage. *Archives Nationales, Colonies, Series C* 11A 65:248-53. Interestingly, in France itself there had been a threefold increase in the number of foundlings during the same period. See Olwen H. Tufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France 1750-1789*, Oxford 1974, p. 321. Whereas it may be true that illegitimate children were not uncommon in the colony, that does not mean that the community as a whole had any less horror of this phenomenon than the church. Pregnancy or childbirth out of wedlock was undoubtedly the most slanderous accusation that could possibly be made against a woman. In fact, it was illegal in the colony to conceal a pregnancy, while abortion was the most heinous crime punishable with death. The community at large agreed with this as in the case of an unmarried girl accused of having attempted abortion of an unwanted child. Her parents not only denied the allegation but also held abortion 'a crime that, by all divine and human laws, deserved death'. See, *Pierre le Boulanger de Saint- Pierre and wife vs. Fr Joseph Denys, September 27, 1714, Jugements et deliberations du Conseil souverain de la Nouvelle – France, Quebec 1885, 6 Vols., VI*, p. 819-20.

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sensual pleasure, as far as the church was concerned. Naturally, its horror was much greater at the reports of premarital indulgence by the soldiers, which it saw as seduction of young girls. In some cases, the problem became serious enough, so that the parents of the girls agreed to marry them off with the person concerned in order to save their honor. This arrangement was unacceptable to Saint-Vallier, who had a very high notion of personal morality, and he forbade marriage in such cases without his prior approval.

It is clear that whatever may have been the sanctity of marriage in the eyes of the church, for the average Canadian it was not always possible to adhere to the strict norms laid down by it; nor is there anything to show that he was excessively worried about it. However, the society had its own notions of what constituted an appropriate marriage, and deviation from these unstated norms attracted protests from the habitants. What is more, these notions of the propriety of an alliance were independent of the preaching of the church. Thus the people gave a lot of importance to the idea of compatibility between the partners in terms of age, and wherever the difference was too wide, people found the alliance objectionable. Similarly, people’s sensibilities were hurt whenever a widow remarried soon after the demise of her spouse. The community’s anger in such cases was not restricted to private criticism of the people involved, but went to the extent of openly demonstrating against the ‘offenders’—a custom that was described as

100 Although there is no reason to believe that the average Canadien had as rigorous a picture of marriage in mind as would be suggested by the pronouncements of the church, it cannot be denied that the teachings of the church had some effect on the marital behavior of people. Thus, the majority of the Canadiens seem to have actually practiced continence during the month of Lent, which is borne out by the data on number of births per month in the colony. See, Jacques Henripin, La population canadienne au début du XVIIIe siècle, Paris 1954.
103 Ibid.
charivari. At times, these demonstrations were big enough to draw the attention of the entire community. In 1683, there was a charivari that lasted for a whole week protesting the behavior of a widow who had remarried three weeks after the demise of her husband. Strangely enough, however, the church was against this expression of the popular will, probably because it was outside its area of control. The particular charivari mentioned here resulted in the Bishop issuing an order of excommunication of all those who participated in such activities. However, the practice had continued even in the eighteenth century, and the church was in no position to do much about it.

The concern for maintaining what were considered the appropriate norms of marriage and the people’s willingness to come out openly against any violation of those norms is an indicator of the closely knit nature of this small Canadian community in North America. Whereas the church provided one of the several domains of cooperation for the community, especially in defining its moral world, the community was by no means totally subservient to the clerical approach to the issue. Although most colonists attended mass regularly, observed the fasts and feasts, etc., they were not mindless robots. On occasion, they asserted their rights using the logic the catechism had taught them.

