

Josh Sulkin

Professor Kolak

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Militarized Modernization:

Internal Colonization and the Making of Modern France

Conquest is a necessary stage on the road to nationalism.

—Georges Valérie, *Notes sur le nationalisme français* (1901), 7.

Introduction

As France built its overseas empire and forced colonized peoples to speak French, the French government encountered at least one issue of hypocrisy. The government recognized that it could not force the people it colonized to speak a language and adopt a culture that many of the people living in France's theoretical borders especially during the 1830s did not speak, in addition to the fact that many French did not even conceptualize a broader national identity because of their seldom interactions with even adjacent communities. To address this issue, the government spilled significant resources and blood, especially in the 1830s, constructing Paris as its cultural capital and standardizing French culture across the hexagon.¹ Due to financial and policy constraints, however, the government could not have uniformly distributed the military to enforce its agenda, so it would have used regional variation in France to target its policies.

To explore how the government targeted certain groups of citizens to enforce Parisian culture and lifestyles throughout the country, there are a few features to consider regarding the broader "place" of 1830s France on the scale of the *département*.² First, France was a country of

¹ The "hexagon" refers to the rough shape of France.

² The *département* is roughly equivalent to an administrative region between the American county and state.

internal colonization, in which the military was stationed at various places in France to force non-Parisians to assimilate to Parisian culture, language, and lifestyles. To visualize this variable, I will plot the military presence as points based on primary and secondary sources after digitizing and geocoding them. I will then operationalize cultural conformity by visualizing the average literacy rate in each *département*. Third, France was a country of economic inequality, and this construct will be approximated from data on the average taxes levied on each *département*.³ Fourth, France was a country of strengthening connections to Paris, which I will operationalize using the absolute distance between the centroid of Paris and that of each *département*. Therefore, I will model some of the targets and consequences of French internal colonization in order to demonstrate how governments invert colonialist policies to conform and dehumanize their citizens to support systems of power.⁴

³ André Michel Guerry, *Essai sur la statistique morale de la France* (Paris: Crochard, 1833), https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_moral_statistics_of_France_from_mons/BcwUAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0.

⁴ Refer to Table 1 for a visual depiction of these features, the variables, and the data sources associated with each.

Table 1: Features, variables visualized, and data sources used to operationalize features⁵

Types of Influence	Feature	Variables ⁶	Data source(s) ⁷
Social	Cultural conformity	Literacy rate	Guerry data set
	Connections to Paris	Absolute distance calculation from centroid point of <i>département</i> to that of Paris	Guerry data set
Economic	Wealth distribution	Taxes levied	Guerry data set
Political/ Law enforcement	Internal colonization	Points of troop concentrations	Secondary sources ⁸

Background

Many scholars have discussed aspects of the French military campaign of internal colonization, notably Eugen Weber. In his groundbreaking *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, Weber argued that the French government transformed rural France the most significantly with its modernizing project of cultural homogeneity and nationalization. By sending troops across the country *en masse* starting just before the 1830s, the French government sought to modernize rural France in three ways. First, the soldiers built schools to spread and institutionalize the French language. Second, they constructed roads and railroads to connect the previously independent rural areas. Finally, the

⁵ This table was inspired by Table 1 in Hannah L. F. Cooper et al., “Racialized Risk Environments in a Large Sample of People Who Inject Drugs in the United States,” *International Journal of Drug Policy* 27 (January 1, 2016): 46, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2015.07.015>.

⁶ All geographic scales of the variable are averages for each French *département*.

