

### **The Transformation of Christian Europe: Princes, Dynastic Agglomerations and Fatherlands**

**Veranstalter:** Erasmus Center for Early Modern Studies Erasmus University, Rotterdam  
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**Datum, Ort:** 12.06.2008–14.06.2008, Rotterdam

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#### **Introduction**

There is little doubt among historians that Europe's political landscape changed dramatically between roughly the later sixteenth century and the end of the Great Northern War and the Spanish War of Succession. Most agree that a Europe of Christian dynasties was transformed into what many historians address as a European 'state-system'. In legal-constitutional terms, strictly speaking and notwithstanding the small number of republics, sovereign acts were still concluded by princes as owners of sovereign rights, not by representatives of states as legal entities. But most dynasties bowed to whatever the reason of state of their lands were understood to be. Not only did dynasties need to have an appropriate confession in order to keep ruling certain lands. They had to follow the 'reason of state' of their lands.

Contemporaries such as Samuel Pufendorf realized this change and analyzed European power-complexes and their 'reason of state'. Commentators like Valckenier, commenting on the mid-seventeenth century internal conflicts within many princely 'states', recognized the systematic relation of 'foreign' politics among princes and conflicts between these princes and the estates and populations of their lands. 'Internal' uprisings were triggered by 'foreign policy' developments, princes all over Europe supported uprisings in the lands of their fellow-princes. More than recognizing that, Valckenier attempted to identify patterns of societal relations specific to some states, but not for others. To princes, given the limited control of early modern governments over their subjects, knowledge about these specifics was just as important as knowledge about the specific goals to be pursued as

head of any one specific state. 'Reason of state' was thus emphatically not only the specific set of goals to be pursued toward other princes in Europe, but also the specific rationale to govern the lands of a prince vis-à-vis his own estates. In order to understand the emergence of the European state system, the interrelation of the 'external' foreign policy 'reason of state' and the 'internal' social, political and economic 'reason of state' towards elites and subject populations have to be addressed.

The aim of the Rotterdam workshop, based on a common initiative by Lucien Bély, John Morrill and Robert von Friedeburg was to make a first step in this direction by concentrating on the period between the later sixteenth and the earlier eighteenth centuries. The aim was simultaneously to move the level of analysis nearer to the main actors and actual holders of sovereign powers (the princes), to address the varying nature of what are commonly called 'states' and to understand 'external' and internal reason of state in close conjunction. In order to achieve this goal three factors were singled out. The first factor was the dynamics within what Lucien Bély has described as the '*society of princes*'. The drives and aims of rulers were determined up to a high degree by the European princely elites they were part of, connected through family, kinship and intermarriage. Competition over means, lands and status among this elite constituted much of the framework of princely politics. Second, early modern domination almost never concerned that of a homogeneous country (in terms of the modern unity of state-law, state-territory and state-subjects of self-conscious 'nations'), but rather comprised multiple lands, accumulated by the dynastic family, all with their own legal, institutional, socio-economic and religious blueprints.

JOHN MORRILL (Cambridge) coined the term '*dynastic agglomerate*' to address this issue, stressing the heterogeneity of the various parts more strongly than terms like 'composite state' or 'composite monarchy' do. The third factor was a rising *perception* of and loyalty to *communities* and their alleged laws (including those given by a specific confessional allegiance). This perception had been stimulated by humanist rhetoric, by historic antiquarianism, by an increasingly dense le-

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gal record and by the repercussions of the complex process of confessionalisation on European societies. The simultaneous massive increase of the burdens of war on all parts of most European dynastic agglomerates led simultaneously to a variety of disputes and conflicts among rulers and estates over jurisdictions, financial support and military interference that sharpened the legal and political argument about the alleged rights of various communities within European's dynastic agglomerates. These developments forced all sides to describe, define or construct the legitimacy of shared affinities, loyalties, descent, obligations, rights and liberties. Conceptions such as 'Patria' or 'Commonwealth' gained sharper and in particular legally relevant meaning as claims developed about the specific constitutional rights of them as political, legal, religious or historic entities.

#### **Concepts and Questions**

In the first session, these three factors were explored in more depth. John Morrill started by elaborating on the heterogeneousness of early modern political entities. He pleaded for the term '*dynastic agglomerates*' to designate the administrative reality of early modern principal rule. Notably, Morrill demonstrated how the dynamics of such a dynastic agglomerate related to the other two elements of early modern statehood mentioned above: the society of princes and political rhetorics. Overall, Morrill did not recognize any British distinctiveness.

