Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France

Sharon Kettering

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For Aunt Byrd and Thomas,
IN MEMORY

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INTRODUCTION

Power and Patronage

Patronage studies concern the realities of power—who gets it, who keeps it, and what they do with it. Power is control over the behavior of others, and it may be derived from physical force, political authority, control over scarce economic resources, social prestige, personal relationships, or a combination of these. It may be expressed directly as coercion or constituted authority, indirectly as manipulation or influence.[1] Patronage is an indirect form of power: a patron influences the behavior of his clients because he can grant or withdraw benefits, thereby rewarding compliance or punishing disobedience. He can manipulate his clients because of their indebtedness for past favors and fear of future reprisals: his control over their behavior gives him power. Patronage is the art of obligation, of manipulation through rewards and punishment. Politics is the art of persuasion, of inducing men to cooperate and do what is demanded voluntarily. The political process has failed when it is necessary to use force. Patronage will probably always have a place in politics, whatever the system, because it encourages cooperation and is effective in moving people to action.

A patron assists and protects his clients, providing them with offices, arranging profitable marriages, finding places for their children, helping them with lawsuits or tax problems. He gives them economic aid and opportunities for career advancement and offers protection from the demands of others. Patronage also refers to material rewards: a patron has the power to distribute goods and resources, especially political offices and favors. It may mean no more than recommending someone for an office or a promotion, but it shades imperceptibly into building a political clientele, a network of officeholding dependents. For this reason, the term patronage may also be used to describe a mode of recruitment to officeholding. A clientele is a network of clients headed by a patron, and a political clientele is a client network used to influence or control a society's decision-making positions.[2]

Clientage is the loyalty and service a client owes a patron in exchange for advancement and protection. A client acts as a reliable, obedient subordinate in what is often a political jungle, helping a patron to perform the duties of

office, providing information, offering advice, lending money, securing places for other dependents, fighting for him, even following him into exile. The term clientage describes the nature of the patron-client relationship, which is unequal, personal, and reciprocal. A patron is expected to give material benefits because he can do so, while a client offers in exchange more intangible assets of loyalty and service. Clientelism is the term used to describe a system of patron-broker-client ties and networks.[3]

A patron-client relationship is a personal, direct exchange, a two-party, usually face-to-face transaction, and a patron uses resources he himself owns or controls. A patron-broker-client relationship, on the other hand, is a three-party, indirect, more impersonal exchange in which a broker mediates between parties separated by distance, using resources he does not always directly control. A broker's resources are the people he knows who can provide access to power and place.[4] A broker acts as a middleman to arrange an exchange of resources between parties who are separated by physical or personal distance. He is a mediator in an indirect exchange—he does not always control what is transferred, but he influences the quality of the exchange in negotiating the transfer. A broker is more than a go-between because he has resources of his own which he can add to the exchange, and he does more than transmit the negotiations: he also influences them, doing his own manipulating and lobbying.

Brokerage is an essential aspect of patronage. Brokers introduce men with power to men seeking its use who are willing to give favors in return for it, then they arrange an exchange. They bring people and opportunities together, allowing them to trade resources and, in conducting the negotiations, they facilitate the use of power and the distribution of resources. Brokers are usually important individuals in their own right with independent resources and large clienteles. This is why they became brokers, and their new role adds to their status. Brokerage is a role that can be played by someone who is a patron, a broker, and a client: he can play two roles at the same time as patron-broker or broker-client, or one role at a time.[5] The duality of their role as patron-brokers or broker-clients, however, sets brokers apart from ordinary patrons and clients, who have direct, personal relationships and operate within one milieu: they do not cut across physical, social, or political distances.

The society and government of early modern France was organized loosely in layers of clienteles reaching vertically to the king at court. One man's patron was another man's client, and brokers bridged the distances between patrons. When clienteles pyramided as they did when expanding horizontally and vertically, brokers handled the exchanges between levels of patrons and clients separated by distance, place, and rank. The pyramiding of clienteles produced, besides layers and layers of patrons and clients, the need for a third but not necessarily distinct role, that of a broker who linked the layers.

Clienteles were necessary to exercise political power in early modern France: clients were used to promote the career goals of their patrons and to provide essential political services. Clienteles were patron-created, patron-

centered, and patron-led, and clients were vertically linked to a common patron, not horizontally linked to each other. An ambitious man used all his resources—reputation, family, rank, office, wealth, and patrons—to build a large clientele, giving him political power. The power of a patron depended upon his ability to mobilize his clients in coordinated political activity. When a man acquired a reputation for generously rewarding those who served him, he could exercise power because he had the potential to reward compliance and could motivate behavior. Clienteles waxed and waned with the fortunes of their patrons, and when a patron's fortunes dwindled so did the number of his clients.[6]

Government by patron-client ties was characteristic of an incompletely centralized state such as France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[7] The crown used royal officials to govern, but institutional procedures alone were insufficient because royal authority in the provinces was still too uncertain and its enforcement too weak. The French provinces were only partially under royal control for most of this period.[8] So the crown had to supplement its authority with patron-broker-client ties that functioned inside and outside the institutional framework: they were used to manipulate political institutions from within, to operate across institutions, and to act in place of institutions. They were interstitial, supplementary, and parallel structures.[9]

Brokers mediated between the provincial power structure and the national government in Paris, performing the critical function of linkage in a state with a weak central government.[10] Local notables acted as brokers in negotiating an exchange of services and goods between a highly placed patron in the national government in Paris, perhaps a royal minister, and his supporters among the provincial ruling elite including their own clients; in fact, they used their influence and clients to mobilize support for him and his projects. Although they did not control the flow of royal patronage from the national capital, brokers appeared to do so in provincial eyes, and they played the functionally equivalent role of patrons in distributing royal patronage from which they took a commission for brokering, sometimes diverting the flow of royal patronage for their own use. Brokers in early modern France did not see themselves as brokers, however; we have the advantage of hindsight in that. They did see themselves as loyal clients helping their patron, a royal minister, to govern the province. Brokers tried to achieve a monopoly in brokering, but they were not always successful: they had too many rivals.[11] Brokers helped the king and his ministers to govern and were an important way of getting things done in a weakly centralized state. Broker-clients were recruited and used by the Paris royal ministers to integrate the peripheral provinces of France and to create a strong central government.

