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An Inclusive "Nation": "Foreigners" at the Bastille, July 14, 1789

David Garrioch

Among those who joined the attack on the Bastille on the afternoon of July 14, 1789 were a significant number of men who were born outside the boundaries of France. The origins of 668 of the nearly 900 *Vainqueurs de la Bastille* included on the official lists are documented with reasonable certainty. Fifty-three of them were foreign-born, a further three almost certainly so: roughly one in twelve of the official *Vainqueurs*. The largest number (at least seventeen) came from areas that today are part of Germany, particularly the Rhineland. Eight more hailed from Savoy and a further seven or eight from what today is Italy. The Southern Netherlands contributed about thirteen *Vainqueurs*, and at least three were from Austria and one from Prussia.[1]

Few historians have commented on the presence of these individuals. An exception was the furniture historian François de Salverte, in his dictionary of cabinetmakers published in 1923, at a moment of strong anti-German feeling in France. He singled out Michel Molitor, who was born in a village in the Austrian Netherlands, north-east of Luxembourg. Molitor lived and worked not far from the Bastille, in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and he appears in the pre-revolutionary archives in January 1788, when he and his cousin reported a theft. They were accompanied by an interpreter, "since they are German and they do not speak the French language."[2] Salverte commented that "several of them [the *Vainqueurs*] did not speak our language, and others were scarcely twenty years old. These improvised "patriots" were no less ardent in avenging France against the horrors of despotism."[3] Salverte saw the

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[1] Durieux, *Les Vainqueurs*, gives place of birth for 635. Several more are identified in Salverte, *Les ébénistes du XVIIIe siècle*; Schefzyk, *Migration*; and *Les Vainqueurs*. I have traced some in other archival sources. Each official list contains names that the others omit.

[2] Leben, *Molitor*, 13–14. Archives nationales, Paris [hereafter AN] Y14436, Jan. 2, 1788: "attendu qu'ils sont allemands et qu'ils ne prononcent pas la langue française."

[3] Salverte, *Les ébénistes du XVIIIe siècle*, xiii: "plusieurs ne parlaient pas notre langue et d'autres n'avaient pas vingt ans. Ces 'patriotes' improvisés ne furent pas les moins fougueux à venger la France des horreurs du despotisme!"

participation of men like Molitor as commendable but paradoxical, because – like many historians – he saw the events of July 1789 through a national lens.

It is worth asking why Molitor, and others who were not French, chose to join the crowd and to risk their lives at the gates of the Bastille. But first we should consider why we might expect place of birth to make a difference. Did someone born outside France, and who spoke poor French, necessarily have different interests, in July 1789, from a person who was born a subject of the French king? Would we expect them to behave differently? The assumption that they would is obvious in Salverte's writing, but it is also implicit in Jacques Godechot's account, still the most important study of the July insurrection. Presenting the fall of the Bastille within the context of his Atlantic Revolution hypothesis, Godechot suggested that it was linked to a series of changes – demographic, economic, social, and ideological – that sparked dramatic challenges to the existing order, from America to the Low Countries, and as far east as Geneva. Yet he also emphasized the national character of July 14, arguing that the attack on the Bastille would not have taken place without a series of earlier revolutionary events around France. He used the places of birth of the *Vainqueurs* to support both of these claims, pointing to the recent provincial origins of over half of them as evidence of the national foundations of the event, and to the presence of "foreigners" as reinforcing its international character. Significantly, Godechot used modern categories to describe the latter group: there were, he wrote, thirteen "Italians," twelve "Germans," twelve "Belgians," one "Dutchman," and one "Swiss." To conclude that their presence made the attack on the Bastille a collaborative, international effort was to assume that being born outside France made these individuals different, perhaps representing wider revolutionary currents. Yet although he was able to point to several French-born participants who had been involved in the American War, and to another who had been in Geneva during the revolution there, he presented no evidence that any of the foreign-born *Vainqueurs* had earlier revolutionary connections.[4]

Other historians of the popular movement of 1789 have avoided these assumptions. George Rudé did not mention the presence of men from outside the borders of France and made only passing reference to the provincial origins of most of the participants. He presented July 1789 as a very Parisian uprising, stressing the role of "the great mass of Parisian petty craftsmen, tradesmen and wage-earners." Their "revolutionary temper," he added, "had been moulded over many months by the rise in living costs and … by the growing conviction that the great hopes raised by the States General were being thwarted by an aristocratic plot."[5] For Marcel Reinhard, too, "no revolutionary *journée* was more Parisian than 14 July," and he pointed out that men born in Paris were disproportionately represented. He too did not mention foreigners. Raymonde Monnier, by contrast, observed that the demography of the *Vainqueurs* from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine was broadly representative of that of the area as a whole, which included significant numbers of foreign-born immigrants, but she did not draw any conclusions from their presence at the Bastille.[6]

There can be little question that those born outside France knew they had come from a different state, and nor is there any doubt that those born inside France knew that they were French. If this is understood to be a "national" revolution in the modern sense of that term, the presence of many foreign-born individuals in the attack on the Bastille raises the question of what they were doing there. In this context, however, as many scholars have observed, the modern concept of "foreigner" is anachronistic. In early modern Europe, and still in the eighteenth century, being "foreign" was socially rather than legally determined. Tamar

[4] Godechot, *Taking*, 225–26, 272–73.
[5] Rudé, *Crowd in the French Revolution*, 59.
[6] Reinhard, *Nouvelle histoire de Paris*, 135; Monnier, *Le Faubourg Saint-Antoine*, 122; Tulard, *Nouvelle histoire de Paris*, 100, does not mention places of birth.

