

# GUINDON CONNECTIONS

*By Laverne Aitchison - editor*

As promised in the Guindon Newsletter #22 Spring 2002 Edwin Bezzina a Ph.D. student in the department of History at the University of Toronto, currently writing a doctoral dissertation on Protestant-Catholic relations in the town of Loudun, France from 1598 to 1665 has put together a wonderful article on our Guesdon/Guindon connections he gleaned from his work.

## **T**HE GUESDON OF LOUDUN<sup>1</sup>

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### **Introduction**

During the long and difficult voyage over the Atlantic Ocean, Jean and Pierre Guesdon must have thought a great deal about the world that they had left behind. Departing in the late 1680s from their native town of Loudun, France, the two brothers have bequeathed to later historians and genealogists a base of material with which to reconstruct some understanding of their former lives, documentation that is derived in part from the greater Guesdon family compact. The purpose of this short article is to provide some interesting clues about the background of Jean and Pierre Guesdon, beginning first with a discussion of sources, then a survey of some genealogical links in this family, proceeding to a discussion of the life of François Guesdon, the return of his son Jean to Loudun, and, finally, the possibility of some links between this largely Catholic family and its Protestant counterparts. It is clear, from what we can glean at this point, that Jean and Pierre Guesdon came from a family largely of artisans who retained a firm commitment to the Catholic religion.

### **Sources**

Reconstructing the family tree of the Guesdon<sup>2</sup> of Loudun requires documents that abound in genealogical data. By far, the most fertile materials in this regard are marriage contracts, marriage acts, and documents dealing with the family patrimony be they post-mortem inventory, estate devolution, or out-of-court settlement. These sources provide what other documents cannot provide: collateral genealogical data. By contrast, a document like a baptismal act gives us the names of the children of a given couple, but rarely an idea of who constituted the relatives of the parents themselves. It is the collateral data that we need the most, for it opens a window into the broader family compact, offering insight into the compact's dominant socio-economic characteristics, its religious properties, and its relations with other families.

What we were able to mine about the Guesdon was extracted from information presented by descendants of the Guesdon, but also from a database that we built for our thesis on the relations between the Protestants and Catholics of Loudun from 1598 to 1665. This large reservoir of data contains roughly 3,100 notarial contracts and 40,000 parish acts, as well as a number of fascinating documents like the consistorial register of the town's Protestant church.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks are extended to Christian Moreau and Jacques and Janine Moron for their genealogical data, to the staff of the municipal archives of Loudun and the archives départementales de la Vienne, as well as to Laverne Aitchison and Edna Humphrey for their kind assistance.

<sup>2</sup> In our database, we have the following name spelling variations: Gesdon, Guédon, Guidon, Guydon, Guesdonne, Guindon, and, the one most commonly used in our documents, Guesdon.

<sup>3</sup> We also transcribed all the parish data up to 1685 and a sizeable chunk of the notarial documentation for this later period. Originally, the thesis had been designed to stop at 1685, but realizing that it would have taken too long to

The database also incorporates the important genealogical work conducted by pasteur Denis Vatinel, Jacques and Janine Moron, and Christian Moreau, work that has revealed some useful pieces to add to the Guesdon puzzle. Of course, during our research trips to France, we could not transcribe every document. In future, a patient historian might be able to excavate some property transactions that involve Jean and Pierre's parents, or perhaps their father's apprenticeship contract. Moreover, rumour has it that more notarial *études* currently being catalogued will be soon available for consultation. So, there is still much work to be done.

### **GENEALOGICAL LINKS AMONG THE GUESDON**

The documents that inform us have facilitated the reconstitution of several Guesdon couples, all of them linked in some way, and these links are plotted on the graphs on pages 18 to 20. These we have built through two linking mediums. The first is the definite medium, whereby the documentation gives concrete evidence of genealogical links between individuals and families. For example, Marie Lunet is the daughter-in-law of Pierre Guesdon and Guillemine Hardouin. There does exist a slight grey area in the discovery of Pierre Triffault, Jacques Leconte, Charles Bertault, and Françoise Lesuire, who represent the uncles and aunts of the children of Jacques Guesdon and Françoise Guesdon.<sup>4</sup> That means that these four collateral individuals must have been married to a Guesdon, which the genealogical information in our database tells us to be true.<sup>5</sup> However, Jacques and Françoise Guesdon have the same last name. Were Triffault, Leconte, Bertault, and Lesuire the direct siblings of Jacques Guesdon or of Françoise Guesdon? All that we can say with certitude at this point is that we have a definite link of some sort.

The second linking medium is suggestive, whereby the names of individuals married to a Guesdon appear as signatories on particular marriage contracts or acts. For example, the fact that R. Boullard and J. Leconte signed the marriage act of Françoise Guesdon and Jean Guesdon (perhaps the same Jean Guesdon who returned from New France to Loudun), suggests—but does not prove decisively—a link between the families of François Guesdon/Marie Molay and Jacques Guesdon/Françoise Guesdon.<sup>6</sup> Similar connections can be drawn by perusing the godparentage data for these three Guesdon clusters, based on the premise that relatives were often chosen to act as godparents. Needless to say, there are other Guesdon couples who turn up in the database and who in some way seem to orbit the families that we have displayed on our graphs; but, we cannot pinpoint their relation with certainty.