⁷ In all cases, “Guerry data set” refers to the digitized version of Guerry, A.-M. *Essai sur la statistique morale de la France*. Paris: Crochard. English translation: Hugh P. Whitt and Victor W. Reinking, Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002. (Orig. pub. 1833). The digitized version can be found here: <https://geodacenter.github.io/data-and-lab/Guerry/>

⁸ I mostly used the following texts when constructing my CSV file because they are the most comprehensive treatments of the subject of military occupation inside of France that I could find. I will further address their limitations in the “discussion” section. Georges Carrot, *Le Maintien de l’ordre En France* / (Toulouse: Presses de l’Institut d’études politiques de Toulouse, 1984). McPhee, *A Social History of France 1780-1880*. Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen*. Charles Tilly, *The Rebellious Century, 1830-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

soldiers forcibly conscripted rural Frenchmen into the army to compel shared, interregional interactions that would create a sense of a national community in the military and in the communities they returned to after their service. The French government took these actions, Weber posits, to make its previously isolated territories dependent on one another through trade, language, and government services, which formed a national identity, weakened rural cultural diversity, and ensnared rural French into the Capitalist system.⁹ Weber's analysis centered the military as the primary agent of rural transformation— a frame of analysis implemented in this essay— and discusses modernizing France as a place by referring to the features of forced conscription, French language instruction in schools, and transportation networks. However, Weber's analysis begs the question of why and where those features were targeted before 1870, which has inspired further research.

Research on French internal colonization has generally viewed the military as an agent of assimilating conquered territories, controlling opposition to modernization, and enforcing moral codes. In Michael Broers' "The Napoleonic Gendarmerie," the military played an active role in assimilating the peoples of captured territories especially during and after Napoleonic France (1799-1815), when the French Empire expanded rapidly and depended on the military to control popular unrest. Broers analyzed the French military presence in rural areas on the edges of its territory and excluded discussions of more solidly controlled French areas.¹⁰ However, as France modernized, the government used the military to quell resistance against its industrial development, as Anja Johansen discusses. Johansen finds that the French military differed from

⁹ Eugen Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 493–94. For more on how interregional interactions, such as military service, create a national identity, refer to Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 2016).

¹⁰ Michael Broers, "The Napoleonic Gendarmerie: The State on the Periphery Made Real," *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies* 20, no. 1 (2016): 91–105.

other countries' regarding strike responses because the French government was much more concerned by its domestic policies than most countries that it deployed troops to crush even "minor conflicts" to defend against "exceptionally serious challenges to internal stability."¹¹ Johansen thus focused her analysis of French military presence on urban, industrializing regions. In Hugh Witt's work, the military is used more implicitly, as the military and police recorded the social crimes that were the main topics of Witt's spatial analysis. Witt parsed through data of the French military presence based on how often they reported enforcing morality, mostly in the far northern and southern regions.¹² To understand how the military impacted modernization outside of Paris and also because of the challenges of finding data, I will filter the data of military points in this project to include mostly larger-scale and other noted responses to protests.¹³

The next aspect of France as a place that will be discussed is cultural conformity, which has been examined by previous authors in numerous ways, but the most important and intriguing for the study of French modernization has centered on religion and literacy. In 1830s France, working people often used religiosity to subvert "what was perceived as a godless, materialistic régime" that attempted to conform mass culture to supporting the government, so J. Lynn Osen's and Peter McPhee's social histories mostly use the concentration of religious people and locations as a proxy for resistance to cultural conformity.¹⁴ Scholars have also approached cultural conformity in 1830s France through literacy. In A. R. Gillis' article, literacy was used as a proxy for cultural conformity, as he approximated the French government's increasing grip on

¹¹ Anja Johansen, "Policing and Repression: Military Involvement in the Policing of French and German Industrial Areas, 1889-1914," *European History Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (January 2004): 72, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265691404040216>.

¹² Hugh P. Whitt, "The Civilizing Process and Its Discontents: Suicide and Crimes against Persons in France, 1825-1830," *American Journal of Sociology* 116, no. 1 (July 2010): 162, <https://doi.org/10.1086/653541>.

¹³ This will be discussed further in the "discussion" section as a limitation.

