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The Atlas of Local Jurisdictions of Ancien Régime France*

Victor Gay[†] Paula E. Gobbi[‡] Marc Goñi[§]

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Abstract

This article describes the construction and content of an atlas of local jurisdictions of Ancien Régime France: *bailliages*. *Bailliages* were at the center of the Ancien Régime’s jurisdictional apparatus: they administered the ordinary royal justice, delimited the area of influence of different customary laws, and served as electoral constituencies for the Estates General of 1614 and 1789. Based on Armand Brette’s *Atlas des Bailliages et Juridictions Assimilées* published in 1904, we develop a historical geographic information system that contains shapefiles and associated data files of *bailliage* courts at the time of the convocation of the Estates General of 1789.

Keywords Administrative boundary, Historical geographic information system, Jurisdiction, *Bailliage*, Institution, Ancien Régime, France

JEL codes K00, N43, P48

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1. Introduction

The judicial system of Ancien Régime France was inherently complex and fragmented (Royer, 1995; Catarina, 2014; Fourniel, 2017).¹ A myriad of local justices enforced a heterogeneous set of rules that varied from parish to parish, effectively regulating social and economic relations (Brizay, Follain and Sarrazin, 2003). At the core of this jurisdictional apparatus were *bailliages* (Gorry, 2014c). Bailliage courts administered the ordinary royal justice and had the authority to judge civil and criminal cases of ordinary importance in first instance. They also had appellate jurisdiction over cases originating from lower, subordinate courts. Beyond their legal attributions, bailliages were key administrative divisions: they delimited the areas of influence of various local customary laws and were used as electoral constituencies for the Estates General of 1614 and 1789. Despite their importance, and much as other jurisdictions at the time, the territorial extent of bailliages was relatively unknown to the royal authority (Brette, 1904; Marion, 1923; Guenée, 1961). In fact, the complexity of their limits led early scholars to assert the impossibility of mapping the geography of Ancien Régime bailliage jurisdictions (Dupont-Ferrier, 1902).

In this article, we describe the construction and content of a historical geographic information system (GIS) of bailliages in 1789: the *Atlas of Local Jurisdictions of Ancien Régime France*. This shapefile and associated data files are based on Armand Brette’s (1904) *Atlas des Bailliages et Juridictions Assimilées*. This source overcomes uncertainty over the territorial extent of bailliages by taking advantage of a unique opportunity to get a glimpse at their territorial organization: the convocation of the Estates General of 1789, which used these jurisdictions as electoral constituencies. In particular, the text of the convocation as well as the minutes of bailliage assemblies in the preparation of these Estates precisely document the territorial distribution of parishes across bailliages.²

¹For comprehensive details on institutions of Ancien Régime France, see Marion (1923), Richet (2019 [1973]), Mousnier (1974), Barbiche (1999), Blanquie (2003), Rigaudière (2010), and Avezou (2014).

²Parishes were the most granular level of administration in Ancien Régime France—there were close to 44 thousand parishes in 1789. They encompassed three notions that did not overlap everywhere: the ecclesiastical parish, the fiscal parish, and the inhabitants community. The notion of fiscal parish was central during the transition to *municipalités* in 1789–93 and to

As the first attempt at a country-wide cartography of Ancien Régime bailliage jurisdictions, Brette’s (1904) atlas was praised by contemporary scholars upon its publication (Sagnac, 1904; Marion, 1905; Bloch, 1907). It has been since then a seminal reference in historical research, whether to locate a specific bailliage (Sagnac, 1951; Trenard, 1974; Poitrineau, 1978) or the bailliage some towns belonged to (Markoff, 1985; Markoff, 1986*a*; Markoff, 1986*b*; Markoff, 1990; Margadant, 1992; Squicciarini and Voigtländer, 2016; Jha and Wilkinson, 2023), to circumscribe the analysis into a specific self-contained jurisdictional space (Chaunu and Gégot, 1966; Dickinson, 1976; Muracciole, 1981; Ruff, 1984; Garreta and Vigier, 2021), or to study the historical geography of jurisdictions in Ancien Régime France (Follain, 1997) and the origins of French départements (Porée, 1905; Berthoumeau, 1914; Lepetit, 1989; Jamain, 2000).

Since the publication of Brette’s (1904) atlas, there has been several attempts at making its content available to researchers through more modern mapping standards. In the *Atlas de la Révolution Française*, Ozouf-Marignier, Nordman and Laclau (1989) published a simplified version of Brette’s (1904) atlas by representing the boundaries of bailliages – without additional information, such as bailliages’ names or types – on a paper map at a scale an order of magnitude below the precision of Brette’s (1904) original maps. Later, various regional historical atlases published digital (i.e., as PDF or JPEG) versions of bailliage maps using more precise scales than Ozouf-Marignier, Nordman and Laclau (1989), but focusing on restricted parts of the territory such as Languedoc (Pélaquier, 2009) or Touraine (Gorry, 2014*c*). In contrast, our atlas covers the entire territory and goes beyond these paper or digital maps by disseminating Brette’s (1904) atlas as a historical GIS along with a set of attribute tables containing comprehensive information on the toponomy and characteristics of each bailliage. The data we propose is therefore directly usable and interoperable with other research programs using localized historical information on Ancien Régime France.

Creating a historical GIS of bailliages based on Brette’s (1904) atlas poses several methodological challenges. Despite its wide usage in historical geography, this historical map does not come without limitations. Most importantly,

communes later on (Gorry 2008; 2014*a*).

these maps do not represent the exact territorial limits of bailliages. Rather, they indicate whether a given parish or town belonged to a given bailliage.³ As a result, the most common method used to construct geographic information systems based on historical maps – the vectorization of boundaries – would produce substantial inaccuracies, especially in regions where jurisdictions are highly fragmented (Gregory and Ell, 2007; Arnaud and Suarez, 2023). We propose a novel methodology that overcomes these limitations by combining GIS techniques and the use of historical toponymies. This method can be emulated in many instances of creation of historical GISs based on historical maps.

