Work in Progress

Rival Courts in Dynastic Europe: Vienna and Versailles 1550–1790[1]

by Jeroen Duindam

The princely household has been likened to a temple, devoted to the cult of dynastic rule. The image of courtiers as the cast of a ritual choreography, magnifying the ruler to almost superhuman proportions, abounds in literature on the court, but we also find it in contemporary printed sources. The learned volumes describing the ceremonies of the European court come to mind; as do the early forms of the periodical press faithfully reporting the court's public ceremonies and festivities. To this day, palaces and works of art confirm the reputation of the court as a splendid backdrop for the mise-en-scène of dynastic supremacy.

There is nothing wrong with this reputation, but we miss the point if we fail to add other dimensions, such as the daily routines of the household: the intimacy of the ruler and his entourage; or the interactions of household and government. A court based solely on ceremony and representation will necessarily seem hollow and inflated. Then, indeed, we may start to wonder why nobles attended court in the first place, and argue that they must have been lured into the court against their own interests. This is the core of the traditional interpretation of the French court: a gilded cage for nobles, a ruse allowing the king to strengthen and modernise the state. Norbert Elias took it up in the early 1930s, and his version of Versailles became the orthodoxy among continental court historians in recent decades.[2]

This first generation of court history had several serious defects. First of all, it was encumbered by the misleading reconstruction of Versailles that lay at the root of Elias' model. This image of Versailles does not fit the reality of the French court at any period: it is a pastiche of elements from various ages. Henri III indeed consciously elaborated and used ceremonial rules, but he did so in an age of crisis and weakened royal power. From the 1560s into the 1650s the French court expanded hugely, in successive leaps interspersed with futile attempts at reduction. In the 1650s the French court reached its zenith: thereafter, numbers decreased, and were to remain more or less stable until the reductions of the 1780s. Expansion thus was connected not to 'domestication' and princely absolutism, but to political crisis and instability. A third major characteristic, relatively obedient high nobles, can indeed be observed at Louis XIV's court — yet his household was smaller than had been those of his predecessors. His noble courtiers, moreover, saw their loyalty

1 Variants of this text were presented as lectures in Oxford (Early Modern Europe Seminar, November 2001) and Paris (Institut Historique Allemand, November 2002). It reflects some of the ideas and conclusions of my forthcoming *Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals 1550–1780*, published by Cambridge University Press in August 2003. For this version, footnotes have been kept to a minimum: they indicate the sources used, but give full documentation only for quotes and books mentioned in the text.

2 See my *Myths of Power: Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court* (Amsterdam, 1995) for a discussion of historiography and a critique of Elias' model.

rewarded with privileges both prestigious and lucrative, and they obtained near-hereditary rights to their court offices. Finally, when in the eighteenth century the court systematically developed its ties with the nobility at large, through a system of presentations and honours attached to court attendance, the major nobles shared a caste-like dominance with the ministerial dynasties at court. Only by pasting together in an artificial scenery characteristics taken from various phases, can we arrive at the conventional depiction of 'Versailles'. Implausible for France, the model is even less helpful as a guide for research on other European courts: establishing this inadequacy with some force was among the principal purposes of my current comparative study of Vienna and Versailles.

Secondly, the Elias model of Versailles seemed to invite further theoretical debate, rather than empirical research and detailed analysis. The 'function' of the court, the 'meaning' of its ceremonial presentation, the 'impact' of the court on civilization, the 'nature' of interactions and communications around the court: they have served as starting points for an orgy of concepts and theories. A highly sophisticated theoretical vocabulary, deriving from Elias, Bourdieu, Foucault, Habermas, Luhmann, Geertz, and many others, was used to explain an entity, the outlines of which were known only superficially. Structure, numbers and costs of the household; hierarchies, functions, and income of courtiers; rhythms of day, week, and year at court; patterns of formal and informal decision-making; prosopographical data of courtiers and councillors: such fundamental matters were ignored or addressed briefly, on the basis largely of literature and published sources. Only in the cases of the Burgundian and the English court, did archival research present greater continuity and depth; typically, theoretical discourse remained more sober here.

A third factor impeding the advance of court history lies in the imperfect communication between the political and the cultural approaches to the court. Two perspectives in particular remained strangely disconnected: the revision of traditional viewes of absolutism, and the study of princely representation. Socio-political studies focusing on the resilience of nobles and regional corporations have thoroughly revised the traditional concept of 'absolutism'. They showed that royal decrees frequently remained a dead letter in the provinces, even in a relatively unified state such as France. The revisionist studies rarely included the household in their research, yet they highlighted the relevance of the court — not as a prison for nobles, but as a meeting-place of powerful elites. At the same time, the 'presentation' of absolute power at court had become a key item in a wide range of studies arising in several disciplines: history of art, architecture, theatre, music, literature. These cultural studies tended to disregard the revision of absolutism, and thus prolonged an outdated interpretation of the early modern state. Nor were they as a rule interested in the make-up and routines of the household itself: buildings, festivities, paintings, performances, or collections, attracted more interest than court staffs, and daily activities. The household thus fell between the two stools of political and cultural history.

In addition to these limitations of court history, we find a more general inclination to see the later seventeenth century as a turning point, a critical threshold

leading from an age of intensely personal forms of power into a phase increasingly dominated by institutions and procedures. That process, however, has never been charted from the perspective of the household. Typically, the prestigious seven-volume European Science Foundation series devoted to the origins of the modern state in Europe, published by Oxford in the last years, did not include the household among its themes. In another important recent conference volume, *The World of the Favourite*, edited by Elliott and Brockliss, the section discussing Leopold I and Louis XIV is labelled the 'twilight of the favourite' — the suggestion implicit in the title is explicitly supported in several instances, though it is questioned in the comprehensive conclusion.[3] Major initiatives in the field of elite and court studies, such as the *Residenzenforschung* series, or *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility*, the conference volume published by Ronald Asch in 1991, studied the period from the later middle ages until halfway through the seventeenth century — thus they could not address or rectify the general impression of sweeping change in the decades following.[4]

It is high time to fill the void in these discussions by looking at the princely household from the sixteenth into the eighteenth century. The early households were lively, often querulous, overextended families of mostly non-noble servants. They were not unlike armies: itinerant, predominantly male bands with omnipresent horses, a system of billeting and quarterly mustering. Provosts took care of discipline, and there was a large train of hangers-on and purveyors. From the fourteenth into the eighteenth century, most households expanded, became more sedentary, and more orderly. Agencies of government, originating in the household, tended to function increasingly separately from the staffs catering for the ruler's domestic environment. Before we can effectively gauge the changes in the make-up of the household and its connections with government agencies, we need to find out more about the concrete outlines of the court. In recent years, I have been trying to find such information in the rich archival deposits of the French court and the court of the Austrian Habsburgs. Below, I will present a brief indication of my findings, concentrating on three points: numbers and structures of the household: the continuum of court life and ceremony; and finally, the dynamics of power at court.