¹⁴ Peter McPhee, *A Social History of France 1780-1880* (Routledge, 1992), 150. J. Lynn Osen, "French Calvinists and the State, 1830-1852," *French Historical Studies* 5, no. 2 (1967): 225-38, <https://doi.org/10.2307/286177>.

rural environments using rising literacy rates for the purposes of making arguments about the correlation between literacy, government power, and decreasing numbers of interpersonal violent crime. Given that the government's main campaigns in rural France were to build schools and increase literacy, higher rates of literacy eliminated local languages and forced rural people to assimilate to the French language and Parisian culture, justifying literacy as a powerful proxy for cultural conformity.¹⁵ With literacy rate demonstrating the reach of the government into all areas of the country to enforce conformity especially to Parisian culture and language, I will use literacy rates to approximate cultural conformity and the government's soft power¹⁶ expansion.

1830s France also was a place of immense wealth disparities. However, France does not have any estimates of wealth distribution for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, unlike "several other European countries,"¹⁷ presenting issues for how to approximate wealth especially for 1830s France. Scholars, such as Lee Soltow and Peter Lindert, have attempted to approximate income inequality by using federal housing surveys and social tables that thereby define income inequality through the lens of housing and qualitative index approximations of wealth.¹⁸ Although property assessments are often the most reliable sources for approximating pre-twentieth century wealth especially in France, the most accepted metric is to use personal property tax data on personal property mostly because the French government during and after Napoléon Bonaparte greatly invested in developing its tax collection system to fund the

¹⁵ A. R. Gillis, "Literacy and the Civilization of Violence in 19th-Century France," *Sociological Forum* 9, no. 3 (1994): 373.

¹⁶ When a government seeks to accomplish a goal, it could coerce another actor, such as through military intervention, which would be an example of hard power. Alternatively, the government could offer positive incentives for another actor giving it what it wants, such as by sending medical aid, which would be an example of soft power. Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (1990): 153–71, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148580>.

¹⁷ Christian Morrisson and Wayne Snyder, "The Income Inequality of France in Historical Perspective," *European Review of Economic History* 4, no. 1 (2000): 59.

¹⁸ Peter Lindert and Jeffrey Williamson, "American Incomes Before and After the Revolution," *The Journal of Economic History* 73 (July 1, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050713000594>. Lee Soltow, *Distribution of Wealth and Income in the United States in 1798* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989).

government's internal and external colonization campaigns, building schools, expanding the military, and constructing roads.¹⁹ As a result of the government's investments in improving its tax system and the fact that many scholars have accepted tax data on personal property as a proxy for income inequality, I will approximate wealth— and the lack of wealth— using these tax data so that this analysis can engage with the ongoing scholarly debate on the relationship between internal colonization and wealth distribution.

A final feature of 1830s France is the increasing connections of French territory to Paris. For modern geographers, distance measurements have become varied and complex, especially with the rise of communication technologies and the revolutions in transportation. According to Thomas Falk and Ronald Abler, geographers must consider technological transformations in distance theories and analysis, as the transportation of goods and people have changed significantly since the “nineteenth century [...] factory” approach to distance.²⁰ While Falk and Abler's point is well taken, the goal of this essay is precisely to use distance measures that are appropriate for their “nineteenth century [...] factory.” For that reason, absolute distance between Paris and each *département* would allow me to visualize how raw distance from Paris may have impacted where the French government directed their military, the levels of literacy, and the concentration of wealth.

¹⁹ Morrisson and Snyder, “The Income Inequality of France in Historical Perspective,” 73.

²⁰ Thomas Falk and Ronald Abler, “Intercommunications, Distance, and Geographical Theory,” *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 62, no. 2 (1980): 63, <https://doi.org/10.2307/490390>.