The centralization and bureaucratization of the French state was a long, difficult, and far from inevitable process.[12] The critical years were 1624 to 1683, when Richelieu, Mazarin, and Colbert worked to create the early modern French state. The creation of a strong national government is usually

described as a lengthy, external process of extending royal control over provincial institutions. The Paris monarchy sent intendants into the provinces to supplant existing authorities, while simultaneously suppressing the power of regional institutions and intimidating their uncooperative members. The intendants had developed enough bureaucratic characteristics by the late seventeenth century to identify them as a newly emerging species of political animal, the early modern bureaucrat.[13] This book suggests that the Paris ministers also extended their control over the provinces, especially those on the frontiers, by another method that was just as effective, distributing royal patronage to secure provincial loyalty and support. The Paris ministers used broker-clients in the provinces to distribute royal patronage to their own and other noble clients in exchange for their loyalty and support. The monarchy's success in governing was due as much to its ability to buy—in different kinds of coin—the loyalty and support of the provincial nobility as it was to the surveillance and coercion of the intendants.

Clientelism has been widely studied within the last two decades by anthropologists, political scientists, and sociologists.[14] When anthropologists move from the study of primitive to complex societies, they tend to be interested in societies with traditional characteristics, the so-called peasant societies, preindustrial, agrarian, and elitist, and they tend to investigate the effects of patronage upon rural village life. They view patronage as a form of interpersonal relationship, focusing on the links between patrons and clients, particularly between local leaders and their followers and between landlords and tenants. Patronage in this context is usually not considered within a formal system of government.[15]

Political scientists, on the other hand, consider patronage a characteristic of government, and usually study it within the context of a formal political system. They have been interested in its political functions, especially party patronage, the way in which political parties distribute public jobs and favors in exchange for electoral support in modern societies. They have also been interested in how patron-client ties act as political linkage, and have done much of the work on brokerage, a subject that has been studied only within the last decade or so.[16] Sociologists, in contrast, have seen patronage as an example of the exchange theory of interpersonal relationships.[17] All proponents of clientelism, however, consider it a useful concept in understanding social organization, as useful as social classes and perhaps more so in traditional societies.

Historians have done surprisingly little work on patronage, although patron-client systems flourished in early modern Europe and dominated its politics. English historians have done more work on this subject than French historians—in recent years a group of historians known as the revisionists have emphasized the role of patronage in early Stuart politics and in the causation of the English civil war—but their inquiries have tended to describe the operation and uses of patronage without much concern for theorization or formal structures.[18] Their work does not help observers trying

to understand the role of patronage in early modern French politics because there were significant differences between the two systems. England had a parliamentary, nonvenal political system with nascent political parties after 1700, and studies of English political patronage have tended to focus on elections to seats in parliament. A national representative assembly sitting periodically, parliament was an institution of political linkage and integration that France did not have. France was a mélange of different regions speaking different dialects added to the throne at different times, and the government of early modern France was formally venal, authoritarian, nonparliamentary, without political parties. The centralizing French monarchy sought to bind independent regional institutions, hereditary royal officials, and local notables to the national government at Paris. A successful method was the brokerage of royal patronage in the provinces to secure the loyalty and support of the nobility and the cooperation of officials in formal political institutions.

Recent studies by early modern French historians have demonstrated the need to understand the political impact of patron-client ties, but there have been few studies of client networks within the Paris government and even fewer of provincial networks.[19] The work of French historians so far has been largely descriptive, mostly exposés of client networks and inquiries into contemporary values and terminology. French historians have shown little interest in how patron-broker-client ties actually affected the functioning of the political system, and the theorization they have developed is eccentric when compared to that proposed by English-speaking anthropologists, political scientists, and sociologists.[20] In general, scholars have tended to work independently on patronage without being aware of each other's conclusions.[21] A goal of this book is to introduce French historians to the interdisciplinary literature on clientelism.

Patronage studies are often case studies of regions—for instance, Mediterranean societies in which patron-client ties have appeared as the dominant mode of organization—and case studies of individual patrons, specifically, incidents in their careers when they exercised patronage.[22] This book uses case studies to explore brokerage, a form of political clientelism. It describes a new type of statebuilder in seventeenth-century France, a provincial broker. He was not a great noble or a provincial governor as he had usually been in the sixteenth century. He was a regional notable, a member of the lesser nobility who rose socially and economically by collaborating politically with the expanding Paris government in return for royal patronage, for example, by helping the new intendants to perform their administrative duties. He was the client of a highly placed Paris official, usually a royal minister, and a member of a Paris-based administrative clientele stretching into the provinces. Royal ministers such as Richelieu, Mazarin, and Colbert distributed royal patronage to reliable broker-clients to achieve the political integration of such peripheral provinces as Provence, Languedoc, Guyenne, Burgundy, Alsace, and the Franche-Comté.

Provence, Languedoc, and Guyenne were provinces in the Midi, in

southeastern, south-central, and southwestern France on the frontier with Spain and Spanish-dominated Italy, while Burgundy, Alsace, and the Franche-Comté lay on the eastern frontier with Habsburg-dominated Germany. Alsace and the Franche-Comté were newly conquered provinces in the seventeenth century. Burgundy, in fact, ceased to be a frontier province only after the Franche-Comté was permanently annexed in 1678. These provinces endured heavy troop movements during the Habsburg wars, extensive military damage and destruction, and high taxes to pay the cost of the wars. In addition, Burgundy, Guyenne, Languedoc, and Provence were *pays d'Etats*, provinces with traditional tax-granting assemblies, customary privileges or liberties, and parlements or provincial high courts. The pays d'Etats were the scenes of widespread popular protest against the royal government during the Habsburg wars. All of these provinces had strong regional identities. Their peripheral characteristics meant that patron-broker-client ties and networks stretching to Paris, inside and outside the formal institutional framework of government, were important in attaching these regions to the central administration.

The operation of patronage is difficult to observe because patrons often veiled their activities, an obscurity that is intensified by a distance of several hundred years and a reliance upon written documents. It is not always easy to find evidence of patronage activities, and patterns emerge only after intensive archival study; in fact, the evidence for this book appeared during the course of another study on Provence.[23] Seventeenth-century Provence was a good choice for a regional study of brokerage as a technique of statebuilding because of its distance from the central government at Paris. One of the most remote and unruly of the French provinces during the Old Regime with a strong tradition of regionalism and a long history of political independence, Provence is a model for other peripheral provinces and their relations with the central government.[24] The archival evidence on brokers and brokering in this book is largely Provençal in origin. The primary evidence on Provençal brokers is supported by secondary evidence on brokers from five other peripheral provinces, Languedoc, Guyenne, Burgundy, Alsace, and the Franche-Comté. Published evidence from these other provinces reinforces the Provençal archival examples and suggests that brokerage as a method of regional-national integration was widely used in the peripheral provinces of seventeenth-century France.

