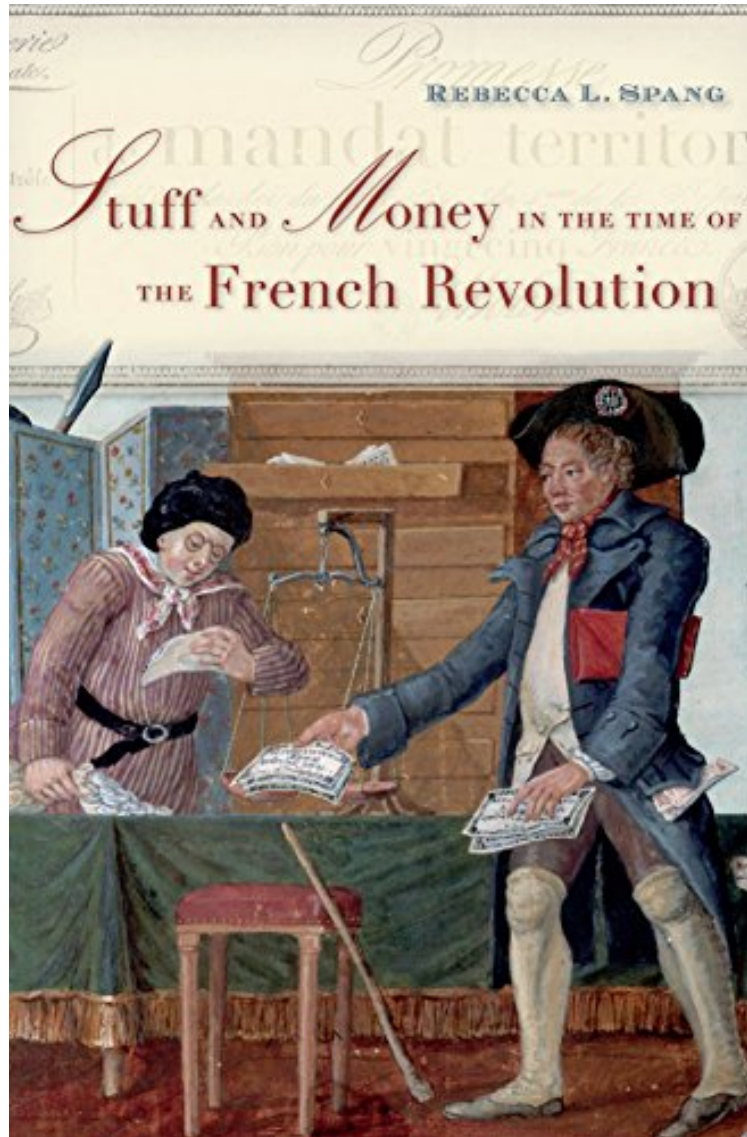


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Stuff and Money in the Time of the French Revolution

Rebecca L. Spang

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Rebecca L. Spang : Stuff and Money in the Time of the French Revolution before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Stuff and Money in the Time of the French Revolution*:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Excellent history, loved it!By CustomerGreat explanation of money during the revolution, barter, gold, silver and billion coin, assignats, bills and notes. One cannot begin to comprehend how the poor suffered, how the Royals lived and how the clergy and nobles dithered over the abyss until you see the role money in all it's forms played. Numismatists, history buffs and those seeking parallels to our own volatile economic times, will all enjoy this. Superb illustrations. Valuable contribution to our understanding of a terrible time.0

of 0 people found the following review helpful. A thoroughgoing hermeneutic of money, value, materiality, ...By Paul Custer
A thoroughgoing hermeneutic of money, value, materiality, and economic theory in the maelstrom of improvisation that was the Revolution. Not just a rich history of the assignats (tho it is that), a sustained effort to relate the conceptual frameworks that underpinned them to those underpinning sovereignty, agency and the new state itself.
0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Excellent History
By Harry C. Veryser
An excellent history of a little known aspect of the French Revolution. This book is well written and researched.

Rebecca L. Spang, who revolutionized our understanding of the restaurant, has written a new history of money. It is also a new history of the French Revolution, with economics at its heart. In her telling, radicalization was driven by an ever-widening gap between political ideals—including freedom of money—and the harsh realities of daily life.