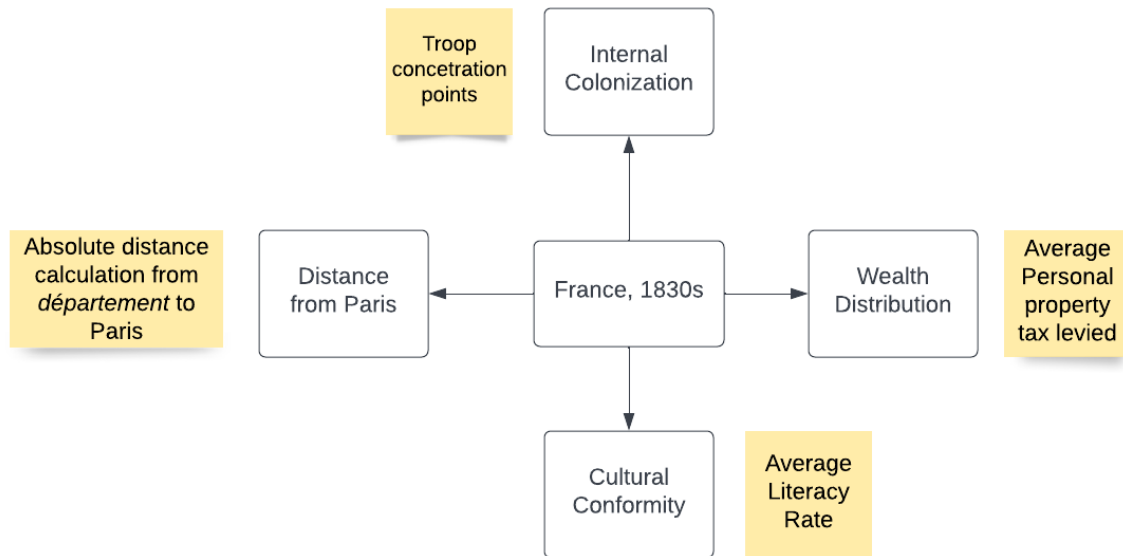
Goals and Objectives

In this project, I aim to introduce a geographic approach to historical analyses of French internal colonization that examines the spatial relationship between features of France— internal colonization, cultural conformity, wealth inequality, and distance from Paris— in order to understand why the French government constructed its national identity by conforming and dehumanizing certain groups of citizens. More concretely, I intend to visualize the data analyzed in classic works, such as Weber's *Peasants into Frenchmen*, to add to their findings from a spatial perspective.

In terms of specific objectives, I plan to create four maps. The first point map will display only the points of significant military occupations to acknowledge the fact that the other three features of 1830s France do not fully explain the point data, allowing future analyses to use the point data on the map and introduce new features of France to help explain its trends. The next three maps will visualize the other variables— literacy rate, distance from Paris, and personal property taxes— as choropleth maps. I also hope to join the military points with the Guerry data set. These maps and databases, together, will hopefully visualize Weber's famous findings and interject in the debate that followed his work from a spatial perspective that incorporates geographic context for future analysis on French internal colonization.²¹

²¹ Refer to Image 1 for a concept diagram— or concept map— for a visualized representation of the project's goals.

Image 1: Concept Diagram



Solution Framework

For my spatially calculated variable—the military points—I first documented all of the references I could find to military occupations using secondary literature, as I could not find any complete digitized or accessible sources outside of French archives. After entering the cities or more precise locations into the spreadsheet, I then found addresses to serve as proxies for the accurate locations of the military occupation and separated the different parts of the addresses into separate columns. I saved this file as a Comma Separated Values (CSV) file so that I could read in the file in R using `read.csv()`. I called the appropriate libraries for this spatial analysis in R, and I standardized the data’s values into characters. Having standardized the value types, I geocoded the points using `geocode_OSM()` and ensured the projection was EPSG: 27572, which in this case is EPSG: 27572 because it minimizes distortion for France, as a country,²² and

²² Although the CRS is apparently outdated, this was the same CRS as used in Whitt, “The Civilizing Process and Its Discontents.”

matches the Guerry data set. I spatially activated the geocoded points by converting them to spatial data using `st_as_sf()` and then visualized the points using a combination of `tmap()` functions overlaid on an OpenStreetMap (OSM) basemap. Finally, I saved the map as a .shp file using `write_sf()` for future spatial analyses and exported the map as a .png file for this analysis.