3 W. Blockmans and J.-P. Genet, eds, *Origins of the Modern State in Europe 1300 -1800* (7 vols, Oxford, 1995–2000), I, War and Competition between States; II, Economic Systems and State Finance; III, Legislation and Justice; IV, Power Elites and State Building; V, Resistance, Representation, and Community; VI, The Individual in Political Theory and Practice; VII, Iconography, Propaganda, and Legitimation; J. H. Elliott and L. W. B. Brockliss, eds, *The World of the Favourite* (New Haven and London, 1999)

4 See e.g. W. Paravicini, ed., *Zeremoniell und Raum. 4. Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* (Sigmaringen, 1997); H. Kruse and W. Paravicini, eds, *Höfe und Hofordnungen 1200–1600. 5. Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* (Sigmaringen, 1999); R. Asch and A. Birke, eds, *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility. The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age c.1450–1650* (Oxford, 1991); P. Campbell, *Power and Politics in Ancien Regime France, 1720–1745* (London, 1996) underlines the parallels between seventeenth and eighteenth-century 'politics'.

Staffs and numbers

The staffs of these courts show great similarity, as do the manuscript sources regulating the routines of household and council. Ferdinand I's ordinances of 1527 and 1537 can be compared to Henri III's detailed rules decreed in 1578 and 1585. These comprehensive ordinances were followed by innumerable shorter and more specific decrees and instructions. In addition, we find series of overviews, listing the staffs of the various departments with their expenses. Together, they show the structures of the court, and allow us to trace the expansion and reduction of its various components. The staffs were basically similar: a chapel with both musical and spiritual functions; the high steward's staff for the table, kitchen, and cellar; the chamber staff serving the ruler in his apartment; stables catering for transport and riding; and finally the departments of the hunt and falconry. The marshal's staff, small but quite important in Vienna as at most other German courts, was differently organised in France, with the separate staffs of the *grand prévôt* and the *grand maréchal des logis* taking care of justice and quartering respectively. Guards were numerous at the French court, and they formed the core of a 10,000-odd elite section of the army. In Vienna, until the reforms of the later eighteenth century, the guards included only *c* 220 traditional *Hartschieren und Trabanten*. Whereas in Vienna only the high steward was assisted by several high noble substitutes, most departments at the French court had a plurality of higher officers, indicated by the habitual sequence of *grand, premier, ordinaire*. In the French chamber, high office proliferated, with the four *premiers gentilshommes de la chambre*, and the *maîtres de la garderobe* immediately following the *grand chambellan*. In France the chapel formed an independent staff headed by the *grand aumônier*. Yet in Vienna it was part of the *Obersthofmeister's* staff, and was supervised only by the *Hofkaplan*, a relatively insignificant figure.

Counting heads presents many problems, connected with the availability as well as the nature of sources. The growth or decline of one court over time can be charted effectively only if we understand and compensate for the diverging criteria used by the compilers; a comparison of two courts makes such interventions even more indispensable. The printed overviews available for both courts in the eighteenth century make comparison easier. Yet we still have to select parallel staffs and services from lists following wholly different principles of organisation: the decisions made in the process inevitably influence the resulting numbers. Taking into account these complications, we can roughly trace the numerical development of both courts. The French inner *maison du roi* including chapel, chamber, table, and smaller elements of other services, doubled from 300 to 600 in the early sixteenth century, and rose to 1,100 in the last two-thirds of that century. In the seventeenth century, the curve was more irregular, with peaks after Henri IV's death, reductions after 1625, inflation in the 1630s, and a climax at 2,000 in 1650. After the first decades of Louis XIV's personal reign, numbers fell to around 900, and they would not stray far from that level until the reforms of the 1780's. These numbers represent only the core of the court. Stables and hunt, recorded in different series, likewise more than doubled in the century following 1550, expanding from around 250 each to 600 each. Louis XIV reduced the *écuries* to their previous standard, but

the hunt remained near the higher figure. Adding the slowly expanding *prévôté*, we can roughly double the number of the king's inner *maison* to reach the totals of his household: the rhythm of inflation and reduction was basically similar. With a total of slightly more than 2,000 around 1700, the officers in the Sun King's household, with the exception of the hunt, had returned to the level of the 1560s, and these reduced numbers set the standard for the eighteenth century.[5]

The court of the Austrian Habsburgs took form only in the course of the sixteenth century, as the successor to various territorial Habsburg courts as well as the court of the Holy Roman Emperor. In the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the household of the king-emperor approached 600 persons, a level it would reach again only in the last, imperial phase of Ferdinand I's rule after 1556. In Rudolf II's reign, the court expanded from 700 to almost 1,200, but Matthias tried to reduce numbers after 1615, and his court, including councils, but without hunt or other households, seems to have been near 800 persons. Under Ferdinand II and Ferdinand III, we see roughly the same numbers. The years from the Peace of Westphalia to the death of emperor-elect Ferdinand IV formed a temporary highpoint of the Viennese court, with high expenditure, and a series of attempts to reconstitute the court on a grander scale. Leopold's early years probably represented a more difficult phase; expenditure dropped, and the aggregate of court staffs, without councils, stood at around 800. Yet it would soon expand, first largely through the proliferation of honorary chamberlains, later by a more steady growth of all staffs, most notably the stables. In the last decades of Leopold's reign, the household, including the honorary chamberlains, had risen to almost 1,500, and it approached 2,000 in the last years of Charles VI. The critical mid-century years witnessed a temporary reduction of the court, but towards 1760, Maria-Theresa's court again matched that of her father, and in 1780 it exceeded 2,000 even without counting all the honorary chamberlains.[6]

5 These numbers are based on the manuscript *états* in the Archives Nationales [hereafter AN] e.g. in Z 1 A 472-523 and the Bibliothèque Nationale [hereafter BN] e.g. in the Clairambault collection, and the printed *État de la France*..., published from the 1650s to 1749. This extends the important earlier work presented in J. Boucher, 'L'évolution de la maison du Roi: des derniers Valois aux premiers Bourbons', *XVIIe Siècle*, 137 (1982), pp. 359–79. Also see D. Reytier, 'Un service de la Maison du Roi: les Écuries de Versailles 1682–1789' in D. Roche and D. Reytier, eds, *Les écuries royales du xvie au xviiie siècle* (Paris, 1998), pp. 61–95, who shows that among those serving in the stables, only *officiers* were listed in the *états*. Thus, for certain services — mostly the stables, hunt, musical establishment, and services for maintenance of buildings — lower ranking officials should be added to the numbers listed here. For the connections of the court with nobles, however, this is hardly relevant: numbers of honorary servants and high-ranking *officiers* were reduced.