Herzog argues that in eighteenth-century Spain, acceptance of local duties enabled the integration of those who came from elsewhere, whereas "people who did not love the community were classified as foreigners."[7] Simona Cerutti observes, for eighteenth-century Turin, that the term "foreigner" did not refer primarily to a person's place of origin, but to people who were not integrated, whether through family connections, economic activity, or implantation in local institutions. Hanna Sonkajärvi, studying Strasbourg, makes a very similar case.[8]

This paper argues, first, that in late eighteenth-century Paris too, place of birth made little difference, and that the way newcomers to the city were treated did not depend on which side of the border they came from. The second major point is that the recruitment of the *Vainqueurs* on July 14 reflects the mobilization of everyday social networks within Paris and drew on long-standing traditions within the city. Most immigrants, wherever they were born, were part of such networks and were quick to embrace these traditions.

The Inapplicability of Legal Definitions in eighteenth-century Paris

Legally, there was a clear difference between French and non-French. Studies of Old Regime legislation and jurisprudence suggest that the courts broadly followed the sixteenth-century legal scholar Jean Bodin, who argued that an adult male born in France, whose father or mother was French, was a "natural citizen" and enjoyed the resulting rights and privileges. Someone born in France to foreign parents was also French, and immigrants could become French citizens through naturalization. Being a citizen meant, among other things, being able to buy, own, and sell property, and it bestowed "civil rights" such as those to inherit and to leave goods to one's heirs. By the late seventeenth century, the courts were extending Bodin's definition to females. In short, someone born and living in France was French, whoever their parents were; someone born outside the kingdom was not French, except if they had been naturalized by the Crown. Being married to a French subject made no difference, even for women.[9]

In reality, however, the distinction was not nearly so clear. For example, the Duchy of Lorraine, where a surprising number of the *Vainqueurs de la Bastille* were born, was nominally independent and was only formally integrated into the Kingdom of France in 1766. Only then had its inhabitants become fully French. Those who, in 1789, were aged over twenty-three had been born outside France. But the Duchy of Lorraine was not a single territorial entity. It was a patchwork of enclaves, some of them tiny.[10] It also enclosed small areas that were part of the Holy Roman Empire, such as the village of Woustwiller, belonging to the Comté of Bliescastel, one of the many tiny Rhineland states. One of the *Vainqueurs*, Joseph Bock, was born in Woustwiller and only became a French subject when the village was ceded to France at the beginning of the 1780s, when he was in his early twenties.[11] He was French neither by birth, nor by choice. Perhaps he was pleased to have Louis XVI as his new king, or perhaps not. Perhaps he did not care!

Borders, furthermore, had none of the importance they hold today. France's eighteenth-century boundaries were remarkably porous, even the best-defined one, the Channel separating the kingdom from England. Land borders were even easier to cross, and usually required no identity checks. Johann Georg Wille left a detailed description of his

[7] Herzog, *Defining Nations*, quotation 71.
[8] Cerutti, *Étrangers*; Sonkajärvi, *Qu'est-ce qu'un étranger?*
[9] Ferrière, "Sujets et citoyens," 100–102; Sahlins, *Unnaturally French*, 19–40.
[10] Sahlins, *Unnaturally French*, 193–94; Sahlins, Natural Frontiers Revisited," 1427–28.
[11] Bouteiller, *Dictionnaire topographique*, 288. I have not included Bock, or the Lorrains, in the statistics of foreign-born *Vainqueurs*.

journey to Paris in 1736, crossing the frontier at the Rhine, then again to enter and leave Lorraine, but the only official inspection was at the gates of Paris, and that was only to check for goods entering the city. Passports were required primarily in times of war or crisis, and even then only for travelers from the areas directly affected.[12] Furthermore, land frontiers were often poorly defined, at least until the last thirty years of the Old Regime, when a series of agreements with neighboring states drew precise lines. The treaty between France and Savoy dated to 1760, those with the Austrian Netherlands, Liège, and several Rhineland states to the 1760s and 1770s, and the one with Spain that fixed the western Pyrenean frontier, to 1785.[13]