The church also sought to control the more routine affairs of the colony. The more puritanical elements within the colonial church, like Bishop Saint – Vallier, for instance,
were opposed to a whole set of behavior that they considered, 'ostentatious', 'immoral', 'sensual', etc. Here it is essential to remember that the church was not a completely monolithic organization. As mentioned earlier, the higher ranks of clergy in Canada, just as in France, were mostly from an aristocratic background. Though most of them followed very high levels of simplicity and piety in their personal life, and thus could not be accused of hypocrisy when they condemned what they regarded too gross a behavior on the part of the *habitants*, the effect of a natural inclination towards the values and behavior patterns of the higher sections of the society is apparent in their judgments. Whereas the church at the higher level conceived of Christianity as an ideal, the lower clergy, closer to the people and more sympathetic to their value system, did not always follow the strict norms laid down by the Bishop. Thus, while the church tried to enforce a highly codified set of behaviors on the congregation, in practice the *habitants*, partly because of their class background, could not always adhere to it. However, it would be tendentious to argue that all deviation from the norms laid down by the church was informed by a conscious desire to subvert the authority of the church. Much of the 'indiscipline' and boisterousness witnessed at the church was a simple reflection of the society in Canada in those days. The issue is not whether or not the *Canadiens* were religious; they were, if that means faith in the broad tenets of Christianity and the spiritual leadership of the church. However, they were not ready to see religion as something over and above their earthly existence; the church for them was as much a part of life as anything else, and it was difficult to enforce too demanding a set of obligations.

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106 At least some of the contemporary accounts emphasize the religious devotion of the *Canadiens* in comparison with France as well as the English colonies, though there is nothing to show that his was due to the power of the colonial church. Thus, Peter Kalm says: 'All those who have traveled in France admit that the French Canadian is a more fervent catholic than his European cousin. Unfortunately, religion seems to consist here only of external observances'. A.B. Benson, ed., *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America*, New York, 1937, Vol. II, p. 544.
upon a community that was prone to frequently ignoring them\textsuperscript{107}. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the church was perpetually dissatisfied with the piety and good conduct of the community. In 1711, the Intendant came to the rescue of the church, and issued this notification to maintain order and sobriety in the church:

"To correct all these disorders, we order that our previous ordinances be executed and herewith prohibit all persons, of whatever rank or station they be, to talk in church or to show a lack of respect due in such a holy place; to smoke at the doors or near them; to leave the church when the priests are giving their sermons, except in cases of great urgency, under pain of a fine of ten livres levied against the offenders, payable by the fathers in the case of minors, and of imprisonment in the event of relapse. We order the priests of the parishes in question to publish the present ordinance, to renew it each Christmas and Easter, and to inform us forthwith of contraventions. We order the captains of the militia to see to its execution\textsuperscript{108}.

\textsuperscript{107} H. Tetu \& C.O. Gagnon, \textit{Mandements, lettres pastorales et circulaires} I, pp. 275-281. As we have noted in the earlier chapters, the community resisted the demands for tithe at the rate of one thirteenth, which was the established rate, and succeeded in getting it reduced to one twenty sixth of the produce. However, even this was not easy to extract from the often unwilling habitant, who frequently violated what the church defined as norms of piety and god behavior in terms of material assistance to the cause of religion. In 1720, a pastoral letter thus lamented the conditions of the church organization in the Detroit area: "The extreme distance I am from you, my dearly beloved children, coupled with the very great difficulty wherein I find myself to send you priests to administer the sacraments to you, move me to have you take notice, by means of this Pastoral Letter, of the indispensable obligation you have to live a pure and Christian life, free from all the sins which can separate you from the grace of God and his love... It is right that we exhort you to maintain the material Temple, which we learn is in lamentable state of disrepair, as well as the symmetry which you have allowed to remain open and exposed to all kinds of indignities because of the cattle which enter it, and which by this fact alone deserves to come under interdict. But above all we strongly urge and advise you to show a true obedience to your pastor, when it is so greatly in our interest to keep and accommodate him for we see here none in the regular or secular clergy who might succeed him." Ibid.