6 Numbers of Viennese courtiers and servants can be found in a range of manuscript *Hofstaatsverzeichnisse* in the Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv [hereafter HHStA] e.g. Obersthofmeisteramt Sonderreihe 181–9; in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek [hereafter ÖNB] codices 14071 (*c.*1675), 14725 (1677–80), 12388 (1678); 14209 (1692–4), 14443 (1690); Allgemeines Verwaltungarchiv, [hereafter AVA] Harrach, Handschriften 145 (1676–7), and from 1702 onwards also in the printed *Kayserlicher und Königlicher, wie auch Erz-herzoglicher und dero Residenzstadt Wienn Staats- und Standskalender/ auff das Jahr MDCCII. Mit einem noch nie dergleichen gesehenen Schematismo geziert*; 1704, 1706–8, 1709–10 etc., available in the ÖNB, Katalogsaal, 393.866-A.kat or microfilm 4478; the volumes for 1704 and 1706–8 in the ÖNB Portraitsammlung 6079. The invaluable series of *Hofzahlamtsbücher* in the Hofkammerarchiv [hereafter HKA] make it possible to compare the numbers listed in *Verzeichnisse* with actual payments.

More than the absolute numbers, it is the timing of reduction and expansion that deserves our attention. At the very moment Louis XIV successfully reduced and stabilized his household, Leopold's court entered into a protracted phase of expansion. This divergence set the trend for both courts until the 1780s. After Leopold's reign the emperor's household in Vienna was still somewhat smaller than the household of the French king, but both would soon be close to 2,000. Turning from the ruler's household to the court as a whole, however, we still find major discrepancies. There was no Habsburg parallel for the extensive *maison militaire* of the French court, and the secondary households within the dynasty were consistently more important in Versailles than in Vienna. In 1699, shortly before the death of Louis XIV's brother Philippe Duc d'Orléans, a detailed memoir lists 1,600 persons in these establishments, a total never reached in Vienna, where only the dowager-empress and the king of the Romans were expected to have a truly independent *Hofstaat*. Following the same 1699 memoir, we can accept a grand total of around 5,000 for the *officiers des maisons royales* in Versailles,[7] whereas parallel numbers were close to 2,000 in Vienna for the same years.

In comparison, the core services of the central 'bureaucracies' in France and the Habsburg lands long remained small. In Leopold's reign, the councils and their staffs expanded from 225 to 400 — mostly by the increasing numbers of honorary councillors. All administrative institutions, especially those dealing with finance, expanded slowly in Charles' reign, but only after 1749 did the balance truly change. This process has been examined carefully in Dickson's works on Maria-Theresa and Joseph: the size of central government quickly approached that of the household, and in Joseph's reign it would go beyond it, though by only a small margin.[8] This rapidly changing constellation cannot be observed in France, where the 'six departments' of the *sécrétaires d'état*, the *contrôleur-général* and the chancellor remained close to 700 for most of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The *ferme générale* in France, and the staffs of all regional institutions in the Habsburg lands were far more impressive, both at least 30,000 — but they cannot be seen as central government agencies, nor could they unequivocally be directed by these central agencies. The same holds true for the countless holders of venal offices so dominant in France. If numbers are to be accepted as an indicator of the relative weight of institutions, we should hesitate to place central administration before the household.

Household proper and noble entourage

The distinction between a *domus providentiae* and a *domus magnificentiae*, or between 'ordinary' below-stairs servants and honorary noble 'above stairs' courtiers, allows us to visualize two very different courts. The first, the household proper, was a service establishment for the dynasty, composed of a small upper layer of noble dignitaries, and a huge majority of non-noble servants in all staffs — ushers,

7 BN, Clairambault 814, see the summary of the preceding lists on pp. 397–8.

8 P. G. M. Dickson, 'Monarchy and Bureaucracy in Late Eighteenth-Century Austria', *English Historical Review* 110 (1995) pp. 323–67, and his *Finance and Government under Maria Theresia 1740–1780* (2 vols, Oxford, 1987).

lackeys, coachmen, stableboys, and the like. The second, the ruler's noble entourage, encompassed a more diffuse group entitled to attend court, but not usually present. It was attached to the noble upper segment in the household by a variety of occasions, offices, and honours. We can visualize the service establishment as a pyramid, the noble entourage as a horizontal extension of the upper layer of this pyramid. On lower levels of the hierarchy, the same phenomenon occurred to a lesser extent: purveyors and artisans could loosely be tied to the court, sharing the privileges of the *Hofgesinde* without regularly taking part in its activities.

Service par terme or job rotation was common in France, though it did not include either the supreme offices or the lowest echelons. Specific groups of servants sharing their jobs were particularly likely to expand in times of crisis. Throughout the sixteenth century, the chamber staff expanded, its *chambellans* and *gentilshommes* serving as the ruler's confidants and representatives. While the staffs of chamber and wardrobe became smaller and more stable after Henri III's reign, the honorary servants for the table, *maîtres d'hôtel* and *gentilshommes servant* multiplied in the first half of the seventeenth century. In the same period, the number of almoners and secretaries exploded; at a lower level of hierarchy, the *portiers* and *gens de métier* reached improbable numbers. During the Fronde, expansion in these ranks broke all previous records, with 309 *gens de métier*, 321 *maîtres d'hôtel*, and similar numbers of *gentilshommes servant*. From 1664 onwards only nine *gentilshommes servant* and four *maîtres d'hôtel* served each quarter — a total of 48 persons. While honorary office, typically held by nobles, was sharply reduced, the household itself was restructured. Lower office-holders lost the privileges of the *commensaux du roi*, and saw their *charges* turned into commissions — in the process, their names disappeared from the *états*, listing only the *officiers* of the court. The remaining office-holders, on the other hand, found their privileges confirmed, and their status strengthened. Hereditary nobility, long since granted to *maîtres, gentilshommes, écuyers*, and *chefs*, was now extended to valets, ushers, and even to the *garcons de la chambre* of Versailles. Thus, the traditionally predominant below stairs element decreased as it tended either to be promoted into noble service, or to be demoted into *ad hoc* commissioned labour. This redrawing of borders and privileges turned the household into an increasingly noble environment. By purging the household, the king restored the exclusivity of its offices. Serving in this exclusive household was a privilege to be held by few; although visitors high and low were freely admitted to behold the king and his noble servants. In the eighteenth century, the right to be presented to the king and to join the king's hunt in the *carrosses* of the *petite écurie*, would serve as the introduction of noble men and women into the world of the court.[9]