Besides these family ties, the three graphs reveal a number of other facets about these families. First, while the Guesdon did not constitute as large a family network in Loudun as the Chesneau or the Thibault, one is struck by the large number of children that some of the Guesdon couples brought into the world. We observe that some of them sired more than eight children,

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complete, we reduced its chronological scope by twenty years (with the promise to return to the initial plan once the thesis was defended).

<sup>4</sup> “Marriage contract between, on the one hand, Pierre Guesdon master shoemaker son of Jacques Guesdon master butcher and Françoise Guesdon, and, on the other, Anne Haguénier daughter of François Haguénier *vinagrier* [maker of vinegar and mustard] and Magdeleine Suireau,” 1 April 1685, notarial minutes of René Douteau, *notaire royal* in Loudun, Archives départementales de la Vienne [henceforth A.D. Vienne], E 4/53: 328.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Triffault was married to Renée Guesdon, Jacques Leconte to Elisabeth Guesdon, Charles Bertault to Judith Guesdon, and Françoise Lesuire to Pierre Guesdon. The Catholic baptismal registers of Loudun enabled us to make these connections.

<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to Christian Moreau for having provided me with a copy of his transcription of the marriage acts for the parish St. Pierre du Marché after 1685. This gave us the important marriage act of Jean Guesdon and Françoise Guesdon, dated 1 July 1698. I verified his transcription with my photocopy of the documents. “Marriage act between, on the one hand, Jean Guesdon son of the deceased François Guesdon and Marie Molay, and, on the other, Françoise Guesdon daughter of Pierre Guesdon and Guillemine Hardouin,” marriage registers of the parish St. Pierre du Marché, Archives Municipales de Loudun [henceforth A.M. Loudun], GG 42.

which places them well above most couples for this town during this period.<sup>7</sup>

Second, the Guesdon maintained a loyalty to the Catholic religion, although the Protestant baptismal registers do exhibit some perhaps remotely related Guesdon (and this we will discuss below).

Third, where it was possible to trace the socio-professional data of the Guesdon shown in those graphs, we find that the compact was largely artisanal in nature. François and Jacques Guesdon were butchers, for example. The families that the Guesdon married into were likewise of similar socio-professional stock (or merchants). This does not mean that the Guesdon were poor. The butchers' guild stood as one of the most powerful guilds in the town, and the size of the dowries of some butchers' children could be surprisingly large.<sup>8</sup> Regrettably, we have found little to inform us about the true economic status of the Guesdon, and one cannot read too much into the size of a daughter's dowry.<sup>9</sup> More documents on the family's patrimony, if ever found, will shed light on the matter. Fourth, following the same tangent, the godparentage clusters of the Guesdon demonstrate that their spiritual alliances lay mostly with members of the same social level, although the baptismal registers surprise us at times with the appearance of the odd lawyer or legal official as godparent.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> A detailed study of the baptismal registers has shown one dominant characteristic about the average Catholic family size for the periods 1622 to 1636 and 1637 to 1651: an undeniable predilection for smaller families,

	1622-1636		1637-1651	
	# couples	% of total	# couples	% of total
1 baptism	528	<b>43.71%</b>	528	<b>35.77%</b>
2 baptisms	177	<b>14.65%</b>	271	<b>18.36%</b>
3 baptisms	127	<b>10.51%</b>	199	<b>13.48%</b>
4 baptisms	107	<b>8.86%</b>	165	<b>11.18%</b>
5 baptisms	70	<b>5.79%</b>	98	<b>6.64%</b>
6 baptisms	69	<b>5.71%</b>	83	<b>5.62%</b>

In cliometric terms, families of over eight children represent statistical outliers (i.e. rare exceptions to the rule).

<sup>8</sup> Drouault, *Recherches sur les établissements hospitaliers du Loudunais* (Loudun: Impr. de Roiffé, 1895), p. 63; Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, *Héraldique Loudunaise* (La Roche-Rigault: PSR Éditions, 1996), p. 210. For an example of an exceptional dowry for the son of a butcher, see "Marriage contract between, on the one hand, André D'Orbé son of André D'Orbé and Andrée Moullé, and, on the other, Suzanne Boutiller daughter of Jean Boutiller and Anne De Thomières," 7 September 1648, minutes of Thomas Aubéry the Elder, *notaire royal* in Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 69.

Needless to say, connecting the size of dowries to the socio-economic wealth of the family in question has to be done with many caveats. A consideration of a dowry's size must be tempered with an understanding of the size of the family from whence it came. In this part of France, each child born to non-noble parents had to receive an equal part of the family patrimony, either through a dowry or at the time of the patrimony's devolution. Hence, it would have been more difficult for parents who had ten children to provide large dowries for each of them. Jean Yver, *Égalité entre héritiers et exclusion des enfants dotés: essai de géographie coutumière* (Paris: Éditions Sirey, 1966), pp. 111-119. For Loudun, see in particular, Pierre Leproust, *Commentaires sur les coutumes du pays de Loudunais ou se rapportent plusieurs coutumes d'autres pays, Ordonnances Royaux, Jugemens & Arrêts, Textes de droit commun, auctorités & avis conformes ou contraires à icelles* (première éd.), (Saumur: Thomas Portau, 1612), titre XXV, article 12, p. 423.

