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Early Modern Questions About the Post-Revolutionary Court

Jeroen Duindam

1 Reinventing Tradition

Without a doubt, the Revolutionary decades around 1800 transformed the format and imagination of political power. Royalty lost its largely uncontested status: a republican alternative to royal power had been created that persisted successfully in political practice as well as in the minds of its friends and foes. Monarchs adapted to changing circumstances. Reformist princes as well as diehard conservatives needed to safeguard the support of their elites and convince the people at large that loyal support of monarchy was in its best interests. Elected representative bodies and public debate were becoming essential components of the political process in many countries. Prohibiting such innovations by invoking the scrupulous continuation of ancient customs was still possible, but in the presence of clear alternatives, the argument was no longer self-evident.

At the same time, revolution and warfare restructured the geopolitical landscape. The Holy Roman Empire was dissolved, leaving a tableau of two leading German powers with a series of smaller players. Russia consummated its eighteenth-century ascendancy to great power status with a marked presence at the heart of European politics. France regained some of its former stature, while Britain reached supremacy as the prime global-imperial hegemon. The Dutch United Provinces, Europe's republican cuckoo in the nest, now re-emerged as a kingdom buttressed by the European great powers to act as a bulwark against French ambition.

The changing balance between royal governments, elected assemblies, and an increasingly vociferous press has ranked high among the themes of historians dealing with the nineteenth century, as has the "system" of European and global balances of power and its breakdowns. Royal courts have figured far less prominently than either constitutional debates or international relations, two classics of nineteenth-century history.

Fifty years ago, much the same could have been said about early modern history. National state formation and the rise of diplomacy persisted as dominant themes of traditional historiography. The steady professionalisation and diversification of royal government, it was assumed, must have marginalised

the domestic setting around kings. Councils, chancelleries, and estates assemblies were seen as pointing to future developments, while households were viewed as outmoded sites of elite vanity, relevant only for their cultural patronage. Thus until the 1970s the study of the royal court was left largely to art historians and devotees of royal biography. This changed gradually in the decades following, with a steady trickle of works examining royal courts in the 1970s widening to reach significant proportions from the 1990s onwards.

New interpretations of the court were generated in cooperative efforts by specialists of late medieval and early modern history, yet their results have not systematically been applied to the nineteenth century.¹ There are several reasons for this failure to connect perspectives. A first cause can be found in the focus of early modern history on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the eighteenth century enjoying special status as the start of the Enlightenment and the “age of revolutions”. This tendency appears to be stronger in Britain than on the European continent: typically, Oxford University Press lists books under the label “Early Modern History (1500–1700)”.² Nevertheless, in most places the eighteenth century and most particularly its second half stand somewhat apart from the main body of early modern studies, as the beginning of an age of profound change, a *Sattelzeit* leading to modernity. Few researchers have adopted a *longue durée* perspective, tracing changes in the royal court from the later Middle Ages into the early nineteenth century.³

A second ground for the compartmentalisation of research may reside in the trajectory of the court itself. Indeed, courts changed profoundly in the

1 See the numerous important volumes of the Göttinger Residenzenforschung, Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen bringing together specialists from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, dealing among others with court ordinances, ceremony and space, education at court, women, favourites, courts and cities; Vale, Malcolm: *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe, 1270–1380*, Oxford 2001 for a wide comparative angle and with a sound understanding of early modern courts. See among the few early works dealing with the court in the nineteenth century Möckl, Karl (ed.): *Hof und Hofgesellschaft in den deutschen Staaten im 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert*. Boppard 1990; Mansel, Philip: *The Court of France 1789–1830*, Cambridge 1991.

2 See <http://global.oup.com/academic/category/arts-and-humanities/history/history-by-period/early-modern-history-1500-to-1700/>, last visited 17.1.2022.

3 My comparative research on Vienna and Versailles (Duindam, Jeroen: *Vienna and Versailles. The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals 1550–1780*, Cambridge 2003) was initially planned to consider the late seventeenth century; including the sixteenth- and eighteenth-century phases of reform proved necessary and allowed comparisons over time as well as between the two courts; see a recent effort at long-term interpretation from the eighteenth into the twentieth century, Persson, Fabian: *Survival and Revival in Sweden's Court and Monarchy, 1718–1930*, London 2020.

course of the eighteenth century, in atmosphere as well as in scale and activities. Rulers and court elites were themselves increasingly hesitant about costly display and exuberant ceremony: they followed, and in some respects guided, the changing tastes of their elite environment. The adoption of simpler court dress, the reduction of forms of conspicuous deference and public religious ceremonies, the opening of royal collections and gardens to the public, the admission of wider audiences to court festivities, and the cultivation of spontaneous interaction with the populace by monarchs: these tendencies can be found at most European courts after 1750, though with substantial differences in timing and intensity. The concern about finances – in itself an aspect of court management recurring in all ages – reached exceptional acuity in the 1760s. A series of budget cuts marks the decades between the end of the Seven Years' War and the onset of the French Revolution. In the 1780s everywhere court establishments had been severely curtailed by reformers in royal service, before the phase of open contestation led to the questioning of royalty itself. If courts of the later eighteenth century could plausibly be presented as shadows of their seventeenth-century predecessors, why should historians of the early nineteenth century be eager to pick up the pieces of this increasingly obsolete institution?

Periodisation and pre-revolutionary court reform thus may help to explain the unwarranted neglect of the royal court in the early nineteenth century.⁴ While the question how these institutions responded to revolution and restoration has been asked, it was addressed mostly in general terms. The famous volume on the *Invention of Tradition* edited by Hobsbawm and Ranger, to which David Cannadine contributed a highly influential chapter on modern British monarchy, gave rise to extended debate. Any historian of the court in earlier periods might have interposed that the combination of continuity and invention had always been common practice. Most courts in history cherished tradition and yet at the same time invented ways to adapt to changing everyday concerns. Practices were adapted constantly yet often unintentionally, in consequence of the varying dispositions of individual princes, the fashions of

4 While much more was published on monarchy, several imperial courts did receive some attention, see the early but somewhat lopsided work by Röhl on Wilhelm II's court as the centre of politics, who used Elias's *Königsmechanismus* as a model to understand Wilhelm's rule-by-dividing, but provides some information on costs and staffs in the third chapter on the court: Röhl, John C. G.: *Kaiser, Hof und Staat. Wilhelm II. und die deutsche Politik*, Munich 1987 (translated as *The Kaiser and his Court. Wilhelm II and the Government of Germany*, Cambridge 1994). See more recently two detailed examinations of the Napoleonic courts (first and second empires), Branda, Pierre: *Napoléon et ses hommes: La Maison de l'Empereur, 1804–1815*, Paris 2011; Mauduit, Xavier: *Le ministère du faste: la Maison de l'empereur Napoléon III*, Paris 2016.

the moment, the example of competitors, the impact of war, disease, and dislocation, or simply because routines were forgotten and details irretrievably buried in messy court records. The German term *Reinszenierung* corresponds to this process better than ‘invention’, which suggests carefully planned action.

In the context of current writing on modern monarchy, David Cannadine’s 2004 remarks deserve to be cited in full:

But what do modern monarchs do when they reign, and how should we most appropriately write about what they do? In part, they continue their traditional functions, although usually in a scaled-back or altered way. But those of us who write on modern monarchies know less than we should about their ancient, medieval and early modern predecessors, and so fail to appreciate sufficiently what those traditional functions were, or just how much they have been diminished and adapted in more recent times.⁵

It seems wholly appropriate and long overdue to reassess the “traditional functions” picked up by nineteenth-century monarchs from a *longue durée* perspective. The extended literature available on the nitty-gritty of early modern court organisation can help to set the agenda for the study of the court in the nineteenth century, and thus alleviate the problem mentioned by Cannadine. This can help to answer several important questions. Did the royal household as an institution peter out or thrive? To what extent was the royal household with its domestic functions a political domain? How did connections between courts and nobles, urban elites, and the population at large take shape? Did the court’s ceremonial routines and interactions with the public change substantially? Answers have been nuanced and diverse, but several clear positions can be gleaned from the literature. This paper will trace such research outcomes on the early modern court before relating them explicitly to the early nineteenth century and provide some tentative first answers related to the Habsburg court in Vienna.

2 Elias and Beyond

The first publication in 1969 of Norbert Elias’s 1933 *Habilitationsschrift* in revised and expanded form as *Die höfische Gesellschaft*, followed by translations in French (1974) and English (1983), initiated a period of renewed interest in the history of the court. *The Court Society* can be read as the empirical

5 Cannadine’s inaugural lecture as Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Professor of British History, delivered on 12 January 2004, printed in Cannadine, David: *Making History Now and Then: Discoveries, Controversies and Explorations*, Houndmills/New York 2008, p. 39–58, quote on p. 41; similar statements repeated on p. 48 and p. 50.

case study corroborating the two volumes of the *Civilizing Process*, published in 1939 and reissued in 1969. Together, these works made a profound impression. Not only did Elias's ambitious theoretical framework convince researchers that the royal court was a subject of great relevance; it also gave them a model to understand and explain courtly patterns of behaviour. *The Court Society* imparted academic stature to a field associated with gossipy anecdotal history and royalist nostalgia.

Elias combined a loose reading of familiar sources (notably the memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon and the *Encyclopédie*) and reliance on historical scholarship produced around 1900 with remarkable intellectual acuity and powerful imagery. His sociological model upgraded the interpretation of the court: this was no vain show of elite profligacy, but an instrument allowing the prince to satisfy the ambitions of nobles while at the same time subjecting them to the demands of the state. Louis XIV, Elias argued, could rely on bourgeois social climbers to strengthen the machinery of state power without openly confronting his noble companions, who were lured into the court and kept in check by the king's manipulation of their ceremonial status battles. Conspicuous expenditure engendered by ceaseless competition at court increased the dependence of noble grandees on the king's coffers. Once they had been tied to the court through these processes, the nobles lost their foothold in the regions as well as their martial allure: gradually they turned into a refined but emasculated courtly elite. In the process, they unwittingly exchanged their military and political clout for a form of courtly behaviour that signalled cultural and social supremacy. The patterns of behaviour enforced in the first instance were soon cherished as elite style: *Fremdzwang* became *Selbstzwang*, and this "civilised" mode of behaviour provided a powerful ideal for society at large.