At the Habsburg court, no regular job rotation existed and honorary officers served in a far less organised way. Alternatively, they could hold their rank without

9 See AN, M 608, 11 (6): 'Règlement fait par le roi pour les Aspirans aux honneurs de la Cour et à la Présentation' (Versailles 31-10-1759), and MM 817 for the lists from 1732 onwards, and further *règlements*. Numbers of those admitted were intitially very small, between 2 and 6; from 1737 onwards (except for war years) they grow to 20 to 40. From 1751, lists come with dates of the occasions when nobles were presented.

serving at all. This tendency was most prevalent among the typical *Hofehrenämter*: initially generic *Hofdiener* and the table servants, *Schenk, Truchseß, Vorschneider*; from the reign of Ferdinand II onwards, most conspicuously chamberlains and from Leopold's reign increasingly also councillors. The expansion of the court under Leopold was caused first and foremost by the rising numbers of chamberlains and councillors. This inflation of honorary office, initially an unintended and often deplored development, turned into a vital asset, strengthening the position of the court among nobles. The two most widely distributed honours of the Habsburg court from the later seventeenth century onwards, the posts of chamberlain and councillor, provided access and at the same time determined the holder's rank at court. Seniority among the first rank of councillors, and the second rank of chamberlains, was the yardstick for all ceremonial occasions at court. The rapid inflation of these honours may have undermined the quality of the distinctions, but access and a position in the established system of court ranks remained indispensable for major noble houses throughout the hereditary lands. The numerous honorary officers connected the regions to their courtly centre in Vienna, and tied noble hierarchies increasingly to individual precedence at court.

Intimacy and display

Honorary office became more exclusive in Versailles, more inclusive in Vienna. Both courts, however, succeeded in becoming the yardstick of noble hierarchies, and offered a central meeting place for elites. Life at these courts followed a roughly similar pattern: it was dominated by the daily routines of rising, eating, sleeping, as well as by the alternation of devotions, deliberation with ministers, audiences, and hunting. Yet one major difference stands out: access was far more limited in the *Hofburg* than in Versailles. The outlines of Habsburg aloofness were already present in the ordinances promulgated by Ferdinand I, stipulating that the emperor's bedroom was not as a rule open for anyone except his most trusted intimates. His successors refined the rules. Rights of entry into the state apartment from the *Ritterstube*, through two antechambers, into the council chamber, was carefully defined, with each threshold demanding higher rank. The emperor's private apartment, beyond the council chamber, was not included in the classification. The Habsburg ruler dined publicly in the *Ritterstube* on major festivals, and on a variety of incidental occasions; yet his daily routines in the chamber were never watched by spectators. Public ceremonies were clearly demarcated highpoints in a usually more secluded routine setting. Typically, court ordinances often included clusters of words such as 'decorum', 'reputation', 'ceremonial' and 'public'. The Latin script of these words stands out in the German handwriting. Likewise, ceremonies were a clearly defined exceptional, but recurring, component of household routines, never their equivalent. Nobles at court, whether or not holding office, were expected to join the Emperor in his public excursions, and attend the temporary visits of outsiders into the palace. They were hardly courtiers, however, in the sense that they lived in the palace, or shared collective entertainments with members of the dynasty on a daily basis. The Hofburg's capacity to lodge courtiers was extremely limited. Until the reign of Maria Theresa, more-

over, there was no recurring programme of dinners, games, balls, and comedies. Except for the *Fasching*-festivities in the first months of the year, entertainments were incidental. Processions and public devotions were the most frequent point of contact of the *Hofstaat* with the Viennese: they took place almost every week, reaching an impressive density in Holy Week and in Pentecost.

The French court was traditionally more open, allowing nobles to approach the king upon rising, while he ate, and before he went to sleep. Christine de Pisan reports a disorderly *lever* in the early fifteenth century. In a 1530 edict against theft at court, Francis I noted the '*grosse fluence des gens qui conversent journellement en nos logis.*' Catherine de Medici's famous letter of advice to her son stressed that both François I and Henri II had allowed their nobles to spend the day with them in easy companionship.[10] Yet Henri III sought to restrict access. His effort was meant to underline his supreme status, but a palpable dislike of the impertinences of courtiers and spectators pervades his ordinances. Most characteristics attributed to the innovations and ruses of Louis XIV were present in Henri's texts, yet the Sun King seemed far less distressed by the multitudes at court. He prided himself on the *honnête familiarité* of French kings with their nobles, contrasting it with the more aloof style of the Spanish Habsburgs.[11] Louis XIV was surrounded by his courtiers even in relatively private settings. Marie Du Bois, one of the valets of the chamber, would ask special favours during the *petit coucher*, when the king was on his *chaise percée*—and this seemed to be the rule for those admitted.[12] In addition, visitors of all sorts and ranks crowded the court. In 1677 and 1682, the king repeated François I's decree against stealing in the *maisons royales*, once more citing the '*afluence des gens de toutes sortes, faineans & sans aveu qui abordent de toutes parts à notre Cour.*' Visitors could habitually be found wandering through the gardens and the palace, nor did Louis XIV's temporary closure of the gardens change this. In these years, a Dutch merchant reports details about the gardens, and about many rooms, stating that only the king's *petit couvert*, or private meal in the chamber, had not been accessible to him. An ongoing sequence of entertainments formed part of French court life from the sixteenth into the eighteenth century, and Versailles, with its dependencies in the *écuries*, *grand commun*, and *chénil*, was able to lodge an estimated 3,000 persons.[13]

It is far from easy to link the open style of the French court, and the closed style of the Habsburgs, with ceremony. The Habsburg style, general at German courts as Hugh Murray Baillie pointed out long ago, created distance between ruler and

10 C. de Pisan, *Le livre des fais et des bonnes mœurs de sage roy Charles V*, ed. S. Solente (Paris, 1936; repr. Paris, 1977) pp. 43–8; R. J. Knecht, 'The Court of Francis I', *European Studies Review* 8/1 (1978), p. 13; H. de la Ferrière, ed., *Lettres de Cathérine de Médicis* (10 vols, Paris, 1880–1909) II (Paris, 1885), pp. 90–5.

