

[Toll Register, Serrières (Ardèche)], Register of toll (péage) charges collected at Serrières on the Rhône River for the years 1527-1530.

In French, manuscript on paper

France, Serrières, 1530 or little after

95 ff., preceded by a blank flyleaf, complete, in very regular quires (i-xii<sup>8</sup>, xiii<sup>4</sup>), on paper (watermark close to Briquet, "Lettre B", no. 8018, Lyon, 1515; no. 8019, Lyon, 1523; no. 8024, Valence, 1551; see also Briquet, pp. 434-435 for numerous variants of this watermark found in South-Eastern and South-Western France), written in a cursive script in brown ink on long lines, various numbers of lines per page. Bound in a contemporary full limp vellum, wallet binding, a cord on the over-flap wrapped around the register, smooth spine with stitching left apparent, inscription in brown ink on the upper cover "Recepte du peage de Serieres. 1527" (Binding a bit stained, a few repairs to parchment, else in fine condition). Dimensions 210 x 155 mm.

Bound in its contemporary utilitarian wallet-style wrapper, this interesting register contains a record of the merchants and the merchandise they hauled when passing the toll point at Serrières (Ardèche, Southeastern France) on the Rhône River. The toll point was administered by a private owner, who received the profits from the toll, the sums for the years 1527-1530 being recorded here. Evidently unpublished and unique, the manuscript contains data of interest for economic history of the period in a well-localized context.

## PROVENANCE

1. Copied in or little after 1530, based on the indicated dates and slight changes of hand. The watermark of the paper points towards regions of Southeastern France (Valence, Lyons). The register might have been copied in Serrières or in a larger city-center such as Vienne or Valence, in 1530, recapitulating the sums received during the period 1527-1530.

Serrières is a small town located in Ardèche, set between the larger towns of Vienne and Valence, along the Rhône River. Since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, a number of successive lords controlled the city, including the powerful Tournon family, and the lucrative toll they were entitled to levy. By the second quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the profits levied from the toll at Serrières were owed to M. de Perault, owner of the toll at Serrières.

2. European Continental Collection.

## TEXT

ff. 1-29v, Record and sums levied (revenues) for the toll register at Serrières, belonging to M. de Perault and represented by three merchants from the city of Vienne, levied by an anonymous tax farmer-general (Vidal Motet?) from August to December 1527, heading, *Estat et value du peage de Seriere appartenant a Monsieur de Perault baillé en asseusement aux seigneurs Francois Verdier, Guillaume de la Tour et Pierre Bonefoy, marchans de Vienne, pour quatre annees prochainement venans commençant le second jour d'aoust mil Vc XXII et semblable jour finissent les quatre annees revolues*; incipit,

"Et premierement a passé maitre Eymar de Tournon une courte chargée de foin payé .i. sol / Plus le .iiii.e jour d'aoust a passé trop long messagier le Ponson Jobert ung carretton chargé de fil sarcié payé .iiii. sols..."; explicit, [December] "Plus le .xxiiii.e de decembre a passé ledict Rosselet avec sa corte chargée de charbon païé pour la moytié du solaige [the term "solaige" means "land"]";

ff. 30-53, Record and sums levied (revenues) for the toll register at Serrières, belonging to M. de Perault represented by three merchants from the city of Vienne, levied by an anonymous tax farmer-general (Vidal Motet?), from January to December 1528;

ff. 53-75v, Record and sums levied (revenues) for the toll register at Serrières, belonging to M. de Perault and represented by three merchants from the city of Vienne, levied by an anonymous tax farmer-general (Vidal Motet?), from January to December 1529;

ff. 75v-88, Record and sums levied (revenues) for the toll register at Serrières, belonging to M. de Perault and represented by three merchants from the city of Vienne, levied by an anonymous tax farmer-general (Vidal Motet?), from January to July 1530; explicit, "[...] Juillet...Le .xxix.e de juillet a passé Claude Porret d'Avignon ung chaine chargé de charbon païé pour la moytié de solaige. Somme .iiii. l[ivres] .xiii. s[ols] .vi. d[eniers]."

f. 88v, blank;

ff. 89-91, List of revenues of M. de Perault less what was owed to the three merchants from Vienne, perceived by Vidal Motet (tax farmer-general?); heading, *Extraict des quictances que j'ay en tant du seigneur Francoys Verdier, Pierre Bonefoy et seigneur Guillaume de la La Tour, marchans de Vienne en deduction de l'argent que je leur ay livré que j'avois receu du peage de Seriere*; explicit, "[...] Comme grosse montent les quictances ou aultres descharges de ce present carnet baillées a Vidal Motet par le siegneur François Verdier, Pierre Bonefoy et Guillaume de la Tour. 1772 [livres]:15 [sous]:10 [deniers]";

ff. 91v-95v, blank.