\textsuperscript{108} A.P.Q., \textit{Ordonnances des Intendants, Vol. IV, Ordinance of March 22, 1710}, p. 40. The church had always been concerned about what it condemned as indiscipline on the part of the \textit{habitants}. Thus, in 1691, Bishop Saint Vallier had made an observation very similar to the ordinance passed by the Intendant twenty years later, which shows that recalcitrance from the community remained a perpetual problem for the pious clergy. As Saint Vallier put it: "We have been deeply grieved during the visits We made in the rural parishes to learn of the abuse which has slipped among many to leave during the homily and announcements of the parish mass on Feast Days and Sundays without valid reason to go and gossip in houses during the sermon; this habit which has been introduced in diverse places in this diocese is evident sign of the lack of devotion and of irreligion... We instruct the curates to refuse them absolution if they do not wish to amend their ways upon sufficient warning; exhorting the priests to take into account the weak piety of their parishioners and not to have the Homily and announcements last more than one half hour, especially during the severe cold..." H. Tetu \& C.O. Gagnon, \textit{Mandements, lettres pastorales et circulaires des Eveques de Quebec}, 3 vols, Quebec 1888, I, pp. 275-81.
Apart from behavior within the church, there were other standards that the clergy, especially at the higher level, sought to impose. As early as 1682, Bishop Laval had passed a *mandement* enjoining upon the colonists, especially the women, an austere dress code, since in his opinion any departure from a strictly conservative dress for women was the work of the devil\(^{109}\). In effect, the church had a dislike for any kind of attire that could possibly be regarded as ostentatious. Physical beauty was not something that the church considered a worthy objective, so that it roundly condemned all women who dared to use any kind of finery. Bishop Saint Vallier in particular was fierce in his criticism of any kind of dress that was not purely functional as against ornamental. He simply refused to agree that dresses could have any aesthetic connotations, even if of an earthy nature, for the common folk or for others, for that matter. During a conversation with the Governor Denonville, Saint-Vallier thus expressed his sense of outrage against ornamental dressing:

"Ostentation in dress appears first of all in the rich and gaudy fabrics which exceed the means and condition of the women who wear them. Also it appears in the excessive clothes they put on, in the extraordinary way in which they dress their hair, which they fill with bodkins and leave uncovered, showing those immodest curls which the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Paul so expressly forbid, as do all the doctors of the Church, and which God has often severely punished, as may be seen by the example of the unhappy Pretextate. According to St. Jerome, who knew her, her hand was withered and five months later she died suddenly and was dashed into Hell, as an angel of God had warned her, because on the orders of her husband she had curled the hair and dressed in worldly fashion her niece\(^{110}\)."

Another statement of the Bishop throws further light on what he was opposed to:

"But what has caused us above all a great sadness is the excesses of luxury in dress and the vanity manifest throughout the country, among the young girls and women of the world, with greater

\(^{109}\) *Archives du seminar de Quebec, Seminaire XV, No. 25, Mandement of February 26, 1682.*

license and scandal than ever before; not satisfied with wearing clothing of which the cost and splendor are far beyond the wearer's means and standing, they affect also immodest head-dress, appearing outside and inside and often even in church bareheaded, or head covered only with a transparent head-dress, with a collection of ribbons, laces, curls, and other vanities, which is completely unbecoming of a Christian person; and what is still more to be deplored and pierces our soul with grief is that they do not hesitate to make themselves the instruments of the devil, and co-operate in the loss of the souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, by laying bare their necks and shoulders and scandalizing thereby and causing the loss of an infinite number of persons who unfortunately find in these scandalous objects the cause of their sins and eternal damnation.

The fact that Saint-Vallier was so much concerned about ornamental dressing says a lot both on the popularity of the trend and the austere nature of the colonial church. It is clear that the habitants did not always follow the rigors of conduct enunciated by the church. We have seen earlier how Peter Kalm noted the love for finery among Canadian women; also, we have seen how, upon the conquest of Montreal, an English officer was surprised by the 'powdered faces' he witnessed on the streets of the city. Ostentation in dress was also to some extent due to the increased prosperity among the colonists. It is interesting that the Bishop criticizes elaborate dressing not only for supposedly violating the norms of religion but also for its subversion of the appropriate modes of behavior prescribed for different classes. To be fair to the Bishop, he was