For the other variables, I ensured that I had the correct libraries loaded to set-up the R environment. Then, I used `st_read()` to read in the Guerry shapefile and inspected the data and its CRS using `head()` and `st_crs()`, respectively. To create the choropleth maps one at a time, I used `tm_shape` and other associated functions to select an appropriate layout and style— I used both original and standard deviation, depending on which showed the most visible amount of variation. After saving the map as a shapefile with `write_sf()`, I created summary statistics tables for each variable using `sumtable()`.

Image 2: Extract-Transform-Load (ETL) Diagram 1: Spatially Calculated Variable

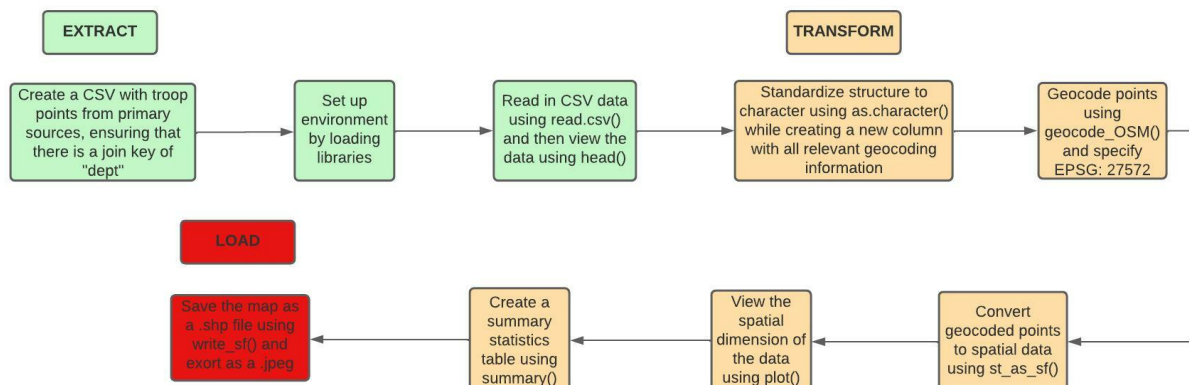


Image 3: ETL Diagram 2: Creating Choropleth Maps for the Other Variables

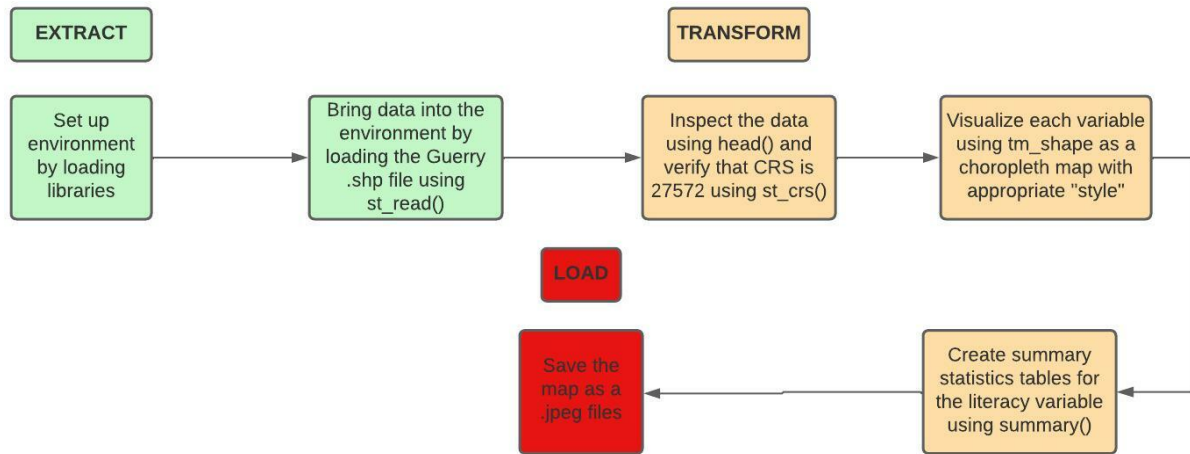
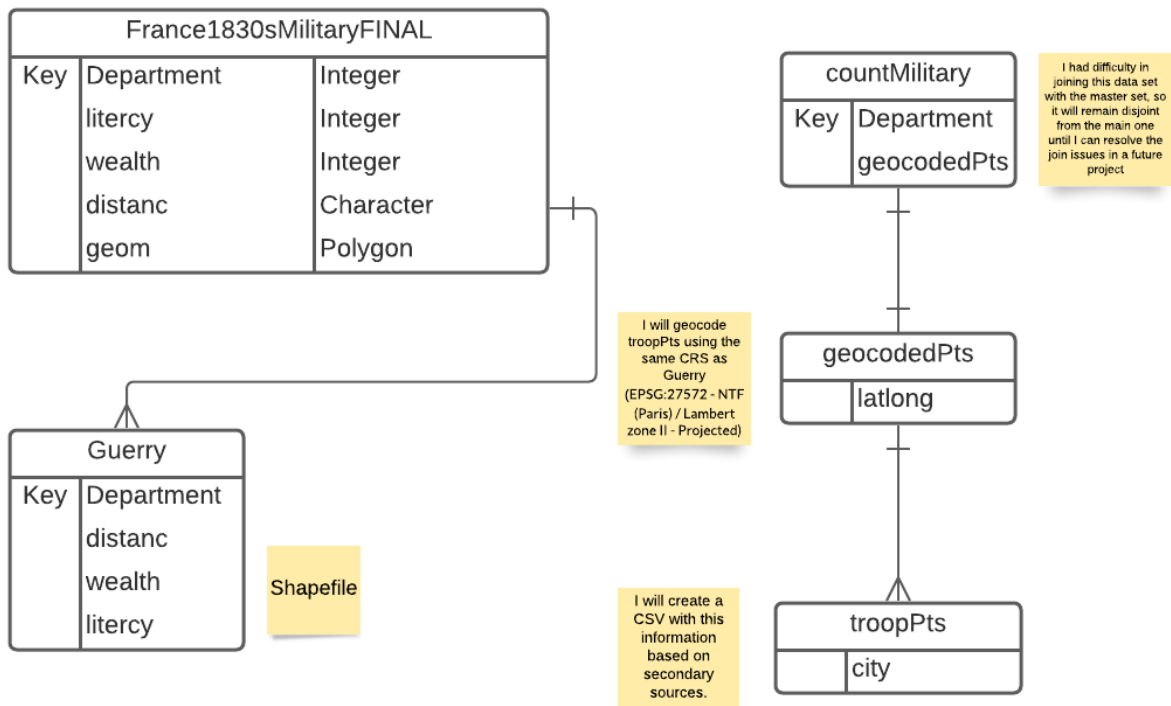
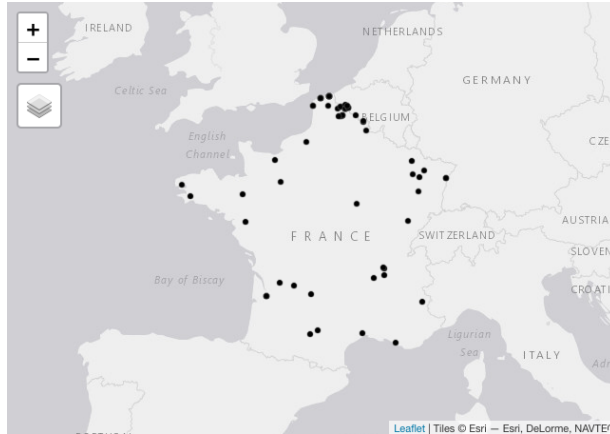