It was perfectly possible to come to Paris and to live there for decades without one's origins or citizenship being questioned. Applications for naturalization often indicate that the petitioners had lived without hindrance in France for many years. Many of them, in fact, emphasized long residence in France as part of their case for obtaining citizenship. Jean Biesta, for example, a journeyman clockmaker from The Hague, declared that he had been in Paris for nearly seventeen years. Nicolas Newbecher, from Luxembourg, had lived in France for over twenty-six years, although had arrived in Paris more recently. His foreign status, however, had not prevented him from purchasing a mastership as a wigmaker.[14]

Indeed, the foreign-born encountered few impediments in the course of their everyday lives. They could be apprenticed, marry, and buy, sell, or inherit property without being asked for their place of birth. Only after death might citizenship become relevant, since the *droit d'aubaine* allowed the Crown to lay claim to the estates of foreigners, and this led a tiny minority of immigrants who had been born outside France to apply for naturalization. Yet exemptions agreed to with most European rulers meant that the *droit d'aubaine* applied only to people from a very small range of places.[15] For individuals with little property, like most of the *Vainqueurs*, this was irrelevant anyway. Those who did seek naturalization often seem to have done so, as in Piedmont and in Spain, as a precautionary measure. The letters granted to Swiss-born George Galliard, in 1748, were intended "to avoid any difficulties that he might encounter," since "the Swiss are free to establish themselves in our kingdom."[16]

The main legal barrier that foreign artisans might encounter was in applying for a mastership in one of the city's guilds. Until 1776, almost all the trades discriminated against "foreigners" (*étrangers*), who were typically defined, as in the 1751 statutes of the cabinetmakers, as "those who are not sons, sons-in-law, husband, widow, or apprentices of a Master."[17] Being an *étranger*, therefore, was not a consequence of where one was born, but of having no close connections with the Paris guild. French-born artisans, if they had not completed an apprenticeship in the city or married into the guild, were in the same position. They, like people born outside the kingdom, had to pay more and to serve a longer period as an ordinary worker. After 1776, however, a royal decree opened masterships to outsiders, excluding only Jews, and it also greatly reduced the cost.[18]

In everyday social relationships, the most significant differences between Parisians and immigrants lay in language and culture, but these did not necessarily coincide with legal definitions. One of those at the Bastille was the cabinetmaker Laurent Payal, born in the town

[12] Morieux, "La fabrique sociale"; Duplessis, *Journal et mémoires de Jean-Georges Wille*, 1: 58; Denis, *Une histoire de l'identité*, 303–308.
[13] Sahlins, "Natural Frontiers Revisited," 1440–1441; Rapport, *Nationality*, 21–22.
[14] Archives nationales, Paris [hereafter AN] O1 231, fols 335 (March 1757), 258 (July 1756). Wigmakers (*perruquiers*) were unique among the Paris guilds in having masterships that took the form of venal offices: Franklin, *Dictionnaire*, 566.
[15] Sahlins, *Unnaturally French*, 36–38, 47–51, 205, 210–11, 225.
[16] Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 5, 9. Cerutti, *Étrangers*, 66. AN O1 228, fol. 354, Jan. 1748.
[17] Quoted in Schefzyk, *Migration*, 64.
[18] Kaplan, *La fin des corporations*, 77–137.

of Luxembourg in 1754. He had moved to Paris some time before 1776, and in 1789 was living in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. Payal was probably a native speaker of French, although a local dialect of German was spoken in parts of the Duchy of Luxembourg. He married the daughter of a laborer in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and was almost certainly Catholic. We can compare him with another *Vainqueur de la Bastille*, André Georges Wiesser, also a cabinetmaker, but who hailed from Strasbourg. He almost certainly spoke Alsatian German as his first language: most people there did, and the records of the cabinetmakers guild in Strasbourg were written in German right through the eighteenth century. Wiesser's wife came from a German-speaking area of Switzerland, and it is likely that the couple were Protestants. Wiesser was legally French. Payal was not, since he was born outside the kingdom and had never sought naturalisation. Yet though Payal technically owed allegiance to the Austrian monarch, he was married to a local woman and in cultural, religious, and linguistic terms was arguably more at home in Paris than was Wiesser.[19]

This was not unusual. There were many at the Bastille on July 14 who hailed from Alsace or Lorraine, and whose first language was German. Lorraine contained more French speakers than Alsace, but its north-eastern section remained German-speaking. Nor were these the only parts of the kingdom where languages other than French were spoken. There were Bretons, Basques, Catalans, and varieties of southern French: Provençal and Occitan. Alongside these were many *patois*, local variants of northern French, that were very different from the dialect spoken in Paris. By contrast, Genevans and others from French-speaking Swiss cantons, particularly urban centres, as well as people from French-language areas of Flanders and the Austrian Netherlands, had little difficulty making themselves understood. A great many people born within France's borders no doubt seemed more foreign to Parisians than some who came from other parts of Europe. Individuals who had grown up in villages and small towns, and in areas with different customs, must have found the city a very foreign place, whether they were French-born or not.