Our work contributes to the historical geography of administrative jurisdictions through GIS methods, which have reached a central place in historical geography scholarship along with the spatial turn in the humanities (Gregory and Ell, 2007; Bodenhamer, Corrigan and Harris, 2010; Gregory and Geddes, 2014). Indeed, the use of GIS in humanities research has enabled historians to radically change the way they think about space. In France, early scholarship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century focused on spatial considerations related to the creation of départements in the context of the centennial of the Revolution (Verdier and Ozouf-Marignier, 2011, 115–20). This field then experienced renewed interest in the late twentieth century with the prospects of the bicentennial of the Revolution (Bardet and Dupâquier, 1974–1991; Arbellot et al., 1986; Ozouf-Marignier, 1989; Nordman and Ozouf-Marignier, 1989*a*; Nordman and Ozouf-Marignier, 1989*b*; Zink, 2000; Motte, Séguy and Théré, 2003; Zadora-Rio, 2008; Lagadec, Le Bihan and Tanguy, 2009). More broadly, historical GISs have experienced substantial developments in the United States (Fitch and Ruggles, 2003; Manson et al., 2022), Germany (Kunz, 2008), Great Britain (Southall 2011; 2012; 2014), and France (Pinol, 2011; Gay, 2021). Nevertheless, these endeavors have nearly exclusively focused on nineteenth and twentieth century administrative constituencies, limiting the capacity of historians and social scientists of analyzing anterior historical spatial processes. We contribute to fill this gap by providing one the first documented historical GIS on Ancien Régime

³In particular, colored areas on the original maps in Brette’s atlas should only be interpreted as part of a jurisdiction insofar as they include a given commune seat

France.⁴ It will further enable historical geographers contextualize and explore the spatial dynamics of the historical processes at work in the functioning of the complex jurisdictional landscape of Ancien Régime France.

The atlas we propose has many potential applications. First, it will empower historical and empirical research in the context of Ancien Régime France by providing an underlying GIS of reference for bailliages—a central jurisdiction in the regulation of the Ancien Régime society. Second, as legal rules differed across bailliage jurisdictions (Fourniel and Vendrand-Voyer, 2017; Gay, Gobbi and Goñi, 2023*b*), our historical GIS can be used to map the different justice systems that coexisted in France, e.g., Roman law in *pays de droit écrit* and customary law in *pays de droit coutumier* (Klimrath, 1837; Hilaire and Terré, 1994). For instance, Gay, Gobbi and Goñi (2023*c*) use this resource to map the spatial distribution of inheritance rules before the Revolution and study how the unification of these rules in 1793 contributed to France’s early fertility decline. Third, because bailliages were used as electoral constituencies for the Estates General of 1789 (Furet, 1988; Crook, 1993; Crook, 1996), our resource will be valuable to study the social, political, and economic conditions leading to the Revolution. In particular, bailliages can be matched to the individuals elected to the Estates General – all listed in Brette (1894–1915) – and to the locations where the *cahiers de doléance* were produced (Hyslop, 1934; Shapiro and Markoff, 1988), a source commonly used to study the state of the country at the eve of the Revolution (e.g., Goy, 1988; Squicciarini and Voigtländer, 2016). Finally, this resource will help historians as well as political and social scientists to shed new light into the evolution of jurisdictions and the extent to which post-Revolution administrative divisions were rooted on or deviated from the jurisdictions that prevailed during the Ancien Régime (Nordman and Ozouf-Marignier, 1989*a*; Ozouf-Marignier, 1989; Zadora-Rio, 2008).

The rest of this article is organized as follows: Section 2 discusses the judicial system of Ancien Régime France and the historical source we rely on, Section 3 provides details on our mapping methodology, Section 4 describes the content of the data of our historical GIS, and Section 5 provides information on how

⁴Some notable exceptions are Arbellot et al. (1986), Bonin and Langlois (1987–2000), Pélaquier (2009) , Zadora-Rio (2014), Catarina (2014), and Gomis (2017).

to access the data files of our “Bailliages in 1789 France” dataverse. Section 6 concludes.

2. Armand Brette’s *Atlas des Bailliages*

2.1. *The Judicial System of Ancien Régime France*

The judicial system of Ancien Régime France was organized in several layers (Appendix Figure A.1). At the apex of this system were the parliaments, which acted as sovereign courts with appellate jurisdiction over civil and criminal cases originating from lower courts.⁵ Starting in the mid-thirteenth century, the Parliament of Paris was the only parliament and had jurisdiction over the entire royal domain. The number of parliaments then gradually expanded to 13 by the Revolution, canvassing the entire territory.⁶

Below parliaments, the local jurisdictions of bailliages administered the ordinary royal justice following customary law—in the southern part of the realm, these courts were also known as *sénéchaussées*.⁷ Bailliages had the authority to judge civil and criminal cases in first instance for royal cases of ordinary importance (Marion, 1905).⁸ They also had appellate jurisdiction over ordinary cases originating from lower, subordinate courts—*prévôtés*, *châtellenies*, and other manorial courts that existed throughout the territory, but also regional

⁵In addition to serving as judicial courts, parliaments held significant political power. They registered edicts and ordinances issued by the king, and had the authority to oppose them, oftentimes serving as a platform for political opposition to the monarchy (Chaline 2010; 2015).

⁶Besides the Parliament of Paris, created circa 1250, the other parliaments that existed by the Revolution were those of Dole (1386) transferred to Besançon in 1676, Toulouse (1443), Bordeaux (1451), Dauphiné (1453) located in Grenoble, Burgundy (1477) located in Dijon, Brittany (1485) located alternatively in Rennes, Nantes, and Vannes, Normandy (1499) located in Rouen, Provence (1501) located in Aix, Navarre (1620) located in Pau, Metz (1633), Flanders (1668) located alternatively in Tournai, Cambrai, and Douai, and Nancy (1768). Several sovereign councils (*conseils souverains*), with similar powers as parliaments, were also created at the outskirts of the realm in Alsace (Colmar), Roussillon (Perpignan), Artois (Colmar), and Corsica (Bastia).

