

POLITICAL ORGANISATION

TOPIC

ROOM 11: ADMINISTRATION OF THE CITY - 16TH -17TH C.

Definition of the Consulate

The Consulate, the embodiment of municipal power in Lyon

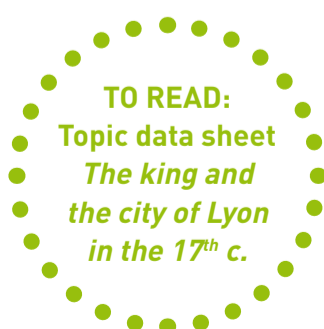
On 21 June 1320, after the defeat of Archbishop Peter of Savoy by the king of France Philip the Fair, the Sapaudine Charter was drawn up to enshrine the entry of Lyon into the kingdom of France, offering the city full self-government... and a Consulate. From then until 1790 – the date of the establishment of the first mayor of Lyon, Zachary-Simon Palerne de Savy – the Consulate embodied the municipal government and political direction of Lyon and was all the more powerful that the city had no parliament, no sovereign court and no major nobility.

Reform of the municipal authority: the Edict of Chauny of 1595

In the 16th c., the city government was based on the Consulate, which was made up of 12 consuls of equal rank, but also on the Assembly of Notables (20 to 25 counsellors) and the General Assembly (200 to 250 notables and around 80 landowners and loom masters). The Consulate had the final say on all the decisions taken by the assembly. In 1595, by publishing the Edict of Chauny, Henry IV reformed the municipal authority of Lyon to bring it into line with the Parisian model. In order to strengthen the royal power at the expense of the municipality and to make the city easier to control, the Consulate was reduced to a membership of 4 aldermen, with an internal hierarchy. A Provost of Merchants* (Inv. 46.2 – Roll of arms of the provosts of merchants) who held decision-making power was elected as head of the aldermen for a period of two years. The general assemblies and assemblies of notables were suppressed: the gap grew between the city government and the population, which was less represented.



Poster of Provost of Merchants Marc-Antoine du Savzey, card, 1661, Inv. SN 22



Accession to the Consulate

Cursus honorum

During the 17th c., a form of cursus honorum, leading to the position of alderman, became the tacit norm. Merchants and traders would work for two years as rectors in the hospitals in Lyon – the *Hôtel-Dieu* and the *Hôpital de la Charité* – and then treasurers for one of the two charities chaplaincies. They would then enter the Court of Conservation*, before reaching the Consulate (Inv. No. 2087 – Certificate of Aldermanship). However, as in other French cities, over the centuries the number of merchants represented at the Consulate diminished, to be replaced by members of the legal profession and officers.

As for the Provost of Merchants, he was almost always a monarchical officer: for example, the Chairman of the Parliament of

the Dombes, a Lieutenant General of a Seneschalsy, the Chairman of a Presidial Court or a treasurer general of France.



Laurent Anisson Sieur D'auteroche, Alderman of Lyon in 1670 and 1671, etching, C. Larinier, 17th c., Inv. N 4656.11

Eligibility

The eligibility requirements for the Consulate underwent changes at the dawn of the 17th c. Whereas until 1598, it was enough to have lived 10 years in Lyon to be a candidate, Henri IV decided in 1601 that only those people born in the city would be eligible. Two years later, however, he revoked this edict: it was sufficient to be French, to have lived for 12 years in Lyon and to own property worth at least 10,000 livres.

The Provost of Merchants, however, always had to be Lyonnais by birth (Inv. 37239 – Provost of Merchants Tolozan de Montfort).

Aldermen in style!

It was traditional for aldermen to adorn themselves with considerable finery. Since 1577, they had three different outfits: a black outfit when they were sitting at the Conservation, a purple one – the colour of the city – during ceremonies and another black one for funeral services and when they left office. These outfits were seen as a sign of refinement and were regularly redesigned over the century. Finally, the aldermen never travelled without an escort of around 50 men and employed an increasing number of municipal officers.



Alderman costume in 1600, adjusted around 1577, "bishop" purple surcoat with satin edging of the same colour, watercolour drawing, Jean Coulon, Inv. N 1940.5

Security guards

Lyon took care of its own security, by means of volunteer unpaid security force, the pennons*, divided up into about 30 different quarters – or pennonages – which had very fuzzy boundaries in the 17th c., although the Consulate gave the system a little more order in 1647. The militia consisted of 21 men per pennonage, led by a quarter captain – known as the pennon captain. They were local representatives of the Consulate responsible for suppressing any unrest, and also participated in the parades that marked royal entries into the city.

Meanwhile, another guard of 200 men was created to look after the City Hall, the bridges, the wine fair, the corn market and the gates of the city during the night. Led by the captain of the city, the company of arquebusiers – also nicknamed the "garots" – repressed disorder and escorted consuls. Finally, a watch company, composed of 50 men selected and paid by the Consulate, attended executions, carried out horse patrols at night and acted as prison guards or wardens at shows.



The *Mandeurs of the City of Lyon*, city sergeants or bailiffs walking before the provost of merchants and the aldermen, detail of the Cavalcade of the Publication of Peace, 1660, Inv. N 248.3.3

Roles of the Consulate

In the 17th c., despite the best efforts of the royal authorities to reduce it, the Consulate wielded considerable political, economic, financial, legal, military and social power:

Inspection of the city's economy

The Consulate received the articles of association and the regulations for all of the trades practised in the city and was able to punish offenders. For example, it had control over the manufacturer and trade of cloth, ensuring that the mark of the workers was stamped on each piece of fabric. Similarly, all merchants had to have the weights and measures that they used certified by the Consulate each year. Every three months, the Consulate organised inspections of traders.

Tax collection

The Consulate managed and collected urban revenue through the receivers general, who were officers of the city. It was responsible for the accounts of the city and controlled the expenses and managed the income of the City Hall.

Lyon, a "good city"

Once it had entered the kingdom of France, Lyon, in its capacity as a "good city", was exempted from having a garrison it did have to not maintain troops. However, the city accommodated armies passing through the region, hosting cavalry in the suburb of La Guillotière and infantry at Vaise and La Croix-Rousse. The Consulate also offered its patronage to the brotherhoods of the Knights of the Arch and the Knights of the Harquebus, thus providing extra strength in case of war.

Civil justice

The Consulate had the power of justice, able to imprison those who violated its decisions or to send people into exile.

glossary

Court of Conservation: commercial court of the *Ancien Régime*.

The Pennons: citizen militia of the city of Lyon. The term also refers to the banners in different districts or corporations – known as pennonages – of the city.

Provost of Merchants: function similar to that of today's mayor.