Social Relationships in the City

Paris was a city built on immigration. In the second half of the eighteenth century, at least two-thirds of its population were born elsewhere, and around 4 to 6 percent – probably more on the eve of the Revolution – came from outside the French kingdom.[20] This had the paradoxical effect that place of birth was enormously important in facilitating integration, yet had little impact on relationships between those from different backgrounds. One of the key sources of solidarity was what people referred to as their "*pays*." This referred to the locality from which they came, sometimes the province, but more often something smaller. Provincials talked about returning to their "*pays*" from time to time. Marie Baurain, who sold secondhand books, said she knew the Widow Dujardin well, "and all the better because they came from the same *pays*."[21] People often gained assistance, in finding work for example, from someone who came from the same "*pays*," even if they did not know them beforehand. They kept in touch with compatriots and regularly gave each other news of home. After a young boy disappeared from his home in Châteauneuf-du-Rhône and was thought to have gone to Paris, the local authorities contacted a man from the same "*pays*" who was living in the capital. He successfully tracked the lad down – presumably through Provençal networks – and verified his identity by asking him detailed questions about the village: the only detail the

[19] Salverte, *Les ébénistes du XVIIIe siècle*, 248, 317; Minutier Central des Notaires, AN [hereafter MC] XXVIII 456, May 6, 1776; Archives de Paris [hereafter AP] V10E 12, June 10, 1806; AN F1dIII/32/1, doss. Wiesser.
[20] Roche, *People of Paris*, 21–24.
[21] AN Y15350, July 29, 1752.

boy didn't know was the name of his *curé*![22] The term "*pays*" was also frequently used of people: a "*pays*" had lent a journeyman six francs so he could buy shoes, and another young man passed on the news of a friend's death to a "*pays*," requesting him to convey it to the friend's parents in Tours. When a furniture-maker known as "*l'Allemand*" had a fight with a neighbor, he took refuge in the house where several of his "*pays*" lived.[23] The term seems to have been used by people from every part of France and even by Parisians, particularly if they had met somewhere else. In 1788, a journeyman tailor and former soldier described another man, a native of the city, as his "*pays*."[24]

To residents of Paris from other parts of France, by contrast, the "*pays*" was often invisible, although language, dress, and other cultural factors did make a few groups stand out. Auvergnats were often readily distinguishable, dominant among the porters at the central market, with their gray hats and red belts. Other Auvergnats worked delivering parcels around the city, and they demonstrated a high level of collective solidarity when, in 1786, the government created a *régie*, an official authority, and gave it a monopoly on this work. A group of men, all of them born near Saint-Flour, were arrested for attacking the agents of the *régie*. A witness testified that "he understood nothing of their Auvergnat language except many threats and vulgar swearing."[25] Auvergnat tinkers in the rue de Lappe, in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, had a long-running feud with butchers in the next street.[26] The records also contain occasional references to "*Allemands*," notably in complaints against turbulent young men, but this was on the basis of language and did not distinguish between German-speakers from outside the kingdom and those from Alsace or Lorraine. Parisians certainly found German names and accents difficult. The Alsatian cabinetmaker Josef Gengenbach ended up adopting the name Canabas, which was clearly the way his clients pronounced his family name. He used "Canabas" for the stamp he put on his furniture, and it even appears on his marriage contract.[27] German-speakers from outside France modified their names in the same way. Another leading cabinetmaker, Josef Baumhauer, born in Bavaria, simply called himself Joseph, except in official documents where his real name appeared in a bewildering range of forms, including "Pomore", "Bamoer" and "Baoumhaoure".[28]

While solidarities between those from the same "*pays*" gave immigrants valuable contacts, and no doubt made them feel less isolated, these differences do not seem to have affected relationships with Parisians from other backgrounds. German-speakers were one of the most distinctive groups, and those who were Lutheran often retained contacts through the Swedish chapel.[29] Yet, like people from the French provinces, most soon established wider networks. They quickly found work with French employers and clients, doing exactly the same sorts of work as their French-born workmates. A Swiss-German named Pierre Beek was employed by the French cabinetmaker Pierre Migeon, serving him as a journeyman for fifteen years, though he never learned to speak French well. Among the *Vainqueurs de la Bastille*, the Lutheran Jean-Georges Hüff, born in Harweiler, just south of Cologne, worked for the prominent French cabinetmaker Ferdinand Bury.[30] Other immigrants worked independently, setting up their benches in rented rooms and undertaking subcontracted work