<sup>9</sup> See "Marriage contract between, on the one hand, Pierre Guesdon master shoemaker son of Jacques Guesdon master butcher and Françoise Guesdon, and, on the other, Anne Haguénier daughter of François Haguénier *vinagrier* [maker of vinegar and mustard] and Magdeleine Suireau," 1 April 1685, minutes of René Douteau, *notaire royal* in Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 328. Pierre Guesdon received from his parents several small pieces of land and thirty *livres* in money and collectable debts. See also "Marriage contract between, on the one hand, Charles Bertault master shoemaker son of the deceased Pierre Bertault merchant and Hilaire Thibault, and, on the other, Judith Guesdon daughter of Pierre Guesdon master shoemaker and Guillemine Hardouin," 30 March 1671, minutes of Thomas Aubéry the Younger, *notaire royal* in Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 103. Judith Guesdon received a dowry of 300 *livres* and some movable possessions.

<sup>10</sup> Note the following exceptional examples of illustrious godparents: René Aubry lawyer in the town's law courts, "Baptismal act of Marguerite Guesdon daughter of Jacques Guesdon and Françoise Guesdon," 12 July 1660; *noble*

## François Guesdon and Marie Molay

We can rest reasonably assured that François Guesdon first saw the light of day around 25 March 1622, and that his parents were Jean Guesdon weaver and Françoise Collet. Such a conclusion stands on the following evidence. The parish registers of Loudun for the year 1694 speak of the burial of a certain François Guesdon master butcher on 22 January, aged 73 at the time of his death. Counting backwards, that leads us to the birth and baptism in 1622 of the François Guesdon cited above. His profession provides the second clue: François' entry into the butchers' guild may have been smoothed by his mother's relatives, for our database tells us that several Catholic butchers in Loudun carried the last name Collet.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, in a marriage act dated 1680, we find in attendance François Guesdon butcher and his wife Marie Molay.<sup>12</sup> The evidence here all seems to point to the same François Guesdon.

Of course, it is not impossible that two François Guesdon were born and baptised in 1622, which would shortcircuit any decisive link between the baptismal and burial acts noted just above. Indeed, the baptismal registers show that two Elisabeth Guesdon were baptised in Loudun in 1668, born to two separate couples. But this is the only example that we have, for all the Guesdon for the entire period 1598 to 1685.

The available documents permit us to glean a few details about François' socio-economic background. Before he died, François lived on the *rue de la tour volue*, located near the gate of Mirebeau. This quarter was not known for its wealthy inhabitants; most of those who lived here filled the ranks of the town's artisan population. On the other hand, it was not the preserve of members of the lowest socio-economic categories either. One generally would have to venture outside the city walls for that.<sup>13</sup> François was baptised in the parish St. Pierre du Martray, again more artisanal than its sister parish, St. Pierre du Marché. In turn, once married he baptised his children in either of the two parishes (but mostly in the Martray).

From all of this, it seems reasonable to conclude that François also grew up in Loudun. Seen through the eyes of a young boy, Loudun in the 1620s must have left him with many a story to tell. The town itself inspired awe in the eyes of any beholder, with its fortifications, its towers, its fortress, its ramparts, and its château. While not impregnable, Loudun's military attributes

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*homme* Henry Tabart king's councillor in the *bailliage* of Loudun and *assesseur* in the *maréchaussée* of the Loudunais, "Baptismal act of Marie Henriette Guesdon daughter of Pierre Guesdon and Françoise Lesuire," 19 September 1661; Gilles Triffault lawyer, "Baptismal act of Elisabeth Triffault daughter of Pierre Triffault and René Guesdon," 5 April 1671, Baptismal registers of the parish St. Pierre du Marché of Loudun, A.M. Loudun, respectively, GG 19, GG 19, and GG 20.

<sup>11</sup> From all the stages through which an apprentice became a master craftsman, the support of close relatives always helped. A would-be apprentice must first find a family willing to sponsor him. Then, to rise to the status of journeyman, the apprentice must land a workshop in which to hone his skills. Finally, his entrance to a guild would become more trouble-free if he had relatives on the examining committee. See Émile Coornaert, *Les corporations en France avant 1789*, 2e édition (Paris: Éditions ouvrières, 1968), p. 190. In the case of Loudun, this fact would explain why one finds so many Protestant members of the Grignon family in the butchers' guild and so many Protestant members of the Jamin family in the tanners' guild. The advantage of blood invigorated an artisan's prospects immeasurably.

<sup>12</sup> "Baptismal act of François Guesdon son of Jean Guesdon weaver and Françoise Collet," 25 March 1622, baptismal registers of St. Pierre du Martray, A.M. Loudun, GG 185; "Marriage act between, on the one hand, Vincent Pousset son of Vincent Pousset and Magdeleine Pellé, and, on the other, Anne Delaleu daughter of Mathurin Delaleu and Louise Chesneau," 8 April 1680, marriage registers of the parish St. Pierre du Marché of Loudun, A.M. Loudun GG 25; "Burial act of François Guesdon master butcher," 22 January 1694, parish registers of the parish St. Pierre du Martray, A.M. Loudun, GG 197.

We cite the following examples of the Collet who were butchers (all of them Catholic): Jean, Pierre, and Antoine.