The political careers of thirty provincial brokers are described. The Provençal brokers include Henri de Forbin-Maynier d'Oppède; Charles de Grimaldi-Régusse; Barthélemy, Cosme, and Antoine de Valbelle; Toussaint de Janson-Forbin; Fortia de Pilles; the bailli de Forbin; the chevalier Paul; archbishop Grignan of Arles; and the comte de Grignan. Brokers from the other provinces include archbishops Claude de Rébé and Pierre de Marca, Cardinal Pierre de Bonzi, Jean de Bertier, and the comte de Mérinville from Languedoc; Antoine d'Aguesseau and Joseph Dubernet, archbishops Henri d'Escoubleau de Sourdis and Henry de Béthune from Guyenne; parlementaires Claude and Gabriel Boisot and Jean-Ferdinand Jobelot from the Franche-Comté; Charles Guntzer, Ulrich Obrecht, Jean-Baptiste Klinglin,

Jean Dietremann, and Jean Dietrich from Alsace; and Claude Bouchu and Nicolas Brûlart from Burgundy. Brief career sketches of these brokers demonstrate that they were clients of highly placed patrons in the Paris government, who offered royal patronage to them and their dependents in exchange for their brokering services, and these career sketches describe their services and the resources that made them possible.

Because brokerage is an aspect of patronage and both are forms of clientelism, this is also a book on the structure and operation of political clientelism, a system that produced the early modern state of Louis XIV and the first bureaucracy in Europe. The first three chapters present the basic identifying characteristics of patron-broker-client ties and networks, laying the groundwork for an analysis in the last three chapters of their use in early modern French statebuilding. The thesis on brokers and brokerage ties the book together. And because the system of clientelism dominated the nobility of France, this book is also a study of the nobility's role in early modern French statebuilding.

How did patron-broker-client ties and networks contribute to the development of the early modern French state? Provincial brokers acted as political middlemen in attaching nobles and institutions in the peripheral provinces to the French throne. Royal ministers such as Richelieu, Mazarin, and Colbert used the distribution of royal patronage in the provinces by networks of their own broker-clients to secure the loyalty and support of independent provincial nobles and institutions. In so doing they bypassed the provincial governors who had enjoyed a near-monopoly on the brokerage of royal patronage in the provinces in the sixteenth century. Royal ministers in the seventeenth century created new provincial administrative clienteles directed from Paris. These ministerial clienteles enabled the Bourbon monarchy to survive the civil war of the Fronde at mid-century and combat the resistance of the nobility to the growth of royal absolutism. Less positively, the conflict and corruption generated by patron-broker-client ties and networks were disruptive enough to force the monarchy to seek a more professional, businesslike basis for its administrative relationships. The result was the emergence of a quasi-public corps of officials, an early modern bureaucracy, during the seventeenth century. Clientelism did not disappear as the new royal bureaucracy developed but adapted to it, coexisting comfortably inside and outside the new political system.

There are some inherent difficulties in doing patronage studies. The first problem is finding archival information on patrons, brokers, and clients and their activities. The second is the amount of detail necessary to establish the political connections between men and explain their significance: a forest of factual detail soon springs up. The third is the lack of a natural narrative or story line: patronage studies sometimes appear to be a bewildering heap of examples, one piled upon the other. It is hoped that by studying the power structure of one province in detail, Provence, and by studying the careers of a small group of exemplary Provençal brokers, familiar faces in a crowd, these differences may be lessened and a sense of continuity achieved.

Four types of archival evidence have been used: administrative and

personal correspondence; diaries and memoirs; family papers; and statements by contemporary political observers including biographies and local histories. Letters between Paris ministers and their provincial clients allow a rare glimpse into the workings of relationships because provincials usually visited the national capital only once a year, and for this reason much was committed to paper that would otherwise have been conducted in private conversations at Paris. Personal diaries and memoirs in which men look back on their political careers, discussing who helped or hindered their advancement, are another valuable source on patron-broker-client relationships. Family papers often provide information on client ties, for example, the names of godparents, witnesses to marriage contracts, and beneficiaries in wills. Descriptions by observers of the contemporary political scene often indicate significant relationships.

Patron-broker-client relationships are always hard to document, however, and sources can be deceptive. Three basic types of evidence have been accepted as indicating that an individual was, indeed, the client of a specific patron: their correspondence, that is, letters containing client language, patronage requests or recommendations, promises of rewards, and expressions of gratitude for favors granted; personal statements in memoirs and diaries; and remarks by contemporary political observers. Letters, however, can be misleading: prospective clients soliciting patronage often used effusive client language without achieving the status. Family papers, too, can be misleading: individuals who acted as witnesses or beneficiaries were not always clients, while family members were not necessarily clients because of kinship ties. For this reason sources have been carefully scrutinized, and more than one source has been used wherever possible. Brokers have been identified from descriptive evidence of their brokering.

Political power in early modern France was exercised by an elite, and a study of early modern French politics and government is also a study of elites. There is a current debate on the role of the nobility in the early modern state. It has become apparent that a knowledge of patron-broker-client ties, which dominated noble relationships on a regional basis, is central to this debate, but little is known about them. Did the nobility, the traditional ruling elite, successfully adapt to the changes of the postfeudal world, exercise political power, and help the French monarchy govern a fragmented, unintegrated state? In an older interpretation, nobles experienced serious economic and social difficulties, making them ever more dependent upon a centralizing monarchy that finally refused to tolerate their unruliness any longer and brought them to heel.[25] This book argues that the monarchy used the nobility of France, great and small, sword and robe, in governing; in fact, the nobility was indispensable in governing until the late seventeenth century. The natural leaders of the nobility, whether great court nobles or provincial governors, were linked to the lesser nobility by patron-broker-client and kinship ties, as well as by landholding, remnants of vassalage, and regional interests, and in this way were able to motivate the provincial nobility to political action. This book suggests that the basic characteristics of patron-

broker-client ties binding the nobility together and motivating it to action are central to understanding its role in the early modern French state. It also suggests that the Bourbon monarchy had a broad underlying base of support among the French political elite, both sword and robe nobles, whose antagonism to the crown has been exaggerated.