[22] AN Y15402, Sept. 1788.
[23] AN Y14436, Jan. 30, 1788; Y11283, June 11, 1788; Y14436, Jan. 14, 1788. See also Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community*, 7, 122, 187.
[24] AN Y15099, Feb. 19, 1788, witness 7, and interrogation of Jan. 24, 1788. For an example of its use by Normans, AN Y15099, Apr. 23, 1788, interrogation of Gabriel Levasseur.
[25] AN Y12816, Jan. 4, 1786, witness 14.
[26] AN Y10994, June 6, 1752.
[27] Salverte, *Les ébénistes du XVIIIe siècle*, 45; MC XXVIII 290, Feb. 14, 1745.
[28] AN Z1o 204A, Dec. 20, 1745; AN Y14099, Mar. 22, 1772; AN Y4963A, Apr. 14, 1772.
[29] Schefzyk, *Migration*. 63–98; Driancourt-Girod, *L'insolite histoire des luthériens*, 100–102.
[30] AN Y14091, Dec. 3, 1764; Salverte, *Les ébénistes du XVIIIe siècle*, 155.

or commissions for merchants. In this they were no different from their French-born peers. The prominent cabinetmaker Pierre Migeon kept a register of subcontractors, in which the names of many German artisans appear alongside a larger number of French ones.[31] Some of the most skilled immigrants did work for the Crown or for princely clients. Conrad Mauter supplied the Comte d'Artois throughout the 1780s, while Bernard Molitor was in 1787 taken on to work at the royal château in Fontainebleau.[32]

Other indications abound of foreign-born individuals becoming very much part of the city. One of the most significant was marriage to French subjects. Bernard Molitor, cousin of the *Vainqueur*, wed a French woman. So, in fact, did the majority of foreign-born cabinetmakers in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. There are many examples from other trades as well.[33] A second important sign of acceptance was entry into the guild as a master or mistress, even though this was difficult for those who came to Paris as adults. Yet the leading German-speaking cabinetmakers did manage to join, and in 1770, Simon Oeben, born in the Rhineland, even became an official of the guild. After the reforms of 1776 it became much easier to join, so that by 1785, around third of the master cabinetmakers were foreigners.[34] This included many of those who lived in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, who were not technically required to belong to a guild, but who found it advantageous to do so. The degree of integration of foreign workers in this trade is also demonstrated by many of them taking on French apprentices. Almost immediately after his admission as a master of the guild in 1781, German-born Nicholas Virrig took as his apprentice a young French boy from Langres, and this was not unusual.[35] All the evidence suggests that individuals from all over France and from many other parts of Europe, and sometimes beyond, lived and labored side by side in the streets and workshops of Paris, and of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine in particular. That is not to say that all foreign workers found Paris an easy or congenial place to live. But in this respect, too, they were little different from people from the French provinces, who moved to the capital to find work and a better life, but did not stay. Nevertheless, those with helpful contacts, skill and determination, and often a modicum of plain good luck, were able to become Parisians, fully accepted by the other residents, whether they came from outside the kingdom or from the provinces.

Recruitment on July 14

The recruitment of foreign-born men who participated in the assault on the Bastille reflects this participation in everyday social networks in the city. Admittedly, our knowledge of those who were present is dependent on the accuracy of the surviving lists. Early in 1790, a group of men acclaimed as leaders on July 14 was given the task, by the Municipality, of identifying the *Vainqueurs*. Although there were undoubtedly thousands of people gathered at the fortress, it appears that only those directly involved in the assault on the drawbridge were included among the *Vainqueurs*. Two lists were published, each approved by the National Assembly, one with 871 names and the other with 954 (although some names were repeated). Neither list gives any other information, but both were apparently carefully compiled, and required witnesses to testify to the presence of those included.[36] The process of identification

[31] Schefzyk, *Migration*, 100–105; AP D5 B6 5491.
[32] Salverte, *Les ébénistes du XVIIIe siècle*, 218; Leben, *Molitor*, 16.
[33] Leben, *Molitor*, 18; Thillay, *Le faubourg Saint-Antoine*, 170–71. For other examples, MC XXVIII 290, Feb. 14, 1745 (Joseph [Gengenbach] Canabas); MC XXVIII 301, Jan. 29, 1747 (Jean-Georges Traub); MC XXVIII 322, July 23, 1751 (Girard Oeben); MC XXVIII 395, Oct. 28, 1765 (Jean-Georges Schlichtig).
[34] Salverte, *Les ébénistes du XVIIIe siècle*, xii, 241. He based this estimate on their surnames, not their places of birth, but Miriam Schefzyk's research suggests that it was fairly accurate: Schefzyk, *Migration*, 98.
[35] MC XXVIII 487, May 3, 1781. For further examples, Thillay, *Le faubourg Saint-Antoine*, 171.
[36] Rudé, *Crowd in the French Revolution*, 56–57; Durieux, *Les Vainqueurs*, 249–55.

privileged those who went in groups and who therefore had others who could testify to their presence, whereas isolated individuals were less likely to be named. Appearing in these lists, therefore, was already evidence of integration.