<sup>13</sup> This statement is based on an extensive study of the different quarters of Loudun. For the quarter of the gate of Mirebeau, we were able to pinpoint the profession of forty of its inhabitants. Of these, only a very few carried important judicial or administrative offices. The majority of the inhabitants were artisans or merchants.

certainly commanded respect. Walking through the streets, young François perhaps also observed the large number of lawyers, tax officials, and bureaucrats who worked in the town, for Loudun towered over the Loudunais region as its legal, administrative, and financial capital. Moreover, he must have been told at one point that a large part of the town's population was Protestant, and perhaps on one occasion he had to rush to safety during an outbreak of violence between members of the two religions.<sup>14</sup>

François' town of origin underwent some dramatic changes in the following decade. In 1632, a plague slammed into Loudun and carried away a third of the town's population.<sup>15</sup> Also, this period witnessed the end of the long struggle over the town's fortifications between two local factions, factions that display a general—although not seamless—dividing line along religious difference. Loudun's elaborate system of defense was torn down, and with it collapsed its military status. The Protestants continued to be marginalized in the town's political and legal institutions, but they did manage to retain a foothold as tax officials and wealthy merchants. Religion continued to divide the community, although numerous examples of interaction are not too difficult to find. However, in the early 1630s, one event divided the town like no other in its history: the Grandier affair. Perhaps François was one of the 6,000 spectators who filled the place Sainte-Croix on 18 August 1634, in order to behold the burning of the condemned priest Urbain Grandier. The unfortunate man was sent to the stake on the false charge of witchcraft, after a dubious trial involving a convent of possessed Ursuline nuns, an event that won for Loudun a notoriety that its citizens on the whole did not covet.<sup>16</sup>

At some point in his youth, François Guesdon must have served as a butcher's apprentice, and then survived the ordeal to become a master butcher. As aforementioned, it is possible that he did so through one of his mother's relatives, although the apprenticeship contract if found will tell all. Unfortunately, we do not know much about his activity as a butcher. We have a number of documents that involve the butchers' guild, and while his relative Jacques Guesdon, also a butcher, appears in one of them, François is entirely absent.<sup>17</sup> We do know that François was

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<sup>14</sup> Except for a few years in the early seventeenth century, the Protestants of Loudun would remain a minority right up to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. However, numbers do not always tell the whole story of political and economic influence.

For an example of the kind of conflict that exploded in the town from time to time, see the various accounts of the small street battle of 1629. Charbonneau-Lassay, *Les châteaux de Loudun d'après les fouilles archéologiques de M. Joseph Moreau de la Ronde* (Loudun: Librairie Blanchard, 1915), pp. 436-438, quoting Gabriel Legué, *Urbain Grandier et les possédés de Loudun*, nouvelle édition, revue et augmentée, (Paris: Baschet, 1880), p. 157; M. Dumoustier de La Fond, *Essais sur l'histoire de la ville de Loudun* (Poitiers: chez Michel-Vincent Chevrier, 1778), tome I, pp. 122-123.

<sup>15</sup> While burial registers do not exist for this period, the fallout from this catastrophe must have been horrific, especially evident in the stark drop in baptisms during this period. Pierre Delaroche provides us with a casualty estimate of 3,700 persons. *Une épidémie de peste à Loudun en 1632* (Bordeaux: Imprimerie-Libraire Delmas, 1936), p. 40. For a cogent analysis of the effects of the plague on the town, see Robert Rapley, *A Case of Witchcraft: the Trial of Urbain Grandier* (Montréal and Kingston: Mc-Gill-Queen's University Press, 1998), pp. 69-74.

<sup>16</sup> For some useful studies of the Grandier affair, see Rapley, *A Case of Witchcraft: the Trial of Urbain Grandier*; Legué, *Urbain Grandier et les possédés de Loudun*; Michel Carmona, *Les Diables de Loudun: Sorcellerie et politique sous Richelieu* (Paris: Fayard, 1988). Pierre Champion, a Protestant procurator in the town, provides a sympathetic contemporary account, presenting to his fellow townspeople numerous arguments in favour of Grandier's innocence. "Discours sur l'histoire de la diablerie de Loudun et sur la mort de maitre Urbain Grandier curé de ladite ville faict par Pierre Champion procureur audict Loudun pour sa satisfaction," [sa fin manque] (manuscript copy of the original), Médiathèque François Mitterrand Salle de la Patrimoine: Pièces relatives au procès d'Urbain Grandier conservées à la Bibliothèque publique de Poitiers, A.2. M. 303, pièce no. 26.

<sup>17</sup> "Accord by the master butchers of Loudun concerning the purchase of some *lettres de maîtrise*," 22 April 1664, minutes of Thomas Aubéry the Elder, *notaire royal* in Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/53: 86 (this is the one in which Jacques Guesdon is found). See also the documents concerning the sale of meat during the period of Lent to the Maison de Charité by some butchers. Archives hospitalières de Loudun [henceforth A.H. Loudun], B9 première liasse.

still a butcher in 1680, because with his wife he attends the signing of a marriage act, and, when asked, he declares himself to be a butcher.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, his burial act confirms the same fact. But, beyond that, we have no evidence that François played an important role in the guild (say as one of the *maîtres jurés*).<sup>19</sup>