⁷Between bailliages and parliaments was another judicial institution: presidial courts (*présidiaux*). These courts, created in 1551, had appellate jurisdiction over cases originating from bailliage courts. There were initially about sixty presidial courts in the mid-sixteenth century, and up to 101 in the mid-eighteenth century.

⁸Cases of “ordinary” importance were those representing material damages up to 250 *livres tournois* by 1551, then up to 2,000 by 1774.

courts such as *vigueries* in Languedoc and *vicomtés* in Normandy.⁹ Bailliages were created in the twelfth century based on pre-existing feudal judicial structures. They significantly expanded over time along with the integration of new provinces into the kingdom: from 42 in the fifteenth century, they grew to over 400 at the eve of the Revolution (Ozouf-Marignier, Nordman and Laclau, 1989).

While bailliages were an emanation of the royal authority, their territorial jurisdiction was not centrally planned. Instead, bailliages developed haphazardly together with the consolidation of the monarchy and with the union, dismemberment, and suppression of feudal strongholds. It was only with the process of codification and reformation of customs between the mid-fourteenth and the late-fifteenth centuries that bailliages acquired a clear status of legal territorial division (Grinberg, Geoffroy-Poisson and Laclau, 2012; Kim, 2021). Bailliage agents benefited from the contemporary jurisdictional confusion. Because they had a financial stake in the territorial reach of their court, they were entrenched in a permanent state of jurisdictional conflict against nearby bailliages in a never-ending quest for expansion (Guenée, 1961). Moreover, as bailliages were subject to a heterogeneous set of legal rules under customary law (Fourniel and Vendrand-Voyer, 2017; Gay, Gobbi and Goñi, 2023b), litigants often appealed to adjacent bailliage courts and pit them against one another in the hope of a more favorable resolution of their case (Kim, 2021, 62). As a result, the territorial geography of bailliage jurisdictions was inherently fragmented. It exemplified the interweaving of jurisdictions and rights that characterized Ancien Régime institutions.

Such complexity led early scholars to assert the impossibility of mapping the geography of Ancien Régime bailliage jurisdictions (Dupont-Ferrier, 1902). In fact, the royal authority never drew such a map as it did not have the knowledge of the exact territorial extent of bailliages (Brette, 1904). In contrast, local administrators had a fair understanding of their spatial configuration, though they did not possess the cartographic tools to effectively communicate this information up the jurisdictional hierarchy. For the administration of their jurisdiction,

⁹The jurisdiction of bailliage courts was codified by the edict of Crémieu on June 19, 1536. Other jurisdictions concerned specific domains: for instance, financial matters were administered by the *Cours des aides*, the *Chambre des comptes*, and the *Cours des monnaies*.

they instead relied on parish lists, which territorial limits were common knowledge to local communities (Guenée, 1961; Dauphant, 2018). Central authorities' relative ignorance of territorial limits might have been purposeful on the part of local bailliage agents as they had incentives to operate covertly and hide information on the actual territorial extent of their jurisdiction so as to increase it. Hence, the uncertainty surrounding bailliages' territorial reach might have been the result of a lack of proper cartographic tools together with strategic motives, rather than reflecting sheer overall ignorance (Girard d'Albissin, 1969).

Amidst such complexity, the archival imprint left behind by the convocation of the Estates General of 1789 represents a unique opportunity to gain insights into the jurisdictional landscape of Ancien Régime France across its entire territory.

2.2. The Convocation of the Estates General of 1789

The Estates General of May–June 1789 were convened by King Louis XVI in August 1788 in an effort to address France's ongoing financial and economic crisis. They consisted in a consultative assembly composed of close to twelve hundred elected representatives of the clergy, the nobility, and the Third Estate.¹⁰ To organize the electoral process, the royal authority had to define the constituencies within which these representatives were to be elected. Because the convocation was a judicial act – the modalities of which were codified by the royal decree of January 24, 1789 – the Royal Council decided that these elections would occur within the constituencies of the royal justice: bailliages.¹¹

Upon the convocation of the Estates General, bailliage officers mandated representatives of parishes within their jurisdiction to appear in bailliage assemblies so as to form an electoral constituency and proceed with the elec-

¹⁰For more details on the organization of these elections, which occurred from January to May 1789, see Brette (1894–1915), Furet (1988), and Crook (1993; 1996).

¹¹The decree of January 24, 1789 stipulated that “[w]e will understand by the terms bailliage or sénéchaussée all the jurisdictions to which the knowledge of royal cases is attributed.” A similar process had been used in the preceding Estates General of 1614. Bailliages that had been electoral constituencies during these Estates General were qualified as “principal” in 1789, whereas those that had not been summoned during those Estates were qualified as “secondary.” This did not presume of any other difference between these bailliages other than a formal rank.

tions (Crook, 1993). When they did not know the exact territory of their own bailliage, officers resorted to information available in secondary sources such as Expilly's (1762–70) or Bruzen de La Martinière's (1726–39) geographic dictionaries (Brette, 1904), or the text of their bailliage's customs (Bourdot de Richebourg, 1724; Grinberg, 2006). Uncertainty regarding the territorial limits of bailliages were therefore resolved upon the reunion of parishes at bailliage electoral assemblies.

While bailliage courts covered most of the territory, the royal justice did not operate everywhere. Several territories on the outskirts of the kingdom had retained the power of justice within their realm so that bailliage courts did not exist therein. These territories thus had to resort to alternative jurisdictions of similar size to form electoral constituencies for the Estates General. For instance, the *généralité* of Strasbourg in Alsace formed three electoral constituencies through the reunion of its six *districts*, which were jurisdictions that had been previously created by Alsace's provincial assemblies.^{12,13} Furthermore, though equipped with bailliages, some territories in the *généralité* of Grenoble chose alternative jurisdictions to form electoral constituencies. In particular, the Dauphiné Estates elected their representatives in January 1789 using as electoral constituencies special tribunals denominated *élections*.¹⁴

2.3. A Cartography of Bailliages in 1789

Based on the text of the convocation and the minutes (*procès verbaux*) of bailliage electoral assemblies, Armand Brette (1904) designed an atlas of bailliage jurisdictions—the *Atlas des Bailliages et Juridictions Assimilées Ayant Formé*

¹²*Généralités* were the largest administrative divisions in Ancien Régime France and the basis for the administration of the territory under the authority of *intendants*. There were 35 *généralités* at the eve of the Revolution (Gorry, 2014b).