Thus, *The Court Society* functioned as the main example of the process of civilisation. At the same time, however, it represented Elias's effort to evaluate French kingship along the lines of Weber's understanding of *Veralltäglicdung* or charismatic power. Hereditary kingship, Elias rightly surmised, frequently put on the throne figures of modest competence. The set of interlocking mechanisms outlined in *The Court Society* would allow even such mediocrities, who were themselves constrained by the strictures (*Verkettung*) of court life, to rule by dividing.

The legacy of this powerful model has been long-lasting as well as problematic. On the one hand, Elias perceptively brought together key characteristics of court life. Ceremony and decorum played a role at most courts in history. Students of rulership in any context, moreover, recognised the relevance of distribution of offices, perks, and honours. Likewise, the concept of *Nähe zum Thron* as determining status and thus potentially uprooting hierarchies could

be confirmed in many settings: court honours had the potential to impact social hierarchies. This, in turn, underscored Elias's point that such honours attached wider groups of people to the royal household, thus forming a "court society".⁶ On the other hand, the specific combination of these characteristics in a *Teufelszirkel* of closely interacting mechanisms defining the changing relationship between king and nobles breaks down upon closer inspection. It simply does not fit the circumstances of the French court from Francis I to Louis XIV, or, for that matter, the situation of nobles at any early modern European court.⁷ The persuasive model provided by Elias still often serves as the starting point for discussions of the royal court in ancient, modern, and global history, at times without taking into account the problems in the empirical substantiation of the key example underpinning the model.⁸

More generally, two fundamental problems undermine the credibility of Elias's powerful vision. Firstly, the acumen required for the role of the manipulator-king was beyond the reach of most hereditary monarchs: it fitted neither their upbringing nor their need for companionship. Elias's contextual

6 Spawforth, Antony (ed.): *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*, Cambridge 2011 zooms in on the question of a wider "court society"; see a breakdown of "domestication" for various groups at court in Duindam, Jeroen: *Versailles, Vienna, and Beyond: Changing Views of Household and Government in Early Modern Europe*, in: idem et al. (eds.): *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires. A Global Perspective*. Leiden/Boston 2011, p. 401–431.

7 See Duindam, Jeroen: *Myths of Power. Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court*, Amsterdam 1995 for a detailed discussion of *Die höfische Gesellschaft*. Recent work on the history of European nobilities, suggests a remarkable resilience and the formation of a leading group of nobles (mixed with social climbers) successfully maintaining its grip on power into the nineteenth century, e. g. Scott, Hamish (ed.): *The European Nobilities. The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, London 1995, I–II and the forthcoming syntheses currently planned by the same author for Oxford University Press.

8 See a successful example in Spawforth: *The Court and Court Society*; a balanced recent discussion in Choda, Kamil Cyprian et al. (eds.): *Gaining and Losing Imperial Favour in Late Antiquity: Representation and Reality*, Leiden/Boston 2019, p. 3, notably p. 41–44, p. 66, p. 179. Note the repetition of models largely discarded for the early modern age, such as domestication, in the literature on modern courts, see e. g. Boudon, Jacques-Olivier (ed.): *La cour impériale sous le Premier et le Second Empire*, Paris 2016, with Elias's view cited in its unmitigated form by Boudon on p. 9, and notably also by Petiteau, Natalie: *La cour impériale. Espace politique ou espace social?*, in: *ibid.*, p. 31–47 (who perceptively picks up Elias's comment on Weber's charismatic power and its *Veralltäglichung* on p. 31, p. 39). The same can be said about Röhl's early work on Wilhelm II's court (note that Röhl reversed Elias's position on the political relevance of court office). In works on courts and palaces throughout the world, Elias's classic depiction of nobles at the French court tends to be the primary comparative point of reference and connection to the European court, see e. g. recently Siebert, Martina et al. (eds.): *Making the Palace Machine Work: Mobilizing People, Objects, and Nature*, Amsterdam 2021, p. 52 and more particularly on the nobility's financial dependence p. 61.

explanation of royal power, in fact, confirmed overstated views of royal powers and thus prolonged the classic image of seventeenth-century “absolutism” – clearly not the intention of his subtle model. Secondly, a tension arises between two notions at the heart of *The Court Society*: the importance of *Nähe zum Thron* and the view of domestic dignitaries as pawns isolated from political power. These elite servants not only enjoyed daily proximity with the king; they could also grant or bar access to others. Stating that proximity to the monarch defined rank, how could Elias define these officeholders as nonentities in terms of political power? Household dignitaries cherished lasting access as a right attached to their rank and office. They acted as gatekeepers and organisers of daily life around the king, including the ceremonies described in detail by Elias. There is no indication that Elias appreciated these roles, nor any sign that he took notice of the dense records left by these officeholders, stressing their very real roles in court life.

While Elias had become a dominant influence in continental European historiography, distinctly different views were taking shape in the United States and Britain.⁹ By the late 1980s, several publications had questioned Louis XIV’s “absolutism”, starting a wider reappraisal of early modern European royal government.¹⁰ Their conclusions on the limitations of royal power and the persistence of noble resilience in the regions as well as at the centre implicitly challenged Elias’s model. In the context of debates on Tudor government an illuminating perspective on the relationship between household and government emerged, a powerful antidote to traditional views of state building. In his work on the Tudor court, David Starkey highlighted the political relevance of access. He pointed out that the steady consolidation of specialised bodies

9 See the remarkable contrast between Dickens, A. G. (ed.): *The Courts of Europe. Politics, Patronage and Royalty 1400–1800*, London 1977 and Buck, A. et al. (eds.): *Europäische Hofkultur im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert. Vorträge und Referate gehalten anlässlich des Kongresses des Wolfenbütteler Arbeitskreises für Renaissanceforschung und des Internationalen Arbeitskreises für Barockliteratur in der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel vom 4. bis 8. September 1979*, Hamburg 1981 (*Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung*, vol. 8). Two examples of work somewhat uncritically following Elias: Plodeck, Karin: *Hofstruktur und Hofzeremoniell in Brandenburg-Ansbach vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert. Zur Rolle des Herrschaftskultes im absolutistischen Gesellschaftssystem*, Ansbach 1972; Ehalt, Hubert Christian: *Ausdrucksformen absolutistischer Herrschaft. Der Wiener Hof im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Wien 1980 (*Sozial- und Wirtschaftshistorische Studien*, vol. 14).

10 Beik, William: *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc*. Cambridge 1985 (*Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History*); Mettam, Roger: *Power and Faction in Louis XIV’s France*, Oxford etc. 1988; Evans, R. J. W.: *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1550–1700: An Interpretation*, Oxford etc. 1979.

pertaining to justice, finance, and decision-making may have added up to a “Tudor revolution in government”, but noted that access to the king remained of the utmost importance in all settings, comprising domestic as well as administrative domains. This was a boon shared by the privy council and the privy chamber:

The privy council, in other words, was “privy” in the same way that the privy chamber was “privy”. Both were supremely intimate with the king: the latter were his personal, confidential attendants; the former his personal, confidential advisers.¹¹

Starkey argued that proximity and trust could potentially turn all the king’s intimates into political actors: they had ample opportunity to find the king’s ear. He substantiated his argument by pointing to delicate missions performed by the king’s loyal companions in the chamber.

Starkey’s remarks have given rise to a formula that expresses a direct contradiction to Elias’s view of household service as apolitical: access equals power. While Starkey overstated his valid point by presenting the privy chamber as more important than the privy council, his observation remains vital.¹² Domestic servants enjoying access were not as a rule powerful in the same sense as leading ministers. Conversely, leading statesmen did not necessarily figure among the king’s intimates; on the contrary, royals frequently had mixed feelings about dominant advisors. Nevertheless, Starkey’s formula forces us to think beyond the organigram of formal government institutions and take seriously the power potential of access and proximity. It cautions against the anachronistic assumption that household office was essentially apolitical and, more generally, raises doubt about the political relevance of formal descriptions of offices and their duties.¹³

11 Starkey, David: Court, Council, and Nobility in Tudor England, in: Asch, Ronald/Birke, Adolf M. (eds.): Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age, c. 1450–1650, New York/Oxford 1991, p. 175–203, quote at p. 200. For Starkey’s quarrel with his *Doktorvater* see Elton, G. R.: Tudor government, in: Historical Journal 31 (1988) p. 425–434 and Starkey, David: A reply: Tudor government: the facts?, in: Historical Journal 31 (1988), p. 921–931; idem (ed.): The English Court: from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War, London 1987.

12 Mears, Natalie: Historiographical Reviews: Courts, Courtiers, and Culture in Tudor England, in: The Historical Journal 46:3 (2003), p. 703–722, noting comments on Starkey’s contention, also referring to the female privy chamber under Elizabeth, p. 707f.

13 See Raeymaekers, Dries/Derks, Sebastiaan (eds.): The Key to Power? The Culture of Access in Princely Courts, 1400–1750, Leiden/Boston 2016.

Elias did not play a role either in Starkey's work or in the critical research on absolutism taking shape mostly in Britain and the United States. At the same time, his influence remained quite strong in continental Europe, where most research on the court took his model for granted until 1990.¹⁴ A first incisive critical reading of Elias appeared only in 1986, with Aloys Winterling's dissertation on the court of the Cologne Electors. In 1991, Ronald Asch brought together Elias's model with the revision of absolutism, in the introduction of an edited volume that marked the beginning of a new phase.¹⁵ A second generation of court history soon emerged, characterised by a more critical appreciation of Elias, a questioning of classic assumptions about absolute monarchy, the integration of American, British, and continental European scholarship on courts and monarchs, and, vitally, a far stronger basis in archival research.¹⁶ Theorising about the "function" of the court on the basis of a handful of familiar settings and ceremonies described in printed sources had long coexisted with a relative paucity of information on the basic outlines and activities of the court. From the 1990s onwards archival research helped to fill in the details for many courts about staffs, hierarchies, responsibilities, tasks, remuneration, numbers, costs, daily routines, annual calendars of seasonal movement and religious festivities – and, last but not least, overlaps between the offices and routines of household and government. Rather than tracing individual contributions to this rapidly expanding literature, I will outline tendencies and at the same time suggest questions they raise for the discussion of nineteenth-century courts.

