Abstract

What can a comparative analysis of the courts in Vienna and Versailles tell us about the Hohenzollern court? I answer this question by tracing changes in court numbers and expenditure, connections between household staffs and government institutions, and finally the pattern of court routines and ceremonies. The Hohenzollern court was a special case, but did not differ as fundamentally from other European courts as an earlier generation of scholars had assumed. The contrast needs to be reduced from two sides, by looking at practices instead of reputations. Court life was never an uninterrupted extravaganza: budget cuts and phases of penury recurred. Also the court calendar everywhere knew stretches of reduced ceremonial activity, alternating with incidental highpoints. Even Frederick II’s personal attitude, distancing himself from court and bureaucracy, had independent counterparts as well as imitators elsewhere.

Introduction

European history still consists primarily of a mosaic based on national histories and national stereotypes. Regions, countries, dynasties and individual rulers take up set positions within the larger whole of European history. Contrasting examples in space and in time tend to denote decline or improvement; dead ends or forward-looking developments. Among such stepping-stones toward modernity, Brandenburg-Prussia has long since enjoyed a special reputation as an early Beamtenstaat catering for and based on the strong presence of the army. It figures universally as an ideotype for historians studying state formation and modernization. This special role, questioned in recent research but still strongly present in textbooks, could be valued very differently, either in positive terms as an early example of a relatively rational ‘modern’ state, or more negatively, as the precursor of later German regimes with a dominant military ethos. Whatever the case, however, the Brandenburg-Prussian state was seen as differing from its competitors. It has been contrasted with its Bavarian and Saxon rivals in the Holy Roman Empire as well as with the great dynastic states of Europe. While rulers in Dresden, Munich, Vienna and Versailles spent lavishly on court culture, the Brandenburg electors allegedly concentrated steadily on military-political consolidation of their exposed territories. From the Great Elector to Frederick II, the Hohenzollern rulers seemed to fit neatly into this picture, with only elector-king Frederick III-I standing out as a friend of ceremony and court pageantry.

See e.g. Werner Pluemp: Korruption. Annäherungen an ein historisches und gesellschaftliches Phänomen, in: Jens Ivo Engels / Andreas Fahrmeir / Alexander Nützenadel (Hg.): Geld – Geschenke – Politik. Korruption im neuzeitlichen Europa (=Beiliebe der historischen Zeitschrift 48), München 2009, 19-47, with 'Beamtendisziplin' mentioned as a 'Selbstbeschreibungsstereotyp' on page 44.
This image of a dynasty aloof from courtly display and ceremonial competition, focusing instead on sound military organization backed up by good government, has been challenged effectively by Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, Thomas Biskup, and others. In retrospect it seems surprising that it remained unchallenged for so long. The Great Elector was as keen to improve his standing among the rulers of Europe as were his fellow-electors. Acquiring royal dignity with full ceremonial honors can hardly be seen as his son’s unworthy exploit. Even Frederick-William I, admittedly an idiosyncratic figure among his fellow-monarchs, acknowledged it as an important step for his dynasty. There is no reason to deny differences in style of rulership and priorities of expenditure, but these should be placed within the confines of the early modern mentality rather than viewed as prefiguring later attitudes. Frederick II takes up a particular position within Hohenzollern mythology, as warrior-king, administrator, musician and philosopher. It is clear, however, that his style of rulership enjoyed great resonance in Europe, and fitted within a changing style of rulership.

After the lull in warfare following the War of Spanish Succession, a protracted series of intense wars disrupted Europe – and the world – in the years following 1740. All rulers involved were confronted with towering financial and political problems. In many cases the military and financial crisis could only be solved by taking recourse to emergency measures putting at risk socio-political consensus. The second half of the eighteenth century almost universally shows tensions between rulers, elites, and a wider public caused by forceful attempts to increase government revenue. The strengthening of public credit as a means to escape from financial crisis, moreover, made states more dependent on the goodwill of creditors. At the same time, a culture of critique became dominant among the elites, with an increasingly active periodical press providing for an expanding reading public. Traditional 'Baroque monarchies' were forced to adapt to these changing circumstances, while in many ways they
themselves were main agents of change.\(^4\) In this sense, Frederick II’s special style of leadership was remarkable mostly for the fact that it was a conspicuous and outspoken example of an attitude gradually becoming more prevalent.

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In my paper I want to put into perspective the Sonderweg of the Hohenzollern not by concentrating on their court, but by situating it against the backdrop of change at two major courts of continental Europe, the Habsburg court in Vienna and the Bourbon court in Versailles. I will adopt a longer-term view, allowing me to chart changes from the seventeenth into the later eighteenth century. This I will do by looking at three themes that seem particularly relevant for eighteenth-century transformations as well as for the reputation of the Hohenzollern court: the numbers, costs, and court ‘reform’; changing balances between household staffs and high executive government; and finally changing patterns of ceremony and court life. My conclusion relates change in these three spheres to the court of Frederick II and to the general debate about the court and an emerging ‘public sphere’ in eighteenth-century Europe.