¹³These three electoral constituencies were the result of the union of the districts of Colmar and Sélestat, Belfort and Huningue, and Haguenau and Wissembourg. Additionally, the city of Strasbourg obtained two representatives for the Third Estate. Still in Alsace, the ten imperial cities of Haguenau, Colmar, Sélestat, Wissembourg, Landau, Obernai, Rosheim, Munster, Kaysersberg, and Turckheim obtained the right to form a single electoral constituency in Sélestat through the decree of February 7, 1789.

¹⁴In general, all three estates formed the same electoral constituency. The main exception to this rule was in Brittany, where the clergy used dioceses rather than bailliages as the basis for its electoral constituencies.

Unité Électorale en 1789.¹⁵ To construct this atlas, Armand Brette reported the forty thousand locations listed in the convocation and in the minutes onto a map of France, the *Carte du Dépôt de la Guerre* at a scale 1:320,000, which displays the names of all of France’s *communes* circa 1852 (Arnaud, 2022).¹⁶ The resulting atlas is composed of 32 large-scale maps, one for each généralité—we display an excerpt in Figure 1.¹⁷ These maps display the territorial extent of each bailliage along with a nomenclature developed by Armand Brette and other information, which we describe in Section 4.

In his introduction to the *Atlas des Bailliages*, Armand Brette emphasizes that his maps are not meant to represent the exact territorial limits of bailliages, but rather, to indicate whether a given parish or town belonged to a given jurisdiction. Indeed, Brette’s atlas does not use cadastral information, so that the colored shapes on the maps should only be interpreted insofar as they include a given commune seat, indicated by a circle on the underlying *Carte du Dépôt de la Guerre*. We explain in Section 3 how our GIS deals with this constraint.

3. Mapping Methodology

To construct a GIS of bailliage jurisdictions in 1789, we propose a novel methodology that overcomes the limitations of our source map by combining GIS techniques and the use of historical toponymies. We proceed in four steps. First, we scan each of the 32 généralité-level maps of Brette’s (1904) atlas in high resolu-

¹⁵This atlas was part of Armand Brette’s broader work of collecting the documents relative to the convocation of the Estates General of 1789 (Brette, 1894–1915). For more details on Armand Brette’s original scholarship in historical geography, see Aulard (1912).

¹⁶When the text of the convocation was insufficient and the minutes from the bailliage electoral assemblies were missing in the National Archives, Armand Brette used alternative sources, among which the minutes of the writing of customs in Bourdot de Richebourg’s (1724) *Nouveau Coutumier Général*, various population counts such as Saugrain’s (1709) *Dénombrement du Royaume*, or Saugrain’s (1726), Expilly’s (1762–70), Simon’s (1776), or Boutiot’s (1874) parish dictionaries. The list of sources used by Brette are detailed for each bailliage in Brette (1904, 27–35) and reported in Appendix Table B.1.

¹⁷Two exceptions are the généralités of Toulouse and Peripignan, and those of Nancy and Metz, which are displayed together on the same maps in Brette’s (1904) atlas. The atlas further contains a map of French colonies (Maurice, Saint-Domingue, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Pondichéry), which we do not integrate into our GIS.

tion (i.e., in TIFF format).¹⁸ Second, we manually georeference these scans along an RGF93 projection. Next, we do not resort to the vectorization of bailliage boundaries, a method that is commonly used in the construction of geographic information systems based on historical maps (Gregory and Ell, 2007; Arnaud and Suarez, 2023).¹⁹ This method would have led to substantial inaccuracies – especially in regions with highly fragmented jurisdictions – as colored areas on original maps should only be interpreted as part of a jurisdiction insofar as they include a given commune seat. Instead, in a third step, we proceed by manually attributing each commune to a specific bailliage. To that end, we overlay IGN’s (2021) shapefile of current communes onto the georeferenced maps, making communes’ seats and names apparent (Appendix Figure A.2). This enables us to manually match each commune polygon to a given bailliage based on the comparison of names and seats locations across layers. In a fourth step, we dissolve commune polygons based on their bailliage attribute (Appendix Figure A.3).

The resulting shapefile of bailliages might be subject to two types of (limited) inaccuracies. First, the shapefile of contemporaneous communes does not exactly correspond to the base map of the *Dépôt de la Guerre* of circa 1852 used by Armand Brette, as there were about 37,600 communes then versus 34,800 in 2021 (Gay, 2021). Some contemporaneous communes are the result of the merger of smaller communes between 1852 and 2021. Hence, some of these communes might be split across two bailliages, rendering the resulting shapefile potentially inaccurate at its boundaries in a few cases.²⁰ For instance, the polygon corresponding to the bailliage of Ham contains the former parishes of Saint-Sulpice and of Estouilly as these were absorbed by the commune of Ham in 1964–5, although they belonged historically to the bailliage of Saint-Quentin. Second, the

¹⁸Each high-resolution scan is available in our “Bailliages in 1789 France” dataverse. The text of the *Atlas des Bailliages* is available from the numeric library of Sciences Po at the following archival Resource Key (ARK) identifier: [46513/sc16qxv1](https://n2t.org/46513/sc16qxv1).

¹⁹The method of manual vectorization of boundaries and lines is for instance used in Perret, Gribaudo and Barthelémy (2015) for France’s roads in the late eighteenth century or in Ostafin et al. (2020) for the administrative organization of Austrian Silesia in the nineteenth century.

²⁰We are constrained to use the shapefile of communes in 2021 because commune-level shapefiles for 1852 do not exist at this date—this is among the endeavors of the ongoing project COMMUNE HIS-DBD (<https://anrcommunes.hypotheses.org/>), which is scheduled to make these shapefiles available in 2025.

base map of the *Dépôt de la Guerre* used by Armand Brette does not exactly correspond to the set of parish locations listed in the minutes of bailliage electoral assemblies in 1789, as there were close to 44 thousand parishes in 1789.²¹ As a result, some communes that were the result of the merger of smaller parishes or communes between 1789 and 1852 might be similarly split across two bailliages.