3 Household Outlines

European courts shared a roughly similar structure, dictated by domestic needs: staffs for the table, chamber, stables, chapel, hunt and protection can be found around all princes. Three leading noble officeholders presided over most courts: the steward, the chamberlain, and the master of the stables (with an international hotchpotch of variants for these titles). The marshal appears as a

¹⁴ See the works cited in note 9.

¹⁵ Asch, Ronald: Introduction: Court and Household from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century, in: idem/ Birke, Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility, p. 1–38, on p. 2 f., p. 8 mention Elias; there are sixteen references to Elias in the book as a whole.

¹⁶ Winterling, Aloys: *Der Hof der Kurfürsten von Köln: 1688–1794; eine Fallstudie zur Bedeutung "abolutistischer" Hofhaltung*, Bonn 1986 (Veröffentlichungen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein, insbesondere das alte Erzbistum Köln, vol. 15); Asch/Birke, Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility.

key figure at German and Scandinavian courts, but held more limited responsibilities for quartering and justice elsewhere. Almoners, guard captains, and masters of the hunt can be added to this exclusive list. Noble deputies and lesser servants were present in each of these staffs. The commoner element was proportionally far more important than the noble upper layer: in this sense courts reflected the social pyramid of society: they cannot be described only as a polished world of noble elite interaction *à la* Castiglione.

Mix-ups in numerical assessments of the court have been the rule rather than the exception, and can be explained easily. The guesstimates presented by contemporary diplomats and visitors are usually far more impressive than the numbers found on lists of dignitaries produced to underpin royal grandeur. Yet a still substantially lower count can be traced in the payrolls of the court, where only those regularly paid and sustained figure. All courts had an inner core of servants whose attendance was required on a daily basis, surrounded by an outer ring of part-time dignitaries, circled by a loose group of *ad hoc* visitors flocking to the court only incidentally. Occasions attracting these outer groups dotted the annual calendar of court activities, but were concentrated mostly in the season spent in the winter residence, from late autumn to early spring, comprising Christmas, the Carnival season and Holy Week. Travel to hunting lodges and journeys dictated by political and military reasons took place mostly in the remaining months, in which only a rump establishment followed the touring ruler. Royals throughout the late medieval and early modern period retained substantial mobility, but they all in due time defined a main winter abode as the fixed core of their peregrinations.

Taking into account seasonal variation and conflicting information in the sources, it is possible to sketch the long-term development of numbers serving in royal households. All major courts of Europe experienced a protracted phase of expansion from the late fifteenth century to the mid-seventeenth century, ascending from around five hundred to more than one thousand permanent staff. Not unexpectedly, with more than two thousand staff, the French king's *maison* surpassed the Spanish, English and Habsburg-imperial courts by several hundreds. It may come as a surprise that inflation of numbers rarely was the intention of rulers, who actively tried to prevent or rectify it in most cases. Growth in the century between 1550 and 1650 was often a consequence of political crisis, with officeholders bringing in their supporters. The planned contraction that occurred in several phases in Spain, England and France after the 1650s, therefore, can be seen as an indication of strength. This was certainly the case for Louis XIV's reforms of the court from the 1660s onwards, establishing maximum numbers of privileged officeholders while hiring cheaper labour through outsourcing whenever this was necessary.

The second half of the seventeenth century was a turning point for most European monarchies in this respect, yet for the Holy Roman Empire proliferation of numbers continued in the century following the Peace of Westphalia, triggered by competition among the main contending houses seeking recognition by the exclusive circle of European royalty.¹⁷

These developments can be clarified by relating them to the hierarchies of domestic officeholders and servants. Leading court office was restricted to high nobles. Some proliferation of offices was visible here, mostly among chamber servants – note, for example, the accumulation of chamberlain, master of the wardrobe, and gentlemen of the chamber at the French court. These upper echelons could hope to obtain major benefits from their service at court: they stood at the peak of the noble elite. In the mid-level ranks of noble honorary officers, inflation was more substantial and boons were far less likely. Typically, this level included chamberlains, table servants, and equerries (*écuyers* in the stables) who were expected to serve part-time on the basis of rotation (*service par terme*) or who obtained the right to attend court without any remuneration or fixed obligation to serve. This noble outer ring of the court would be expanded frequently by nominations during royal festivities. In addition, the titular offices of councillors and secretaries could be multiplied, with their status only nominally related to actual service as advisors or pen-pushers. Finally, the lower service echelons of the household, too, had their honorary extensions, connecting the court to urban trades and crafts, and privileging purveyors of the household.

A repeated pattern of inflation of honours and attempts at reduction can be found at most courts. Rising numbers risked undercutting the exclusivity and hence could diminish the attraction of court office. Conversely, the reduction of numbers confirmed the prestige of the remaining officeholders. Oscillations were caused mostly by the honorific extensions of the court. Increases induced by the need for artisans, servants, and labourers were usually limited, gradual, and more lasting. Inflation and adaptation can also be observed in the royal orders of chivalry created in the later Middle Ages, designed to distinguish the top echelon of noble state servants and members of the dynasty. Inflation of numbers could lead to the establishment of a more exclusive order; in 1578, Henry III of France created the *Ordre du Saint-Esprit*, replacing the *Ordre de Saint-Michel* as the prime royal order. Moreover, orders were expanded

17 See the Brandenburg example elaborated by Stollberg-Rilinger, Barbara: *Höfische Öffentlichkeit. Zur zeremoniellen Selbstdarstellung des brandenburgischen Hofes vor dem europäischen Publikum*, in: *Forschungen zur Brandenburgischen und Preußischen Geschichte*, Neue Folge, Bd. 7 (1997), p. 145–176.

throughout the early modern age, with their membership diversifying to include soldiers, scholars and artists and more generally loyal supporters. For women, too, special orders were created, often with strong religious overtones. This “economy of honour”, initially tied to the royal court, would persist. Napoleon systematically reorganised the system: in this broadened scope it would be adopted by restoration monarchies and modern republics alike.¹⁸

The court usually comprised not only the king’s household, but also semi-independent establishments catering for the queen, the queen-mother, royal brothers, and dynastic youngsters. In 1699, just before the death of Louis XIV’s brother, the assemblage of all royal households added up to ca. five thousand persons. These secondary households, together outnumbering Louis XIV’s *maison* in 1699, could develop into centres of patronage and political trafficking. This was certainly the case for the queen-mother’s household in the early years of kings and the heir-apparent’s household under aging kings. As a consequence of budget cuts and reforms, the secondary households were reduced and increasingly integrated into the main household at some courts, notably in Vienna.

Women were a rare exception among the servants and officeholders in the male household, and they formed a minority even in the households of queens and princesses, where they served in the chamber. The female presence around dynastic women consisted of a hierarchy of lesser servants climbing to senior noble ladies, with a substantial core group of noble girls in their late teens learning manners and awaiting marriage, somewhat like the younger male pages who were educated in the stables. The short-term court service of pages and girls formed another *trait d’union* between royal households and the nobility. Contact between noble girls at court and their male counterparts were strictly regulated – kings nevertheless frequently recruited their mistresses from among them.

Court expenditure was extremely variable, with dynastic visits and marriages or ambitious palace construction absorbing huge sums in peacetime, whereas costs were reduced to a bare minimum in war years. Payment of wages was frequently suspended during wars, when officeholders stepped in with their own funds to maintain a semblance of continuity. Curbing expenditure was an ongoing concern: controllers and bookkeepers were increasingly prominent in court organisation. As a proportion of the budget, courts always ranked below army expenditure and the servicing of debts caused by wars. Even the incidental but forbidding cost of building splendid palaces was dwarfed by military expenditure: the total amount spent on the construction

18 The term is derived from Pečar, Andreas: *Die Ökonomie der Ehre. Der höfische Adel am Kaiserhof Karls VI. (1711–1740)*, Darmstadt 2003.

of Versailles between 1664 and 1715 matched one single average year of military expenditure during the Nine Years' War (1688–1697).¹⁹ In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the average amount spent on the court in Europe's major monarchies decreased in proportion to rising state budgets, from between ten and twenty per cent in the seventeenth century to less than ten per cent in the second half of the eighteenth century.²⁰

To what extent did these patterns continue in the nineteenth century? Let me briefly assess this by considering the case of the Habsburg court in Vienna. Change in the layout of staffs and leading offices remained limited. In 1810, an *Oberceremonienmeister* was added, but this officeholder could not aspire to joining the upper echelon, and he seems to have had a limited impact on court ceremony.²¹ The records of the familiar court staffs continue in familiar formats, but show a tendency to proliferate – the *Vielschreiberei* of servants and administrators, grumbled about by Joseph II, continued unabatedly.²² The same can be said about the inflation of the court, halted and reversed under Joseph. Shortly after the Napoleonic wars, Emperor Franz I's household approached the peak reached under Maria Theresia. Remarkably, the household expanded rapidly in the 1830s and 1840s, moving beyond four thousand persons on the eve of the 1848 revolution. Expansion was concentrated mostly in the lower echelons of service staffs and guards. However, the numbers of *Ordensträger* and *Ehrenämter*, not included in the figure below, were very high: aggregate numbers moved far beyond *ancien régime* levels.

19 Bonney, Richard: Vindication of the Fronde? The Cost of Louis XIV's Versailles Building Programme, in: French History 21:2 (2007), p. 205–225, tables on Versailles, other building projects, and annual military expenditure at p. 213–218.

20 See Duindam, Jeroen: Vienna and Versailles. Materials for Further Comparison and Some Conclusions, in: Zeitenblicke 4:3 (2005), 13.12.2005, URL: http://www.zeitenblicke.de/2005/3/Duindam/index_html, URN: urn:nbn:de:0009-9-2411 (last visited 21.1.2022); assessment of European development in terms of numbers and finances, see idem: Royal Courts, in: The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History. 1350–1750, vol. II: Cultures and Power, ed. by Hamish Scott, Oxford 2015, p. 440–477.

21 See Stekl, Hannes: Der Wiener Hof in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts, in: Möckl, Hof und Hofgesellschaft, p. 17–60, at p. 36 f. See the edition of the new master of ceremonies' attempt at increasing order in 1812, a demarcation of responsibilities rather than a description of ceremonial practice: Schneider, Karin (ed.): Norm und Zeremoniell. Das Etiquette-Normale für den Wiener Hof von circa 1812, Edition und Kommentar, Vienna u. a. 2019.