Next, LUCIEN BÉLY (Paris) considered the dynamics of the early modern '*société des princes*'. He identified the functioning of this society by looking at three different, though interacting levels, the family of kings, the society of sovereigns, and the world of princes. Any monarch legitimized his royal authority not only towards his subjects, but also toward other princes. The direct familiar circle of the monarch constituted a rather small and enclosed community that was considered elevated above everyone else. It was the only surroundings where a monarch could find his equals. As such, its internal relations highly influenced the course of politics. Marriage remained the major political instrument, as it was deployed fully for dynastic interests. The last level comprised the relations between monarch

and estates.

Finally, ROBERT VON FRIEDEBURG (Rotterdam) complemented Morrill's and Bély's contributions by elaborating on the contemporary perceptions and rhetorics by which early modern community as society were conceptualized. In particular, the growth of offices during the seventeenth century, paid by a growing volume of taxation, led to increasing conflicts over the distribution of these offices. Terms such as 'patriot' and 'favourite' became common coins to legitimize claims for office and influence.

#### **Section I: The Empire, the German Nation and the Habsburgs**

The first paper by ALEXANDER SCHMIDT (Jena) examined the use of the rhetorics of 'nation' and 'fatherland' by – mainly – protestant German princes. The rhetoric of love to fatherland functioned not least as camouflage for divisions within the Union. During the ensuing debate, HEINZ SCHILLING (Berlin) referred to another feature of the Empire: its perception as a sacred entity. Furthermore, this *Holy Roman Empire* comprised much more than Germany. So, to what extent did any 'German patriotism' relate to the Empire? KAREN FRIEDRICH (Aberdeen) referred to a 'constitutional patriotism', in which the estates were assured their position towards the Emperor and among each other.

Next, ARNO STROHMEYER (Salzburg) examined the interrelation between the state-formation processes within the Austrian-Habsburg territories – stabilizing the power-position of the Habsburg dynasty – and the way the Habsburgs played out their dynastic interests in the rest of Europe. During the ensuing debate, Robert Frost wondered why the Habsburgs should try to integrate all their dominions if this already happened on the level of higher society and ruling elites? Schilling considered Frost's question the core of the entire discussion on the relation between monarchies, politics and rhetorics: why indeed presented princes themselves the way they did? Schilling himself suggests the explanation lies in the then existing connection between the cultural and legal representation of a ruling prince. Karen Friedrich remarked on the fact that lands and dominions were not least legal communities in which those who held office

needed to be 'indigenatus'.

In the final paper of this section, THOMAS NICKLAS (Erlangen) examined the position of principal dynasties *within* the Empire itself, exemplified by the Wittelsbach-family, in particular the interrelation of dynastic interest and confessional conflict. Nicklas described how the two branches of the family – separated since the 14th century – pursued increasingly diverging paths. Comparing the cases of Bavaria and the Palatinate, Nicklas showed that church and faith were instruments of dynastic strategies and that dynastic unity remained entirely problematic. Dynastic politics aimed first and foremost at territories, status and offices, rather than at loyalty to other family-branches.

#### **Section II: Habsburg's crowns in Spain and Italy**

The paper by BERNARDO GARCÍA GARCÍA (Madrid) dealt primarily with the structure and functioning of the Spanish court: a society of its own, the court in Madrid headed a network of European courts, of representatives, officials, courtiers, envoys and a system of patronage. Spain had always been a multitude of estates, countries and realms. Here, the idea of the multiple nature of the king was applied: the king had to be a king in and for every realm, estate or dominion. In other words, the king had to legitimize himself in every country separately and in ways addressing the specifics of each dominion. The Habsburgs propagated an image of their dynasty as devout defenders of faith and church. Finally, Garcia examined the organisational structure of the Spanish court.

ANTONIO ÁLVAREZ-OSSORIO ALVARIÑO's (Madrid) contribution addressed primarily organization and functioning of the Habsburg court-council in Lombardia. In line with Garcia's paper, also this paper examined the way the Spanish monarchy tied its peripheries to the Madrid court. During the following debate, many questions addressed the 'court-network', especially relations between centre and periphery, as well as the issue of centralizing and decentralizing forces. Morrill pointed at the ever difficult balance to be kept by any ruler: on the one hand the monarch would be dissatisfied if a vice-roy ruled too loosely. A strict rule, on the other hand,

could give incentive to uprising, something the monarch also, at all costs, wanted to avoid. Garcia proceeded that the regional courts in the provinces were considered to be the Spanish court: the Spanish king was there through both representation and negotiation. Garcia claimed that especially the possibility to negotiate constituted the essence of *being* Spanish for the courts of the periphery. Finally, Garcia mentioned that coins were captioned 'rex espangol', a title that did officially not exist since no such unified Spanish kingdom did exist.