We provide users with the opportunity to alleviate these potential sources of inaccuracies. Specifically, we project onto our shapefile of bailliages the coordinates of parishes at the time of the Revolution based on Cristofoli et al.'s (2021) dataset. This enables us to generate a layer of parish points with bailliage attributes corrected for the aforementioned inaccuracies—for instance, we reclassify the parishes of Saint-Sulpice and of Estouilly as part of the bailliage of Saint-Quentin. In addition, this alternative approach offers users the possibility to project these points back onto any commune-level shapefile and aggregate the results into bailliage-level polygons best suited for their purpose.

4. Data Description

Our atlas of local jurisdictions of Ancien Régime France contains three shapefiles: a shapefile of France's territory in 1789 (Section 4.1), a shapefile of the types of jurisdictions that formed electoral constituencies for the Estates General (Section 4.2), and the atlas' main output, the shapefile of bailliages in 1789 (Section 4.3).

Each shapefile is available in two forms: a polygon form and a points form, where each point represents a parish at the time of the Revolution. The content of attribute tables is identical for polygon- and point-form shapefiles, except that the latter further contains parish-level information from Cristofoli et al.'s (2021) dataset: each parish's Cassini identifier, their name as displayed on Cassini's map and on the censuses of 1793 (*an 3*), 1801 (*an 8*), and 1999, and their geographic coordinates in RGF93 projection.

²¹The number of 43,792 parishes is based on the set of parish seats displayed on Cassini's map of France (*Carte Générale de la France*), which was surveyed between 1756 and 1789 (Dainville, 1955; Pelletier, 1990). The point coordinates of these parishes are available from Cristofoli et al.'s (2021) dataset.

4.1. *France’s Territory in 1789*

The first shapefile of our atlas represents the extent of Brette’s (1904) atlas, i.e., the territory of the kingdom of France as of 1789. This broadly corresponds to the current territory of mainland France, with three main exceptions: the Duchy of Savoy, the County of Nice, and the Comtat Venaissin.²² These territories together represent only 3 percent of France’s current territory and 2 percent of all parishes at the time of the Revolution (Appendix Table B.2). Other exceptions include several small principalities (Montbéliard, Salm), independent cities (Avignon, Mulhouse), counties (Saar-Werden, Sault), and lordships (Montjoie, Mandeuire, Bidache).²³ We display the shapefile of France’s territory in 1789 in Figure 2—the corresponding shapefile in points form is displayed in Appendix Figure A.4. Attribute tables associated with these shapefiles contain an identifier for each of these territorial entities as given by Brette (1904) along with their names (see Table 1).

4.2. *Types of Jurisdictions*

Most electoral constituencies for the Estates General of 1789 correspond to the local jurisdictions of the royal justice: bailliages and sénéchaussées. This is the case for 84 percent of both France’s territory and parishes (Appendix Table B.3). The remaining electoral constituencies correspond to alternative jurisdictions, generally because the royal justice did not operate therein.²⁴ We map

²²Small portions of the northeastern territory of France were ceded to Prussia per the second treaty of Paris on November 20, 1815. This concerns the entire bailliage of Sarrelouis, part of the bailliage of Bouzonville in the généralité of Metz, and areas near Wissembourg and Landau concerning parts of the districts of Haguenau and Wissembourg as well as the ten imperial cities in the intendance of Strasbourg. These areas are not displayed in our shapefiles.

²³These territories were integrated into the territory of France soon after the Revolution: 1790 for the lordship of Bidache, 1791 for the city of Avignon and the Comtat Venaissin, 1793 for the principalities of Montbéliar and of Salm, the county of Saar-Werden, and the lordship of Mandeuire, and 1798 for the city of Mulhouse. The Duchy of Savoy and the County of Nice were only annexed in 1860. Moreover, Brette’s (1904) atlas considers the island of Corsica as part of the kingdom of France, given that the National Assembly voted on November 30, 1789 a decree stipulating that “the island of Corsica is part of the French empire.” Finally, the enclaved foreign territory of the commune of Llivia, visible on Brette’s (1904) atlas, is not accounted for our GIS as it still belongs to Spain today.

²⁴Brette (1904) distinguishes 18 other types of jurisdictions that formed electoral constituencies: *baronnies, comtés, districts, gouvernances, hautes justices, juridictions royales, pays, prin-*

the spatial distribution of these jurisdictions in Figure 3. The attribute table associated with this shapefile contains a jurisdiction type identifier along with their names (Table 1).

4.3. *Bailliages*

The shapefile of bailliages in 1789 is displayed in Figure 4—the corresponding shapefile in points form is displayed in Appendix Figure A.5. It exhibits 435 jurisdictions. Two bailliages are not displayed on this map although they are present in the data files associated with our atlas. The first is the bailliage of Sarrelouis, as its territory was ceded to Prussia per the Paris treaty of November 20, 1815. The second is the bailliage of Bassigny-Barrois, which did not have a territorial constituency for the Estates General of 1789.²⁵

The attribute table associated with this shapefile contains a host of variables that characterize each bailliage: an identifier, a set of names, a rank, and a seat (*chef-lieu*). Below, we detail each of these variables, which are listed in Table 1.²⁶

Bailliage identifiers Each bailliage is characterized by an identifier following Brette’s (1904) nomenclature. These identifiers range from 001 to 445 except for the jurisdictions of Dauphiné in the généralité of Grenoble, which combine a number and a letter, from 442A to 442F.²⁷

Bailliage names We provide bailliage names in various forms: a short form that contains the most representative name of the bailliage, generally the name of

capautés, provinces, prévôtés, châtellenies, vicomtés, royaumes, sièges royaux, souverainetés, vigueries, villes, and élections.

²⁵Members of this electoral constituency elected one representative from the reunion of the bailliages of Bourmont and of Lamarche.