22 See e. g. HHStA KA StR Präsidialakten 11-1-78 Allerhöchste Entschließungen wegen Geschäftsvereinfachung bei dem Staatsrat und den Hofstellen zur Verminderung der Schreiberei; KA StR Präsidialakten 4. III Organisierung und Instruktionen, 1817–1836: 36 fol. 529–530, 25.2.1818 on *Schreiberei*.

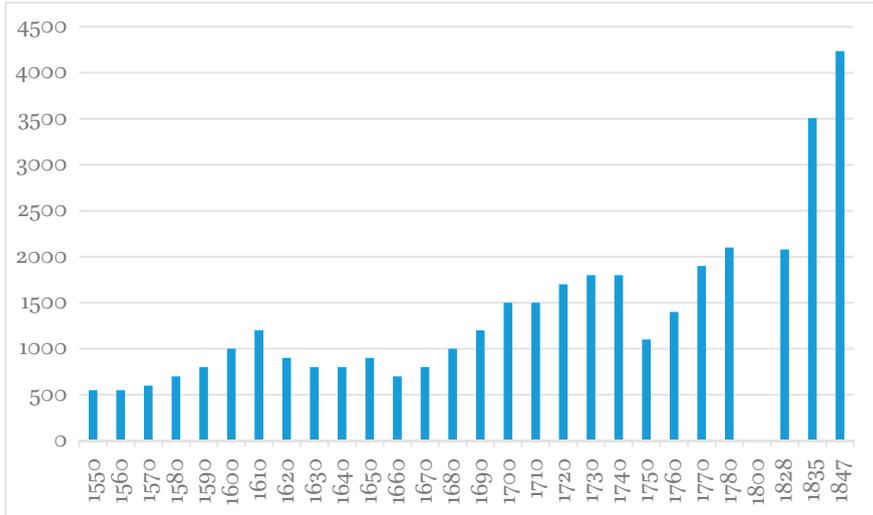


Fig. 3.1 Numbers of the Habsburg court 1550–1847 without secondary household or honorary officers.²³

A more detailed examination along the lines of the volumes recently edited on the Viennese court in the eighteenth century,²⁴ showing not only numbers, but a detailed breakdown in personnel, would make it possible to reach conclusions about continuity among servant families and dignitaries, about the social composition of court staffs, and about the provenance and social background of its numerous honorific extensions.

With these questions awaiting further research, it seems reasonable to view the restoration court in Vienna as adhering to familiar forms, and at the same

23 See Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles, the Courts*; Stekl, *Der Wiener Hof*, p. 22–28. Note the particularly strong inflation of lower personnel and guards and the stability of upper level court dignitaries. This expansion took place under the government of Ferdinand I, who was widely seen as *regierungsunfähig*.

24 Kubiska-Scharl, Irene/Pözl, Michael: *Das Ringen um Reformen. Der Wiener Hof und sein Personal im Wandel (1766–1792)* (Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs, Bd. 60), Innsbruck 2018; idem/idem: *Die Karrieren des Wiener Hofpersonals 1711–1765. Eine Darstellung anhand der Hofkalender und Hofparteiprotokolle*, Innsbruck etc. 2013; Scheutz, Martin/Wührer, Jakob (eds.): *Zu Diensten Ihrer Majestät. Hofordnungen und Instruktionbücher am frühneuzeitlichen Wiener Hof*, Munich 2011. See current research efforts at the Austrian Academy of Sciences: *The Viennese Court. A prosopographical portal* at <http://viecpro.oeaw.ac.at/?lang=en> and *Der Wiener Hof um 1800. Eliten, Herrschaft und Repräsentation (1790–1835)* <http://www.oeaw.ac.at/en/ihb/forschungsbereiche/geschichte-der-habsburgermonarchie/forschung/wiener-hof-um-1800> (last visited 22.1.2022).

time expanding rather than contracting. How does this fit the story of courts elsewhere in Europe? Examples of ongoing research in Prussia presented in this volume suggest post-revolutionary consolidation followed by expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century.²⁵ For Russia, the question is still open, but the court's increased public activities as well as its urgent safety concerns strongly suggest growth.²⁶ Robert Bucholz's long-term examination of the English court reflects some of the tendencies found in the major European courts, and shows that numbers were consolidated at levels somewhat under the pre-revolutionary standard at least until 1837.

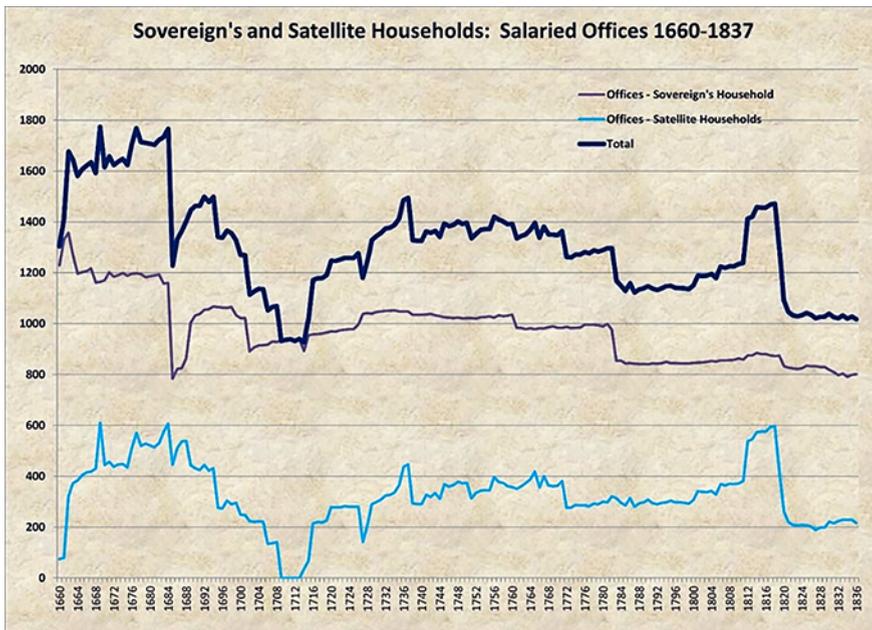


Fig. 3.2 Numbers of salaries officials at the English court 1660–1836.²⁷

25 Materials presented during the Berlin conference by Große, Annelie: *Die Rolle der preußischen Prinzenhöfe im 19. Jahrhundert. Eine finanzhistorische Analyse*, and Bittner, Anja: *Zu Herkunft, Stellung und Funktion des Adels in der preußischen Hofgesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert*, in this volume, p. 107–129 and p. 309–327.

26 McCaffray, Susan P.: *The Winter Palace and the People: Staging and Consuming Russia's Monarchy, 1754–1917*, DeKalb 2018; see also the earlier work by Wortman, Richard S.: *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, vol. 1: *From Peter the Great to the Death of Nicholas I*, Princeton 1995, vol. 2: *From Alexander II to the Abdication of Nicholas II*, Princeton 2000.

27 Bucholz, Robert: “The King’s turnspit was a member of Parliament” and other Tales from the Expanded Database of Court Officers 1660–1837, forthcoming in: *The Court Historian*;

Even in France, with its sequence of sharp political alterations, there was relative continuity in numbers. Napoleon's *maison* surpassed that of his Bourbon predecessor, whereas the restoration reverted to Louis XVI's reduced court of the late 1780s. There was expansion under Charles X, sharp contraction under Louis Philippe. With Napoleon III's rise to power, the court experienced its final phase of inflation, matching the outlay of Napoleon I before its demise in 1870.²⁸

Comparative research can suggest explanations for the linkage between political change and the fluctuations in numbers of the household with its multiple honorary extensions. To what extent were members of representative assemblies integrated in court sociability and honours? What does this tell us about the political relevance of the court? How did the dichotomy in political styles often suggested between England and France on one side, Austria, Prussia and Russia on the other, impact courts? Did growth indicate a more authoritarian mould of government, or was it caused primarily by international competition? Did a popular or elite demand for honours and prestige

figure 1 shows the numbers of the royal household and secondary households, 1660–1837, showing continuation at a somewhat reduced level in the period around 1800, with a peak in 1810 followed by further reductions. The situation after 1837 has not been studied at this level of precision. The author explains that the peak in 1810 was caused by the creation of a household for the Prince Regent while continuing King George III's establishment. I thank Robert Bucholz for his frequent advice, for sharing these materials, and for allowing me to use them before the publication of his article.

- 28 On numbers in France ca. 1550–1780 see Duindam, Vienna and Versailles, the Courts, and idem: Vienna and Versailles, Materials; Mansel, The Court of France 1780–1830 on p. 197 cites 1,860 for the king's *maison* and 1,114 for secondary households, a total of 2,974, on p. 199 a higher number, 3,722 is given for Napoleon's *maison* in 1813, but technical staff was comprised in this number and totals cannot be compared without further breakdown. On p. 203 Mansel lists 2,921 for the restoration court. Under Louis Philippe numbers dropped sharply. A new court was constructed by Napoleon III, for which Mauduit, Le ministère du faste, p. 7 f. cites 3,404 persons as grand total and a number of ca 1,600 for the *domesticité*, with a breakdown of the latter figure for 1854 and 1867 in the *annexes statistiques*. See the thesis by Trétout, Thibaut: Société curiale et monarchie restaurée en France (1814–1830). La "nation des courtisanes", Paris 2016, available online at <http://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01834594/document> for discussion of restoration court and details on the *liste civile* and court finances for a longer period, at p. 148–177. I thank Quentin Deluermoz and Thibaut Trétout for their help in establishing numbers for the nineteenth century. The situation in post-napoleonic Spain remains understudied, but an institutional-financial overview of the household can be garnered from Sánchez González, D.: La nueva planta para la Casa Real de Fernando VII: el desconocido Reglamento de 17 de noviembre de 1815, in: Cuadernos de Historia Moderna II (2003) p. 311–343, in particular at p. 319–323 and p. 343. Including all staff catering for palaces and domains owned by the royal house, the court after Napoleon numbered around 3,000 persons; I thank José Eloy Hortal Muñoz for these data.

play a role? What can the extensions of the court tell us about the connections between various regions, or specific social groups, with the centre?²⁹ Only further research can provide answers.

4 Redefining “Politics”

The question of the political influence of courtiers is far more difficult to assess than the household’s organigram or its numerical development. Two extremes need to be discarded without further ado: Elias’s notion of court office as apolitical *per se*, and the undifferentiated equation of proximity to political power. What could the frequent presence around the sovereign, with few or no other courtiers present, bring in terms of political influence? And to what extent were such opportunities defined by gender, hereditary rank, special skills, and formal office?