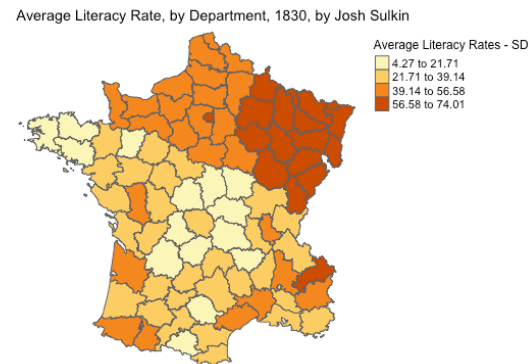
Image 4: Entity Relationship Diagram



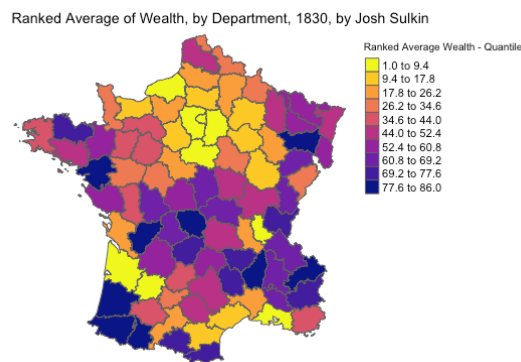
Results



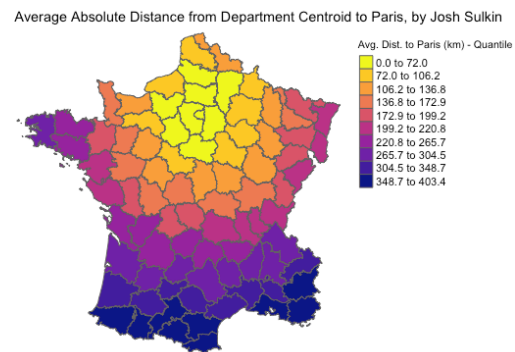
Map 1: Military Points



Map 2: Average Literacy Rate



Map 3: Ranked Average Wealth



Map 4: Average Distance to Paris (km)

In Map 1, the French military seems mostly relegated to the furthest reaches of French territory, with a particularly notable concentration on the French-Belgian border. Another concentration is located near the midpoint of Belgium and Switzerland in the eastern corner of France. The military does not have a strong presence in the center of the country and is relatively dispersed in southern France. Regarding the literacy rate in Map 2, French had the highest rates in Paris and in the eastern corner of France. The lowest rates of literacy appear to be in south-central France. Interestingly, French in the southeastern and southwestern corners have higher

literacy rates than the surrounding areas. In terms of ranked average wealth of Map 3, French in Paris and immediately surrounding areas appear to have the most wealth. The least wealth seems strewn across southern France, excepting the few in southwestern and southeastern France. Map 4 shows the average distance from Paris, using the distance between the centroids of each *département* to Paris. The map shows how much closer Paris lies to the north and how far it is from especially the southern regions.

Discussion

The objective of this analysis was to take a geographic approach to historical analyses of the French internal colonialist project by creating four maps to display different perspectives on 1830s France as a changing place through the lenses of internal colonization, cultural conformity, wealth inequality, and distance from Paris. To this effect, I planned to create four maps approximating these four constructs by using the variables of military points, literacy rates, personal property taxes, and the absolute distance from Paris to the centroid of the *départements*. While I succeeded in these goals and made four maps of these variables, I encountered significant issues with joining the CSV file I created to the Guerry data set, which I attempted to resolve but due to time constraints was unable to accomplish this additional challenge.

Nevertheless, I successfully created four maps visualizing the complexity of French culture, politics, and economy that produced fascinating results with bearing on the literature. One interesting result was that Map 1 of the military points corroborates Johansen's study on the French government's deployment of the military in the industrial regions of France to protect its modernizing agenda, given that the French industrial regions are also located in the northeastern

corner of France bordering Belgium.²³ Additionally, Map 1 expands Broer's argument that focuses on the use of the military in France's peripheral regions during the Napoleonic Era (1799-1815) into the 1830s because even though Europe forced an end to France's rapid expansion, the French military maintained its presence in the periphery to enforce French hegemony.²⁴ Intriguingly, even though Whitt used the same Guerry data set that I used in this analysis, Map 1 challenges Whitt's argument that relies on the purported connection between records of defiance against moral and legal standards with increased military presence because the military according to Map 1 had a strong presence in the north but especially in the northeastern region that Whitt did not discuss in his article. Thus, Map 1 demonstrates a benefit to corroborating one's data with other sources, such as beyond the Guerry data set.