#### **Section III: 'National Monarchies' and Republics? The British Isles, France and North-Eastern Europe.**

JAMES COLLINS (Georgetown) took a long-term perspective, starting in the high middle ages. Most late medieval and sixteenth century French kings remained embedded in the larger kin-group of princes of Royal blood, the dynasty as a family corporation, and confronted with an aristocracy taking the 'bien publique' as their explicit task. Princes with Royal blood claimed some kind of participation in running the country. The 'family-corporation' had subsidiaries, as in Burgundy, which needed to be accommodated unless the price for alienation had to be paid. The wars in Italy began as wars to gain lands for the *family corporation*, not to enlarge 'France'. Since the later fifteenth century, however, the family corporation 'dried out'. When during the 16th century the complex network of the royal family dramatically shrank and the Valois finally produced no male heir for succession, a new situation emerged. A situation characterized by several family branches and princes of Royal blood changed into one with the current king being the only possible claimant. During the sixteenth century, this situation was overshadowed by a common rhetoric of 'bien publique' as commitment for king and elites. Henry IV began to shift language from 'l'état' to 'mon état'. In the wake of his death the king's 'état' almost completely replaced the language of 'bien publique'. This change in rhetoric and the change in the nature of the family conglomerate coincided in putting the person of the king even more at stage than had been done before. It is against this background that the sale of offices, the growth of

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a personal clientele of the king, the holders of royal offices, and the relative decline of the importance of estates have to be understood.

DAVID FINNEGAN (Dublin) addressed Stewart Ireland in British Context. The violent period between 1630 and 1690 shaped Ireland and its relation to the other two kingdoms. Ireland became in 1551 a kingdom, a dependency of the king, not of the kingdom of England directly. By a wave of enforced transfers of land the percentage of land hold by Old English or Gaelic born in Ireland had shrunk to 10 percent toward the end of the century. Protestants from England then hold 90 percent of the land. Simultaneously, the attempt to implant the Protestant reformation in Ireland mainly failed. The discussion focussed on the status of Ireland (colony of kingdom), the position and image of the king and the issue of religion.

ROBERT FROST (Aberdeen) elaborated on the comparative relations of the Vasas and their estates Sweden and Poland-Lithuania, 1562-1668. As the example of Vasa-Sweden and Poland-Lithuania showed, monarchs could cause regions or lands to come together, but for processes of state-building and bureaucratization they still depended heavily on the subjects of these territories. Frost attacked Tilly's vision of monarchs as sole managers of statebuilding, for Tilly had focussed too exclusively on princes and had not considered sufficiently either their embeddedness in the society of princes nor their dependency on the elites within their societies. A typology was needed for the 'Herrscher im Doppelamt', the way some monarchs attempted to manage their agglomerate by presenting different images to different parts of it. Success or failure of dynastic agglomerates also remained crucially dependant on regional elites, though in highly varying and changing ways, as the examples of Spain and France had already shown. The comparison of the estate's reaction in Sweden and Poland to Royal politics illustrated this importance. The coup d'état and the deposition of king Eric in 1568, the accession of Johann III and his marriage with a Catholic wife led to a reorientation of Swedish foreign policy against Moscow and toward Johann's large dynastic project to forge a Union with Poland, not least to access

to a vastly bigger and richer land than Sweden. Yet the estates envisioned such a union as personal, only. The Polish estates insisted on the right of Polish citizens – the nobility at large – to end the Union if they wished so. Three topics dominated debate: the issue of the different 'nations' within Poland-Lithuania, the issue of the religious composition of the estates and the dynastic aspects of the Polish-Swedish Union-project. In the elective agglomerate of Poland-Lithuania, the language of fatherland and patria was frequently used. The Poles were proud of their political system and saw it as the best option: The king remained controlled by the estates as being himself part of them. MIKHAIL DMITRIEV's (Budapest/Moscow) contribution considered the failure of the Union of Brest and the question to what extent orthodox Christians within the Polish Lithuanian commonwealth were mobilized to oppose an increasingly Catholic Poland and attempt to find support from Orthodox Moscow.