This book does not explore the infrastructure of noble clienteles, where they extended horizontally or vertically or how they connected regionally or nationally, and it does not explore their operation at Paris. Noble clienteles need diagramming internally and externally to perceive their overall structure, which appears to have been loosely hierarchical. This book does, however, offer a theoretical understanding of noble ties and networks drawn from the social sciences, and a new perspective from which to view politics and power in early modern France. It was written because the answers to many of the questions it poses on the political influence of patron-broker-client ties and networks could not be found in other studies. A knowledge of these ties and networks affords a clearer understanding of what constituted political power in early modern France and how the upper ranks of that society were organized. This book suggests that patron-broker-client ties as underlying structures were an important determinant of the political interests, motives, and actions of the French nobility in the early modern period, and were flexible enough to allow choice and voluntarism in French political life. This book proposes clientelism as a form of political association that explains both individual and institutional political behavior, and also as an organizing social principle within the elite. In fact, once we know more about how these ties stretched across the gulf to the masses below and affected their actions, we may find them a valuable social concept for explaining early modern French behavior and organization, more valuable perhaps than horizontal class alliances or hierarchical corporate orders.[26]

CHAPTER ONE

Patrons and Clients

The traditional knocks on the stage are heard, and the red velvet curtains of the Comédie Française open on a production of Molière's *Le Misanthrope*, first presented in 1666. The main character, a young nobleman named Alceste, is sitting alone, disturbed and restless, when his friend Philinte enters the room, stops in surprise, and asks what is bothering him. Alceste answers that he no longer wants to belong to society. Philinte asks why, and Alceste answers that he can no longer endure the insincerity and hyprocrisy that civility requires. Alceste asks, "What good can come from a man who flatters you, swears his friendship, loyalty, zeal, esteem, and affection for you, praises you extravagantly, then does the same for the first scoundrel he meets?"[1] He complains that in Louis XIV's Paris with its mannered social rhetoric he cannot tell friend from foe. Philinte replies that a member of polite society must observe its customs and manners. Alceste protests that honesty and truthfulness are more civil forms of behavior which he intends to adopt. Molière's comedy depicts with bittersweet humor the difficulties resulting from his vow.

The words friendship, loyalty, zeal, esteem, and affection are repeated over and over in the correspondence of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France, for instance, in the letters between patrons in the royal government at Paris and their clients in the provinces. Formal courtesy phrases using these words open and close letters, adorning their text with rhetorical flourishes and sweeps reflecting a world of patron-client relationships that has long since disappeared. The language of clientage cloaked a network of reciprocal personal relationships stretching from the top of the Paris government into the distant provinces of the Midi. We need to pierce the cloak of language veiling clientage in order to understand it.

A patron assured a client of his friendship and esteem, his protection and gratitude for services rendered. For instance, Cardinal Mazarin assured his client, Henri de Forbin-Maynier, baron d'Oppède, of his friendship which led him "joyfully to seize occasions to serve you."[2] The Cardinal assured another client, Charles de Grimaldi, marquis de Régusse, a president in the Parlement of Aix, that "I shall seek every day to show you the growing

esteem and friendship which makes me affectionately inclined to render you service."[3] A client in turn expressed his loyalty and affection for his patron, promised zealous and faithful service, and swore humility and obedience: Toussaint de Janson-Forbin, bishop of Marseille, wrote Colbert that "as You are my patron, I have recourse in all my needs to the honor of Your protection."[4] Louis d'Oppède, bishop of Toulon, thanking Colbert for the honor of his protection, swore "an inviolable attachment to Your service," and requested "the opportunity to render You useful service."[5]

What type of relationship was masked by these formal courtesy phrases? Did they describe sincere emotion, or were they hypocritical flattery as Alceste charged? What obligations lay behind the declarations of friendship and loyalty? As historian Roland Mousnier has noted, "These relationships are little studied and badly understood for our period. There existed a world of beliefs and ideas which are completely strange, it seems, to Frenchmen of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, requiring an attempt to recreate and understand it."[6]

General Characteristics of Patron-Client Relationships

Observers have agreed on several common characteristics of patron-client relationships. Such relationships are dyadic (two-person), personal, and emotional. Participants are unequal in status: there is a superior (a patron), and an inferior (a client) in a voluntary, vertical alliance. The patron-client bond is a reciprocal exchange relationship in which patrons provide material benefits and protection, and clients in return provide loyalty and service. There is a wide range of possible interactions, or services and benefits exchanged. The relationship is continuous, more than a single, isolated exchange.[7] These traits distinguish patron-client relationships from others in early modern French society.

Patron-client relationships were a personal, emotional bond between two persons.[8] For example, François de Bassompierre, born in Lorraine, owed allegiance by birth to the dukes of Lorraine whom his family had traditionally served, and to the Holy Roman Emperor whom the dukes of Lorraine had served. But when he was twenty Bassompierre swore allegiance to the French king, Henri IV, after a visit to his court. Bassompierre, as he later wrote, told the king that "He had charmed me so much that without going farther to look for a master, if He wanted my service, I would devote myself to Him until death. Then He embraced me and assured me that I could not find a better master than He, who would be more affectionate to me or would contribute more to my good fortune and advancement. That was Tuesday, March 12, 1599. I have considered myself French since them."[9]

Charles de Lorraine, duc de Guise, was named governor of Provence by Henri IV in the autumn of 1594 in order to secure his political support.[10] Guise sullenly and unenthusiastically met the new king for the first time on January 15, 1595.[11] Henri IV's charm and bonhomie, however, struck a

responsive chord in him as it had in Bassompierre, and the two men became friends.[12] In fact, Guise and Bassompierre became drinking and gambling cronies of Henri IV, competing with him in tournaments of love for the favors of court ladies.[13] Bassompierre reported Guise's last conversation with Henri IV on the morning of May 14, 1610, a few hours before the king was stabbed to death by an assassin.[14] Guise laughingly told him, "You are, in my opinion, one of the finest men in the world, and our destiny meant for us to be friends because even if You were an ordinary man, I would have been in Your service at whatever price, but since God made You a great king, it could not be otherwise than I am Your man."[15] Guise cried openly at the news of his death.[16] Bassompierre and Guise had warm, personal, and emotional relationships with their patron.