I. Numbers, costs, reforms

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Any scholar researching the development of the dynastic court in terms of numbers and costs will be baffled by numerous problems regarding sources and definitions. Who ‘belongs to the court’? Only those listed on the payrolls, or also numerous honorary servants attending court incidentally, maybe even grandees with their personal following visiting court? In terms of institutional make-up, moreover, it is difficult to draw a sharp line between court and government, or between court and army. Finally the generic term ‘court’, usually hides a series of households, often residing in various locations. Notwithstanding these difficulties students of the court will recognize immediately two contrasting propositions. First of all, looking at lists of court servants, we can establish a remarkable continuity of service over time. Court servants formed a tightly knit group of families, successfully holding on to their positions. Secondly, and more important for this contribution, continuity becomes far less evident as soon as we look at aggregate numbers instead of individual families. In the Viennese case court office was still held on a strictly personal basis dissolving upon the ruler’s death. A new ruler started his own personal court, reconfirming servants in their offices, accommodating others in the dowager-empress’ household, and finally pensioning off a third group. Even honorary officers were personally nominated by the ruler, with their numbers gradually expanding during a reign. In France court office had become semi-hereditary in most ranks, through the practices of venality and the survivance. A new ruler could make changes here and there, but in principle took office in his predecessor’s court.

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Courts were notoriously inclined to succumb to inflation of honors, and rulers were perennially trying to

\(^4\) Peter R. Campbell: Power and Politics in Old Regime France, 1720-1745, London 1996, 4, suggests the term “baroque monarchy” or “baroque state” as an alternative for absolutism or “administrative monarchy”.

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counter this trend by sending away supernumeraries. Usually, they did so gradually following the formula of 'vacation avenant', discontinuing a position upon the death or departure of the incumbent. Strong rulers could opt for more radical strategies. Thus, Louis XIV, usually thought to have expanded his court, initiated a major reduction of the court in the 1660’s which led to a stabilizing of numbers of the court – and to the confirmation of families remaining at court in their offices and privileges. The reform of the 1660’s marks a break in the trends of development ending the ragged peaks and dips of the previous century. In Vienna, on the other hand, within the general trend of gradual expansion, a pattern of sharp decreases during phases of warfare and following the death of a ruler remains visible, most notably in the crisis of the 1740’s.⁵

While numbers stabilized in France expenditure always followed an uneven rhythm dictated mostly by warfare, more rarely also by extraordinary dynastic outlay for festivities. Expenditure at the Habsburg and Bourbon courts varied from depths of less than 5% to heights of more than 35% of total expenditure, usually hovering between 10 and 20%. Warfare and war debts, always the two major components of the budget, strictly limited court expenditure. Clearly, warfare made it impossible to build new palaces or organize festivities on a lavish scale. During long wars, moreover, it frequently proved impossible to pay salaries of court servants – we find their wages listed as outstanding loans in French as well as in Habsburg registers. In financial distress during the wars around 1700 the Sun King had to ask his courtiers to bring their silverware to the royal mint, he himself leading the way. W.R. Newton’s recent detailed study of the palace of Versailles with its petulant lodgers in the eighteenth century underlines the persistent attempt of the court administrators to control and limit expenditure, and the inadequacy of their funds to cover even the rising costs of maintenance.⁶ Clearly, court splendor was presented to the public more readily than the less glamorous practice of making ends meet. Reducing expenditure, however, was a dominant concern of all court administrators, and financial procedures occupy many pages in court instructions.

In the course of the eighteenth century court splendor increasingly came under fire. Interestingly, several friendly descriptions of the court in Vienna, from Rinck’s biography of Leopold I to Küchelbecker’s description of Charles VI’s Vienna, praise the modesty of the ruling house, stressing


religion and good governance rather than conspicuous display. A discourse criticizing court splendor and praising modesty was hardly new – it had always figured in commentaries on court life as well as among the rules of the court itself. In the second half of the century, and particularly after the Seven Years’ War, it became stronger, in part because rulers themselves used their insolvency as an argument to more rigorously tax their subjects. In the Habsburg domains this process developed gradually, with major reductions and reform arising from the crisis of 1740-2, followed by a steady rebuilding of the court peaking in the 1770’s. Serious reductions followed only in the decade of Joseph II’s personal rule. Maria Theresa, however, frowned upon the indulgences of her daughter at Versailles, notably her taste for extravagant jewelry. Joseph himself openly expressed his distaste for all forms of court luxury. At the same time, Habsburg institutions of government expanded rapidly, though the central bureaucracy eclipsed the household only toward the end of Joseph II’s reign.

In France the reforms of Louis XIV had stabilized numbers, changing only within relatively small margins during the eighteenth century. The accession to the throne of Louis XVI, however, almost immediately led to a series of reform attempts, first by Malesherbes, followed shortly by Necker. Chrétien-Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes, briefly holding office as sécrétaire d’état for the maison du roi (1775-1776), convinced the king that reform was inevitable. Malesherbes stated it would be applauded by the populace, arguing that: ‘...ce n’est point par la pompe, par la magnificence, qu’un roi de France est respecté...’. A reduction of the court and its ceremonies, he continued, ‘...ne fera qu’augmenter la vénération qu’il [the king, J.D.] inspira à ses sujets et aux étrangers...’. The king’s willingness to listening to his subjects could have paradoxical results; thus, his decision to stick to the richly ornamented but costly and arguably outdated habit habillé as court costume was motivated by his desire to protect the French silk industry rather than by his taste for display. Court dignitaries as well as royal siblings, moreover, were less impressed by the urgent necessity of reform, which they viewed primarily as an infringement of their rights. A few years later, therefore, Necker started his court reductions by taking away financial responsibilities from the senior court officers. In fact, the reforms initiated during the decade preceding the revolution in France represented a sharper reduction proportionally than the simultaneous reductions at Joseph II’s court. At the same time, however, there was little or no growth of central government institutions in France, a marked contrast to their ongoing expansion in the Habsburg monarchy.