Fortunately, we possess a somewhat shorter manuscript list, compiled by Stanislas Maillard, a member of the committee, which gives addresses and occupations for most of the 662 individuals included. Only one woman is mentioned, and there were other omissions that historians have been able to identify. Nevertheless, it provides the best information we have. The occupations have been analysed by George Rudé. The largest single group comprised 107 furniture-makers (cabinetmakers, joiners, and wood-turners), followed by 61 soldiers, reflecting the participation of the French and Swiss Guards, whose members often exercised part-time artisan activities. Forty-one more were locksmiths, twenty-eight shoemakers, followed by a variety of other artisanal trades.[37] The occupations of the foreign-born participants reflect this general pattern. Of thirty-seven whose trade is known, twenty-nine were artisans, mostly in the furniture industry. Two were shoemakers, three plaster sculptors, and a hatter. Four more were soldiers.[38]

Addresses are more systematically provided, and – aside from the fact that most were in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, these have not been examined by historians. They reveal that neighbors and workmates often went to the Bastille together. This was partly, as Rudé pointed out, because they belonged to the same National Guard units, formed in the preceding two or three days.[39] Clearly, in this part of Paris the National Guard was recruited through neighborhood and workplace connections, in which many foreign-born Parisians were full participants. Thus, at least six *Vainqueurs* lived at number 48, rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine: a tinsmith, a nail-maker, a tailor, a shoemaker from the Austrian Netherlands, and two marble-workers, one from Burgundy and the other from Italy. Another seven *Vainqueurs* lived at number 2, rue de Lappe, one of them German-born. He and one of the others were wood-sculptors, while the remaining four worked in various other occupations. Twenty more men in the list, around half of them furniture-makers, lived in the rue Saint-Nicolas, and four were foreign-born. Other furniture-makers among the *Vainqueurs*, some of them also from outside France, dwelled in the same vicinity. But in this industry, work ties extended far beyond joiners and cabinetmakers, since many artisans – locksmiths, marble-workers, bronze-casters, metal-engravers, gilders, wood carvers, and others – frequently collaborated on large pieces of luxury furniture. These networks are much harder to trace in individual cases, but bankruptcy records and lists of witnesses on marriage contracts provide ample evidence that individuals born outside France were part of them.[40]

These examples suggest that foreign-born men went to the Bastille together with others from the same house, neighborhood, or workshop, rather than with people from the same place of origin or linguistic background. Although the largest non-French language minority, German-speakers, lived and worked in the streets to the east of the Bastille, they represented a small minority of the population of the area and did not dominate particular houses or streets. As noted above, they worked alongside French artisans, many married French women, and many joined the guilds.

[37] Rudé, *Crowd in the French Revolution*. 57–58.
[38] AN T514 (1). I have identified a handful of other occupations in the notarial records.
[39] Rudé, *Crowd in the French Revolution*, 57.
[40] For examples, AP D5 B6 5491, suppliers of the leading French cabinetmaker Pierre Migeon. MC VI 786, marriage contract of Guillaume Cramer, Apr. 16, 1771.