The terms friends and friendship were often used by patrons and clients to indicate the personal, affectionate nature of their relationships. Cardinal Mazarin described the newly appointed first president of the Parlement of Aix, his client Oppède, as "a particular friend."[17] At the same time in a letter of condolence on a client's death, Mazarin wrote that the deceased, Antoine de Valbelle, had been "one of my good friends."[18] Charles de Grimaldi, marquis de Régusse, declared in a letter to his patron, Cardinal Mazarin, that "I am counting on your previous assurances of friendship."[19] The terms friend and friendship, however, were also used to indicate the political loyalty and support of clients. For instance, Mazarin wrote angrily to the marquis de Gordes, lieutenant general of Provence, "Your best friends have fomented the recent trouble at Aix, which was against the King's service. It is not enough that your intentions are good. It is necessary that those who are attached to you by friendship and interest end the disturbances, and demonstrate their zeal and fidelity for the King's service."[20] At the same time, Mazarin thanked first president Oppède for "the service to the King which you and your friends render in your company."[21] Governor Mercoeur complained in a letter to Mazarin that president Régusse was silent during controversial discussions in the Parlement, but he was allowing his friends to argue.[22]

Genuine friendship could and did exist within clientage, but such friendships had usually been forged before the patron-client bond. Friends were bound together by mutual respect and affection in a relationship that was enjoyable and useful but not absolutely necessary to them both. It was a free, horizontal alliance of equality in what was exchanged. But this balanced reciprocity changed as one or the other moved up the political ladder—as one friend advanced in the world, he took the other with him. The imbalance grew, and they became patron and client.[23] Patron-client relationships were vertical, unequal alliances characterized by dependence and by dominance and submission, by a superior who acted as a patron and an inferior who acted as a client.[24] A client needed the protection and material benefits that were provided by his patron, he gave loyalty and service in exchange for them. Friendship was transformed into a patron-client relationship when one friend became dependent on the other for advancement. The boundaries

between friendship and clientage were never clearly marked, however. Client loyalties were expressed in terms of friendship, masking inequalities and conflicts of interest. Technically, clientage was a bond between men of unequal rank, usually a less affectionate relationship in which a client needed what he received from a patron. But the metaphors of friendship were used in clientage, and the two were easily confused.[25]

The formal rhetoric of clientage was the language of master and servant. For instance, the comte de Mérinville, lieutenant general of Provence, wrote to Colbert, his patron, "I am a very devoted servant who is concerned about all Your interests."[26] Henri de Forbin-Maynier d'Oppède, first president or chief justice of the Parlement of Aix, declared to his patron, Cardinal Mazarin, that "I would be infinitely unhappy if Your Eminence were to doubt the fidelity and sincerity of my feelings. I must add that You are my sole master, and that it is blindly I must execute all the wishes and orders of Your Eminence."[27] The duc de Mercoeur wrote Mazarin, his patron, from Barcelona and signed himself, "Your most humble, fond servant," while the chevalier Paul wrote his patron, Colbert, "I beg You very humbly to be persuaded that I have no wishes other than those of His Majesty and Your own, and I await the honor of Your orders, which I will always obey with great submission and respect."[28] Antoine de Valbelle described himself as "an old and faithful servant of Your Eminence" in writing Cardinal Mazarin, his patron.[29] The rhetoric of clientage was studded with expressions such as "I am your servant," "to render" or "to give service," and "I am entirely yours," while the standard closing of letters was "your very obedient and faithful servant," sometimes varied with "very humble and affectionate servant." The language of clientage became the language of courtesy.[30] Joseph Dubernet, who was first president of the Parlement of Aix in the 1630s, described himself as "the servant of the archbishop of Bordeaux," his patron, in writing to Cardinal Richelieu. When Du Bourg delivered the Bastille to Henri IV in 1594, he was asked to recognize the new king as "a good prince." He answered that he did not doubt it, but that "he was the servant of the duc de Mayenne."[31]

The terms used to describe the favors bestowed by a patron upon a client indicate the inequality of the relationship. These terms included *grâces*, or favors; *bonté*, goodness or kindness; *bons offices*, or good offices; and *bienfaits*, or benefits. Such terms implied the gracious, voluntary bestowal of a gift by a superior upon an inferior. First president Dubernet of the Parlement of Aix assured Cardinal Richelieu ingratiatingly that "I have found prompt obedience in our company and great gratitude for the favors we have received from the King through the protection of Your Eminence."[32] A client was obsequiously grateful for a patron's generosity. First president Séguiran of the Aix Cour des Comptes swore to Cardinal Richelieu that "the obligations I have from Your goodness are infinite. I am so aware of Your benefits that I will do anything to support Your interests."[33] Governor Alais wrote with deference to the secretary of state for Provence a decade later, urging him to use his "good offices" at court on the governor's behalf.[34]

The notion of receiving favor from a patron contained within it the potential of falling from grace and losing favor—"broken friendships" were an integral part of clientage.[35] The terms used to indicate a failed relationship included falling into a patron's bad graces, his *mauvaises grâces*, and being disgraced; losing his protection and friendship; suffering his bad offices, his *mauvais offices*. Antoine de Valbelle, formerly a Marseille bigwig, wrote Secretary of State Brienne on February 21, 1645, that he was at Aix, "where I am trying to get back into the good graces of governor Alais."[36] Valbelle had lost control over the municipal government of Marseille a few years earlier because of Alais's opposition. Alais had written to his friend at court, the comte de Chavigny, "It may be true that lieutenant Valbelle of the Marseille admiralty court has testified in your presence to wanting to regain my favor, but his perfidy and deceit are without equal."[37] Régusse wrote to Mazarin in 1659, from the north where he had been sent in exile a year earlier, "I am a faithful servant languishing in the bad graces of my master. I ask to be restored to the goodness of Your Eminence."[38]