8 See Alfred Arneth / Mathieu Auguste Geoffroy (eds.): Correspondence secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Cte de Mercy-Argenteau, avec les lettres de Marie-Thérèse et de Marie-Antoinette, Paris 1874-75, 3 vols., here II, 418 (Mercy to Maria Theresa, 19-1-1776), 422-23 (Maria Theresa to Mercy 12-2-1776); compare III, 35: Mercy's complaints to Maria Theresa that the queen had a costly ‘gout immodéré’ for ‘jeux de hazard’ (18-3-1777): the king’s special support for her old playing debts did not even cover the current costs of playing at court. See on Joseph’s attitudes Derek Beales: Joseph II. In the shadow of Maria Theresa 1741-1780, Cambridge 1987, and his recently published second volume: Joseph II. Against the World, 1780-1790, Cambridge 2009.
9 Archives nationales Paris (AN) O 1 749 nr. 51, 1775 memoir.
Court life was no never-ending fairy tale of magnificence and opulence; making ends meet while maintaining a dignified façade was a difficult challenge, and temporary insolvency no exception. Whether imposed by circumstances or chosen voluntarily on the basis of personal preferences, modesty could profitably be presented as an accomplishment rather than as a shortcoming -- in the heyday of Baroque, but conspicuously so in the second half of the eighteenth century. The development of the court in Brandenburg-Prussia in these respects can be seen as exceptional, particularly in the reign of Frederick-William I, the epitome of conspicuously stylized modesty. Recent studies on the Hohenzollern courts as well as on other European courts suggest that the difference was not fundamental. Fluctuations were the rule, and as long as household routines persisted at a minimum level, the court could still easily be made to serve as the basis for incidental moments or phases of greater outlay. This seems to have been the case during the reigns of all Hohenzollern rulers in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

II. Household versus bureaucracy

A court, almost by definition, is the environment where domestics and administrators meet. The relationship between these two main components of the dynastic centre can differ widely, from rigid spatial separation, common at many Asian courts, to almost entire coincidence. On the one hand, servants cater for the person of the ruler, attending to daily activities familiar for any household; on the other hand, the ruler needs servants to deal with the government of his realm. European household staffs were usually organized into services for chamber, hall, stables, chapel, guards and hunt. Officers in each of these spheres tended to combine their domestic tasks with major responsibilities pertaining to government; chamberlains doubled as treasurers, stewards extended their responsibility for the 'economy of the court' to the realm at large, and marshals commanded armies as well as subordinates in the stables. While these formal competences were taken over by specialized agents of government in the course of the Middle Ages, high court dignitaries as a rule remained strong in the highest organs of government, notably in the upper councils meeting in the ruler's presence, or advising the ruler through written memoranda. These high nobles were the social and daily proximates of rulers, and hence in many cases became their confidants. However, their high rank could also make them a nuisance or even a danger, particularly when they came close to the ruler in rank or held rights to succession - always a ground for tension.

Lawyers and financial specialists proceeding from rank to rank in the emerging administrative hierarchies were increasingly successful in reaching the upper-level councils, first as secretaries implementing the council's decisions, then often as full participants. Homines novi in government

ascended in rank throughout the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At all European courts the highest echelons of household staffs and increasingly professionalized administrators met around the ruler, yet their connections could take very different shapes. The two overlapping service hierarchies tended to become separate segments, with differentiated responsibilities. Institutional segmentation did not preclude overlaps in staff through accumulation of offices; it certainly did not prevent the interaction of the two spheres in the processes of patronage and decision-making around court.

The comparison of Vienna and Versailles shows that this was hardly a uniform development. In both realms, new organs for government were formed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The earliest printed French overviews of the court dating from the 1650’s (‘États’) list them separately from household staffs – with the latter taking pride of place. Throughout the seventeenth century Habsburg manuscript Hofstaatsverzeichnisse included all groups at court, listing them under different headings, but in a sequence that suggests integration rather than separation. In France restoration after the Fronde (1648-1653) did make a difference because it sharpened the delineations of competences and memberships. Taking away from the highest nobles their perceived right of membership in the supreme council and restoring the king’s powers to select and invite members, France reverted to a situation that in Vienna was in fact habitual. In practice, high court dignitaries during the reign of Louis XIV only rarely combined their office with executive decision-making power, whereas this combination remained common in Vienna, even if it never was a formal right. The highest courtier, the Obersthofmeister (steward, maître d’hotel), habitually chaired the council, a practice continuing into the reign of Joseph I, falling into abeyance only under Charles VI French courtiers, however, were able to add to their office governorships in the provinces and military command – a combination so prevalent that court officers in the eighteenth century became the ruling elite par excellence. While in the later seventeenth century the central organs of government in France were predominantly the domain of a small group of highly successful ministerial dynasties – social climbers seeking alliances among court nobles – in Vienna ‘robe’ status in the highest circles never led to the creation of a new elite: it remained limited to individuals, successful in government, but rarely able to fully assimilate into the court nobility.