Clearly, only a handful of people in domestic or administrative office were formally entitled to advise the sovereign on key decisions of state, pertaining to war and peace, to religion, or other matters seen as vital as well as secret. From the later Middle Ages onwards, specialised services had moved away from the domestic core of the household, forming separate institutions with their own staffing and *esprit de corps*. Differentiation, professionalisation, and increasing levels of paperwork and record keeping were typical for the household as well as for these specialised councils and chancelleries. In both spheres, responsibilities, ranks, and emoluments were decreed through ordinances and instructions. The demarcation between these two worlds was evident at an early stage, yet it did not prohibit frequent overlaps. Throughout the seventeenth century and in the early eighteenth century, the *Obersthofmeister* at the Habsburg court in Vienna acted as chair of the emperor’s privy council: he thus formally presided in both domains. In many kingdoms, moreover, individual servants of the dynasty could combine offices in household and government, or, alternatively, follow a *cursus honorum* with subsequent stages in both domains. Formal separation thus did not preclude formal connections and overlaps.

Ideally decision-making remained confined to privy councillors and ministers of state invited by the sovereign to offer their opinions, assembled in

29 See e. g. Sánchez, Raquel: Los gentilhombres de Palacio y la política informal en torno al monarca en España (1833–1885), in: Aportes. Revista de Historia Contemporánea 33:96 (2018), p. 33–64, available online at <http://revistaaportes.com/index.php/aportes/article/view/341>; see also the materials in the *annexe statistique* in Mauduit, Le ministère du faste.

council or during individual consultations. Others in the ruler's presence might be tempted to offer unsolicited advice about matters of state, yet this could be seen as a serious transgression, even if the initiative came from a trusted intimate. Conversely, on the express invitation of the sovereign, anybody could act as advisor. This must have occurred with some frequency in the upper echelons of household office, on an *ad hoc* basis that could be formalised through the appointment of household dignitaries as councillor or minister.

Royal companions could turn into favourites by holding court office controlling access to the prince as well as presiding over the council. The dominance of such minister-favourites was never accepted easily, but they could succeed in consolidating their powers by expanding the circle of their supporters through patronage, while preventing rivals from reaching the king's ear. Rightly or wrongly, royal confessors were often seen as leading influences. Access was part and parcel of the special role of confessors whose religious authority strengthened their chances to obtain marked and lasting influence notwithstanding the fact that they usually lacked high birth.³⁰ More incidentally a similar position could be obtained by other "service specialists" combining special skills with facility of access, such as doctors, scholars, and artists. Every now and then a low-ranking chamber servant might emerge as royal favourite, but such persons were more likely to translate their intimacy into exceptional social ascent than into political influence.³¹ Most conspicuously, mistresses and minions could rise rapidly in status and power through sexual intimacy with the prince: they could be as powerful as the great minister-favourites. All those rising rapidly through the king's favour risked a precipitous downfall, particularly when their meteoric career was not supported by the redeeming quality of high birth.³²

30 Bireley, Robert: *The Jesuits and the Thirty Years War: Kings, Courts, and Confessors*, New York/Cambridge 2008; Reinhardt, Nicole: *Voices of Conscience: Royal Confessors and Political Counsel in Seventeenth-Century Spain and France*, Oxford 2016.

31 See e. g. the notorious case of one of Rudolf II's chamber servants: Hurter, Friedrich: Philip Lang, Kammerdiener Kaiser Rudolfs II. Eine Criminalgeschichte aus dem Anfang des siebenzehnten Jahrhunderts, Schaffhausen 1851.

32 Hirschbiegel, Jan / Paravicini, Werner (eds.): *Der Fall des Günstlings. Hofparteien in Europa vom 13. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*. 8. Symposium der Residenzenkommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Ostfildern, 2004; other important volumes, Elliott, J. H./Brockliss, L. W. B. (eds.): *The World of the Favourite*. New Haven/London 1999; Kaiser, Michael/Pečar, Andreas (eds.): *Der zweite Mann im Staat. Oberste Amtsträger und Favoriten im Umkreis der Reichsfürsten in der Frühen Neuzeit*, in: *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, Beihefte 32, 2003. Note the absence of women in these important volumes.

In any polity governed by a single person elevated to exceptional status, the rise of favourites will remain a distinct possibility. A colourful bouquet of paramours, gurus, eccentric outsiders, ideologues, and spin doctors can be garnered from post-revolutionary history. Not infrequently, such figures were relative outsiders, providing the sovereign with a carefree alternative to the overbearing presence of political managers and household grandees. Continuity seems to be the rule here, although we need to take into account that the political impact of favourites would rise or decline in proportion to the powers of the person at the centre.

At the other extreme of the spectrum stand members of the ruling house: they were the quintessential insiders, closer in rank to the ruler than court grandees or ministers, let alone mistresses or favoured outsiders. However, family ties could give rise to distance and conflict as well as to intimacy and favour: trust could not be taken for granted. Moreover, while dynastic siblings have held high political or military office, this was not necessarily always the case – on the contrary, there is a long tradition of sidelining and even incarcerating royals.³³ Tensions inherent in family life tend to be amplified and become more explosive in the dynastic context. Across the global spectrum of patrilineal dynasties, rights of succession risked souring relationships between the incumbent king and his brothers. This dormant conflict could be prolonged from generation to generation, in the form of tensions with lateral junior lines of the royal house, and flare up on occasion – the Orléans in France are a case in point. Queen-mothers, whether or not they formally acted as regents, could be dominant presences during the reign of young kings, who were not invariably pleased by their mothers' stature, particularly after their formal ascent to the throne. During long reigns, sons awaiting succession might become a liability for aging kings. Even docile and patient heirs were likely to be courted by all who hoped for change under the approaching reign.³⁴ More generally, all persons who could claim dynastic charisma might attract a throng of well-wishers with political ambitions: factions easily formed around members of

33 This group to some extent reflects the situation ascribed by Elias to the court nobility as a whole: "domestication". See details about the treatment of royal brothers in Duindam, Jeroen: *Dynasties. A Global History of Power 1300–1800*, Cambridge 2016. Several titles on aspects of dynasties in the nineteenth century can be found in recent work, notably in the Palgrave Studies in Modern Monarchy series edited by Heather Jones, Axel Körner, Heidi Mehrkens, Frank Lorenz Müller, see <http://link.springer.com/series/14609> (last visited 22.1.2022).

34 On conflict between aging kings and their restive sons see Duindam, Jeroen: *A Plea for Global Comparison: Redefining Dynasty*, in: *Past & Present* 242, supplement 14 (2019) p. 318–347.

the royal family. We do not know much about the political influence of official spouses, queens or empresses, representing the rank of their own royal houses and responsible first and foremost for dynastic continuity. Their open activities were restricted to family matters, religion, education, and philanthropy. The boundary between family matters and high politics was thin, and it is quite possible that many queens who outwardly demonstrated a painstaking respect for the constrictions dictated by their gendered role, were actively counselling their husbands.³⁵ This dynastic tableau is surely equally relevant for the nineteenth century, although its impact must have been affected by changes in the political status of the monarch.

Favourites broke through the accepted boundaries of careers and political practice; political opposition might crystallise around dynastic siblings. These spectacular trajectories were the tip of an iceberg, the conspicuous summit of unremarkable and ongoing forms of everyday favour and political trafficking at court.

What did nobles hope to achieve by seeking domestic service at court?³⁶ They entered as pages or court damsels to obtain an elite education and form part of the courtly network. Women hoped to increase their chances for a marriage alliance befitting their family interests. Men could endeavour to move on to the lower echelons of court office, consolidating their family honour while striving for higher positions at court, in government, or in the army. Once they ascended the ladder of promotions, their chances of acting as patrons for others increased. The court was a hub of patronage: leading courtiers enjoyed rights of nomination in their own staffs, and could push candidates for posts

35 Braun, Bettina/Schnettger, Matthias/Keller, Katrin (eds.): *Nur die Frau des Kaisers? Kaiserinnen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Wien 2015; a new project on the letters of empress Eleonora Magdalena of Pfalz-Neuburg: "Familiensache. Dynastische Handlungsspielräume von Frauen" has been initiated by Katrin Keller, who also leads the project „Der Wiener Hof um 1800“ at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

36 This is the question at the heart of Pečar, *Die Ökonomie der Ehre*; also see the definitive and masterful study by Horowski, Leonhard: *Die Belagerung des Thrones. Machtstrukturen und Karrieremechanismen am Hof von Frankreich 1661–1789* (Beihefte der Francia, Bd. 74), Ostfildern, 2012. Wolfgang Reinhard's examination of the papal court, "as a laboratory case to analyse the social history of European politics" has been fundamental, see (among numerous works) Reinhard, Wolfgang: *Papal Power and Family Strategy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, in: Asch/Birke, *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility*, p. 329–356, quote on p. 330. Reinhard's examination of "Mikropolitik" was followed by a number of works by his pupils on the papacy and had a profound impact of the studies dealing with patronage and state building, see recently Engels, Jens Ivo/Köhler, Volker: *Moderne Patronage – Mikropolitik in der Moderne. Konturen und Herausforderungen eines neuen Forschungsfeldes*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 309/1 (2019), p. 36–69: <http://doi.org/10.1515/hzhz-2019-0020>.

and honours in the king's hands. Rightly or wrongly, they were perceived as intermediaries and approached by petitioners who hoped to advance their interests. Court politics was first and foremost the "micro-politics" of distribution of honours and nominations, and it played out at all levels of the courtly hierarchy, crisscrossing institutional boundaries between household, various levels of government, the military, and the church.

Courts, moreover, were the familiar meeting place for elites hailing from different regions and not connected in other ways. Moreover, they played this role on a grand superregional canvas, connecting the admixture of local elites to the wider horizon of the Holy Roman Empire, Europe, and incidentally even beyond. Clearly, expectations never materialised for all clients and brokers, but the court did function as the main entry point for elites eager to tap into this overarching network of opportunities.