A third characteristic of early modern French client relationships was the reciprocity of the exchange. A patron who controlled essential, scarce resources was expected to give material assistance in exchange for the loyalty and service of a client who provided more intangible benefits. For example, Colbert wrote to his client Oppède, "I know you have asked the King for the abbey vacated by the death of the abbé de Foix. You can count on it, without flattery or having to write to me, and I shall provide it with great pleasure, knowing the services you have rendered."[39] Antoine de Villeneuve-Mons, member of an old Provençal noble family, had married Louise d'Albert de Luynes, sister of Louis XIII's favorite. Through his brother-in-law's influence, Villeneuve found a place in the household of the king's brother, Gaston d'Orléans, whom he served well. As a reward he was named first master of the duke's household, marshal of royal camps and armies, governor of the Provençal fortress of Les Baux, and governor of the port of Honfleur, the city of Pont L'Evêque, and the region of the Auge in Normandy.[40]

The reciprocity of the patron-client exchange is demonstrated by Cardinal Richelieu's relationship with Louis XIII. He was the king's chief minister, and his position and power depended upon his personal relationship with the king, his patron. In addressing expressions of affection to the king, Richelieu often referred to himself as Louis XIII's *créature*, thereby recognizing the source of his power and prestige. The word créature was commonly used in seventeenth-century France as a term of politeness, appearing frequently in thank-you letters and formal closings of administrative correspondence. Richelieu served the king well and enjoyed extensive royal patronage as a result. He used it to build his own party within the royal government and to surround himself with créatures.[41]

Historian Orest Ranum has studied the administrative créatures of Richelieu, and found that they merited the term "created," which they used to describe themselves: they owned their political power and office to Richelieu

as he owned his to the king. Although they had considerable experience and ability in their own right, it was not for these qualities that Richelieu favored them. Their "obsequious fidelity" in thought and deed, even to the point of risking their own lives, explains Richelieu's decision to share political power with them: they were his eyes and ears in the royal government, and they helped him to govern.[42] One of these créatures was Claude de Bullion, surintendant of finance.

Claude de Bullion had a special place among Richelieu's créatures because of his greater age and experience. He was probably about seventy when he died in 1640, and he had been serving the king in his councils since 1619: he had more years in the royal service than any of Richelieu's other clients, and was not inclined to let them or the Cardinal forget it. From a rich and influential family, Bullion became chancellor to the Queen Mother, and through her gained access to the royal council. He joined Richelieu's party sometime before 1630, informing the Cardinal of a court intrigue developing against him two months in advance and even lending him money.[43] Bullion held the crown's ramshackle financial structure together and found money for the Habsburg War under the most difficult conditions; he served Richelieu well.[44] He was the most influential of the Cardinal's créatures, whom the others were careful not to alienate.[45] Generously rewarded for his loyalty and service, he amassed a huge fortune.[46] One son became a president in the Parlement of Paris, while another son replaced his brother in the Parlement of Metz when he became abbot of Saint Fanon de Meaux, and Richelieu arranged the marriage of at least one of Bullion's sons. Bullion was highly successful at placing his numerous relatives in office.[47]

A wide variety of benefits and services were exchanged by patrons and clients. For example, Léon le Bouthillier, comte de Chavigny, another of Richelieu's créatures, was treated like a son by the Cardinal and became secretary of state for foreign affairs at a young age, serving as the personal liaison between Richelieu, Louis XIII, and Gaston d'Orléans. The king was accustomed to receive the political advice of his chief minister through Chavigny, who then reported his success or failure in managing the king back to the Cardinal: Chavigny's reports on the king's disposition and attitudes helped Richelieu to decide how to behave when they met.[48] After 1635, Chavigny became the friend and chancellor of the duc d'Orléans, although this position did not interfere with his loyalty to Richelieu: he headed a party of *Cardinalistes*, clients and agents of Richelieu within the duke's household. They included the duke's personal secretary, almoner, doctor, apothecary, chamberlain, guard captain, and several nobles in his entourage. All served two masters without apparent ill effects.[49] In return for his loyalty and service to Richelieu, Chavigny received the titles of royal councillor, secretary of state, royal secretary, notary, and he inherited his father's office of treasurer of the king's orders. He was named governor of the royal châteaux of Vincennes and Antibes, received substantial royal pensions, made frequent land purchases, constructed his own château at Chavigny, and enjoyed considerable revenues, although he was always heavily in debt.[50]

As another example, Melchior de Chevières, marquis de Saint Chamond, began his career in the army where his exploits attracted Richelieu's attention. Securing the Cardinal's patronage, he embarked upon a successful diplomatic career, serving as envoy to the Queen Mother at Compiègne in 1631 after she fled France.[51] For this delicate mission, he was rewarded with appointments as governor of the citadel of Sisteron and lieutenant general of Provence. In a letter of gratitude to Richelieu on May 30, 1632, Saint Chamond wrote that "I have such a feeling of obligation for the honor it has pleased You to do me in employing me that I beg You very humbly, Monseigneur, that You henceforth recognize me as Your Créature."[52] He became ambassador to Germany and negotiated with Count Oxenstierna, chancellor to the Swedish king, and with the king of Denmark.[53] A list of services rendered and favors received can be as long and varied as a list of clients.

Early modern French patron-client relationships had another characteristic: they were continuous or enduring, that is, interactions were repeated over a number of months or years.[54] This was true for the patron-client relationships of Henri IV and Bassompierre; Henri IV and Guise; Villeneuve and Gaston d'Orléans; Richelieu and Louis XIII; Richelieu and Bullion, Chavigny, and Saint Chamond, all of which endured for years. Patron-client relationships were characterized by reciprocal exchanges in which a patron gave material benefits, advancement, and protection in return for a client's loyalty and service, demonstrations of respect and esteem, information and advice.

Fidelity Relationships

Early modern European historians have done comparatively little work on the nature of patron-client relationships. Roland Mousnier is among the few French historians who have worked on this subject. But differences exist between the definition of patron-client relationships he proposes and the one presented in this chapter. Mousnier has developed the concept of *fidélité*, or fidelity, to describe bonds of personal loyalty in early modern France, which he sees as a postfeudal society of corporate social orders linked by vertical ties of loyalty, man-to-man personal ties of fidelity. The client vowed total allegiance and absolute devotion to his patron, offering support and obedience, and in exchange the patron placed confidence and trust in his client, offering advancement and protection. Mousnier emphasizes that while reciprocal benefits and services were one source of fidelity relationships, the emotional bond was basic. A reciprocal exchange of services should be understood in emotional, effective terms as producing gratitude and gratefulness, which cemented the bond of loyalty.[55] This bond was not feudal, although it was a feudal legacy.[56] Mousnier writes that "fidelity was an emotional tie, founded on mutual affection, uniting two men totally, by free choice, independent of duty toward the nation, the king, law, and society. . . .