It is also unfortunate that we know little about François' wife, Marie Molay. We do not know even the socio-economic milieu from whence she came, although in all likelihood it was similar to that of her husband. She did have a female relative named Jeanne Molay, who appears as godmother in the baptismal act of Jean Guesdon, son of François Guesdon and Marie Molay (perhaps the same Jean Guesdon who left for New France).<sup>20</sup> And, even after thirteen pregnancies, Marie Molay still managed to outlive her husband, because she appears as his widow in the marriage of their son, Jean, in 1698. Marie Molay and her husband must have been married sometime before 1653, and, as aforementioned, they baptised all but two of their children in the more plebian parish St. Pierre du Martray. Following a pattern described above, the parents and the godparents on the whole probably share the same socio-economic status, with the exception of Paul Oryau procurator. Of course, a large number of the godfathers did sign the baptismal acts in which they took part, which suggests some degree of education; but, the majority of their names do not represent recognizable members of the town's social elites.<sup>21</sup>

## **PIERRE AND JEAN GUESDON**

Regrettably, our database does not give much definitive information on the life of Pierre Guesdon, other than the well-known fact that he was baptised in St. Pierre du Martray on 24 September 1622.<sup>22</sup> Pierre Fouscher and Elisabeth Lesuire served as his godparents, the former of

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François Guesdon's absence from these documents does not mean necessarily that he was not a master butcher, for the documents involving the guild do not always cite all of its members.

<sup>18</sup> "Marriage act between, on the one hand, Vincent Pousset son of Vincent Pousset and Magdeleine Pellé, and, on the other, Anne Delaleu daughter of Mathurin Delaleu and Louise Chesneau," 8 April 1680, marriage registers of the parish St. Pierre du Marché of Loudun, A.M. Loudun, GG 25.

<sup>19</sup> "Marriage act between, on the one hand, Vincent Pousset son of Vincent Pousset and Magdeleine Pellé, and, on the other, Anne Delaleu daughter of Mathurin Delaleu and Louise Chesneau," 8 April 1680, marriage registers of the parish St. Pierre du Marché of Loudun, A.M. Loudun GG 25; "Burial act of François Guesdon master butcher, 22 January 1694," parish registers of the parish St. Pierre du Martray, A.M. Loudun, GG 197.

A *maître juré* was an artisan in a guild whose task lay in ensuring that the other members were respecting the guild's statutes and regulations. Michel Lachiver, *Dictionnaire du monde rural: les mots du passé* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), p. 999.

<sup>20</sup> "Baptismal act of Jean Guesdon son of François Guesdon and Marie Molay," 16 February 1653, baptismal registers of St. Pierre du Martray, A.M. Loudun, GG 187.

<sup>21</sup> In most cases, when a social elite like a lawyer or tax official is cited as a godparent, the scribe recorded his profession. However, the scribe did not extend as consistently the same courtesy to members of a lower social order. The one possible exception here is Pierre Fouscher, who signs the baptismal act of Pierre Guesdon in 1662. Pierre Fouscher appears elsewhere in our database as a notary. Or, the Pierre Fouscher in this baptismal act could have been the alternative sieur de La Bonneau, a merchant. "Baptismal act of Pierre Guesdon son of François Guesdon and Marie Molay," 24 September 1662, baptismal registers of St. Pierre du Martray, A.M. Loudun, GG 187. For the baptismal act in which Paul Oryau acts as a godparent, see "Baptismal act of Jeanne Guesdon daughter of François Guesdon and Marie Molay," 22 February 1661, baptismal registers of the parish St. Pierre du Marché, A.M. Loudun, GG 19.

In chapter four of our dissertation, we assembled a dataset of 539 officeholders (magistrates, judges, lawyers, procurators, tax officials, or important bureaucrats). The virtual absence of any names from that dataset in the godparentage data of Guesdon and Molay's children is highly suggestive.

<sup>22</sup> "Baptismal act of Pierre Guesdon son of François Guesdon and Marie Molay," 24 September 1662, baptismal registers of the parish St. Pierre du Martray of Loudun, A.M. Loudun, GG 187. See also, Robert Larin, *La*

whom may have been a merchant or a notary. However, coming from an artisanal family and belonging to a certain age group, the two brothers embodied perfectly the archetypal male emigrant who decided to try his luck in New France.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps François Guesdon and his wife could not afford to pay master craftsmen to apprentice their two sons, and thus the prospect of work and available land overseas proved all too tempting.<sup>24</sup>

We know a bit more about Jean Guesdon. Sources tell us this: he came to New France with his brother and then signed a contract in August, 1688 to work for the merchant François Hazeur, in order to help build the mill at Malbaie. Later, he is hospitalized for nineteen days in October-November 1689 and then again in 1693 and 1696, at the Hôtel-Dieu de Québec.<sup>25</sup> At this point, however, the documentation raises difficulties. While in the hospital, it is recorded in the hospital's registers that he is thirty years of age. But logistical difficulties have prevented us from determining when exactly he made this declaration. If he made it in 1689, then that would mean that he was born around 1659-1660. Certainly, his parents did sire two children both named Jean, but they were baptised on 16 February 1653 and 10 June 1666, respectively. Could there have been a third Jean born around 1659-1660, but who for whatever reason was not recorded in Loudun's baptismal registers? It is unlikely. Around this time, François Guesdon and Marie Molay were siring children in rapid succession: Marie was baptised on 11 May 1658, another Marie on 16 November 1659, and Jeanne on 22 February 1661. There is simply not enough time in this span for the gestation, birth, and baptism of little Jean.<sup>26</sup>

How do we then explain the contradiction between the declaration of the age "30" and the two baptisms of the brothers Jean Guesdon? One hypothesis comes to mind: the scribe who recorded the age wrote "30" instead of "36," or wrote "36" in a way that looked too deceptively like "30." If that were to be the case—and it remains to be shown—then the Jean hospitalized was the one born in 1653. Alternatively, if Jean Guesdon declared himself to be thirty years of age in 1696, then that would roughly match the baptism of 1666. Some groundwork in the Quebec archives should resolve the question.