Royalty attracted a persistent stream of petitions and requests, much of it addressed to the king, to members of the dynasty, and to conspicuous figures in government and household, or to the judicial agencies attached to the court.³⁷ From the later Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, the process was streamlined and bureaucratised. Paperwork and the intervention of chancelleries formalised the process and this may have reduced traditional opportunities for accosting the king during outdoor occasions and for handing over petitions to the king on his way to the chapel. Nevertheless, even in this modernised form, the process allowed and perhaps to some extent demanded the intervention of courtiers.

This certainly holds true for the recommendation of candidates for honorary positions. Most groups present at court, as we have seen in the discussion of numbers, served as the core of a wider group of honorary part-time "courtiers". The proliferation of honorary office had effectively granted European courts a significant and often decisive influence as arbiters of elite hierarchies. The moment and level of entry into the court-defined ranking became one of the factors determining the priority and status of contending elites. Court

37 On petitioning see Bowie, Karin/Munck, Thomas: Early modern political petitioning and public engagement in Scotland, Britain and Scandinavia, c. 1550–1795, in: *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 38:3 (2018) p. 271–278; Almbjör, Martin: The Problem with Early-modern Petitions: Safety Valve or Powder Keg?, in: *European Review of History / Revue européenne d'histoire* 26:6 (2019), p. 1013–1039; specifically from Enlightenment to Restoration: Oddens, Joris: The Greatest Right of Them All: The Debate on the Right to Petition in the Netherlands from the Dutch Republic to the Kingdom (c. 1750–1830), in: *European History Quarterly* 47:4 (2017); on transformations in the nineteenth century: Miller, H.: Introduction: The Transformation of Petitioning in the Long Nineteenth Century (1780–1914), in: *Social Science History*, 43:3 (2019), p. 409–429, <http://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2019.24>.

rankings, while often based on family pedigree to be certified by the king's genealogists, were gradually extended by rewarding outstanding service in government and in the army. From the later seventeenth century onwards, tables of ranks were created, providing a concordance of ranking at court, in the army, and in the administration. Trades and crafts were traditionally integrated through nominal membership in the court: the beneficiaries may have delivered their labour or goods at reduced prices, but they now held significant fiscal and legal privileges and could pose as the doyens of their profession. Royal academies and a range of special service orders integrated the arts and scholarship in court-based rankings. In the nineteenth century these efforts were further expanded to manufacturing and commerce, as well as to all individuals performing remarkable services for the ruling house or the nation at large.³⁸ Most European courts had successfully attempted to become the arbiters of elite status, validating social ascent through court recognition. Conferring titles and distinctions in these outer ranges of the court was in the hands of court dignitaries as well as ministers, assembling lists to be validated by the sovereign. For royals it was possible to personally control the machinery only for top-level nominations.

The court stood at the heart of this machinery distributing ranks, titles, offices, and perks. Access to patronage was far more relevant for men and women at court than active involvement in high-level decision-making. *Große Politik* necessarily remained the domain of an exclusive circle.³⁹

How relevant are these remarks for the nineteenth century? Favour and the dynastic tableau need to be taken into account. High politics were undoubtedly still the domain of select groups, now changed in style and composition particularly by the marked presence of members of representative assemblies. I find it difficult to assume a radical break in the practices of patronage, brokering, recommendation, and nomination. Perhaps norms were decreed with greater consistency, but did this fundamentally transform practices?⁴⁰ The early modern experience shows that dichotomies based on the organigram of government institutions – between formal and informal power, domestics

38 Clark, Samuel: *Distributing Status: The Evolution of State Honours in Western Europe*, Montreal 2016.

39 This is one of the conclusions of Horowski, *Belagerung des Thrones*.

40 Engels, Jens Ivo: *Geschichte der Korruption. Von der Frühen Neuzeit bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt a. M. 2014; Knights, Mark: *Trust and Distrust. Corruption in Office in Britain and its Empire, 1600–1850*, Oxford 2021.

and administrators, men and women – should never be taken for granted. Did the revolutionary redefinition of *Öffentlichkeit* and the explicit exclusion of women from voting rights, active citizenship and officeholding, reduce *ancien régime*-style political leverage of elite women?⁴¹ Women clearly could still rule in some countries as queens or empresses. Was the presence in courtly politics and micro-politics of court ladies, noble dowagers, princesses and spouses reduced in the nineteenth century? These questions can be answered only by combining two notoriously difficult challenges: *longue durée* research connecting pre- and post-revolutionary cases, and the detailed prosopographical examination of families necessary to unveil networks of influence.

Some first impressions related to the boundaries between household and government acquired during probes in the archives of the Viennese court in the early nineteenth century raise more questions rather than providing clear answers.⁴² Emperor Franz's personal notes and statements can be traced in great quantity. He seems to have been deeply involved in administrative details even at the level of mundane chancellery routines.⁴³ The distribution of competences and responsibilities among various “chefs meiner Hofämter, Hofstellen und Hofkammer” recurs as a constant concern.⁴⁴ The emperor's

41 The ongoing debate about this could benefit from the examination of households and women present there. See recently Aali, Heta: French Royal Women during the Restoration and July Monarchy. Redefining Women and Power, Cham 2021, and other titles in the Palgrave Queenship and Power series edited by Charles Beem and Carole Levin, <http://link.springer.com/series/14523> (last visited 22.1.2022).

42 A series of planned visits to the Haus-, Hof und Staatsarchiv and other Viennese institutions were cancelled due to Covid 19. See in general on political continuity at the regional level Godsey, William: The Sinews of Habsburg Power Lower Austria in a Fiscal-Military State 1650–1820, Oxford 2018; on the court under Franz Josef, see the dissertation by Winkelhofer, Martina: Der Hof unter Kaiser Franz Joseph, Vienna 2010 and idem: Die politische Zuordnung der Obersten Hofbeamten unter Kaiser Franz Josef I., in: Tönsmeier, Tatjana/Velek, Lubos (ed.): Adel und Politik in der Habsburgermonarchie und den Nachbarländern zwischen Absolutismus und Demokratie, Munich 2011, p. 197–214.

43 It is surprising to note the frequency of Franz's *Handbillets* in the phase of post-war reconstruction of formal procedures in the *Hofstellen*, e. g. in HHStA KA StR Präsidialakten 3 Organisierung und Instruktionen, 3. Teil, 1808–1814; 4. Teil, 1817–1848 as well as in numerous nominations and in assorted court dossiers. The painstaking detail of instructions about rather detailed matters (Referateintheilung, Votantenbogen) can be found in published form in Walter, Friedrich: Die österreichische Zentralverwaltung: 2. Von der Vereinigung der österreichischen und böhmischen Hofkanzlei bis zur Einrichtung der Ministerialverfassung (1749–1848), Bd. 1, Halbbd. 2: Die Geschichte der österreichischen Zentralverwaltung 1780–1848, Teil 2: Die Zeit Franz' II. (I.) und Ferdinands I. (1792–1848); text and sources in several volumes, Vienna 1956.

44 HHStA HA OMeA 605–96 Präliminarien der obersten Hofstellen, 1815 V 351, April 1816 Franz writing to Obersthofmarschall Wilczek.

contact with his main court dignitaries in part seems to have taken shape in writing and has a decidedly administrative ring. How often did the emperor meet with his senior court dignitaries in person? How close was their relationship? Did court office gradually develop from daily companionship into the administrative control of a department? Or did this simply reflect Franz's formal style of communication? These questions need further research.

Overlaps between household office and the role of advisor were present.⁴⁵ The connection followed a traditional pattern in the case of Franz's *Aio* (governor) Franz Reichsgraf von Colloredo (1736–1806), who combined a series of domestic and political offices. Among other court dignitaries simultaneously holding political office, Ferdinand Fürst zu Trauttmansdorff-Weinsberg (1749–1827) strikes the eye. After a distinguished career in diplomacy and government he was nominated *Konferenzminister* in 1801, before he finally became Franz's *Obersthofmeister* at age 58 in 1807. His son Johann, *Obersilberkämmerer* in his father's staff, was appointed to the leading office of *Oberststallmeister* in 1812: a remarkable accumulation of two supreme charges in the hands of one family. Upon the occasion of the 1801 nomination as *Konferenzminister*, Emperor Franz sent Prince Ferdinand a personal note, explaining that this was a "Probe und Merckmal meiner Gnade und Gewogenheit" and adding that he would not hesitate to ask him for more services "nach Willen und Gutbefinden". Was Trauttmansdorff close to the emperor, who appointed him as well as his son to the highest court offices, and left the office of *Obersthofmeister* vacant for seven years after Trauttmansdorff passed away in 1827? In his authoritative biography of Klemens von Metternich, Wolfram Siemann presents Trauttmansdorff as an old-style courtier, thwarting Metternich's plans.⁴⁶ While Siemann refers mostly to an earlier phase and in particular to Metternich's father and the Belgian situation, his evaluation appears to provide a pejorative confirmation of Trauttmansdorff's role as Franz's confidant.

Among the others combining court office with active political duties stood Graf Rudolph von Wrba (1761–1823), nominated by Franz in 1806 to succeed Colloredo as *Oberstkämmerer*, while continuing to serve in various executive

45 See Godsey, William: Courtiers, a 'minister favorite', and politics in Austria during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period', in: Courts and Politics in an Age of Reform (c. 1780–1830), ed. by Duindam, Jeroen/Somsen, Quinten/Welten, Joost, forthcoming Brill Publishers, Leiden/Boston 2024.