For [Spang], the issues surrounding Revolutionary paper money, or assignats, were neither simply social nor ideological. They were simultaneously social and political. In fact, the assignat, she deftly shows, was meant to be both state-sponsored, i.e. national, and natural, i.e. worth something that was very real. This is a quite brilliant, assertive book. For Spang, all historians (pace Furet and Soboul) were wrong, as are we? culturally blind, apolitical economists; all Jacobins; some prostitutes and beggars, and, also, Edmund Burke, who explained in 1791 that the utter destruction of assignats, and the restoration of order, are one and the same. Restoring ancient world orders, as we know, usually doesn't work. (Patrice Higonnet *Times Literary Supplement* 2015-06-10) It constitutes a deeply impressive scholarly attempt both to refocus historians' attention and to rethink the lessons of the revolution today. In our world of economic uncertainty and limited political horizons, this history of the French Revolution could hardly be more relevant. (Duncan Kelly *Financial Times* 2015-01-30) In emphasizing weakness and uncertainty instead of fanatical strength as the driving force behind the Terror, Spang contributes to an important realignment in the study of French history. (Ruth Scurr *The Spectator* 2015-02-21) Brilliant. What [Spang] proposes is nothing less than a new conceptualization of the revolution. Spang's innovation is to shift attention from these higher-flown interpretive constructions to the basic notion of practice. What people thought, she reasons, came about as an inevitable response to what they did? or, more specifically, to the limitations placed on what they could do by the material medium through which they transacted business, i.e., money. Spang's book is distinguished not only by its theoretical advances but also by fine writing and keen perception. Spang's greatest contribution is her theoretical reorientation of revolutionary studies from causes to practices, from precursors to processes. She has provided historians—and not just those of France or the French Revolution—with a new set of lenses with which to view the past. We study history because, in the hands of a gifted historian like Rebecca Spang, it reveals the true nature of the human predicament. (Arthur Goldhammer *Bookforum* 2014-12-01) Written with her customary verve and wit, Rebecca Spang's latest book offers a bold and pathbreaking cultural and material history of paper money in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century France. *Stuff and Money in the Time of the French Revolution* will be appreciated not only for what it reveals about the French Revolution. In addition, it is a subtle but significant contribution to the broader rethinking currently taking place concerning the relationship between economics and political economy in the modern age. (Colin Jones, author of *The Smile Revolution: In Eighteenth Century Paris*) Rebecca Spang notes that money is a social convention based on mutual trust. The French Revolutionaries had the misfortune of introducing their new paper currency, the assignats, into a world in which social relations and political loyalties had already been scrambled by the Revolution. In this enthralling and deeply researched book, Spang shows how this monetary experiment compounded insecurity, multiplied occasions for mistrust, and powerfully affected the revolution's course. She casts a brilliant new light on both the politics and the lived experience of the French Revolution. (William H. Sewell, Jr., author of *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*) Spang, author of a highly original 2000 book on French history entitled *The Invention of the Restaurant*, has done it again. [Here she] views the French Revolution from rewardingly new angles by analyzing the cultural significance of money in the turbulent years of European war, domestic terror and inflation. (Tony Barber *Financial Times* 2015-06-26) Marvelous. What seems to be a book about a specific aspect of the historical episode is really a reflection on the nature of money and its intrinsic relationship with politics and with conceptions of property. Set in the 1780s and 90s, it could not be more relevant to the bitcoin/ledger debate. (Diane Coyle *Enlightened Economist* 2015-11-27) Spang's dazzling reassessment of the assignat makes this book a must-read for any specialist in the field. Spang's witty prose and carefully selected anecdotes might sway nonspecialists to purchase it with plastic. *Stuff and Money* touches on a number of major historical developments at the end of the 18th century, but it also offers lasting insights on market relations. Though the specifics of the work are grounded in the history of 18th-century France, the general principles Spang unearths are just as relevant today. (Patrick Hyde *Los Angeles of Books* 2015-12-04) [This] is a book that was enjoyable to read, informed me about all kinds of things I hadn't known, and is full of insights about the relationship between money and politics, and the nature of property and value. It's a great example of history helping one think more

clearly about the present and maybe the near future. (Diane Coyle Enlightened Economist 2016-10-21)About the AuthorRebecca L. Spang is Professor of History at Indiana University.