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*contribution du Haut-Poitou au peuplement de la Nouvelle-France* (Moncton, Nouveau-Brunswick: Éditions d'Acadie, 1994), p. 79; Marcel Fournier, *Les villages de nos ancêtres: Loudun au Poitou, ville d'origine des ancêtres Dazé, Fardeau et Guindon* (Décembre 1997), <<http://planete.qc.ca/histoire/villages/decembre97.htm>>, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Hubert Charbonneau, "Seconde introduction: migrations et migrants de France en Canada avant 1760," Larin, *La contribution du Haut-Poitou au peuplement de la Nouvelle-France*, pp. 39-44; Leslie Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 82-84, 101-128.

<sup>24</sup> This hypothesis to account for Pierre and Jean's departure is purely conjectural, based on the observation made by Larin that, in this part of France at least, young men experienced difficulty in becoming artisans. Larin, *La contribution du Haut-Poitou au peuplement de la Nouvelle-France*, p. 61.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80; Marcel Fournier, *Les villages de nos ancêtres: Loudun au Poitou, ville d'origine des ancêtres Dazé, Fardeau et Guindon* (Décembre 1997), <<http://planete.qc.ca/histoire/villages/decembre97.htm>>, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> There is a remote possibility that the third Jean was conceived, born, and baptised between the first Marie and the second Marie. Consider the following chronological breakdown. The second Marie must have been conceived around mid-February, 1659 (for her to be born in mid-November). Thus, the period between the baptism of the first Marie and the conception of the second is about nine months. Could the third Jean have been brought in life in those nine months? This is highly improbable, given the strictures against sexual intercourse while the mother was nursing. Moreover, the intergenetic intervals between the children of François Guesdon and Marie Molay are never less than twelve months. See also, Wendy Gibson, *Women in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 70-83, and esp. p. 70; Sara F. Matthews Grieco, "The Body, Appearance, and Sexuality," Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge, eds., *A History of Women in the West*, vol. III, *Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 71; "Baptismal act of Marie Guesdon daughter of François Guesdon and Marie Molay," 11 May 1658, baptismal registers of St. Pierre du Martray, A.M. Loudun, GG 187; "Baptismal act of Marie Guesdon daughter of François Guesdon and Marie Molay," 15 November 1659, baptismal registers of St. Pierre du Marché, A.M. Loudun, GG 19; "Baptismal act of Jeanne Guesdon daughter of François Guesdon and Marie Molay," 22 February 1661, baptismal registers of St. Pierre du Marché, A.M. Loudun, GG 19.

The sources also tell us that Jean Guesdon returned to his native Loudun after his stay in the Hôtel-Dieu de Québec.<sup>27</sup> This is entirely probable, for the patient work of Christian Moreau has revealed a marriage act dated 1 July 1698 in the parish St. Pierre du Marché between, on the one hand, Jean Guesdon son of François Guesdon and Marie Molay, and, on the other, Françoise Guesdon daughter of Pierre Guesdon (not the one in Québec) and Guillemine Hardouin. The scribe recorded in the margin that the newlyweds stated their plans to live in the nearby village of Veniers.<sup>28</sup> However, Jean's marriage was short-lived, for he died sometime before the birth of his first child, 17 March 1699.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the illness that struck him in Québec returned in 1698 to deliver the final blow. That would be a plausible explanation, if it were not for the birth of his brother Jean. Which Jean Guesdon, then, was married in 1698, the one baptised in 1653, or the one baptised in 1666?<sup>30</sup> The marriage act does not provide any evidence to settle the matter. However, we do have one lead: the Jean Guesdon from Québec became a breadmaker.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps a notarial contract one day will be unearthed in the archives that cites Jean Guesdon breadmaker and his wife Françoise Guesdon. That would almost solve the mystery, but the necessary document remains to be discovered.

### A Protestant Connection?

As mentioned above, the Guesdon compact discussed in this small article set firm roots in the Catholic camp. Not one Protestant has been found among their ranks. However, no evidence has come forward to suggest that they belonged to the intensely devoted branch of the Catholic community either. Nowhere do we find the Guesdon, any Guesdon, acting in any of the town's confraternities, or as a *procureur de la fabrique* of one of the two parishes,<sup>32</sup> or fulfilling any role in the town's small Catholic hospital, the Maison de Charité. Of course, most of these positions

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<sup>27</sup> Larin, *La contribution du Haut-Poitou au peuplement de la Nouvelle-France*, pp. 79-80; Marcel Fournier, *Les villages de nos ancêtres: Loudun au Poitou, ville d'origine des ancêtres Dazé, Fardeau et Guindon* (Décembre 1997), <<http://planete.qc.ca/histoire/villages/decembre97.htm>>, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> We confirmed Moreau's transcription with our copy of the original act. Transcriptions of Christian Moreau of the parish registers of St. Pierre du Marché, 1685-1700; "Marriage act between, on the one hand, Jean Guesdon son of the deceased François Guesdon, and, on the other, Françoise Guesdon daughter of René Guesdon and Marie Lunet," 1 July 1698, parish registers of St. Pierre du Marché, A.M. Loudun, GG 42.