On the basis of this differentiated situation, in the second half of the eighteenth century the situation changed again. In Austria – a term becoming increasingly common in the eighteenth century – the reforms starting in 1749 and continuing at an uneven pace throughout the century reduced the formal political role of high courtiers. The diaries of Khevenhüller, bewailing the declining influence of his generation of court nobles, have some resonance with the memoirs of Saint-Simon. Khevenhüller’s less literarily embellished text, however, stays closer to the actual situation than Saint-Simon whose masterful tragedy of noble decline and takeover by the alliance of monarchy and vile bourgeoisie has

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12 See Duindam: Vienna and Versailles (FN 5), and the forthcoming work by Leonhard Horowski: Machtstrukturen und Karriermechanismen am Hof von Frankreich 1661–1789 (= Beihette der Francia, 72), Ostfildern 2010.
led many a historian astray. Joseph II did not trouble to hide his distaste for traditional courtiers, did his best to ignore the court, and tried hard to set new standards of disinterested state service for all ranks. Among his main advisers, however, nobles were strongly present. In France high nobles briefly reached political prominence following the death of the Sun King; Louis XV adopted most basic tenets of the reign of his great-grandfather, but accepted high nobles as ministers. Princes of the blood remained a force to be reckoned with throughout the eighteenth century. Under Louis XVI, finally, council membership and ministerial status were readily obtained by nobles.

The rise of bureaucracies can be seen as a general phenomenon, even if they remained small and at the top often were dominated by household-related noble elites. An increasing physical distance between household staffs and professional administrators developed at most courts, the institutional separation gradually leading to special buildings for ministries, no longer necessarily integrated into a palace compound. In the process, the person of the ruler remained the focal point, both in written and in interactive forms of decision-making. This left open the possibility of influence by intermediaries and proximates, whether these were courtiers or cabinet secretaries.

At court councilors and secretaries were as markedly present as domestic servants high and low. Ministers improved their status vis à vis courtiers, and their staffs moved out of the court. The long-term process in which hierarchies, locations, mutual connections as well as relations with the ruler changed form took different shapes in different realms. Seen against this long-term background the Brandenburg-Prussian example, most of all the sequence of the roi-sergent and his son, presents a particular case because bureaucracies developed strongly, whereas the court retained a low profile. Both monarchs, moreover, developed a markedly personal style of rulership, distancing themselves from their court as well as from the courtly traditions of Europe. Frederick was a notable specimen of the bureaucrat-king, arguably exceeding in this respect Philip II and Louis XIV, approaching Napoleon. His example was to be followed in an exacerbated form by Joseph II – who through his highly personal style of rule tried to set a standard of disinterested state service for all his subjects.

III. Court life, ceremony, and religion

Did traditional ceremonial practices in France and Austria decline? Like Frederick and Frederick-

William, Joseph II avowed a determination not to be governed by the traditional strictures of court life. In his 1752 political testament Frederick famously remarked:

'Die meisten Könige haben sich selbst eine Art von Ketten geschmiedet, unter deren Gewichten sie oft seufzen. Mein Vater besaß den Mut, die seinen zu zerbrechen, und seinen Spuren folgend habe ich das mir überlieferte Maß an Freiheit getreulich bewahrt.'

Shortly after Joseph II's coronation as Holy Roman Emperor, Johann Jacob Moser noted a similar sentiment in his revised *teutsches Staatsrecht*:

'...haben des jezigen Kaysers Joseph II. Majest. das Herz gefaßt, zu zeigen, daß Sie Meister über das Ceremoniel seyen, nicht aber das Ceremoniel über Sie...'

Khevenhüller, hardly a friendly observer, referred to the young emperor as a person 'welcher alle alte Gebrauch für eitel Préjugés halte'. Joseph himself explained his position in a handwritten note to his *Obersthofmeister* in 1786 that deserves to be quoted at some length:

'Es sind bereits seit mehreren Jahren nach und nach alle diejenigen […] Gebräuche, als das Mantelkleid, die Tracht der Edelknaben und so mehrere von mir abgestellt worden. Es erübrigen nur noch die sogenannte Hof und appartemens Kleider der Damen; die kniegebogenen reverenzen und der Handkuß von Männern und Weibern gegen den Landsherrn und alle Personen vom Erzhaus. Diese will ich hiermit ebenfalls abstellen, und sollen selben nach den neuen Jahr 1787 bey keiner Gelegenheit von Niemanden mehr in Ausübung gesetzt werden […] weil dieses zwischen Menschen und Menschen kein geziemende handlung ist, die Gott allein vorbehalten bleiben muß…'

Several matters are at stake here. Joseph's abolition of ceremonial habits reflects a changing religious attitude; it also shows a new paradigm of rulership, implicit in the significant last phrase of this quote. A change of ruler would always engender minor modifications, adaptations to the personality of the new sovereign. Such adjustments could be proclaimed loudly – whether as innovations or as a return to the unblemished example of the past – but more often they were implemented casually and without much ado. Did core routines of court life in the eighteenth century undergo more profound change, going beyond the individual preferences of rulers?