111 Archives des Colonies (A.C.), series F 3, Vol. VI, circular of 1686, fol. 272. Whereas the church may have been unhappy with the dresses 'completely unbecoming of a Christian person', it is evident that the average woman in eighteenth century Canada did have a collectively defined notion of sexual morality, and chastity was a highly valued virtue in the colony. Thus calling a woman 'poutain' was the greatest insult to her. Accusations about the lack of sexual morality were sometimes made against women, both by men and women themselves, and they were often taken very seriously, which would show the general concern in the society for sexual morality of women. Needless to say, the same standards were not applied in the case of men. See J.M. Bumsted, Interpreting Canada's Past, Toronto 1986, article by Peter N. Moogk, p. 76.


personally a very austere person, and, therefore, did not like ostentation in dress in others. However, it is difficult to miss the condescending note of a high ecclesiastic for the pretensions of the common folk. The Bishop's attitude in this regard also betrays the strong influence that the forces of Counter-Reformation exercised over the church in New France. In its attempt to redefine the faith of the people and take it closer to a sanitized version of Christianity, the colonial church was only following the lead given by the Catholic Church in France. It is no doubt true that if this version had been accepted by the people at large, they would have been deprived of practically all the little pleasures that they had in an otherwise humdrum existence. Evidently, the people did not go all the way with the higher clergy in leading a life aimed at escaping hell or gaining heaven. It is not surprising that for the anguished Bishop all ornamentation in dress was an invitation to mindless sensuality. It is doubtful, however, if the society as a whole found fault with the sensual aspects of life.

We have earlier seen how the church in Canada came into conflict with the political authority over the issue of popular theater. Related to this was the question of the ban on certain kinds of literature in the colony. Here it would be important to remember that this ban could not have affected the community beyond a point, since many were illiterate, and reading of any kind of literature was more of a luxury in those days. However, the ban does reflect the all-encompassing nature of the colonial church, at least in theory, as well as its penchant for propagating austerity in word and deed. Whereas some of the material proscribed by the church may have contained anti-clerical references, it was not always self-defense that motivated the actions of the clergy. The church looked with disfavor any kind of popular literature, except that of a religious nature, and it employed
various means to control the spread of ‘blasphemous’ literature. One of these was the personal surveillance of the community. Lahontan, a victim of the censorship, has thus described one such incident:

'When I think of this Tyranny, I cannot but be enrag'd at the impertinent Zeal of the Curate of this City. This inhumane Fellow came one day to my Lodging, and finding the Romance of the Adventures of Petronius upon my table, he fell upon it with an unimaginable fury, and tore out almost all of the leaves, This book I valued more than my life because 'twas not castrated: and indeed I was so provok'd when I saw it all in wrack, that if my Landlord had not held me, I had gone immediately to that turbulent Pastor's House, and would have plucked out the Hairs of his Beard with as little mercy as he did the Leaves of my book. These Animals cannot content themselves with the study of Men's Actions, but they must likewise dive into their Thoughts.'

There can be no doubt that censorship of a whole range of literature was an attempt on the part of the church to 'dive into' the 'thoughts' of the people. However, this was not a phenomenon peculiar to the church in Canada. In fact, it could be said with enough justification that control over thought, and not just action, was one of the most important duties of the church, as Christianity being supposedly a revealed religion making universalistic claims to truth had to be defended both in word and deed. The list of the proscribed books (the Index librorum prohibitium) was prepared under the authority of the Pope himself in 1557, and it was then passed on to the various dioceses. It appears, however, that the church in Canada was more successful in enforcing the ban, partly because of the very limited readership within the colony.

It is clear that the church in Canada looked upon itself as the moral guardian of the community. But in doing so it was not making any inroads into the domain of the state,

since the latter itself expected the church to indoctrinate the people in order that the social
and moral order could be perpetuated. It would also be erroneous to assume that the
people disputed the moral authority of the church in theory. In fact, the Bishop was
widely seen to be the moral and spiritual head of the colony, and was expected to come to
the rescue of the people in times of distress. Tensions between the church and the
colonists were generated whenever the former displayed excessive zeal in enforcing its
version of morality on the populace. But most of these tensions remained fairly
manageable, because the community had a variety of ways to evade the norms laid down
by the church. In doing so, the community was trying to maintain its autonomous notions
of morality and good behavior. Restrictions on dress remained more an expression of the
pious intentions of the church, and it is doubtful if they were ever taken seriously by the
colonists. While the church exercised greater influence on the institution of marriage, we
have seen that the scope for subversion, advertent or inadvertent, was always there.