#### **Concluding plenary debate**

For the concluding debate, Bély summarized section I. He emphasized the negotiations among the 'nations' of the Spanish crown under the umbrella and with the help of the courts on the one hand and the 'fidélites regional' in most kingdoms and dominions on the other. The monarchy tried consciously to adapt to this most basic structure of its agglomerate, the strong composite character with many different explicit 'national' identities.

Friedeburg's summary of section II concentrated on the specifics of the Empire as a *civitas* in its own right with an institutional structure, comparatively strong privileges for its princes, their attempts to accumulate further lands and status and subsequent specific intra-dynastical rivalries and problems.

In his summary of section III, Morrill suggests that we should think of a three-stage dynamic of the dynastic agglomerate, made up simultaneously of the relations within the family corporation itself, between the dynasty and their states; and within the estates themselves within their lands. Against this background, he stressed a number of research issues in order to gain a clearer overview: to map the wins and losses of dynastic agglomerates to gain a comparative idea of the

changing landscape of Europe and the dynastic potential at each point in time with as much chronological rigour as possible; to study the demographics of family corporations and the vulnerability of the inheritance system – in France between 1360 and 1789 only two kings were succeeded by adult sons –; to comprehensively understand ‘hearts and minds’ campaigns, from the use of paintings and processions to the printing of coins, including issues such as intermarriage strategies for elites from different dominions, in order to calibrate how different tools of creating allegiance work over time; to focus on the contemporary terminology of *bellum civile*, *bellum inter socios*, and *bellum seditionum*.

Frost stressed that it was necessary to realize to what extent we still lack a unifying set of terms and assumptions in the wake of the demise of Marxism and theories primarily inspired by the Social Sciences and to identify the specific groups of persons actually running politics. Heinz Schilling concluded the workshop with a summary of sixteen points concerning methods and approach, the present conference and further debate. They will, together with the other summaries, provide the basis for planning a further, larger conference in two years time to address the issues lined out in Rotterdam in more detail.

#### **Programme**

THURSDAY JUNE 12

#### **Concepts and Questions.**

Chair: Conal Condren (Cambridge)

John Morrill (Cambridge): Dynastic Agglomerations

Lucien Bely (Paris): The European Society of Princes

Robert von Friedeburg (Rotterdam): Patriots and Favourites

Introductory Plenary Debate

#### **Section I: The Empire of the German Nation and the Habsburg Monarchy.**

Chair: Robert von Friedeburg (Rotterdam)

Alexander Schmidt (Jena): German Princes and the Rhetoric of Nation and Fatherland

Thomas Nicklas (Erlangen): The Wittelsbach Dynasty between its Estates and its competitors

Arno Strohmeyer (Salzburg): Estates and Subjects in Habsburg dominions inside and outside the Empire

FRIDAY JUNE 13

#### **Section II: Habsburg's crowns in Spain and Italy. Chair Lucien Bely (Paris)**

Bernardo García García (Madrid): Habsburg Spain

Antonio Alvarez-Ossorio Alvarino (Madrid): Spanish dominions in Italy

#### **Section III: 'National Monarchies' and Republics? The British Isles, France and North-Eastern Europe.**

Chair: John Morrill (Cambridge)

James Collins (Georgetown): Nation and Patria in the Bourbon Dynastic State

David Finnegan (Dublin), Stewart Ireland in British Context

Robert Frost (Aberdeen), The Vasa in Sweden and Poland Lithuania

Mikhail Dmitriev (Budapest/Moscow), Royal Authority, patria and Muscovite challenge in Ukraine-Belarus, XVIth-XVIIth centuries

SATURDAY JUNE 14

#### **Concluding Plenary Debate.**

Chair: Heinz Schilling (Berlin)

Lucien Bely: Preliminary summarizing suggestions on Spain

Remarks by Garcia and Plenary Debate

Robert von Friedeburg: Preliminary summarizing suggestions on the Empire and the German Habsburgs

Remarks by Strohmeyer, Schmidt, Nicklas and Plenary Debate

John Morrill: Preliminary summarizing suggestions on 'National Monarchies and Republics'

Remarks by Frost, Finnegan, Collins, Dmitriev and Plenary Debate

Chair: Heinz Schilling: Preliminary conclusions and concluding debate

Tagungsbericht *The Transformation of Christian Europe: Princes, Dynastic Agglomerations and Fatherlands*. 12.06.2008–14.06.2008, Rotterdam,

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in: H-Soz-Kult 18.09.2008.