When compared with Map 1, Map 2 shows surprisingly high literacy rates in the eastern corner of the country and there appears to be a relationship between higher concentrations of military points with higher literacy rates. This relationship would make sense because the military, as previously discussed regarding Weber's famous analysis, built schools, so the fact that above average literacy rates—over 56.58% compared to the average of 39.14%—were reached in the eastern corner of the country reveals a potentially significant connection between the higher concentration of military occupations and higher literacy rates. Interestingly, Map 2 has an almost inverse relationship with Map 3 of wealth, as the more literate eastern region of France had among the lowest ranked averages of wealth. This relationship has interesting implications for Johansen's essay particularly because of the overwhelming influences of the French government on the industrial areas to use the military to change those areas in such a way that incorporated the people into Parisian ideas of society with language and also entrapped them

²³ Johansen, "Policing and Repression."

²⁴ Broers, "The Napoleonic Gendarmerie."

in industrial development that made them an integral, impoverished part of the developing French nation. Map 3 does not change Paris as the center for both literacy and wealth, but the immediately surrounding areas also seem to have more wealth than most of the country. This fact has interesting implications when paired with Map 1 because— other than a single point at Paris aimed to put down the Revolution of 1832 that inspired *Les Misérables*²⁵— the military tended to avoid centers of wealth that was closer to Paris, as Map 4 shows, and instead congregate in poorer or industrial areas, implying that the military had either a negative impact on the wealth of French living in those areas or sought to exert its power over less wealthy areas to maintain the status quo. When comparing Map 3 with Map 4, wealth appears to be linked to proximity to Paris, with a few exceptions in southern and western France, where centers of trade were well-established since the Middle Ages.²⁶ Therefore, these maps corroborate the literature and introduce important areas of further research.

The spatially calculated variable— the military points— was pivotally important to this project. First, while other researchers such as Whitt have used the Guerry data set to visualize the data, this analysis places the Guerry data in context of the broader development of France of which the military was an instrumental aspect and played a central role in the trends that André Michel-Guerry identified in his research even though the military remained an unacknowledged influence on the development particularly in rural France. Additionally, the military points had to use geocoding and other processes learned in Geographic Information Science II because the points remained undigitized, so I had to centralize them in a spreadsheet, export it as a CSV file, standardize the data according to the appropriate character and CRS structures, properly attach them to the map, and add the base map. Without the skills of GIS II to geocode and create the

²⁵ McPhee, *A Social History of France 1780-1880*, 283.

²⁶ Ibid, 48.

map, I would not have been able to visualize the military points— an essential aspect to understanding French national development— and they would remain undigitized and unable to offer the aforementioned corroborations and challenges to the existing literature on French internal colonization during the 1830s.

Regarding future research, there are many directions that can be taken, particularly because of the limitations in this analysis. First, the data that I used for Map 1 is far from complete, but it comes from the most holistic literature on internal military occupation that I could find outside of French archives. For this reason, future research could use the undigitized records on French internal military occupation that are in French archives to paint a more complete picture of the extent of internal colonization in the early 1800s. Second, I could not join the military data set I created with the Guerry data set because of a significant number of errors when I attempted to join them. Future research and projects could therefore join the data sets to overlay the maps and thereby draw out even more interesting conclusions that could then be shared using a single map and as a compiled database that other researchers could reconfigure for purposes different from this analysis to further the geographic perspective on the historical questions raised by Weber, Johansen, and others.

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