There can be no doubt that religion in the form of Catholic practices became an integral
part of the Canadien identity. The church played a visibly important role not just in
matters of spirituality and morality, as we have seen, but also in educational, medical,
cultural and social issues and interactions. The Canadien community enjoyed what
sociologist Raymond Breton has called ‘institutional completeness’, the organizational
structure to provide the services it required\(^\text{115}\). A direct result of this institutional
completeness acquired during the French regime was the limited social interaction,
especially in the rural areas, with British society after the Conquest. The cultural
differences between the Canadiens and Anglophones aided in the maintenance of ‘social

\(^{115}\) Raymond Breton, *Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of
distance'. This was further strengthened by the size of the Canadien community and endogamy. The fact that their mother tongue, French, was also accorded privileged status and was spoken by the British elites aided in the maintenance of their traditional lifestyle and distinct identity.

Militarization and Its Consequences for the Colony:

In the preceding chapters, it was mentioned in the passing how New France was a militarized society taking shape in an environment that necessitated intermittent warfare with the natives, on the one hand, and the English colonists, on the other. The consequences that this militarisation had on the colonial society as a whole were also discussed briefly. In this section, we intend to look into the military question in New France at some length, both for the purpose of understanding the military organization itself as well as the interconnections it had with other developments in a pioneer society like that of seventeenth or eighteenth century Canada.

At the very outset, it is important to see how and why military activity comes into play in the context of the French regime in North America. Several factors could be said to have contributed to the evolution of a military organization in the colony. Probably, the most important of these had something to do with the very nature of mercantilism-colonialism- the twin forces that took France and some other European countries to different parts of the world. Mercantilism, the predecessor of the more enduring capitalism, had at its very core the concept of economic expansion of Europe. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Europe as a whole was the net importer of goods from the rest of the world, especially India and China, though much of this trade was carried out through middlemen. This was the case primarily because the European countries
produced very little that could be exported to the foremost trading nations of the world. However, economy had been expanding in Europe for the last few centuries, and there was a great push towards further expansion of economic activity, based on relatively fast growing population and the consequent demand for consumption. Mercantilism was in some ways an ingenious method that enabled the leading economic powers of Europe to put themselves in an advantageous position vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Since the existing economic base of these countries could not enable them to have favorable commercial relations with the largest economic powers of the time, the aim of economic expansion could be realized only by combining trade and commerce with an aggressive policy that emphasized favorable economic relations even if that meant using methods that had not been traditionally associated with trade and commerce. Military coercion was thus at the heart of European economic expansion, since it was only through the means of this coercion that Europe could hope to get the resources for its economic expansion. The rise of mercantilism involved a good deal of piracy on the high seas, bombardment of centers of trade in different parts of the world, like Vasco da Gama’s attack on Calicut, and, in the case of Americas, outright occupation of land in a gradual manner. It was not as though the European nations arrived in North America on some kind of entertainment tour of a virgin land. Rather, it was a typical economic-military venture that brought them to the ‘new lands’, and conflict with the natives and among the nations themselves was intrinsic to the very process. Virtually all the European ships carried cannons to meet any kind of military challenge that may come up. Therefore, when we talk about the militarisation of society, we need to remember that it was not peculiar to Canada. It occurred in other parts of the world where Europe set its foot,
sometimes in a far more virulent form than in Canada. However, it was the peculiar nature of French mercantilism- colonialism and the prevailing conditions in North America that gave a distinct shape to the military organization in New France. What differentiated the French experience in Canada from elsewhere, notably the English and the Spaniards from the Americas, was that military action was directed not at dispossessing aboriginal inhabitants but against potential European rivals.