<sup>29</sup> Transcriptions of Christian Moreau of the parish registers of St. Pierre du Marché, 1685-1700. There is reference to the burial of a certain Jean Guesdon on 25 September 1698, aged 29 years of age. That would fit perfectly into the time span between the marriage of Jean Guesdon on 1 July 1698 and the birth of his first child on 17 March 1699 (and yet the problem of connecting the age of Jean to his baptism, either in 1653 or 1659, again presents a stumbling block). Parish registers of the parish St. Pierre du Martray, A.M. Loudun GG 202. I am grateful to Edna Humphreys for having signaled this burial to me.

<sup>30</sup> One might wonder why parents would give the same first name to two of their children, as did François Guesdon and Marie Molay, both for Jean and for Marie Guesdon. There was certainly a large reservoir of first names to choose from, for our database contains a First Names table with over 945 possibilities, a large number of them perfectly acceptable to a devout Catholic family. In some cases, the second child with the same name is named thus in order to honour the memory of the first, who did not survive infancy. This may have been the case of the two Marie Guesdon, baptised one after the other.

On the other hand, one finds from time to time in the documentation siblings with the same first name. In the Catholic tradition, this could be a way of venerating particularly important saints and figures in the Catholic religion, like the Virgin Mary. And, the use of the terms "the Elder" and "the Younger" could be applied as easily to siblings as it could to fathers and sons. See for example the presence of two sisters Marie Briault the Elder and Marie Briault the Younger in the following document: "Two *transactions* concerning the succession of Michel Ragueneau lawyer in the Parlement of Paris and Madeleine Dreux his wife," 6 February 1660, notarial minutes of René Confex, *notaire royal* in Loudun, A.D. Vienne, E 4/55: 45.

<sup>31</sup> Larin, *La contribution du Haut-Poitou au peuplement de la Nouvelle-France*, p. 80.

<sup>32</sup> A *procureur de la fabrique* is a male member of a parish church who sat on its council, called the *fabrique*, to oversee and ensure the material well-being of the church. François Bluche, *Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle* (Paris, Fayard, 1990), p. 573.

were staffed by social elites, but one finds artisans and those of a similar status serving in such capacities.<sup>33</sup>

The Protestant baptismal registers do list some Guesdon, but fewer in the seventeenth century. One such couple was Josias Favereau and his wife Renée Guesdon, who sired two children in the early seventeenth century. And, as late as 1664, a period which witnessed an intensified state persecution against the Huguenot minority, we find the Protestant baptism of Marthe Guesdon daughter of David Guesdon and Anne Geslin.<sup>34</sup> But, no decisive genealogical link has been mustered to attach them to their Catholic counterparts.

The Catholic godparentage data, on the other hand, present some curious anomalies that beg explanation. We turn first to the baptism of Judith Guesdon, daughter of Pierre Guesdon and Guillemine Hardouin.<sup>35</sup> The first name “Judith” is a name frequently given to Protestant children, and for that very reason avoided by Catholic parents. Judith Guesdon’s godmother was Judith Lesuire, whom the scribe neglected to record any revealing details about her family ties. There are a few Judith Lesuire in the Protestant baptismal registers, but we cannot determine which one (if any) served as Judith Guesdon’s godmother. Perhaps Judith Lesuire converted to Catholicism, which would have made possible her role as a Catholic godmother.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Consider the following examples: Pierre Malboise butcher, *procureur de la fabrique* of the parish St. Pierre du Martray, around 1649, and André Barbier *laboureur* (tillage farmer), *procureur de la fabrique* of the same parish, around 1639. “Baptismal act of Elisabeth Malboise daughter of Pierre Malboise butcher and *procureur de la fabrique* and Catherine Chambellain,” 29 March 1649, baptismal registers of St. Pierre du Martray, A.M. Loudun, GG 187; “*Bail à ferme* concerning a small piece of land between the *procureurs de la fabrique* of the parish St. Pierre du Martray and Pierre Lambert sieur de Tranchis *archer* in the *maréchaussée* of the Loudunais et al.,” 5 September 1641, A.D. Vienne, D 128.

<sup>34</sup> The children of Josias Favereau and Anne Guesdon were baptised in January 1601 and January 1607. The daughter of David Guesdon and Anne Geslin was baptised in September 1664. The Protestant baptisms of Loudun for the seventeenth century exist only as copies of the originals, containing only the month and year for each baptism and the names of the parents and their newborn child. For these tables, see Tables des baptêmes protestants de l’église réformée de Loudun (1566-1608, 1621-1663), A.M. Loudun, GG 195-197; Philip Benedict, *The Huguenot Population of France, 1600-1685: The Demographic Fate and Customs of a Religious Minority*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge Vol. 81, Part 5, 1991* (Independence Square, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1991), pp. 35, 120., p. 120; Transcriptions of M. Jacques Moron, *Baptêmes protestants de Loudun du 14/02/1566 à Mai 1608*, édition du 23 août 1995; *Baptêmes protestants de Loudun 1621/1663*, édition du 6 juin 1995. For certain periods during the sixteenth century, there exist both the originals and the tables; Benedict compared them and found the latter to be an accurate representation of the former. There is a gap in the documentation between 1608 and 1621. Thanks are extended to M. Moron for passing on to me his transcriptions, which I checked across the original tables.