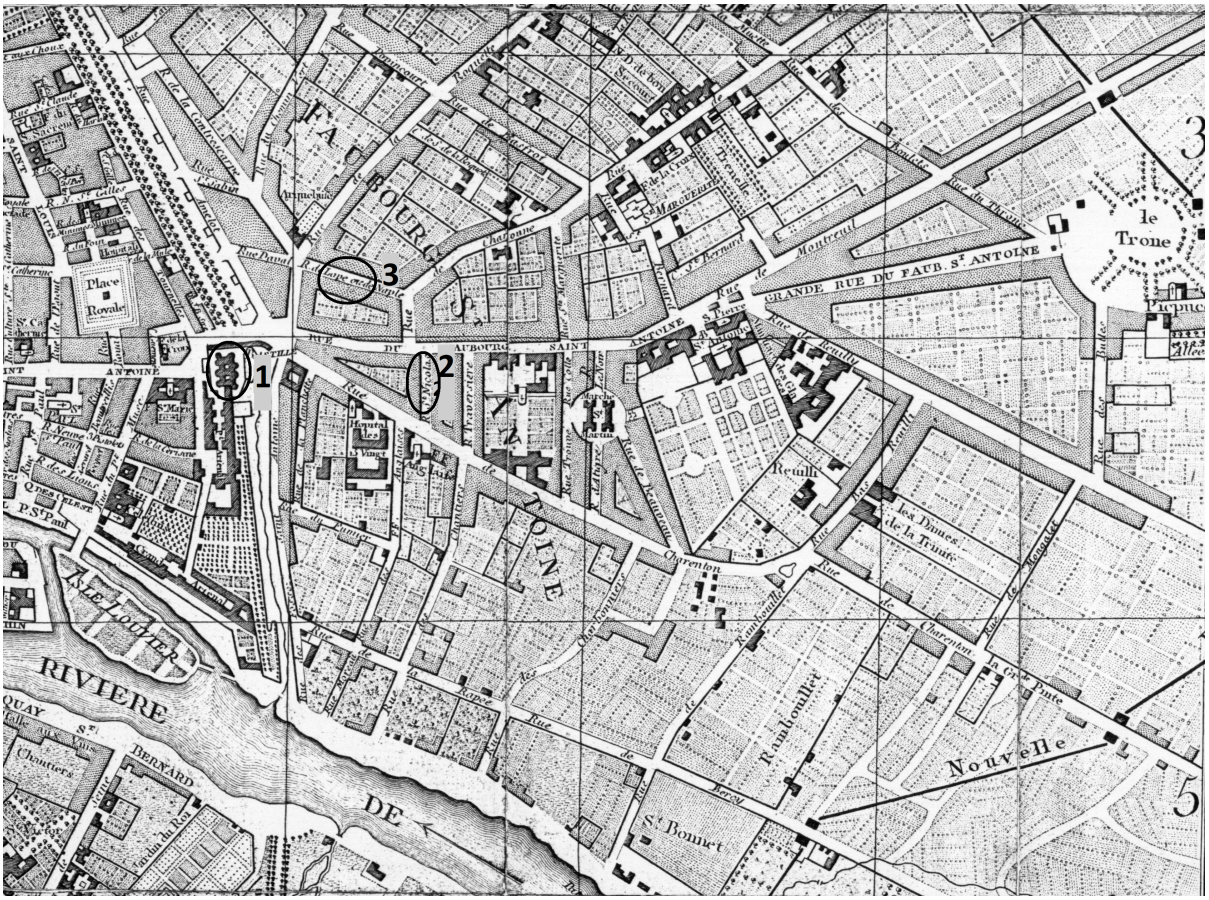

Figure 1. The Faubourg Saint-Antoine at the start of the Revolution
1. the Bastille; 2. rue Saint-Nicolas; 3. rue de Lappe.
Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, *Plan de la ville et faubourg de Paris avec tous ses accroissements et la nouvelle enceinte des barrières de cette capitale*, by Louis-Joseph Mondhare. © Public domain

The over-representation of inhabitants of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine among the *Vainqueurs* – 69 percent of those whose addresses are known – was partly because of their proximity to the Bastille. But the areas around Saint-Paul and the Marais were just as close to the fortress, and they were apparently less represented on July 14. There were, it seems, factors other than geography. One may have been the spirit of independence for which the Faubourg was rightly renowned. The area had a reputation for turbulence, particularly in defence of its workplace liberties, since its artisans were exempt from the obligation to belong to a guild. This did not prevent guild officials from attempting to prosecute those who, in their estimation, produced shoddy work or infringed the rules and privileges of the guilds. But when they entered the Faubourg, they sometimes took their lives in their hands.[41] In other domains, too – in religious matters, notably – the Faubourg had a reputation for dissidence. Many French Protestants continued to live there after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and it was one of the centres of Jansenist resistance in the middle years of the eighteenth century. The Faubourg was also the site of large-scale bread riots in 1725 and 1775, and of violence over the supposed abduction of children in 1750. And of course, in 1789 it was the location of the violent protests against the wealthy manufacturers Jean-Baptiste Réveillon and

[41] AN Y10990A, Sept. 15, 1746; Thillay, *Le faubourg Saint-Antoine*. 229–33.

Dominique Henriot, accused of advocating a reduction in wages. These events reflect local traditions of independence and of collective protest.[42]

It is also worth noting that the trades that were best represented both in the Faubourg and at the Bastille – if we set aside the soldiers – had particularly strong histories of solidarity. In Paris as a whole, joiners, locksmiths, silkworkers and shoemakers were among the artisans who most commonly took industrial action. Shoemakers had a much wider reputation as politically active radicals, not only in the nineteenth century but in earlier periods. In Paris, joiners and cabinetmakers were also among the earliest artisans to establish mutual aid societies.[43] In short, these occupations had histories of collective action that point, in each case, to a specific, trade-related ethos of self-reliance. Foreign-born cabinetmakers, particularly numerous in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, belonged to an occupation in which collaboration was indispensable, and they labored alongside their French-born counterparts, sharing the long hours, the cramped spaces, and the sociability of the workshop. Traditions of collective mobilization may help to explain why this trade was over-represented at the Bastille.

It is also possible, of course, that those who had served apprenticeships or worked as journeymen in the free Imperial towns or similar places had imbibed equally strong activist traditions there. Artisans, despite their diversity, were a determinedly proud and independent group within European society. Younger artisans were very mobile, and this produced forms of organization, particularly in the German states, that gave them a trade identity and traditions shared across political boundaries.[44]

Conclusion

We cannot know for certain what motivated the vast majority of those who attacked the Bastille. Only a handful of them left accounts, and they were written after the event, when it was already being reinterpreted. Nevertheless, the evidence points to a widely shared concern that the city was under siege and that the Bastille – like the Hôtel des Invalides, which had been invaded on the morning of July 14 – contained stores of weapons that could be used for its defence.[45] There is no reason to believe that the motives of foreign-born *Vainqueurs* were any different. On the contrary, everything points to them behaving as adopted Parisians, little different from the provincial immigrants who made up most of the crowd on July 14. That is hardly surprising when we consider the pre-revolutionary context. Even for official purposes, in contact with the police, the notaries, or the parish clergy, place of birth was largely irrelevant, and that was even more the case in everyday neighborhood and workplace relationships.