This manuscript contains the record and list of monetary sums collected for the toll (péage) of Serrières, a small mariner's town located on the Rhône River. The Register provides the names and cargoes that requested passage at this toll point on the Rhône. The French word for "toll" is "péage," derived from the Latin "pediaticum" meaning "the right to set foot [in a given place]." It is a feudal tax levied in exchange of the right to circulate, to use a road, a river, a bridge, a city-gate etc. On the Rhône River, as on many rivers of France, the tolls waged when passing specific points were administered and levied by private families, who in fact were "owners" of the tolls that could be inherited or sold much like "offices" (see C. Ferriere, *Traité des fiefs, suivant les coutumes de France.*, 1680, p. 463: "Sur le fleuve du Rhone, les peages appartiennent aussi aux seigneurs des lieux").

Traveling and engaging in commerce in the later Middle Ages and Early Modern era could prove to be taxing! In addition to the numerous tithes and taxations, the roads and rivers of France were lined with toll and customs checkpoints. There have been studies on the high number of toll stops on rivers such as the Rhône, the Saône, the Garonne, or the Seine. For example in the later Middle Ages there were up to sixty different toll points between Serrières and Pont-Saint-Esprit on the Rhône, and since most of the commerce between Lyon and Marseille was fluvial, merchants were obliged to pass through the successive tolls. Initially a royal

prerogative, the profits were soon entrusted to local noblemen or religious houses, more or less usurped from the king during feudal times (see M. de Vauzelles, *Traité des péages*, Lyon, 1550: "[...] Tous les péages de leur propre nature sont au roy." [All tolls belong to the king]. The amount of "péage" owed varied according to persons and merchandises, depending on amounts, place of provenance, place of retail etc.

Here are listed the names of the commuters, their geographical origin (Lyon, Valence, Tournon, Vienne, Romans, Avignon, Annonay, Terrascon [Tarascon] etc), the goods they hauled (coal, oranges, figs, cotton, salt, fish, cereals etc.), and of course the amount paid in toll. The listings are particularly interesting for the variety of technical terms used for the different containers loaded on the boats, the geographic origins of the merchants, the goods that transited up and down the Rhône River. This document allows one to appreciate mercantile traffic on the Rhône during a circumscribed and limited time, here between 1527-1530, under the reign of Francis I.

The péage of Serrières was finally suppressed in 1884, substituting with regard to taxation a common unified law to former local feudal rights that had survived even the French Revolution. In 1660, Colbert instigated an important inquiry that sought to fight against the spontaneous and excessive multiplication of tolls that enriched some but were detrimental to good commerce. Again, in the eighteenth century, tolls had become a political issue, and the French monarchy instituted a commission in 1724 that was in charge of verifying ownership and clear title to the wide variety and number of "péages" that were granted to individual owners, sometimes unfounded and abusive. Eventually, the French monarchy would progressively buy out or claim rights to the tolls. Tolls and waterways became a political and economic bone of contention, in which the State sought to reassert its rights. In the case of the "péage de Serrières," the toll was "bought back" by the French king in 1770: at the time it had passed on to the Prince de Soubise, owner (and seller to the king) of other tolls on the Rhône and on land as Tournon, la Roche de Glun, Eyras, Beauchastel and la Patte St-Rambert (see Paris, Archives nationales, H4 3189: arrêt du Conseil du 15 juillet 1770).

The toll waged at Serrières for the boats passing on the Rhône considerably enriched the local lords and owners of the "péage." As early as the eleventh century, the ruling family of the Roussillon benefited from the tolls around Serrières, and the name of these Lords remains in the local topography in a nearby town called fittingly Péage-de-Roussillon. A number of families exercised their right to levy the toll at Serrières, including members of the powerful Tournon family. The title of the present document rightly underscores the fact that the lords "owned" the rights to a specific toll and the sums perceived: "Estat et value du peage de Seriere *apartenant* a Monsieur de Perault..."

Further research in institutional archival holdings such as the important series, Paris, Archives nationales, H4, *Commission des péages*, including shelfmarks H4 3184, *Péages du Rhône et de la Saône* (1386-1791) or H4 3188-3190, *Péages du Rhône et de la Saône* (1204-1776), would certainly yield interesting comparisons. A transcription of all the entries would most certainly provide information of commercial and philological interest.

## LITERATURE

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Rossiaud, J. *Le Rhône au Moyen Age. Histoires et représentations d'un fleuve européen*, Aubier, 2007.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

On Serrières, Ardèche

<http://www.serrieres.fr/>

Anne Conchon, *Droits de péage et pouvoirs sur la rivière (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)*

<http://www.cairn.info/revue-hypotheses-1997-1-page-83.htm>

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