11 Louis XIV, *Mémoires de Louis XIV pour l'instruction du Dauphin*, ed. C. Dreyss, (2 vols, Paris, 1860), II, p. 568.

12 *Moi Marie Du Bois. Gentilhomme Vendômois valet de chambre de Louis XIV*, François Lebrun, ed. (Rennes, 1994) pp. 133, 135, 141, 143.

13 BN, Clairambault 828 prévôté, pp. 1253–9; F. Driessen, ed., *De reizen der de la Courts 1641–1700–1710* (Leiden, 1928), pp. 51–6, 60–1; J.-F. Solnon, 'Cour' in *Dictionnaire de l'Ancien Régime*, ed. L. Bély, (Paris, 1996) pp. 353–8.

subjects; the French style stressed accessibility.[14] Clearly, the first seems more 'ceremonial' than the latter. Yet distance created room for intimacy and family life, by reserving a secluded sphere for the ruler and his kin with their companions. In Vienna this was taken for granted. At the French court, however, with its tradition of accessibility, barring access could be perceived as a slight, particularly by high-ranking courtiers. When French kings sought refuge against the bustle, sharing intimacy with relatives or favourites, those excluded from this smaller circle sought to be admitted for two reasons: it conspicuously showed their rank and favour, and it allowed them to talk to the king under ideal circumstances. The expectation of accessibility, and the resulting pressure of courtiers, are vital factors in the explanation of the domestic rituals typical for the French court—it may also help to explain the conspicuous presence of favourites, a phenomenon more marked in France than in the Habsburg lands.

The domestic rituals allowed the king to toy with his courtiers, by creating an infinity of special occasions and rights. Yet how likely, or easy, was it for the ruler to use such customs to manipulate courtiers? Could conflicts of rank and competence strengthen his authority? The abundance of rules striving to solve and prevent such conflicts suggest that they were a nuisance. When in 1688 Louis XIV silently waited while his grand master of the wardrobe and first gentleman of the chamber quarrelled over the right to give him his coat, he must have been feeling more uncomfortable than shrewd.[15] At all levels of the courtly hierarchy, such conflicts recurred, and they hardly made the service more dignified; it was in the king's interest to prevent and limit them. Rank remained the fundamental criterion for the king's decisions. Almost all special rights during *lever*, *coucher*, and meals (*chemise*, *serviette*, etc.) were to be granted to the highest prince present—in fact, only the presentation of the *bougeoir* was explicitly left to the king's discretion. We tend to repeat a handful of dubious instances suggesting the Sun King's active manipulation, whereas we forget the more numerous examples showing his attachment to rank and hierarchy, and his anger or embarrassment in the face of disputes.

Reticence and elusive words recur in contemporary portrayals of many rulers, who felt burdened by a variety of tasks and pressures. Their behaviour has been interpreted either negatively as indecisiveness, or respectfully, as a masterful ruse, the choice between the alternatives depending largely on the general perception of a reign: the silence of the successful was seen as masterful, taciturn rulers who failed were regarded as indecisive. Such judgements, by historians and contemporaries, obscure the basic similarity in outlook of most kings and emperors. Silence and reticence were among the most conspicuous acts of rulers. Manipulation of domestic rituals, it seems to me, was an unpredictable instrument at best, most often used ineffectively and defensively by monarchs who felt harassed and anxious.

14 H. Murray Baillie, 'Etiquette and the Planning of State Apartments in baroque Palaces', *Archaeologia* CI (1967) pp.169–99

15 Dangeau [Philippe de Courcillon, Marquis de], *Journal du marquis de Dangeau [...] avec les additions inédites du duc de Saint-Simon*, Soulié, Dussieux, de Chennevière, et al., eds (19 vols, Paris 1854–60), II, p.123 (25 March 1688).

The familiar scenes from Saint-Simon usually presented as the 'ceremonies' of the French court, were the domestic routines of a relatively open court, characterised by a highly competitive upper echelon. In fact the ceremonies of the French court form a nearly exact parallel to Habsburg ceremonies: the traditional public highpoints recreating the ties between sbjects and dynasty. The ceremonial compilations by Godefroy father and son, published in 1619 and 1649 respectively, rarely refer to the domestic setting, nor does it form more than a minute part of the immense manuscript archive of Nicolas de Sainctot, Louis XIV's master of ceremonies.[16] Routines in the chamber and at the king's table, moreover, remained firmly under the authority of the relevant court dignitaries—that is, of the very persons conventionally depicted as the victims of ceremony.

In the course of the seventeenth century, contacts between the courts of Europe became far more frequent, and a measure of compatibility was necessary among the ceremonial settings of these courts. Diplomats, especially ambassadors, would demand a treatment visibly underlining their sovereign status, in all spheres of court life where they were admitted. Thus, a major effort in the 1650s to improve the ceremonial stature of the Habsburg court was explicitly connected to complaints of ambassadors. It was relatively easy to secure these changes at the Habsburg court, where 'social occasions' were limited, and the dynasty lived in relative seclusion. In France, the very openness of the court, and its multiplicity of informal occasions, escalated the potential for conflicts of rank. The high proportion of above stairs noble servants, as well as the number of grand families holding supreme court office, further exacerbated the situation. Thus, while in Vienna conflict over precedence usually included either diplomats or princes from the empire, in France locals had a lasting, large and vehement share.

Rank was a dominant concern in daily court life as well as in ceremonies. Situational details indicated rank in both contexts: sitting/standing, covered/uncovered, left/right, and the unending array of similar distinctions. Nevertheless, we need to separate the solemn or festive ceremonial occasions from daily life at court. The border was relatively precise in Vienna, though Maria Theresa's reforms to a certain extent opened the court, instituting a range of occasions mixing courtiers and relative outsiders. In France, the borders between public and private were consistently less clear, and intermediate stages more frequent. The extremities of public presentation and privacy, however, were commonplace for rulers at both courts. In fact the strongest case for a 'ceremonialisation' of the court can be made if we connect it to two factors: the impact of permanent diplomacy, and the increasing density of intermediate-level social events at both courts in the eighteenth century. We should note, however, that these developments coincided with

16 T. Godefroy, *Cérémonial de France* (Paris, 1619); D. Godefroy, *Le Cérémonial François* (2 vols, Paris, 1649); Sainctot's *mémoires* can be found in BN ms fr 14117–14120, ms fr na 3122, 3156, 3157; *journal* in BN ms fr 6679, registers of his own volumes in BN ms fr 13017, and ms fr 15524. In the Bibliothèque Mazarine, there is a multi-volume copy of Sainctot's memoirs made by Desgranges, his successor as *Maître des Cérémonies*: BM 2737–2751; in the *avertissement* for the register to this series, BM 2753, Desgranges lists his sources. In the AN series K 1712–1723 and KK 1423–1454 Sainctot also figures prominently, particularly in K 1712, KK 1431, and KK 1448; KK 1440 is a comprehensive register.

the erosion of traditional ceremonies, a process slow in France, later and more abrupt in the Habsburg lands. The re-enactments of the ties between centre and regions, and the rituals connected to the annual liturgical calendar, in particular, became less frequent.