[fidelity was] not a question of a simple service relationship, a simple exchange of service and compensation, but a total devotion, a gift of self on one side and affection on the other. The tie which united master and fidèle was an affective bond."[57]

Mousnier describes two basic types of fidelity relationships, master-fidèle and protector-créature. Master-fidèle relationships existed among nobles and gentlemen, while protector-créature relationships existed among members of the royal government. A master who was a great noble advanced his faithful gentlemen servant at court, arranged a good marriage, and acted as a patron to the children of the marriage. A protector named his créature to office, assuring his administrative career and advancement in exchange for his loyalty and service.[58]

Developing Orest Ranum's observations on créatures, Mousnier continues that "the king can only have his orders obeyed through his fidèles acting as intermediaries. These are the king's men who in turn have their own faithful servants, their own créatures."[59] Denis Richet graphically describes a government composed of tiers of créatures when he writes: "The man whom the king puts in an important post is himself surrounded by fidèle relatives or protégés whom he in turn puts in command positions. Thus is established a cascade of fidelities permitting the regime to survive ... a sequential caricature of the old feudal pyramid."[60] Mousnier notes that "in the fidelity relationships defined as master-fidèle and protector-créature, regional variations do not appear important."[61] Mousnier's theory of fidelity has received wide support.[62]

Mousnier's use of the term fidelity to describe personal bonds of loyalty in early modern France is misleading, however, because intense emotional loyalty was not the determining characteristic of most relationships, albeit of some. These relationships were more varied than Mousnier has recognized. All were characterized by loyalty, a minimal level of which was implicit in effective service, but the degree of loyalty varied with the relationship. Some were fidelity relationships as Mousnier has described them, permanent, exclusive, and intensely emotional, and some were not. Many relationships were characterized by self-interest and by short-term, serial loyalties in which a dependent changed protectors for reasons of self-interest; multiple loyalties were not uncommon. Mousnier's definition of fidelity has also been criticized.[63]

In an attempt to clarify his theory of fidelity, Mousnier has introduced the concept of a clientele relationship, that is, the bond between patron and client as a separate relationship from that of fidelity. Mousnier has written that "the patron gives protection and assistance; the client honor, obedience, and political service ... a clientèle relationship is distinct from that of fidelity, which is a reciprocal gift of self, having an element of affection evocative of love, at least warm friendship, without anything ambiguous or doubtful. It [a clientèle relationship] is also distinct because changing clientèles is legitimate ... it is illegitimate, scandalous, dishonorable to break a fidelity relationship, to change masters, although there were numerous cases of this ... the fidelity

relationship, master-fidèle, protector-créature, is distinct from that of clientèle and feudalism and more important."[64]

This attempt to clarify the original definition does not solve its problems, however. It muddies the water even more—it is confusing—and raises more questions than it answers. Mousnier has created a separate category, a clientele relationship, for all those relationships that do not fit his definition of a fidelity relationship. Clientele relationships were easily severed, and were not characterized by a strong bond of affection. However, loyalty was characterisic of clientele relationships, too—was not loyalty implicit in the service of all clients? It may not have been affectionate loyalty of the intensity or durability of that in fidelity relationships, but it was personal loyalty. The patron-client relationship has been defined in this book as a dyadic, personal, vertical, unequal, reciprocal, exchange relationship in which there was some degree of loyalty binding the participants together, although the degree of loyalty varied with the relationship. A fidelity relationship was a *type* of patron-client relationship in which the bond of loyalty was intensely affectionate and durable rather than an entirely different relationship.

Mousnier has overemphasized the importance of loyalty as the determining characteristic of patron-client relationships. It was only one of several determining characteristics: these relationships were complex. For example, was depth of emotion enough to distinguish fidelity as a separate relationship from other patron-client relationships? Did the scandalousness and unpleasantness of a break indicate deep emotion and thus a fidelity relationship? Were rancorous partings only characteristic of fidelity relationships? If it was illegitimate to break a fidelity relationship, although this occurred often, did such a relationship exhibit fidelity as Mousnier has described it? Would not such a relationship be infrequently or never broken? Did fidèles and créatures belong to clienteles, that is, how different were Richelieu's fidèles and créatures from his other clients? Did they belong to his clientele?

Mousnier has stated that fidelity relationships were reciprocal exchanges based on loyalty and service, with loyalty as the fundamental tie. He emphasizes the strength and nature of the emotional bond as the differentiating characteristic of fidelity relationships. But what determined the strength of this bond? What determined the degree of loyalty and affection in fidelity relationships? Was it always the same? How was the balance between loyalty and service determined? Was the mix always the same? How was reciprocity measured, and how important was it?

There are other problems with Mousnier's definition. For instance, he persists in attaching his view of the nature of personal bonds of loyalty, whether client or fidelity, to his notion of a society of orders, which has not received wide acceptance among French historians.[65] These concepts are separate, and should be discussed separately. And Mousnier has used the term *fidélité* to describe other relationships besides those that are patron-client, for instance, the relationship of the king to the church and the kingdom of France, of his subjects to the king, of Christians to God and the church, among men-at-arms and peers inside an order, corporation, terri-

torial community, pressure group or secret society, and among members of a profession such as judges or university professors. What were the differences between these fidelity relationships and those that were dyadic, personal, vertical, unequal, reciprocal exchange relationships? Did not the exchange of advancement and protection for loyalty and service distinguish patron-client relationships from other relationships characterized by emotional loyalty?[66]

Mousnier has overlooked elements of materialism and self-interest in fidelity relationships. Differences in rank, position, and power could impede the formation of an "affectionate friendship," or distort its nature when it did develop. Differences in rank tended to give patron-client relationships an artificial, sycophantic air, and unequal relationships characterized by dependency had built-in tendencies toward deceit and hypocrisy, reflected in the exaggerated rhetoric of their language. Unequal relationships based on gratitude and dependence did not always produce a genuine emotional bond, particularly when rewards were much-needed. A superior's ability to distribute necessary material benefits to an inferior influenced the nature of the relationship: a créature's effusive gratitude and his eager desire for favors often had an air of obsequious self-interest that belied declarations of eternal devotion and self-sacrificing loyalty. The devotion of most dependents was not absolute until death regardless of their claims: there were too many broken relationships and too much clientele-hopping for that. In fact, the common practice of changing clienteles has an air of opportunism that clashes with the fervent declarations of undying loyalty. Clients not infrequently changed patrons when it was to their material advantage to do so. The intensity of emotional loyalty varied with the relationship and was tempered by material interests.