When we talk about Canadian military in the pre-Conquest days, what we have in mind usually are two separate, though interrelated, types of military entities: the colonial militia composed of the general populace of the colony, and the professional troops sent from France to be garrisoned in different parts of Canada. Whereas the colonists, from the very beginning, had to be ready to defend themselves, as and when the need arose, the formalization of this activity came into the picture for the first time as a result of escalation of conflict between the colonists and the Iroquois towards the middle of the seventeenth century. The hostilities carried out against the Iroquois and others were not aimed at driving them from their ancestral territory to effect settlement. Rather, the French in the interests of the fur trade were drawn into an inter-tribal war as partners of the Hurons and Algonkian suppliers of furs. The result was an intensification of warfare in which the Iroquois on several occasions threatened the very existence of the French colony.

It was one of the darkest eras in the history of New France, when the fledgling colony was being attacked by the well-armed Iroquois tribes supplied by the Dutch and English. The first glimpses of what would later become one of the hallmarks of the Canadian society during the period under review can be seen in the order of the Governor
of Trois Rivières, issued in 1651, calling upon the ‘captain of the inhabitants’ to take up arms against the enemy and defend the settlement. And we know that Pierre Boucher, the captain of Trois Rivières, formed some kind of militia to carry out these orders\(^{116}\). In 1663, when the war against the Iroquois was still in a delicate phase, another such force, named Militia of the Holy Virgin, was formed upon the orders of the Governor of Montreal\(^{117}\). However, these developments do not yet refer to the formation of an organized militia.

The first great push towards the military organization of the colony came with the arrival of Louis XIV on the scene. It was from this time onwards that regular troops in sizeable numbers were deployed in the colony. These were of two kinds: *troupes de terre* and *troupes de la marine*. While the former were part of the French military proper, the latter were organized for the defense of colonies. While both were regular troops, the former constituted the elite sections of the military. In 1665, the first contingent of *troupes de terre*, Carignan-Salières regiment, arrived in New France\(^{118}\). A little later, some more regular troops from France arrived at the colony, so that the number of troops now reached an all time high of 1300. It must be mentioned here that this was one of the only two occasions when regular troops belonging to the French military were deployed in the colony- the second occasion being the Seven Years War that finally led to the conquest of New France at the hands of the British. Significantly, both the instances of the use of *troupes de terre* occur in a context where the very existence of the colony was threatened by the enemy- the Iroquois in the first case and the English in the second. In any case, the


troops belonging to Carignan – Salieres regiment had been dispatched to Canada with the specific aim of suppressing the Iroquois, and once that objective was achieved in 1668, they were recalled to France. However, some 400 of these troops and some officers stayed back in the colony. The arrival, in 1669, of some 350 soldiers for permanent settlement in Canada reinforced the former troops of the regiment, taking the total number to an impressive figure of 800- impressive because the total population of the colony at this time was no more than three thousand, excluding the troops. It was these troops that constituted the troupe de la Marine in Canada. Since the soldiers belonging to the troupe de la Marine had all been once a part of the regular French forces, they had had the same level of training and experience as the troupe de terre. What distinguished them from the latter was their permanent settlement in the colony, though there is reason to believe that this eventually led to deterioration in the conventional fighting skills of these troops while taking on native guerrilla tactics suited to forest warfare, raiding and scouting.

However, the 800 or so troops belonging to the troupe de la marine were not considered sufficient by the Crown for the defense of the colony. Therefore, in 1669, Louis XIV ordered the Governor to divide all my subjects dwelling in the country into companies keeping in mind their [geographical] situation; and after having thus divided them, you appoint captains, lieutenants and ensigns to command them. The stated aim of this exercise was 'to make the inhabitants expert in the use of arms and in military discipline'. The actual formation of the militia, however, took place only in 1673 after

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121 George F. G. Stanley and Harold M. Jackson, Canada's Soldiers 1604-1934, Toronto 1954, p. 21.
122 Ibid.
the arrival of Frontenac as the Governor of New France\textsuperscript{123}. Under this scheme of things, every parish was supposed to have its own company of local militia, honorary in nature, commanded by the locally appointed Captain of Militia, and larger parishes sometimes had more than one company at their disposal, with the strength of each company at around 50 troops\textsuperscript{124}. In the beginning, these companies were further organized to function as regiments under the authority of ex- colonels of the Carignan regiment\textsuperscript{125}. Interestingly, the capitaines de milice were appointed out of the relatively prosperous habitants, and not the seigneurs, as would probably have been the case in France. What is more, there was an element of popular democracy here, in the sense that the captain was selected by parishioners themselves, in the same way as perhaps a tribe would select its chief in order to have a capable military leader at its disposal. In the course of time, the office of captain of militia tended to be hereditary, as the same families that had initially provided these local leaders continued to be dominant within their respective parishes.