It may be superfluous to repeat that neither ceremony, nor court life was ever as well-ordered as prescriptive sources suggest. Studying the ordinances of both courts, one is surprised by the similarity and recurrence of complaints about conflicts, disorders, and bad behaviour. All ceremonial arrangements tended to be forgotten or violated in the long run; rules for entry into the chamber, or arrangements for courtiers in the chapel and at the public table, were reiterated periodically, usually in weary tones. In the eighteenth century, Luynes and Khevenhüller were annoyed by the same irregularities that had bothered their seventeenth-century predecessors.[17] Ceremonial registers tend to focus on problems, as they sought to prevent or remedy disputes over precedence; ordinances likewise tried to correct abuses: thus, these sources may convey an excessively rowdy impression — but they present a more plausible and lively image than the superficial equations of ceremony and court life found in contemporary descriptions, and uncritically copied in much recent court history.

The highest officers at court

In many respects, the Habsburg court was a more serene environment than the French court. Most of all, the ties between the emperor and his senior noble servants were more stable than those of the French king with his grandees. 'It might appear odd that seventeenth-century Austria lacked both strong government and strong opposition ...' Robert Evans noted in *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy*.[18] The statement aptly captures the atmosphere at court. After the clash of the 1620's, the emperor, weak if his rule is seen in terms of bureaucratic power or bold action, was rarely challenged by his elites. Indeed, his courtiers were far more deferential towards their master than were their French counterparts. While courtiers habitually advised the emperor, no dynasty had a vested right to a place in the inner council — although the chancellor (*Hofkanzler*) and the high steward would take an important role in the council because of their office. Leopold's inner council, or *Konferenz*, was not unlike Louis XIV's *conseil d'en haut* in this respect. All court servants except the imperial vice-chancellor lost office upon the death of the emperor. The new emperor could influence hierarchies at his court by the timing of his nomination of councillors and chamberlains. High court office, shared among a group of senior noble families, stood at the end of a long career. The emperor was free to nominate whomever had served him well, and no single

17 See e. g. Luynes [Charles Philippe d'Albert, duc de], *Mémoires du duc de Luynes sur la cour de Louis XV*, L. Dussieux and E. Soulié, eds (17 vols, Paris 1860–5), XIII, pp. 440–1; J. J. Khevenhüller-Metsch, *Aus der Zeit Maria Theresias. Tagebuch des Fürsten Johann Josef Khevenhüller-Metsch, kaiserlichen Oberstbofmeisters 1742–76*, R. Khevenhüller-Metsch and H. Schlitter, eds (7 vols, Vienna, 1907–25) II, pp. 187–8 (November 1743), p. 16 (16 March 1745), pp. 102–3 (July 1746).

18 R. J. W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550–1700. An Interpretation* (Oxford, 1979) p. 169.

family could demand court office. His court departments were, at least in theory, subject to one general budget, overseen by his financial chamber. The heads of court departments do not seem to have enjoyed well-defined rights of nomination, though the emperor would probably tend to confirm their nominees. The income of the highest court *charges* in Vienna remained limited, and only special rewards, given at the emperor's discretion, would make court service truly attractive from a financial point of view.

The French dynasties dominating court office clashed more frequently with royal power than did nobles in the Habsburg lands. Indeed, the century after 1560 was characterised by recurring conflict, rendering more demonstrative both noble opposition and royal authority. The 1650s were not as disruptive for French nobles as the 1620s had been for nobilities in the Habsburg lands, yet the more recent heritage of revolt and restoration left its mark on the ties between sovereign and courtiers from the 1660s. This made contemporaries, as well as historians, highly sensitive to the fate of princes and dukes at court. From a longer term perspective, the shift of high nobles to the court seems neither new nor harmful. Robert Harding long ago suggested the increasing orientation of provincial governors towards the court around 1600, underlining that they used their frequent stays at court to cement local networks. Katia Béguin more recently showed that already by the late 1620s the Condé were carefully cultivating their ties with ministers.[19] The comparison with Vienna further reduces the impression of sudden capitulation or decline surrounding French noble courtiers. Louis XIV's reform of the council, taking away the right of princes to serve in the inner council, instituted a practice not unlike that in Vienna. The French king could promote and demote, but seniority among dukes and peers was less easily manipulated than that of Habsburg honorary officers. From the Viennese perspective, it is not the impotence, but the power of the French supreme officers that strikes the eye. They controlled their own budgets, and held unambiguous rights over *charges* in their department — indeed, the value of their offices was partly determined by the extent of such rights or *casuels*. The Condé high stewards saw their rights limited only marginally after 1659. They enjoyed rights over hundreds of offices in their department, and took the oath of loyalty from others. The financial autonomy of all major departments, and the income flowing from transactions with venal offices, provided the leading courtiers with a handsome profit. Princely and ducal dynasties obtained a *de facto* monopoly for their *charges* in the later seventeenth century: their sons would obtain the *survivance* during their father's lifetime, and hold office upon his death. The offices were clearly seen in terms of family property. In addition to the diminutive traditional wages and the more important *casuels*, a range of special pensions and rewards could be expected; in the course of the eighteenth century, these rising rewards would increasingly be seen as rights instead of favours.

19 R. R. Harding, *Anatomy of a Power Elite. The Provincial Governors of Early Modern France* (New Haven and London, 1978); K. Béguin, *Les princes de Condé. Rebelles, courtisans et mécènes dans la France du grand siècle* (Paris, 1999), and her reinterpretation of Louis XIV in 'Louis XIV et l'aristocratie: coup de majesté ou retour à la tradition', *Histoire, économie et société* 19, 4 (2000) pp. 497–512.