Michel Harsgor, in describing French personal relationships in the fifteenth century, has noted what he calls "double fidelities": a client served two masters at once, or a client asked his patron to secure him a position with a more important patron so that he could serve both their interests at once.[67] Harsgor gives several examples of the first category, for instance, Réginer Pot, who served the duke of Burgundy and the king of France at the same time, and his brother, Guyot Pot, who did the same; Odet d'Aydie, who served the duke of Brittany, the king of France, and the king's brother at the same time, while soliciting the patronage of the duke of Burgundy. Harsgor finds double fidelities a peculiarity of fifteenth-century politics: the collapse of feudalism and the resulting political and military confusion created a need for rapid mobility and change, for "personal zig-zags as the human and social expression of political dilemmas." It was sometimes necessary for a man to change masters to continue his political career or even to preserve his property and freedom.[68]

However, a study of French bonds of personal loyalty in the seventeenth century indicates that switching patrons was a common practice in clientage not limited to its infancy or to an unusually stressful period. The practice of subpatronage or subclientage—a client, with his patron's consent, became

the client of his patron's patron, a sort of patron-leapfrogging as it were—was widespread in the seventeenth century, and examples can be seen in the careers of Jean Hérauld de Gourville and Henri de Forbin-Maynier d'Oppède.[69] The ideal may have been a fidelity relationship of lifelong devotion to one patron, but the political reality was messier. Multiple allegiances were common, and clients could belong to two networks at once, although this sometimes caused problems. Clients, even those who were fidèles and créatures, switched allegiances when the political situation demanded it, for instance, when the political fortunes of their patron declined, while regional and material interests and other personal loyalties influenced these relationships. Fidelity relationships as described by Roland Mousnier certainly existed in seventeenth-century France, but they were not the most prevalent type of patron-client relationship. The ordinary garden variety was less durable and more materialistic.

Modern observers should not be misled by the language of clientage nor should they confuse the political reality of these relationships with the effusive rhetoric in which they were expressed. Observers have too often relied for their understanding of patron-client relationships on the rhetorical declarations of participants and on theoretical treatises rather than on actual behavior.[70] They have too often confused images of the ideal with political reality, and have accepted at face-value fervent declarations of loyalty and abstract definitions without investigating the actual conditions and subterranean realities of relationships. Social scientists have warned that there are strong elements of myth and hyperbole in patronage, and that "relationships must be analyzed quite apart from the meanings attributed to them."[71] And historians have warned about the pitfalls of trusting literary evidence too much.[72] Patron-client relationships in practice were not always characterized by the blind devotion which clients ritualistically swore to their patrons. If we study the actual conditions of patron-client relationships, a discrepancy often appears between what was said and done. The formal rhetoric of clientage conceals the cold, hard reality of men and their ambitions meshing into place. The professed goals in relationships were not always the real goals. We need more studies of actual practice in these relationships. Bonds of personal loyalty in early modern France were generally more varied, multiple, material, and fragile than we have recognized.

Variability among Patrons and Clients

There has been wide disagreement among social scientists on what clientelism is, on its important and unimportant elements and how they mix.[73] In fact, some social scientists believe there has been such a proliferation of variations that so-called general characteristics have become meaningless descriptive labels. Most observers, however, accept the notion of a common corps of characteristics differentiating patron-client relationships from other relationships in a society.[74] For example, a reciprocal exchange of loyalty and

service characterized patron-client relationships in early modern France, but the degree of loyalty varied with the relationship and so did the type of services exchanged. Patron-client relationships were always personal and emotional, but the degree of personalism and emotion varied with the relationship, that is, some were warmer, closer, and more affectionate than others. There were varying degrees of intensity, dependency, reciprocity and durability, and there were different types of exchanges in patron-client relationships depending on the participants and their circumstances. The balance between the instrumental and the effective varied in relationships, too, that is, the balance between the pragmatic, self-interested exchange of service and emotional loyalty.[75] For example, Cardinal Mazarin named Henri de Forbin-Maynier d'Oppède, a former *Frondeur*, first president of the Aix Parlement because Oppède had convincingly demonstrated his willingness to use his considerable power and prestige in Provence on the Cardinal's behalf.[76] Pragmatic considerations determined this relationship.

Emotional considerations, on the other hand, shaped the patron-client relationship of Colbert and Pierre Arnoul. Pierre's father, Nicolas Arnoul, had served Colbert as intendant of the royal galleys at Marseille, and had become the friend of Louis XIV's minister. A client who had served long and well, as Arnoul had, often developed a close personal relationship with his patron—length of service was important and tended to produce close bonds. At his father's death, Colbert appointed Pierre Arnoul to serve as naval intendant at Toulon because of the regard he had for Nicolas, and because of Pierre's friendship with his own son, the marquis de Seignelay: Pierre Arnoul had been at school with Colbert's son, and they had made a trip to Italy together.[77]

Pierre's performance as naval intendant left much to be desired, however, as Colbert repeatedly warned him. On July 17, 1678, the minister wrote: "It is necessary that the friendship I had for your deceased father to be great for me to overlook all that I see of your conduct," and Colbert warned Pierre that if he continued in his behavior, "the King will take away your office."[78] On February 22, Colbert had written sarcastically that "I have always heard Toulon is more Mediterranean than Paris in climate, and the weather better. Nonetheless, every time you have four ships to arm, God opens the heavens for a flood, and sends every rainstorm to Toulon in order to delay the execution of the King's orders."[79] On April 10, 1677, Colbert wrote Pierre that "in your letters, you often criticize the advice and opinions of commander Du Quesne. Be assured that when you've studied twenty years under Du Quesne, you won't be as smart as you now think yourself to be . . . you cannot do more for yourself, or the royal service, than to apply yourself with great care to learn all you can, and do as well as you can . . . if your father were alive, he would tell you that."[80]

Unfortunately, Pierre Arnoul did not learn all he could, and Colbert was forced to recall him for his incompetence. Pierre's career was not ruined, however. His friendship with the marquis de Seignelay saved him: Seignelay sent him as naval intendant to Le Havre and then to Rochefort. Pierre