The militia was not a paid service, and yet it was a compulsory recruitment of all the able bodied males between the ages of 15 and 59. It might be imagined that under these circumstances it may not have had a very high level of motivation. On the contrary, however, the militia constituted a motivated force because of several factors. First and foremost, it was a force for self – survival, without which the very existence of colony might be endangered. For the habitants, joining the militia was not so much a matter of compulsion, as this was perceived to be the most effective way of ensuring the defense of the colony, which, needless to say, was considered to be the most important interest of the colonists. What was at stake was their own existence, a fact that gave a popular

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.p. 22.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
character to the militia. For the captains of militia, it provided a godsend opportunity to ensure social mobility. Most of them already had a socio-economic status just below that of the seigneurs, and their new designation further added to their standing within the community. They were widely perceived to be the leaders of the local communities, and had in this manner eaten into some of the authority that had traditionally belonged to the seigneur. It was the captain, and not the seigneur, who was supposed to enforce the orders of the higher administration within the parish. Thus, within the context of the local community, the captain of militia occupied a high place due mainly to his military service to the community.

The significance of the constitution of the colonial militia should not be underestimated, since most of the actual fighting, which was guerrilla warfare, or *la petite guerre*, as the habitants called it, was done by the militia rather than the regular troops. From the point of view of the colony, it was a momentous development to have the entire community mobilized for self-defense in what was truly to become a war of attrition, both against the Iroquois and the English colonies. It was this total mobilization of what was admittedly a small community in relation to both the natives and the English that enabled Canada to maintain its independence for a long time. Of course, the services of the entire militia were usually not required at one point of time. The members of the militia were unpaid on the grounds that they were defending their own hearth and home. Nevertheless, they were well-equipped at state expense, a benefit they did not hesitate to exploit in order to obtain superior arms and ammunitions, clothing and appropriate footwear.

As a rule, it was the individual companies that carried out the planned attacks against the enemy. While the members of the militia were given some general training in military
drills, including shooting, their training was nowhere as rigorous as that of a regular soldier. The real training that the militia received was in the battlefield, especially with the Iroquois, where it was a conflict centered on the time tested guerilla tactics of stealth and speed.

By the eighteenth century, military, both regular one and the militia had become a well-established institutions in the colony. This added appreciably to community solidarity and an attachment to place. Peter Kalm was impressed by the fact that soldiers were well-fed and clothed, paid regularly and were well-disciplined\(^{126}\). These conditions were in stark contrast to those prevailing in the English colonies; one of the observers from the English colonies has thus commented upon the militia:

> "Our men are nothing but a set of farmers and planters, used only to the axe and hoe. Theirs are not only well-trained and disciplined, but they are used to arms from their infancy among the Indians; and are reckoned equal, if not superior, in that part of the world to the veteran troops. These (Canadians) are troops that fight without pay - maintain themselves in the woods without charges - march without baggage and support themselves without stores and magazines - we are at immense charges for those purposes\(^{127}\)."

The successful constitution of the colonial militia was, of course, one of the several elements of stability in the colony. It provides further testimony to the successful adaptation of the *Canadiens* to their environment. Along with other factors, the military organization and experience in the colony contributed to a colonial sense of self-reliance, of belongingness\(^{128}\). Like the aboriginals peoples who were the first inhabitants, they

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belonged to the land in as much as they were at home in its fields and forests. The land had adopted them and so their destiny was tied to it. Its physical attributes, climate, land forms, etc. were associated with their occupations, economic activity, land use, language and even warfare. The region gave them a feeling of distinctiveness, group consciousness and shared loyalty. It had become their homeland.