²⁶The attribute table also contains the type of jurisdictions as described in Section 4.2 and the name of the généralité in which bailliages are located per Brette’s (1904) classification. These 33 généralités are displayed in Appendix Figure A.5.

²⁷Brette’s (1904) nomenclature of bailliages is not continuous for two reasons. First, four bailliages were erroneously included in the royal decree of January 24, 1798 that convened the Estates General—the bailliages of Ezy (87), Pacy (91), Château-Renard (128), and Scham-bourg (371). These virtual bailliages did not effectively correspond to a jurisdiction and were non-existent by the time of the convocation. Second, the electoral constituencies specifically dedicated to the election of representatives of the Clergy in Brittany (dioceses), numbered 422–430, are not represented in our atlas.

the city where its seat was located, e.g., *Amiens*, a long form that also contains its jurisdiction type, e.g., *Bailliage d'Amiens*, and its original name as written in Brette (1904). In nearly all cases (406 out of 437), long-form names are identical to original names.²⁸

Additionally, when ambiguity would arise in short-form names, we qualify them with their jurisdiction type in parenthesis. For instance, bailliages with identifiers 151 and 316 both have their seat in the commune of Mortagne, although the former refers to the *bailliage* of Mortagne while the latter refers to the *prévôté* of Mortagne. In this case, we modify these short-form names to *Mortagne (bailliage)* and *Mortagne (prévôté)*, respectively.²⁹

Bailliage ranks Electoral constituencies for the Estates General of 1614 were also based on bailliage jurisdictions. Bailliages that had been electoral constituencies during these Estates were qualified as “principal” in 1789, whereas those that had not been summoned were qualified as “secondary” and attached to a principal bailliage. This did not presume of any other difference between these bailliages other than a formal rank. We qualify the rank of each bailliage and provide the principal bailliage to which secondary bailliages were attached to. Many bailliages were principal without any attached secondary bailliage.

Bailliage seats Finally, we provide information on the location of the seat (*chef-lieu*) of each bailliage, i.e., the location where the bailliage assembly occurred upon the convocation of the Estates General. In particular, we indicate each seat’s Cassini and INSEE identifier, name on Cassini’s map, name in the censuses of 1793, 1801, 1999, and 2021, as well as geographic coordinates in RGF93 projection.

²⁸They differ in 31 cases because we drop the name of the seat location when indicated in the original name. For instance, the long-form name of the bailliage with original name *Bailliage de La Montagne, séant à Châtillon-sur-Seine* is *Bailliage de La Montagne*, while its short name is *La Montagne*.

²⁹These cases are relatively rare and further concern the following bailliages, which all have their seat in the same commune: *Paris (ville et faubourgs)* (144) and *Paris (hors les murs)* (145), *Valenciennes (ville)* (312) and *Valenciennes (prévôté)* (314), *Metz (ville)* (330) and *Metz (bailliage)* (331), and *Arles (sénéchaussée)* (384) and *Arles (ville et territoire)* (385).

Nearly all bailliage names correspond to the location of their seat, although there are some exceptions. First, some bailliage names correspond to a region, especially in *pays d'Etat*.³⁰ For instance, the bailliage of the **Pays des Quatre-Vallées** (023) had its seat in La Barthe-de-Neste. Second, by 1789, the seat location of several bailliages had moved from their original location without changing names. For instance, the location of the seat of the bailliage of **Vouvant** (167) had moved from Vouvant to La Châtaigneraie, a dozen of kilometers away. Third, some bailliage seats were located outside of their bailliage territorial jurisdiction. For instance, the bailliage of **Andelat** (095) had its seat in Murat, about twenty kilometers away from Andelat and outside of the bailliage. Finally, bailliages that were split between a city intra-muros and its hinterland had their seats in the same city.³¹ These 46 special cases are flagged by a variable in the attribute table and listed in Appendix Table B.4.

5. Data Availability

We disseminate the shapefile and associated datafiles of our atlas of local jurisdictions of Ancien Régime France under the CC-BY 4.0 license in a repository entitled “Bailliages in 1789 France” hosted on the Harvard Dataverse at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/T8UXHK> (Gay, Gobbi and Goñi, 2023a). This dataverse contains shapefiles and associated datafiles for the extent of France (**FRANCE_1789_BRETTE**), the types of jurisdictions (**JURISDICTIONS_1789_BRETTE**), and bailliages (**BAILLIAGES_1789_BRETTE**). It also contains the scans of original maps in Brette (1904). Attribute tables associated with each shapefile are available in Stata data format (**dta**) and in text delimited format (**txt**).³² See Table 1 for a summary of the content of these data

³⁰Pays d'Etat were regions that had retained a representative assembly of the three orders that negotiated tax collection processes with royal commissioners (Mousnier, 1974; Barbiche, 1999).

³¹This was the case for the bailliages of **Paris (ville et faubourgs)** (144) and **Paris (hors les murs)** (145), **Valenciennes (ville)** (312) and **Valenciennes (prévôté)** (314), **Metz (ville)** (330) and **Metz (bailliage)** (331), and **Arles (sénéchaussée)** (384) and **Arles (ville et territoire)** (385).

³²These data files contain name strings in both capitalized and proper forms, while attribute tables (**dbf** files) contain name strings only in capitalized form to avoid compatibility issues with accentuated letters in GIS processing softwares.

files.

6. Conclusion

This article describes the construction and content of a curated atlas of the local jurisdictions that were at the core of Ancien Régime’s judicial apparatus: bailliages. These jurisdictions epitomize the interweaving of judicial institutions that characterized Ancien Régime France. Their haphazardous development alongside the consolidation of the monarchy and the dissolution of feudal strongholds was such that the royal authority did not know the exact territorial extent of these jurisdictions and never represented their spatial distribution. Based on Brette’s (1904) *Atlas des Bailliages* and the convocation of the Estates General of 1789, we fill this gap and provide an atlas of bailliages in shapefile form along with relevant bailliage-level information.