The Condé princes of the blood, and the Bouillon, Lorraine, and Rohan *princes étrangers* were hierarchically closer to the king than the princes and counts holding court office in Vienna were to the emperor. The Condé were close to the royal succession, the lesser princes cherished their sovereign status, and presented it as antedating the favours they had obtained from French monarchy. Their marital alliances show a proximity to Europe's ruling houses. These dynasties, and the ducal families monopolising the next echelon of court offices, usually held senior governorships as well as high military command, and were often also active in finance.[20] Around 1700 Viennese court dignitaries were invariably of high noble stock, but they had received princely status in the course of recent service to the Habsburgs. As upstart princes of the empire, they were at pains to secure their position in a group of near-sovereign territorial rulers that looked at them coldly. Most of them never received full rights of session and vote in the imperial diet, the final confirmation of princely status. The senior princes of the empire, ranking below the emperor, but above his supreme domestic officers, jealously protected their rights against both. Inevitably, the rivalry of this distant intermediate layer strengthened the bond between the emperor and the new princes serving at his court. In mentality as well as activities, Habsburg courtiers were closer to a service elite than were French courtiers, and they rarely were as troublesome and haughty.

In addition to the pressures from the senior territorial princes of the empire, there was another reason for the easy compliance of Habsburg courtiers: until the reforms of Haugwitz, regional and local government remained almost wholly in the hands of the estates and the nobles. In the lands of the Bohemian crown, and in Hungary, the immense landholdings of a handful of dynasties connected to the Viennese court underlines that for them serving the emperor was hardly an economic necessity — indeed their landed incomes were a precondition for successfully entering the imperial *cursus honorum*.[21] The impressive number of palaces built in the city and outskirts of Vienna after the 1680s shows that these dynasties saw no apparent contradiction between demonstrating their dynastic ambitions, and loyally serving the emperor. Interestingly, neither do the emperors seem to have been bothered by the splendid palaces of their noble servants, as they sought legitimation rather in tradition and religion, than in personal grandeur. Thus, while at court the French grandees held a more exalted position, in the country at large the dynasties of Habsburg courtiers remained more powerful. Most French dynasties of court dignitaries, moreover, were more dependent on the income generated by serving at court.

20 See the lucid discussion by Leonhard Horowski, 'Pouvez-vous trop donner pour une chose si essentielle? Eine prosopographische Studie der Obersten Chargen am Hof von Versailles', *Mitteilungen der Residenzenkommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* 11, 1 (2001), pp. 32–53, and for finance Daniel Dessert's *Argent, pouvoir et société au grand siècle* (Paris, 1984).

21 See A. Pecar, 'Die Ökonomie der Ehre. Resources, Zeremoniell und Selbstdarstellungspraxis des höfischen Adels am Kaiserhof Karls VI (1711–1740)' (unpublished dissertation, Cologne 2001), forthcoming as *Die Ökonomie der Ehre. Der höfische Adel am Kaiserhof Karls VI. (1711–1740)* (Darmstadt, 2003) *Symbolische Kommunikation in der Vormoderne* 5.

Faction and favourites

One crucial domain remains to be discussed: decision-making, or the ties between household and council. In the Habsburg lands, no sharp borders separated service in the household and in the council: it is revealing that the highest rank on ceremonial occasions at court was that of honorary councillor. A group of vested families held supreme office in both spheres, and courtiers were seen just as relevant in decision-making as conference ministers. Even after Haugwitz's reforms, we cannot picture the household as an unpolitical environment, though its role in formal decision-making was clearly becoming less impressive. As late as 1772, the precedence of the high steward over all other state servants was explicitly confirmed — though arguably by that time, this supremacy was somewhat specious.[22] In France, formal decision-making remained outside the domain of most great courtiers in Louis XIV's personal reign, but they recaptured it in the regency, and some would wield ministerial power in the second half of the century.

The informal web of friendships and influences can never fully be grasped, if only because most relevant communications will not have been put into writing. With a massive array of sources, we can try to reconstruct factions and intrigues at court in a short time span. For longer periods, we can hope to uncover recurring sources of influence, and establish patterns of conflict. David Starkey's equation of access and power helped to highlight the 'political' relevance of domestic service and intimacy.[23] Access to the ruler, however, came in many forms and at many levels of hierarchy: friends from youth, governors, preceptors, confessors, chamber servants, companions on military adventures or otherwise formative experiences, councillors, and mistresses were among those most likely to achieve lasting influence.[24] Lower-ranking servants and companions offered relatively untroubled solace to rulers: chamber valets were prominent at both courts, dwarves conspicuously present at the Habsburg court. Senior domestic officers and important ministers certainly had the opportunity to find the ruler's ear, but their high status or knowledge of state secrets made confidence dangerous as well as probable — no ruler wanted to be perceived as a *roi fainéant*. Exceptional favour and sharp disgrace were never far apart, as the tragic ending of many favourites, and the habitual exiles of French ministers indicate.

Favour and faction are two sides of the same phenomenon. Proximity to the ruler, and power in the ministry were major assets at court. In July 1754 Luynes noted that the 'party' around D'Argenson had '... *beaucoup d'amis, mais non*

22 See HHStA ZA Prot 70 for a discussion of the *Obersthofmeister's* prerogatives in 1772, fols 159r–170r.

23 D. Starkey, 'Representation Through Intimacy. A Study in the Symbolism of Monarchy and Court Office in Early-Modern England', in *Symbols and Sentiments. Cross-Cultural Studies in Symbolism*. I. Lewis, ed. (London, 1977), pp. 187–224 and his introduction in *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London, 1987).

24 On all aspects of favour, see the profound study by N. Le Roux, *La faveur du roi. Mignons et courtisans au temps des derniers Valois (vers 1547–vers 1589)* (Paris, 2000).

25 Luynes [Charles Philippe d'Albert, duc de], *Mémoires du duc de Luynes sur la cour de Louis XV*, L. Dussieux and E. Soulié, eds (17 vols, Paris, 1860–5), XIII, pp. 430–1, 436–7 (July 1754), quote on p. 437 about Pierre-Marc de Voyer de Paulmy, Comte d'Argenson, secretary for war, and Jean Baptiste Machault d'Arnouville, *contrôleur-général* and *garde des sceaux*.

pas dans le ministère et fort peu dans les courtisans qui approchent du roi'.[25] While factions are reported at both courts throughout the early modern age, we have reason to doubt the solidity and longevity of these alignments. Diplomats, professionally committed to uncovering intrigues at the courts they visited, may have perceived combinations that would have surprised the alleged allies, and the same may hold true for the reports of courtiers fretting over the successes of their rivals When we have several detailed reports for one single period, the divergences are often striking. Was there truly a 'Spanish' party among Bohemian nobles around 1600, or did it loom large mostly in the minds of the Calvinist beholders, echoed by later Czech historians? Party labels, so much is clear, were often invented as a slur: factions did not publicize their secretive activities and were rendered manifest mostly by the outcry of their opponents.