Successful courts were the theatre of interaction among elites, between the ruler and these elites, and
between the upper layers assembled at court and the population. Rules for access, for participation in

court occasions, for the entry of spectators, for the outings of the court ideally all helped to establish a

well-ordered interaction. Household and government formed the institutional core for a series of

occasions that brought together many groups, by no means only from the upper layers. Urban

processions and entries, meetings with estates assemblies, progressions through the realm: these

were all interactive occasions where several parties presented themselves. The eighteenth century

has often been seen as the culmination of a phase of gradual change from the later Middle Ages

onwards, reflecting a withdrawal of courts from their urban environments. Itinerant rulers settled in

winter residences, interactive outdoor civic culture changed character by being forced into a palace-

based ceremonial setting. Instead of a ruler touring the country, entering cities and meeting political

bodies, such institutions now had to send their representatives to the centre. Rulers themselves,

finally, chose to withdraw, creating their own personal sphere in series of more secluded rooms in their

apartments.

This view of changing monarchical practices partly rings true. While all courts traveled regularly, most

settled in a privileged Winterresidenz from late autumn to early spring – the ceremonial and festive

highpoint of the court calendar. Politically motivated travel became less important in many countries,

although it never disappeared. Some rulers withdrew into a more secluded lifestyle for at least a share

of their lives, for instance by dining among a select group of invited guests, shutting out the traditional

public sphere of the court. Can we compare Louis XV’s petits soupers, a small innovation at a court

that on the whole stuck to its routines, to Frederick II’s Tafelrunde? Was Frederick’s withdrawal from

court into his own favourite palatial setting just a variant of a more general tendency? Does Marie

Antoinette’s pastoral daydream, the hameau, where she spent time among her close friends, fit into

the same category as the phantasies of the miller of Sanssouci? The pastoral idyll had always offered

a pleasant escape from court life and hence formed favourite pastimes at court. The notion that

courts and rulers withdrew into the palace, however, needs more thought.

From the sixteenth century onwards the Habsburg court had been shielded from publicity more
effectively than its Valois-Bourbon counterpart. Public interaction in the palace remained limited to

specific moments in the court calendar, whereas in France accessibility was almost a sovereign’s duty

and a subject’s right – certainly in the case of high nobles. Maria Theresa’s rule, often depicted in

terms of an increasingly ‘private’ family life, seems instead to have introduced ‘French’ standards of

access and sociability for a widening range of social groups. While Maria Theresa was happy to leave

a share of public appearances to her husband, a Winterordnung of 1747 conveys the relative

18 Hours, political interpretation of petits soupers.

19 See Claudia Schnitzer: Höfische Maskeraden. Funktion und Ausstattung von Verkleidungsdivertissements an
deutschen Höfen der frühen Neuzeit (= Frühe Neuzeit. Studien und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur und
Kultur im europäischen Kontext, 53), Tübingen 1999.
openness of her new style, stating:

‘...daß sie disen Winter über alle Sonntäg auf dero Seiten öffentlich speisen, vor der Kirchen die gewöhnliche öffentliche Audienzien ertheilen, Dienst- und Freitäg Appartement halten, extraordinarie aber alle Sonntäg-, Mittwoch- und Samstäg bei der Obristhofmeisterin sichtbahr sein würden’.

French-style appartements were followed by meals with the noble guests; Khevenhüller mentions two tables of circa 40 couverts each for banquets in the late 1740’s. On special occasions traditional public dining took place in the spacious Redoutensaal – during one such meal the bustle was such that the hall had to be vacated. Rules for access into the state apartment were loosened, leaving more room for military officers, and by 1751 military dress was accepted at court. In addition, balls, masked balls, and incidental large-scale festivities invited into the court urban audiences previously allowed to approach the court only as spectators during outdoor ceremonies. The organization of the Belvedere festivities in 1770 and the Schönbrunn festivities in 1775 was a new departure, more open than anything seen earlier in the century.

Joseph positively cultivated openness toward a wider public, at the same time distancing himself from the world of the court. The Vienna Prater park was opened to the public in 1766 with the dynasty paying regular visits cheered by the public. In 1775 followed the opening of the Augarten where Joseph had a summer villa built for himself in 1780. Joseph mingled with a Viennese public in a variety of ways – in theatre- and opera boxes and most conspicuously during his daily ad hoc audiences in the Hofburg’s Kontrolleurgang shocking his younger brother Leopold by conversing with a lowly public. These conspicuous openings, however, should be seen against the background of declining traditional forms of contact, notably the religious interaction between court and city to be discussed below, and the discontinued practice of court quartering.

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20 Quote from Khevenhüller: Tagebuch (FN 16), Bd. 2, 191; for the tables see 225 (May 1748) and 324-325 (May 1749, two tables of 60 and 40 respectively) in the same volume. Compare Ingrid Haslinger: Küche und Tafelkultur am kaiserlichen Hofe zu Wien. Zur Geschichte von Hofküche, Hofzuckerbäckerei und Hofsilber- und Tafelkammer, Bern / Vevey 1993.