46 Siemann, Wolfram: Metternich: Strategist and Visionary. Cambridge, Mass./London 2020 (translation of: Metternich: Stratege und Visionär: eine Biografie, Munich 2016); on p. 92, p. 96 and p. 133 f. in the context of clashes between Klemens' father Franz Georg Karl von Metternich-Winneburg and Trauttmansdorff; on p. 450 about Franz's June 1815 entry into Vienna.

functions related to finance and mining.⁴⁷ Court office, in most cases, followed a long career in government, was granted at a relatively advanced age, and in several cases was performed in tandem with other roles in government. This may all reflect Franz's age and personality: aging rulers tended to appoint older persons, who then necessarily had a long career behind them. Still one might be tempted to see court office as the supreme reward for trusted senior servants. It is possible that these elderly statesmen no longer cultivated their previous connections, but we cannot be sure. The correspondence between Metternich and Franz's *Obersthofmarschall*, Johann Josef Graf von Wilczek (1738–1819), cautions us not to jump to conclusions. Wilczek had accepted the office in his late seventies in 1813, a senior among his colleagues. In early June 1816, Metternich sent a note to the *Obersthofmarschall*, aiming to clarify competences and administrative procedure. He asked Wilczek to immediately forward all matters relating to "höhere Politik und Diplomatie" "an mich" (underlined by Metternich), while all "Privat-Angelegenheiten" could be submitted to the "geheime Hof- und Staatskanzley" (also underlined).⁴⁸

Combining these remarks with the extremely diverse materials encountered in this randomly chosen carton relating to court offices, including finances, reforms of the procedures in the chancelleries, the reception of ambassadors, and copies of peace treaties, there is plenty of reason to question the impermeability of boundaries between household and government – and this indeed seems to have been Metternich's concern. Conversely, Metternich himself was deeply involved in matters relating to the court and the imperial house. Court dignitaries and leading statesmen often dealt with similar matters and frequently encountered each other – moreover, most of them shared a high noble background and orientation. What do the ceremonial records tell us about their ranking? Even after Metternich's rise to the supreme office of *Haus-, Hof und Staatskanzler* in 1821, he still did not enjoy ceremonial priority over the *Obersthofmeister*: the ceremonial records suggests a precarious balance with

47 See Godsey, *Sinews of Habsburg Power*, p. 382 and p. 388 on Wrbná and Trauttmansdorff's political roles; idem: *Oberstkämmerer Rudolph Graf Czernin (1757–1845) und die "Adelsrestauration" nach 1815 in Österreich*, in: *Études Danubiennes* 19 (2003) p. 59–74, on Wrbná, and on the notable restriction of access the dignity of chamberlain following the entry of Czernin in office. I thank the author for sharing this article with me, as well as pointing out Winkelhofer's work on the court under Franz Joseph – and for critically reading a first draft of this paper.

48 HHStA HA OMeA 605–96 Präliminarien der obersten Hofstellen, 1815, 416 V 351 Letter Metternich 3 June 1816.

an advantage for the *Obersthofmeister*. This may have been another ground for uneasiness on Metternich's part.⁴⁹

5 Ceremonies and Interactions

Ceremony occupies a central place in Elias's model. He equated ceremony with court etiquette, and presented the court as the centre of polished social mores. Yet the overviews of the ceremonies of the French court published in the first half of the seventeenth century fail to include references to the details of the *lever* and *coucher* or any other domestic indoor practice made famous by Elias. They describe stately public occasions, with solemn and festive components, often performed outdoors or in church rather than in the confines of the palace: *sacre* and coronation, marriages, funerals, entries, convocations of estates, meetings between princes, acts of homage and oaths of fealty. There is a focus on "assemblées solennelles" of the king with political corporations, on interaction with the population as well as with fellow princes and their emissaries. Clearly, "rangs et séances" were of great importance both for ceremony and for everyday life at court, yet we should be careful not to conflate the two.⁵⁰ Royal households of mixed social composition attended to numerous tasks, in a

49 After the death of Trauttmansdorff in 1827, the office of Obersthofmeister was left vacant (with the tasks left to the Oberstkämmerer Johann Rudolph Graf Czernin zu Chudewitz) until 1835, when Rudolph Fürst zu Colloredo Mansfeld was appointed. This seven-year semi-vacancy had apparently changed the balance between the *Staatskanzler* and the *Obersthofmeister*, impacting their status among diplomats, see the exchange of notes in HHStA OMeA NZA 219 Rangsachen, Eide, Installierungen, 1830–1836: 219–56: Wichtige Zeremonielakten insbesondere den Fürstenrang betreffend (1835–1854); XII 1835 Neujahrstag von 1835; HHSTA KA KFA 174–7 Beantwortung von Colloredo-Mannsfeld der vom Fürsten Metternich aufgestellten diplomatischen Grundsätze hinsichtlich seiner Stellung zum Ersten Obersthofmeister in diplomatischen Häusern. Schneider, Norm und Zeremoniell, predating Metternich's nomination as *Haus-, Hof und Staatskanzler* and thus defining his role of *Staatskanzler* / foreign minister, shows the two leading officers in charge in different contexts, but with a clear ceremonial edge for the *Obersthofmeister*, who served as *Os principis* and could speak in the ruler's name (p. 69 f.). The *Etiquette-Normale* defines hierarchies through the process of oath-taking, see p. 42, p. 44, p. 58, p. 74, p. 77, p. 124, p. 164. See the *Obersthofmeister* accepting oaths of key figures such as Graf Karl Zichy, councillor: HHStA OMeA NZA 217–12: Eidablegung des neuer-nannten Geheimen Rates Graf Karl Zichy vor dem Obersthofmeister, August 1813.

50 The volumes published by Godefroy, Theodore: *Cérémonial de France*, Paris 1619, and Godefroy, Denys: *Cérémonial François*, Paris 1649, two volumes (all available at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>); see Duindam, Jeroen: *Vienna and Versailles, the Courts, on the extended registers and journals subsequent masters of ceremony*, Nicolas de Saintôt and Michel Ancel Desgranges.

calendar that included ceremonial highlights against the backdrop of far less rigidly orchestrated mundane routines. The court was neither a Castiglionesque salon writ large nor an incessant series of high-profile events.

Ralph Giesey and several others have argued that the “great ceremonies” declined, to be replaced by a script of court life under the Sun King.⁵¹ There is some truth in this. Many great ceremonies were connected to the beginning or end of reigns: *sacre* and coronation, death and obsequies, and also the habitual tour around major cities of the realm. In long reigns, these ceremonies thus will seem to disappear. In addition, the Estates General were no longer convened, and the king’s movement to the regions tended to be replaced by regional delegations moving to Versailles. Did the interactions characteristic of the great ceremonies relocate to the court?

The reduction of great ceremonies was far less drastic than often assumed. Louis XIV practised the royal touch and the Maundy Thursday re-enactment of the Last Supper, standard religious ceremonies in the court’s calendar. While Louis XV famously abstained from touching his people after 1739, he did so on sound Catholic grounds: because of his extramarital liaisons, impurity prevented him from taking communion, which took away his power to heal.⁵² Most of the great ceremonies continued until the Revolution. Louis XV had his *sacre* and coronation, and *lits de justice*. In a dense sequence between May 1774 and June 1775, his grandson and successor Louis XVI organised a *lit de justice*, arranged his father’s funeral and had a splendid *sacre* and coronation. During the *sacre*, an emotional elite in attendance shed tears in Reims cathedral and an eager crowd of thousands of scrofula sufferers sought the king’s touch. In a recent reassessment of the start of the king’s reign, Anne Byrne underlines Louis XVI’s effective integration of politics and ceremony. We see a king adapting long-standing traditions to fit his personal priorities and the vogue of the times for the sentimental – one among many examples of *Reinszenierung*.⁵³ Perhaps Louis’s finest hour came during his visit to Cherbourg in 1786, where

51 Giesey, Ralph E.: *The King Imagined*, in: *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. 1: *The political Culture of the Old Regime*, ed. by K. M. Baker, Oxford/New York 1987, p. 41–59, notably at p. 54–58. See similar notions in the work of others pursuing the legacy of Ernst Kantorowicz (Sarah Hanley, Richard Jackson, Lawrence Bryant) grouped under the label of “*école américaine*” or “*école cérémonialiste américaine*” by Boureau, Alain: *Les cérémonies royales françaises entre performance juridique et compétence liturgique*, in: *Annales ESC* 46:6 (1991), p. 1253–1264, terms on p. 1255.

52 Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles, the Courts*, p. 138–140.

53 Byrne, Anne: *Death and the Crown. Ritual and Politics in France before the Revolution*, Manchester 2020; see a previous more sceptical but less convincing interpretation by Grell, Chantal: *The sacre of Louis XVI: The End of a Myth*, in: Michael Schleich (ed.),

he could show his affinity with ships and cultivate direct contact with the population.

Undoubtedly, the French court did serve as a theatre of ceremony. Its reputation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, was based on familiarity rather than on rigid ceremonial order. Court life in France had always struck outsiders as rather crowded and messy, with little room for the dignified solitude of royals practised elsewhere. In the 1570s and 1580s, Henry III tried to induce more order and some distance through repeated court ordinances. His rules were elaborated under Louis XIV, yet some of the bustle remained. At Versailles, the gardens were open to the public, and tourists of all kinds were present on a daily basis, even attending the king's public dinner. The French-style court, with its dense set of social meetings, became a European model, although the accessibility of royalty and the busy corridors would remain something of an exception. An overly rigid choreography of behaviour should not be seen as typical for the French court. More importantly, everywhere, the script related first and foremost to the exceptional moments of dignified public performance, at court or elsewhere— and even there, frequent slips occurred.

The Viennese court puts in perspective the French example. More than anything else, religious ceremony here provided moments of contact between the ruling house and the population. During the great processions of Holy Week and Corpus Christi, the *Hofstaat* paraded through the streets of Vienna followed by numerous urban corporations. Members of the ruling house performed the *Fußwaschung* on Maundy Thursday, an event reported in the local press. Until the end of Charles VI's reign court sociability was limited, adhering to the religious, dynastic, and seasonal calendars of celebrations without permanently catering for wider audiences within the palace. Maria Theresa allowed the entry of urban elites into palace events and started organising more frequent social occasions as well as larger-scale festivities. Joseph II sharply reduced the traditional religious-ceremonial points of contact. Moreover, he skipped even coronations and *Erbhuldigungen*, key events in the ceremonial-political calendar that consecrated the traditional framework of regionalised privileges and therefore clashed with the emperor's political preferences.⁵⁴ At the same time, Joseph cultivated direct "spontaneous" connections with the urban and rural

Monarchy and Religion: The Transformation of Royal Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe, Oxford 2007, p. 345–366.

54 See a useful long-term perspective on Habsburg coronations: Gelder, Klaas van (ed.): More Than Mere Spectacle. Coronations and Inaugurations in the Habsburg Monarchy during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, New York/Oxford 2021.

populace, during his travels or near the Vienna *Hofburg*. Acknowledging the tradition of interaction with the wider public, he replaced one form of contact with another. His successors restored the traditional format, but made sure to include the popular dimension.