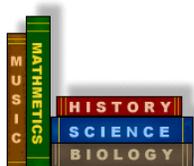
<sup>35</sup> “Baptismal act of Judith Guesdon daughter of Pierre Guesdon and Guillemine Hardouin,” 24 April 1646, baptismal registers of the parish St. Pierre du Marché, A.M. Loudun, GG 16.

<sup>36</sup> The possibility that a Protestant would have acted as a godparent for a Catholic newborn is highly unlikely. Both the Protestant and Catholic churches frowned upon such a practice, based on the belief that the role of the godparent was to oversee the spiritual upbringing of the child. Moreover, the Protestant and Catholic traditions on the whole maintained fundamentally incompatible beliefs about baptism, beliefs that effectively made interconfessional godparentage virtually impossible.

For a paper given at the French Historical Studies conference, we constructed a dataset composed of 700 godmothers and 200 godfathers, taken from the Catholic baptismal registers. Cross-referencing with other sources, we discovered that not one of them can be said to be undeniably Protestant. “The Dilemmas of Confessional Relations involving Religious Practice: Loudun, 1598-1665,” Paper presented at the French Historical Studies Conference (Toronto, April 2002). For material on the different understanding of baptism held by Protestants and Catholics, see Roman Catholic Church, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, sixth session, “Decree concerning Justification,” chapter VII, p. 33; seventh session, “Decrees concerning the sacraments,” pp. 53-54; twenty-fourth session, “Decree concerning the Reform of Matrimony,” chapter II, pp. 185-186; Reformed Churches of France, “La Confession de foi des Églises Réformées de France dite ‘Confession de La Rochelle’ 1559,” *Confessions et catéchismes de la foi réformée* ed. Olivier Fatio (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1986), article 35, p. 126; *La Discipline Ecclesiastique des Eglises Reformees de France*, “Du Baptême,” article 6, p. 369; *Discipline Ecclesiastique des Églises réformées de France* (1607), “Du Baptême,” article 7, folio 24 verso; Garrisson, *Les Protestants aux XVIIe siècle*, pp. 45-49.

Another curiosity is the appearance of Pierre Guignard as the godfather of Pierre Guesdon, son of François Guesdon and Marie Molay (baptised 15 March 1654). Casting a glance at the previous century, back to the the year 1582, we find in the Protestant registers the baptism of Pierre Guignard son of Pierre Guignard and Anne Guesdon. And, we find another Pierre Guignard (perhaps the one baptised in 1582?) in the Catholic parishes in the 1650s baptising the children that he sired with his wife, Jeanne Molay.<sup>37</sup> Do we have here Protestant-Catholic interaction of some sort? Again, our imagination raises some possibilities, but the documents must emerge to transform them into certainties.

Finally, the butchers' guild to which François and Jacques Guesdon belonged did boast an influential Protestant contingent.<sup>38</sup> This guild represented one of the few in the town in which Protestants actually played any role, as they gravitated more to the profession of merchant or tax official during this period of escalating persecution. Conceivably, in this guild the two Guesdon nurtured fruitful commercial relations with their Protestant neighbours.



**A very special thanks to Edwin Bezzina**

**for all the time and research to present this exclusive documentation for  
the Guesdon of Loudun, France.**

## **Conclusion**

Certainly, there is still much work to be done on the Guesdon of Loudun, many archival bundles to sift through, and many genealogical links to draw. At this stage, however, what we know about the two brothers Jean and Pierre Guesdon and their former life in France presents us with a useful case study, a microcosm, of the characteristics of those who migrated to New France, some to return to their native country, others to stay permanently. And, we see here a microscopic but integral part of one of the great issues in early Canadian history: the process by which Europeans transplanted their customs and beliefs, their society, and themselves to the North American continent, and how that continent and its peoples shaped the European newcomers in turn.

Edwin Bezzina

<sup>37</sup> Note the following baptismal acts for the children of Pierre Guignard and Jeanne Molay: Marie Guignard, 13 January 1655, baptismal acts of the parish St. Pierre du Marché, A.M. Loudun, GG 18; Renée Guignard, 2 February 1656, baptismal acts of the parish St. Pierre du Marché, A.M. Loudun, GG 18; Claude Guignard, 6 February 1657, baptismal acts of the parish St. Pierre du Martray, A.M. Loudun, GG 187; René Guignard, 30 September 1658, baptismal acts of the parish St. Pierre du Martray, A.M. Loudun, GG 187.

For the Protestant baptism of Pierre Guignard son of Pierre Guignard and Anne Guesdon, dated 11 February 1582, see Tables des baptêmes protestants de l'église réformée de Loudun (1566-1608, 1621-1663), A.M. Loudun, GG 195; Transcriptions of M. Jacques Moron, *Baptêmes protestants de Loudun du 14/02/1566 à Mai 1608*, édition du 23 août 1995.

<sup>38</sup> We were able to link a good number of the members of the butchers' guild to the fathers cited in the Catholic and Protestant baptismal registers (which thus gives us the religion of the butchers in question). During the period 1598-1635, we found 9 Protestant butchers and 18 Catholic ones; during the period 1636 to 1665, we found 3 Protestants and 27 Catholics. Part of the dramatic shift in the Protestant-Catholic distribution in the guild across the two periods is due to demographic change: the Catholics continued to expand as the century progressed, while their Protestant neighbours declined significantly in number.