21 Elisabeth Grossegger (Hg.): Theater, Feste und Feiern zur Zeit Maria Theresas 1742-1776 (= Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, 476 / Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Publikumsforschung, 12), Wien 1987, 227.

22 See Michael Hochedlinger: Mars ennobled. The ascent of the military and the creation of a military nobility in mid-eighteenth-century Austria, in: German History 17 (1999), 141-176.

23 See Beales’ two volumes on Joseph (FN 8), and particularly his: Joseph II, petitions and the public sphere, in: Hamish Scott / Brendan Simms (ed.): Cultures of Power in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century, Cambridge 2007, 249-268.

At the same time in Versailles, we find a relatively strong continuity of household routines. The traditional easy style of access and deportment at the French court was transformed in the sixteenth century into a salon-like style of court life, based loosely on Italian examples. Domestic routines were codified to a far greater extent under Henri III, in an attempt to counter the potentially threatening ongoing public commotion around the king. After protest by court nobles, angrily defending their right of access the rules were accepted in a mitigated form. In fact, Henri’s ordinances provided the basis for domestic routines at the Sun King’s court, soon to be proclaimed as the glory of France in États and ceremonial anthologies of the time. The French court had a reputation to defend in this field, and apart from the temporary abandonment of Versailles during the regency, it enjoyed great continuity. No hazards such as the Ottoman siege of 1683 or the military crisis of 1740-42 disrupted palace life. Tourists swarmed through the gardens and the rooms of the palace, paying their guides to show them localities and occasions not usually available for tourists in Vienna. Reputations and tourist expectations surely were not the only or major reasons for ceremonies to survive. Royalty needed to represent its grandeur, and courtiers of all ranks likewise valued ceremony in which they played prominent – and often lucrative – roles. They were entitled to the material leftovers of ceremony, and used the rituals to demonstrate their rank.

In general conventions were effectively defended by courtiers cherishing their offices as family heirlooms. Any change could diminish their rights, threaten their rank, and affect their income. The gouvernante des enfants de France, the highest female serving at the French court, for instance, did not accept the proposal of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette to simplify the routines of educating the royal children. The court adhered to its traditional open style, but in terms of its personnel and honorary connections became relatively closed. The number of noble men and women presented to the king and allowed to attend the royal hunt, obtaining the honneurs de la cour, was far more restricted than the number of honorary courtiers in Vienna. To be sure, almost anybody could visit Versailles, watching the king’s public appearances as spectator rather than as participant. For the relatively small number of greater dignitaries present in the palace matters became more difficult because the expansion of the royal family forced them out of their high-status apartments. Versailles lost some of its appeal for wider audiences as well as room for its conspicuous elites.

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26 The opposition of the gouvernante des enfants de France, Mme de Guémenée, is discussed in: Journal de l’abbé de Véri publié avec une préface et des notes par le baron Jehan de Witte, 2 vol., Paris s.d. (= 1928), vol. 2, 162, 171.

27 François Bluche: Les honneurs de la Cour, Paris 1957, ‘Les Cahiers nobles’, 10-11; see Archives nationales Paris M 608, 11 (6): ‘Règlement fait par le roi pour les Aspirants aux honneurs de la Cour et à la Présentation’ (Versailles 31-10-1759), and MM 817 for the lists and further règlements.

28 Newton: Espace du Roi (FN 6); Newton: La Petite Cour (FN 6).
Domestic routines, however, were only a minor element of ceremony. Traditionally, the great public celebrations of dynasty and realm formed the essence of ceremony. These festive occasions were often religious in nature, or structured around religious celebrations. Was the religious backbone of such occasions undermined in this period? Frederick in many places ridiculed French royal rituals, notably the *sacre* and the *toucher*, in which religion played the key role. Did the ties between religion and monarchy loosen in the course of the eighteenth century? There seems to be a case in favor of this proposition. The Jesuit order, long a pillar of Catholic monarchies, was suppressed in France in 1764, with Austria following hesitantly in 1773. Furthermore, the royal touch, thought to cure scrofula, was discontinued after 1739 and disappeared altogether until the end of the reign after the Metz incident in 1744. The king himself in a private letter to his grandson, the duke of Parma, expressed a remarkable attitude toward the royal touch:

‘... j’ay acquis a mon sacre le don de pouvoir être l’instrument de la grace que Dieu fait de guerrir des écrouelles, mais pour cela il faut que j’y sois moy meme [in a state of grace, J.D.], et il y a du temps que cela ne m’est arrivé. Nous avons en ce pais cy des remèdes pour guérir de cette maladie. Si vous en voulez je vous en envoirai et la manière de l’administrer.’

In true Catholic spirit the king stopped touching his subjects: because of his amourous adventures he had refrained from confession and communion which made him unworthy to act as an instrument of divinity. On the other hand, Louis soberly points out, the disease could be alleviated by other means. The liturgical calendar, for generations the principal factor determining the court’s daily and monthly schedule of activities, gradually became less dominant in France. Religion, however, still structured court routines, and religious celebrations formed a part of all major dynastic occasions. Louis XVI took up the *toucher* again during his *sacre* in 1775. The 'cène', or last supper reenacted, the French variant of the Maundy Thursday rite, is reported at many instances throughout the eighteenth century.