Although GIS methods have reached a central place in historical geography scholarship and its importance for the humanities is growing, their application for the study of the geography of administrative jurisdictions in Ancien Régime France remains elusive. This has limited the ability of historians and social scientists to study the historical processes at play through the lens of spatial methods. By providing one of the first GIS for Ancien Régime France, our work will empower historical geographers in exploring the spatial dynamics of this period, especially those concerning the functioning of a complex jurisdictional landscape and the Estates General of 1789. Relative to previous work on the geography of bailliages specifically, our GIS covers the entire French territory and precisely maps the dramatic heterogeneity in bailliage’ shapes and sizes, as well as their numerous enclaves – sometimes dozens of kilometers away from their bailliage seat. These advances will enable historical geographers to uncover the spatial intricacies of power and governance structures that contributed to the dislocation of France’s Ancien Régime society, and ultimately, to the French Revolution.

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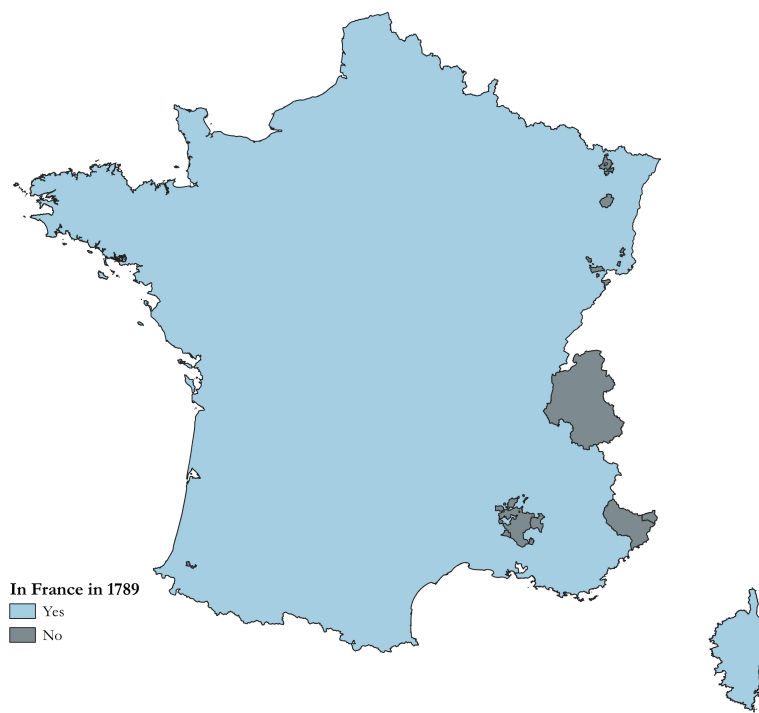


Figure 2. Extent of France's Territory in 1789

Notes. This figure displays the territorial entities present on the territory of France in 1789 per IGN's (2021) Admin-Express shapefile of March 2021 based on Brette's (1904) *Atlas des Bailliages*.

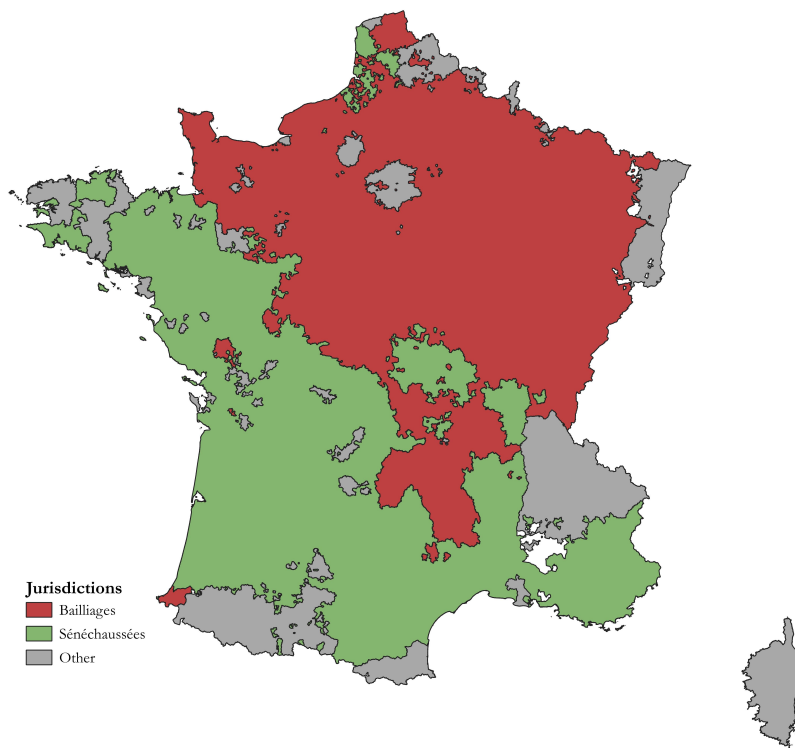


Figure 3. Types of Jurisdictions that Formed Electoral Constituencies in 1789

Notes. This figure displays the distribution of main types of jurisdictions that formed electoral constituencies for the Estates General of 1789 per IGN's (2021) Admin-Express shapefile of March 2021 based on Brette's (1904) *Atlas des Bailliages*.