This is broadly consistent with the argument of Simona Cerutti, Tamar Herzog, and Hanna Sonkajärvi that "foreigners," across eighteenth-century Europe, were not necessarily people born in other states, but rather those who were poorly integrated into the society where they found themselves. It confirms their finding that letters of naturalization were the exception, irrelevant for most of the population. But the example of the *Vainqueurs* does not entirely support the emphasis that Cerutti and Sonkajärvi place on urban institutions such as guilds. Most of the foreign-born individuals at the Bastille worked in the Faubourg Saint-

[42] Garrioch, *Huguenots of Paris*, 96–103; Julia, *Réforme catholique*, 343–410; Thillay, *Le faubourg Saint-Antoine*, 31–36.
[43] Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, 377–91; Hobsbawm and Scott, "Political Shoemakers"; Garrioch, "Mutual aid societies."
[44] There is a very large literature on artisan organization. For a starting point, Ehmer, "Artisans, Journeymen, Guilds"; and Epstein, "Labour Mobility."
[45] Godechot, *Taking*, 187–205; Tackett, *The Glory*, 79–89.

Antoine and did not join a guild. Few guild masters were among the officially-recognized *Vainqueurs*. These were, overwhelmingly, people whose integration into the city was achieved through workplace and neighborhood ties. That is clear both from Old Regime records and from their mobilization on July 12 or 13, 1789, as members of the citizen militia – soon to become the National Guard. They came from the same streets and often the same houses as other members of the National Guard. Their engagement, furthermore, like that of the people around them, is consistent with long-standing patterns of collective behaviour, particularly within the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, with its history of independence and resistance. The artisan trades most strongly represented in their ranks had demonstrated, across the preceding century, high levels of collective action and solidarity.

It is possible that some foreign-born individuals came to Paris with a similar ethos, derived from an upbringing in proudly independent towns or, in the case of artisans, from wider traditions of solidarity within their trades. If so, this no doubt predisposed them to action. But when they accompanied their French-born neighbors and comrades to the Bastille on the July 14, they did so as Parisians, committed to defend the city from an aristocratic enemy.

That, in turn, reveals much about the character of Paris society in the second half of the eighteenth century. While not always welcoming to newcomers, the city was no more difficult for foreign immigrants than for those who came from the provinces. People arrived from all over Europe, and sometimes beyond, and while speaking French was important, there does not seem to have been discrimination against those who spoke it imperfectly or who were culturally different. Although there was certainly such a thing as a "French" identity before the Revolution, and the modern idea of the "nation" was present in embryonic form, those concepts were relevant only in certain very restricted contexts. In fact, as Peter Sahlins has argued, citizenship was increasingly being defined, in the years before 1789, by political and domestic virtue.[46] This, in principle at least, created a national community that was more welcoming to foreigners.

The revolutionary careers of some of the foreign-born *Vainqueurs de la Bastille* certainly bear this out. Even though the Revolution brought an official rhetorical emphasis on an exclusive "national" identity, and some stringent measures against "foreigners" were later decreed by the Convention, these allowed for numerous exemptions and even then were not systematically enforced.[47] The foreign-born participants in the attack on the Bastille were treated in exactly the same way as French-born ones, receiving official recognition and in some cases compensation. They remained in the National Guard, and some went on to join the military battalion of the *Vainqueurs*, which later fought in the revolutionary wars and in the Vendée.[48] Others, like Johann Schwerdberger, originally from Saxony, and Jean-Baptiste Piel, from Monaco, became members of the revolutionary committee of their section in the Year II.[49] Even at the height of the Terror, there was no discrimination against them, whatever the rhetoric in the Jacobin Club and the National Assembly.

We should not be surprised, therefore, to find people who came from beyond France's borders participating in the insurrections of July 1789, in the same way as those born in France. At a time when national categories were still being forged, they were equal members of the urban community, and as such clearly felt entitled – perhaps duty-bound – to take action on behalf of what supporters of the Third Estate were already, in mid-1789, calling "the Nation."

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[46] Sahlins, *Unnaturally French*. 19–132, 213–24 (quotation p. 224); Rechniewski, "Instituting the Citizen."
[47] Bell, *Cult of the Nation*, esp 149–217; Wahnich, *L'Impossible citoyen*; Rapport, *Nationality*, esp. 194–206.
[48] Durieux, *Les Vainqueurs*, 13 (Alfe), 26 (Bole), 34 (Branckaer), 164 (Payal).
[49] Monnier, *Le Faubourg Saint-Antoine*, 134. See also Cobb, "La mentalité révolutionnaire," 109–10.

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