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29 See e.g. his letters to Voltaire, in: Oeuvres posthumes de Frederic II, Roi de Prusse, Bd. 9: Correspondence, Berlin 1788, 113 (Frederick to Voltaire, 27 June 1740), 273 (Frederick to Voltaire, 14 July 1774), 280-281 (Frederick to Voltaire, 27 July 1775).

30 Khevenhüller: Tagebuch (FN 16), Bd. 8, 12, Maria Theresa and Khevenhüller discussing the abolition effected in 1773, compare ibid., Bd. 7, 181 (31-8-1773, the Papal bull had arrived 21-7-1773) and note 218, 256-262.


Its continued existence indicates not only the importance of religion at court. Professing Christian humility by modestly serving food to the poor, members of the sang royal in fact demonstrated their supreme rank.

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The Habsburg court had been notorious for its dense sequence of religious processions and ceremonies in Vienna and its hinterland. Indeed, the public religious manifestations of the court formed an important connection with its urban environment. Christmas and Easter cycles gave occasion for many outings of the Hofstaat in Vienna; in addition Marian piety, as well as pilgrimages to nearby shrines supplemented the dense religious exchange between court and city. The annual celebration of Corpus Christi or Fronleichnam alone consisted of eight processions, three of which included the court. Change was both more abrupt and radical in Austria than in France. While most activities in the ongoing religious calendar survived the difficult first decades of Maria Theresa’s reign, they started declining after the death of her husband in 1765. The number of annual ‘Sollentitäten’ was reduced from circa 68 during Francis Stephen’s last years to 32 in 1767 and 22 in 1774. In this year Khevenhüller reported the absence of the Hofstaat in the Corpus Christi procession, a fact much commented upon in the city. Already in 1765 Joseph II had proved unwilling to perform the age-old rite of washing the feet of old poor men on Maundy Thursday; his mother prevailed over him temporarily and we find Joseph grudgingly performing the rite, soon seeking to escape these to him onerous duties. After Maria Theresa’s death other members of the dynasty continued to perform the pedilavium; only in the last years of Joseph’s reign, did it stop altogether. Leopold II immediately restored it, and the practice continued until 1918.

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Court life and ceremony changed character in the course of the eighteenth century, mostly gradually, but conspicuously and radically under Joseph II Ceremony, often negatively presented as impeding communication among groups and individuals, in fact was a format for organizing interaction between

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34 Küchelbecker: Allerneueste Nachricht (FN 7), 222-249, gives a detailed calendar of one year at court. Similar calendars and an interesting overview (with a bibliography in the notes) by Elisabeth Kovacs: Kirchliches Zeremoniell am Wiener Hof des 18. Jahrhundert im Wandel von Mentalität und Gesellschaft, in: Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs 32 (1979), 109-142, esp. the lists in notes 61, 69, 84. Kovacs shows the continuity until the first decade of Maria Theresa’s rule and the changes that occurred afterwards. Also see Anna Coreth: Pietas Austriaca. Ursprung und Entwicklung barocker Frömmigkeit in Österreich, Wien 1959; Beales: Joseph II. In the shadow of Maria Theresa (FN 8), 36-37; 156-159.

35 Khevenhüller: Tagebuch (FN 16), Bd. 6, 29 (9-6-1774).

36 'Wienerisches Diarium enthaltend alle so von Tag zu Tag so wohl in dieser Kayserlichen Residentzstadt Wien selbstn sich zugetragen', see Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 393-052 B-D-E Kat or microfilm 226, e.g. the Anhang in 1729 nr. 31, 16 April, likewise the report in the 14 April 1770 issue, proudly listing the added ages of the male (982) and female (1006) participants. In the later eighteenth century, the Fußwaschung is still a recurring item in the documents and protocols, see e.g. Khevenhüller: Tagebuch (FN 16), Bd. 6, 171 (March 1766), 231-232 (April 1767); HHSTA ÄZA K 70 8 (20 March 1765); HHSTA Zeremonialprotokoll (ZA Prot) 33 fol. 27-28 (1769) with Maria Theresa and Ferdinand; fol. 142-3 (1770) with Joseph II; ZA Prot 34, fol. 20, 133, 242; in the early 1780s ZA Prot 36: fol. 7-8; fol. 327-329, ZA Prot 37 fol. 13 Fußwaschung (April 1768); no such ceremonies are noted for 1787, 1788, and 1789; fol. 207 reports the Fußwaschung under Leopold II on 1 April 1790, and ZA Prot 38 fol. 14, 97 show continuity. Compare other references to the Fußwaschung in ÖNB cod. 12958 (1766) fol. 18-19 (the 12 men and women receive 30 Groschen); and ÖNB cod. 12956 fol. 463 (1777).