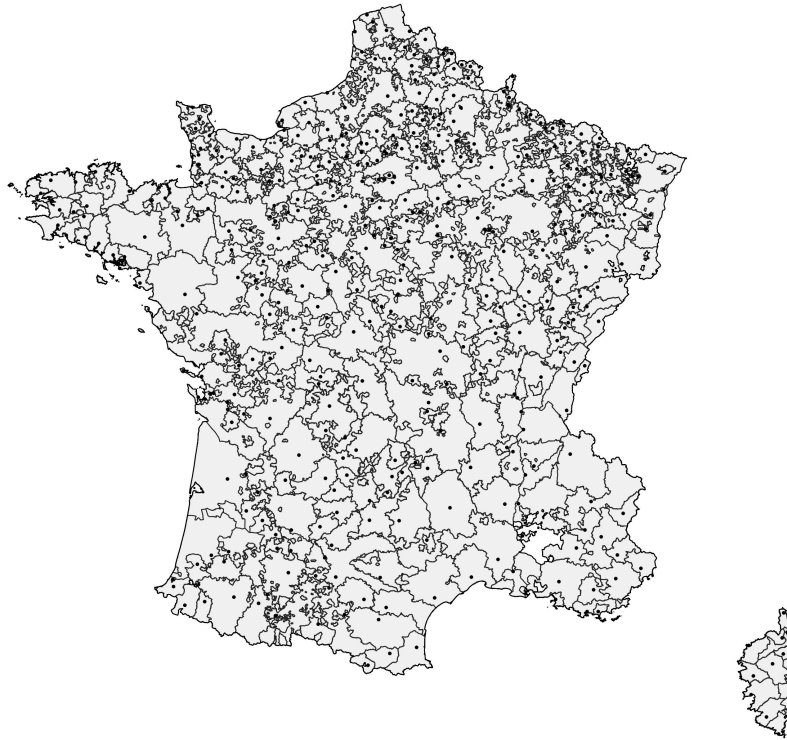


Figure 4. Bailliages in 1789

Notes. This figure displays the distribution of bailliage jurisdictions that formed electoral constituencies for the Estates General of 1789 per IGN's (2021) Admin-Express shapefile of March 2021 based on Brette's (1904) *Atlas des Bailliages*. Black dots indicate these jurisdictions' seats.

Table 1. Variables in the *Atlas of Local Jurisdictions* Data Files

Dataset / shapefile	Variables			Description
	dta / csv	dbf		
BRETTE_FRANCE	territory	TER_ID	Territory identifier	Territory identifier
	territory_name	TER_NS	Territory name (short, upper case)	Territory name (short, upper case)
	territory_name_prop		Territory name (short, proper case)	Territory name (short, proper case)
	territory_name_long	TER_NL	Territory name (long, upper case)	Territory name (long, upper case)
	territory_name_long_prop		Territory name (long, proper case)	Territory name (long, proper case)
BRETTE_JURISDICTION	type_gen	TYPG_ID	Type of jurisdiction identifier (general)	Type of jurisdiction identifier (general)
	type_gen_name	TYPG_N	Type of jurisdiction name (general, upper case)	Type of jurisdiction name (general, upper case)
	type_gen_name_prop		Type of jurisdiction name (general, proper case)	Type of jurisdiction name (general, proper case)
	type_det	TYPD_ID	Type of jurisdiction identifier (detailed)	Type of jurisdiction identifier (detailed)
	type_det_name	TYPD_N	Type of jurisdiction name (detailed, upper case)	Type of jurisdiction name (detailed, upper case)
	type_det_name_prop		Type of jurisdiction name (detailed, proper case)	Type of jurisdiction name (detailed, proper case)
BRETTE_BAILLIAGES	generalite_name	GEN_N	Généralité name (upper case)	Généralité name (upper case)
	generalite_name_prop		Généralité name (proper case)	Généralité name (proper case)
	bailliage	BAIL_ID	Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction identifier	Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction identifier
	bailliage_name	BAIL_NS	Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction name (short, upper case)	Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction name (short, upper case)
	bailliage_name_prop		Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction name (short, proper case)	Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction name (short, proper case)
	bailliage_name_long	BAIL_NL	Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction name (long, upper case)	Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction name (long, upper case)
	bailliage_name_long_prop		Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction name (long, proper case)	Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction name (long, proper case)
	bailliage_name_brette	BAIL_NB	Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction original name (proper case)	Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction original name (proper case)
	bailliage_order	BAIL_ORD	Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction order	Bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction order
	bailliage_sup	BAIL_SUP	Identifier of principal bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction	Identifier of principal bailliage or equivalent jurisdiction
	type_gen	TYPG_ID	Type of jurisdiction identifier (general)	Type of jurisdiction identifier (general)
	type_det	TYPD_ID	Type of jurisdiction identifier (detailed)	Type of jurisdiction identifier (detailed)
	cl_flag	CL_FLG	Bailliage chef-lieu flag	Bailliage chef-lieu flag
	cl_noacass	CL_CASS	Bailliage chef-lieu cassini identifier	Bailliage chef-lieu cassini identifier
	cl_insee	CL_INSEE	Bailliage chef-lieu INSEE 2021 identifier	Bailliage chef-lieu INSEE 2021 identifier
	cl_nom_cassini	CL_NC	Bailliage chef-lieu cassini name (proper case)	Bailliage chef-lieu cassini name (proper case)
	cl_nom_an3	CL_N3	Bailliage chef-lieu an 3 name (proper case)	Bailliage chef-lieu an 3 name (proper case)
	cl_nom_1801	CL_M1801	Bailliage chef-lieu 1801 name (proper case)	Bailliage chef-lieu 1801 name (proper case)
	cl_nom_1999	CL_M1999	Bailliage chef-lieu 1999 name (proper case)	Bailliage chef-lieu 1999 name (proper case)
	cl_nom_2021	CL_N2021	Bailliage chef-lieu 2021 name (proper case)	Bailliage chef-lieu 2021 name (proper case)
cl_position_x	CL_X	Bailliage chef-lieu latitude in RGF93	Bailliage chef-lieu latitude in RGF93	
cl_position_y	CL_Y	Bailliage chef-lieu longitude in RGF93	Bailliage chef-lieu longitude in RGF93	

Notes: Each shapefile is also available in points form, where each point represents a parish at the time of the Revolution. The content of both types of shapefiles' attribute tables are identical except that those in points form further contain several parish identifiers from Cristofoli et al.'s (2021) dataset: each parish Cassini identifier (`noacass`), names as displayed on Cassini's map (`nom_cassini`) as well as on the censuses of 1793 (`nom_an3`), 1801 (`nom_1801`), and 1999 (`nom_1999`), and geographic coordinates in RGF93/Lambert93 projection (`position_x` and `position_y`). `dta` and `csv` files contain name strings in both upper case and proper case forms, while `dbf` files contain name strings only in upper case form to avoid compatibility issues with accentuated letters.