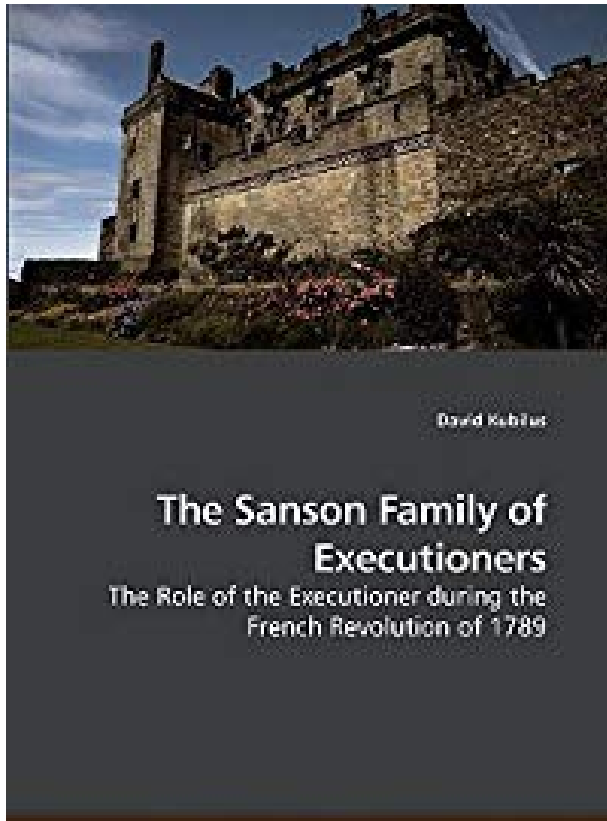


# The Sanson Family of Executioners



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To the casual observer, the executioner is viewed with little sympathy. He ruthly discharges his duties upon those found guilty by the court or King without feeling or emotion. In researching the life of the Sanson family of executioners, however, I discovered a very different story. From Charles the elder in 1662, who began his career as a headsman as the result of an ill-fated love affair, to Henri-Clement, who lost his position due in part to his lavish lifestyle, the Sanson's carried out their macabre duties. None claimed to enjoy their work, and by reading the diaries of Charles-Henri, the distaste with which he regarded his daily tasks during the Revolution is painfully clear. This study will examine how the position of the executioner, handed down from father to son, affected each of the Sanson's and their families.