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the court and its audiences. Any decline of traditional forms of interaction made it necessary to establish new points of contact, redefining both the court and its audiences. A redefinition along these lines took place under Maria Theresa and Joseph. The French court continued the model set by Louis XIV: a reduced prestigious court open to the general public, and broadcast widely through a variety of media. The conspicuous success of the formula in the age of Louis XIV may have made change more difficult, whereas courtiers themselves were keen to hold on to their privileges. The divergence in ceremonial practices in France and Austria reflects the very different relationship between ruler and courtiers. Habsburg courtiers did not hold venal or semi-hereditary office, and hence were not entitled to financial compensation, a major problem in the French case.

In Vienna courtiers such as Khevenhüller defended ceremony, but their resistance was futile against Joseph’s determined activism, a determination not seen in either Louis XV or Louis XVI French ‘absolute’ rulers in many respects were more constrained than their counterparts elsewhere in Europe. The very success of Louis XIV’s reductions in the long run had helped to establish at court a limited number of noble families in positions they would successfully hold on to until the crisis preceding the revolution. Maria Theresa in her Denkschrift of 1751 mulled over the ambiguous consequences of success. The rewards showered by Ferdinand II on his loyal nobles after the victory of the White Mountain (1620), she argued, laid the foundation for the undue power of regional elites in the framework of Habsburg monarchy. Nevertheless, Habsburg policies, long more traditional, had retained the flexible honorary connections between court and country. Habsburg nobles, moreover, accepted the need to gradually ascend to higher office at court and in government through a cursus honorum. Never holding undisputed individual or family rights to office, they could more easily adapt to reform in government than their French comppeers. Joseph’s willful style of rulership, sometimes needlessly confronting his elites, went beyond the examples of his mother or Frederick II.

**Epilogue**

In the later eighteenth century, all courts underwent changes caused by budgetary pressures as well as by changing sensibilities. Restyling rulership became a major issue for all monarchs. They had to relocate themselves and their courts in a changing environment, redefine their relationship with traditional elites as well as with the population at large. An expanding public reflected more critically on the role of the court. In the process of changing forms of interaction the critical perception of courtly forms became increasingly relevant. New strategies and practices had to be devised to ensure the positive reputation of rulership – most particularly when and where military and political predicaments undermined the credibility of sovereigns.

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37 Alfred Arneth: Zwei Denkschriften der Kaiserin Maria Theresia, in: Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte 47,2 (1871), 267-354, here at 300-301: in the process the Bohemian Oberstkanzler obtained a power no longer with ‘königliche Autorität ... compatible seye’.
This process has usually been described in terms of a rising ‘public sphere’, the increasingly strong voice of more or less independent critical audiences. Recently T.C.W. Blanning produced a virtuoso reappraisal of Habermas' classic study, arguing that the culture of representation – the ‘culture of power’ – was being slowly superseded by the emerging vital public sphere – the ‘power of culture’.\textsuperscript{38} Rulers had to come to grips with this new force, or succumb to it. While the changes in reading, writing, and publishing helped to create a public discourse quite different in tone and structure from that of earlier ages, I see a tension with the thesis of withdrawal of the court in this preceding phase. The court always had had to communicate with the groups and audiences present in its environment, and had never been able to structure this communication to conform entirely to its own needs and desires. Communication could take the form of interaction – with groups actually present at court, or the court present in their midst – or alternatively through the rapidly expanding series of media that could be multiplied and transported – bringing the court into the homes of more distant audiences. Attention to the persistence of this need for communication and the gradual change of occasions, groups and media around court provides a perspective that makes the public sphere more than a vehicle of modernization theory.

Courts could hold many functions – they catered for the dynasty, formed the heart of government, offered a meeting point for elites as well as a ceremonial-festive point of orientation. As a centre of redistribution, they attracted petitioners and litigants. Of course, rulers could choose to differentiate these functions, to organize them in different forms, taking them out of the organic unity of the \textit{familia} living under one roof. This process of ‘going out of court’ had been going on for centuries. Reductions of the court, increasing independence of bureaucracies, a ruler distancing himself from courtiers and ministers: these phenomena can be fitted into this wider process. We have to ask the question whether the functions often combined in the court simply disappeared, or migrated to other loci in the socio-political landscape. It is my impression that the latter usually was the case.

Defining his priority area of activity, Frederick could choose to drop minor concerns, improving his reputation while making sure that issues were dealt with by others. No friend of delegation in important state affairs, he could leave ceremony and diplomatic protocol to other members of the dynasty.\textsuperscript{39} When he saw fit, Frederick could bring to life the courtly machinery to accomplish certain ambitions – he saw reason to expand his court by nominating Silesian dignitaries after the conquest of the

\textsuperscript{38} Timothy C.W. Blanning: \textit{The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture}, Oxford 2002.

province, and was not averse to celebrating in great style matters he thought important. Joseph appeared more disposed to drop the honorary aspect altogether, even if he did maintain the court. Soon, however, the emperor discovered to his dismay that his pet bureaucracy shared many traits of the old court: bureaucrats proved quite susceptible to the courtly vices of quarreling over rank and Vielschreiberey. Could the bureaucracy truly replace the court as an instrument of monarchical representation? If so, it probably needed to take over some courtly appurtenances. It is useful to keep in mind here that even the supreme general-bureaucrat-ruler of modern history, Napoleon, matched the expansion of his bureaucracy with the judicious restoration of a court which enabled him to connect, reward or rebuke his most prominent subjects.

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