Faction in Vienna has often been connected to geographical origin, with Germans, Spaniards, Italians, and Bohemians recurring from Ferdinand I to Charles VI. These regional labels were thought to partly overlap with policy orientations: the hereditary lands versus the empire; war against France or war against the Ottomans. In her 1751 political testament Maria Theresa still condemned the overly close ties of ministers and courtiers with their native provinces. Closer scrutiny suggests that connections among the main actors in household and government were both more personal and more volatile, changing according to occasion. We tend to define 'politics' as top-level decision-making; yet ambitious persons at court, whether in Vienna or in Versailles, were usually looking for something else. They were interested in finding a suitably prestigious office, and advancing their dynastic interests, more than in meddling in the details of policy. Only in particularly challenging choices, or when decisions had a direct impact on their interests, would larger groups be drawn into policy matters. In other situations, they were happy to leave the details to specialists and devoted advisers. The day-to-day distribution of favours, material as well as honorific, occupied the minds of most court-related elites more often than the formulation of policies. Conflicts over precedence, or over coveted nominations, moreover, might give rise to more disputes than decisions pertaining to religion or warfare.

Serious instances of factional strife in France, especially during regencies, inevitably included *princes du sang*, bastards, and the highest princely dynasties. Nor did this tendency stop after the Fronde. Proximity to the succession structured alignments in the last decade of Louis XIV's reign, and determined the conflicts of the Orléans, Condé, and royal bastards in the early eighteenth-century. Louis XVI's reign likewise would be soured by royal siblings. The royal family, evidently, was rife with potential for conflict. In Vienna the role of dynastic siblings was less marked, and courtiers never came near that elevated rank. After Rudolf II's tragic ending, archdukes were usually loyal, yet distant, ruling their own provinces in the name of their crowned relation. There are several major exceptions: the death of emperor-elect Ferdinand IV suddenly turned Leopold-William into a serious rival for young Leopold's imperial election. Towards the end of Leopold's reign, Joseph was anxious to assert himself, and his group of reformers served as a shadow cabinet, more or less like the circle around the duc de Bourgogne. If Joseph had

not died in 1711, and his brother Charles' Spanish adventure had still failed, the latter's return to Vienna could have compromised dynastic peace, though a suitably prestigious appanage in Italy or the Low Countries might have solved the problem. In the eighteenth century, archdukes and archduchesses resident in Vienna were never as constant and vocal a force of opposition as the French princes — though the co-regency of Maria-Theresa and Joseph was never entirely easy.

A crucial question now arises: were the dynamics of access and favour less important after 1660, or after 1700? Did the strengthening of administrative institutions render less relevant the personal element in decision-making? After the death of his most trusted ministers, Louis XIV increasingly relied on Madame de Maintenon. Courtiers sought her support, and saw her as the '*fidèle interprète des pensées du roi*'.[26] The *principal ministre* and the influential mistress were conspicuously present in the eighteenth century. Cardinal Dubois, briefly serving as first minister, noted that control over the distribution of honours was of vital importance; he added that all communication with the king had to go through him. In France, we find a greater number of notorious favourites, to a certain extent able to monopolise access and the distribution of honours, than in Vienna. Yet favour in its various forms was near the heart of both courts from the sixteenth into the eighteenth century. The ruler's isolated central position ensured a persistent need for trust and intimacy. Favourites tended to hold sway mostly in the early years of an inexperienced young ruler, or in the last years of an elderly ruler confronted with declining health and an eager successor. I see no major differences here between the familiar eighteenth-century instances and earlier examples. In 1767, two years after the death of her beloved husband, Maria Theresa assured one of her confidants, Count Sylva Tarouca '*... qu'il lui était aussi nécessaire dans sa vieillesse et décrépitude que dans sa jeunesse et étourderie*'.[27] The Cardinal de Fleury served the younger Louis XV, Madame de Pompadour dominated his later years; Maurepas was a powerful influence in Louis XVI's first years of rule, and the king depended more heavily on the support of Marie-Antoinette in the years following the failure of the *assemblée des notables*. Monarchy became more stable after the protracted phase of religious upheaval, and administrative institutions carried a larger share of the machinery of governance. The operation of these institutions, however, was still based on the personal setting of power around the dynastic ruler.

Conclusion

This discussion of the entwined domains of household, ceremony, and power at two courts was necessarily brief. Each of these domains could be discussed with more concrete detail. Yet ceremony cannot be understood without knowledge of the diverging developments of honorary office at different courts, nor can we understand the contrast between the relatively serene *Hofburg* and turbulent

26 M. Bryant, 'Françoise d'Aubigné, Marquise de Maintenon: Religion, Power and Politics. A Study in Circles of Influence during the Later Reign of Louis XIV, 1684–1715', (unpublished PhD thesis, London, 2001), p. 274, citing Villars' memoirs.

27 *Correspondence secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Cte de Mercy-Argenteau*, (3 vols, Paris, 1874–5) I, pp. 146–7 (the empress reporting the death of Sylva-Tarouca to Mercy, 1 April 1771) quote in note 1.

Versailles, if we do not take into account the discrepancies in rank and power of the court dignitaries. The reduced, exclusive establishment at Versailles, and the expanding, inclusive household in Vienna were successful as points of orientation for a nobility that was only marginally present at these courts. Court office, held by the upper nobility, was the *nec plus ultra* of rank and power in both realms — even if it did not always bring direct political influence. The household, including a higher proportion of nobles in Versailles than in Vienna, matched the idealised image of the temple of dynastic power only during well-orchestrated highpoints. Yet these traditional public occasions were subject to negligence, and disputes. Daily life at court, moreover, was never rigidly ceremonialised: ceremony and order at court proved well-nigh unattainable ideals.

Open rebellion became an aberration in the later seventeenth century. Yet in the centre of ceremony as well as decision-making, the ruler remained vulnerable. I see no masterminds hiding behind a screen of silence, no weaklings incapacitated by their character flaws, but individuals confronted with a structural burden that was frequently too much for them. In their proximity, confidants could offer solace, but they were not always disinterested. Those who approach the king, Louis XIV noted in his memoirs, are the first to see his weaknesses, and are likely to take advantage of them.[28] Ministers and courtiers were players in a game, the rules of which remained basically unchanged.

Jeroen Duindam

Jeroen Duindam was born in 1962 and is a lecturer at the History Department of Utrecht University, The Netherlands. He received his PhD in 1992 with a critical study of Norbert Elias's The Court Society. *In 1995 it was published in a revised and translated edition:* Myths of Power: Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court *(Amsterdam 1995). Cambridge University Press published his* Vienna & Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550s–1780s *in August 2003.*

28 Louis XIV, *Mémoires*, Dreyss, ed., II, p. 404.