Ceremony was not only a top-down initiative. Courts were expert at organising ceremonies, but more often than not they did so in close co-operation with other bodies: regional authorities, clerics, political and civic corporations. There was a grassroots demand for royal performance. The 1775 royal touch in Reims arose in part as the response to popular demand. The same can be said with greater insistence about the remarkable proliferation of the royal touch in England under the Stuarts. In his restoration reign, Charles II touched almost 100,000 persons – a stream he had tried to contain through a series of restrictive regulations.⁵⁵

The presence of a wider public was necessary for most ceremonies: indeed, the boundaries between participants and spectators could be fuzzy.⁵⁶ In the Holy Roman Empire, the open-air acrobatics on horseback stipulated for the *Wahl und Krönung* in the 1356 Golden Bull for the electors were still practised in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though now more often by electoral proxies than by the electors in person. The confluence of all the delegations and huge numbers of hangers-on tripled the population of Frankfurt during the election and coronation period. Cheering crowds acted not only as passive bystanders. The populace was allowed and expected to tear away the rich cloth from the wooden planking as soon as the newly elected emperor had passed on his way from the church to the town hall on the Römer square. After the electors' proxies had performed their traditional *Verrichtungen* on horseback – distributing coins, fetching wine, oats, and a piece of the ox and presenting these items to the emperor – the people could rush in to plunder the kitchen with all other trimmings of the event. While the ensuing battle usually gave rise to several casualties, this hooligan acclamation of imperial dignity formed part of the show: it could not be banned easily by imperial command.⁵⁷

55 Brogan, Stephen: *The Royal Touch in Early Modern England: Politics, Medicine, and Sin*, Woodbridge, Suffolk/Rochester NY 2015.

56 See “failed” ceremonies because of the absence of audiences, Duchhardt, Heinz: *Krönungszüge. Ein Versuch zur “negativen Kommunikation”*, in: idem/Melville, G. (eds.): *Im Spannungsfeld von Recht und Ritual. Soziale Kommunikation in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, Cologne 1997, p. 291–301; Duindam, Vienna and Versailles, the Courts, p. 136.

57 The experiment to skip the *Preisgabe* on the occasion of Charles VI's 1711 *Wahl und Krönung* offered no solutions: the mob pushed aside the soldiery, see Duindam, Jeroen: *The Habsburg Court in Vienna: Kaiserhof or Reichshof?*, in: Evans, Robert/Wilson, Peter H. (eds.): *The Holy Roman Empire 1495–1806: A European Perspective*, Boston/

Court ceremony and popular ritual were connected intimately.⁵⁸ Considering monarchy in a longer-term perspective the constitutive force of popular or banal royalism strikes the eye. It did not arrive on stage unexpectedly in the nineteenth century; neither was it an invention of enlightened despots. There is little reason to replicate the classic formula contrasting an “outward-looking” civic-courtly culture in the Middle Ages with the “inward-looking” script of absolutist courts in the seventeenth century, succeeded by enlightened despots who again sought the support of the wider public. As far as I can see, the popular dimension was always there, in the form of religious interaction as well as in the more boisterous aspects of popular involvement in outdoor ceremony. Sweeping changes in the media, in the script, and in the paraphernalia used in these performances should not obscure the fact that the popular dimension was a lasting component of royal legitimacy.⁵⁹

My preliminary research in the Vienna archives, where the ceremonial series originating in the 1650s can be traced into the nineteenth century, suggests that there was an attempt to scrupulously secure continuity in the arrangement of court routines and ceremony. The religious ceremonies abolished or reduced by Joseph II resurfaced and continued into the twentieth century. Continuity does not preclude incremental or even radical change, but this was the outspoken intention not even in cases where entirely new ceremonies had to be invented.⁶⁰ Ceremonial insecurity was triggered by territorial-political shifts, particularly in all matters related to the changing dimensions of Germany. An ongoing concern of Viennese ceremony, the status of princes from the empire in court ranking and ceremony, was impacted by the demise

Leiden 2012 (Brill's Companions to European History I), p. 91–119, for Charles VI's 1711 experiment see p. 107.

58 I leave aside here the lengthy and repeated discussions of differences between the two, but note a tendency to associate ceremony with rigidified court protocol and ritual with lively popular performance, leaving little room for the permanent intersection between these attitudes in elite and popular domains.

59 See a carefully researched sceptical view on the popular connection of monarchies around 1800 by Büschel, Hubertus: *Untertanenliebe: der Kult um deutsche Monarchen 1770–1830*, Göttingen, 2006.

60 Godsey, William: *Pageantry in the Revolutionary Age: Inaugural Rites in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1790–1848*, in: Gelder, *More than Mere Spectacle*, p. 247–282, citing Franz I's newly designed, traditionally-styled yet also profoundly innovative inauguration in the Tyrol in 1816 at p. 262 f.

of the Holy Roman Empire. New categories had to be created and fitted into ceremonial routines. Moreover, the grandest ceremony of all, the election and coronation, stopped. The Hungarian and Bohemian coronations continued as did regional inaugurations, but no coronation was instituted for the newly designed *Kaiserthum Österreich*.⁶¹

The preceding paragraphs of this essay have dealt with themes long neglected by the historiography of the nineteenth century – the organisation and the political role of the household. The representation of monarchs in a variety of media and performances, however, has been a thriving field of examination, connecting historians of the early modern to those of the modern age. Clifford Geertz has effectively argued against the traditional instrumental view of royal pomp: his key quotes can be found scattered in the literature. In a number of paradigmatic contributions Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger has made clear how profoundly cultural and political domains were intertwined.⁶² The performative aspect of royal pageantry and the cultural perspective on politics have been fully integrated into examinations of the modern monarchy with its ramifications in a variety of social groups.⁶³ This abundant and productive literature has helped not only to highlight the interconnections between monarchs and populations in the nineteenth century; it has also raised questions about ritual aspects of contemporary political culture.

The currently prevalent stress on the political culture of modern monarchy frequently leads to important results – among recent examples, Anne Byrne's work on Louis XVI can be cited. However, only with the social and political contexts of the royal household can we obtain a more comprehensive understanding of monarchy. Some novelty can be expected from unearthing more forms of royal representation, popular responses and initiatives. Yet the broad outlines are present, and can be multiplied and refined *ad libitum* without bringing conceptual change – a problem familiar in early modern research

61 Joseph II had not been crowned as king of Hungary; Franz and Ferdinand were crowned both in Hungary and Bohemia; Franz-Joseph, notoriously, was not crowned in Bohemia, while he did go through the coronation rites in Hungary in 1867. See on coronations and inaugurations in a longer-term perspective Van Gelder, *More than Mere Spectacle*.

62 Stollberg-Rilinger, Barbara (ed.): *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?* Berlin 2005; Geertz, Clifford: *Negara. The Theatre-State in Nineteenth-century Bali*, Princeton 1980.

63 From Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, to, very recently, Watanabe-O'Kelly, Helen: *Projecting Imperial Power: New Nineteenth Century Emperors and the Public Sphere*, Oxford 2021 many titles can be mentioned dealing with the interactions between dynastic rulers and their peoples through a differentiated variety of means, media, and occasions. There is more overlap and resemblance between the cultural approach to the court in the early modern and modern ages than in the social or political approaches.

presenting detailed descriptions of ceremony boosted by familiar interpretations. At this point a more powerful innovative impulse can be expected from the integration of social, political and cultural perspectives on the royal household, and thus from a return to institutional sources as well as to prosopography. Representation and reception need to be counterweighed by the social history of households and the difficult question of political influence of domestic office. A history of modern monarchy cannot leave aside these domains, and should be able to point out how and when the households lost their social relevance to become wholly marginalised politically. Even a superficial consideration of the materials suggests that neither 1789 nor 1815 can be accepted as an endpoint, and the same can in all likelihood be said about 1848.

6 Conclusion

By discussing household structures, political routines, and court performance, this essay seeks to rephrase the outcomes of early modern research on the royal court in questions relevant for the nineteenth century. It argues that common assumptions about the declining role of households and courtiers in the changeover from the *ancien régime* to modernity need to be tested, and, on the whole, appear to have been overstated. A renewed examination of the outlines and social extensions of the royal household may show unexpected levels of continuity in some cases, change in others. What do instances of growth, stability or reduction tell us about the political constellations in these countries? Only a wider comparative examination of several courts can provide clear conclusions.

It is necessary, moreover, to discard the narrow understanding of politics founded on institutionally defined boundaries and formal procedures. A re-examination of court “politics” should leave room for overlaps and connections, for the impact of access and special favour, for the political activities of domestic officeholders and women at court, and for the recurring tensions in the dynasty itself. Processes of *Verschriftlichung* and professionalisation started taking shape before the early modern age, but they did not preclude the permanent admixture of domestic office and political trafficking. We need to assume the same for the nineteenth century until we find evidence contradicting the interconnections. Politics, moreover, should not be defined only as decisions of state. The active involvement of court dignitaries at this high level was never as self-evident as their role in the everyday machinery of patronage, recommendations and nominations. Such practices should not be dismissed

lightly or treated as inconsequential: the redistribution of wealth, office, rank, and benefits has been vital for most polities in world history, including the contemporary scene.

The long-term view of royal courts necessarily stresses linkages between social, political, and cultural history, and underlines the social diversity of the court itself as well as its recurring popular appeal. It shows that the examination of royal households in the nineteenth century should be a shared concern rather than a niche for aficionados of the court: it helps to bridge the gap between classic views of high-level decision-making and the currently predominant literature on the representations and perceptions of power. This social history of households has the potential to challenge prevalent views of modern monarchy and affect our understanding of the thresholds of 1789, 1815, and 1848.

Max Weber's typology of power was a key influence on Elias's *Court Society*. The attempt to clarify everyday forms of power around the monarch ranked high among Elias's priorities, but his initiative was undermined by limitations in his materials and by his uncritical acceptance of outdated views derived from late nineteenth-century historiography. Elias's questions and perspectives, however, can still be relevant. Renewed examination can bring a fuller understanding of the court's layered political constellation, showing the intersections between decision-making and redistribution, with an eye for the domestic setting with its multiple social extensions defining rank, as well as for activities ranging from humdrum housekeeping to splendid shows, shared with live audiences and broadcast in a variety of media. Using an apposite phrase coined by David Cannadine, this will provide an answer to the "one elemental question: how are people persuaded to acquiesce in a polity where the distribution of power is manifestly unequal and unjust, as it invariably is".⁶⁴

64 Cannadine, David: Introduction, in: *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*. Cambridge 1987, p. 1–19, quote at p. 19.