

## **Those In Between: Princely Families on the Margins of the Great Powers**

Jonathan Spangler

(Final version, October 2008)

“To a gentleman, any country is a homeland.”

--Cardinal Jules Mazarin (Giulio Mazzarino)<sup>1</sup>

“We are looked upon as the last of the Gauls or as the first of the Germans. We are neither Gauls nor Germans; we belong at once to both of them.”

-- from an eleventh-century necrology, Saint-Lambert de Liège<sup>2</sup>

Strasbourg, 1827—After having resided peaceably in this city since his Alsatian estates were restored to him by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the Prince of Salm-Salm was required to leave France by the new Conservative Catholic Royalist government. His crime? He had declared his intention to convert to Protestantism. The issue at stake, however, was whether or not the formerly sovereign prince was to be considered an alien or a citizen and thus subject to French law. In his defense, the prince produced example after example of his ancestors’ and his own service to the French crown in the preceding centuries. His uncle was a French field marshal who had raised troops from Alsace for Louis XV at his own expense, and his younger brother had worked to keep the northeast frontier loyal to Louis XVI as bishop of Tournai.<sup>3</sup> But examples could be provided in equal numbers of his ancestors’ service to the Empire. His own father, the French field marshal’s brother, had been an Austrian field marshal and governor of Luxembourg.<sup>4</sup> Two brothers, two careers; one French, one Austrian. For a princely family hailing from the borderlands between France and the Empire, this scenario was entirely commonplace, a standard family practice for survival between larger powers.

An interesting cap to this story is the identity of the man who tried the hardest to prevent the Prince’s conversion: the former Bishop of Strasbourg, the Cardinal-Prince de Croÿ.<sup>5</sup> His family had been princes in the Southern Netherlands since the sixteenth century, and readily displayed the same pattern of military service. The Cardinal himself had five brothers: two French field marshals, a Spanish brigadier, a Bavarian general, and an Austrian colonel.<sup>6</sup>

At the beginning of the era of nationalism and citizenship, where would these formerly pan-European families fit in? Their kinship networks were almost exclusively with one another, across linguistic, geographical, and political frontiers, rather than with one particular national nobility or another. The Cardinal de Croÿ was the most natural person for King Charles X to send to the Prince of Salm-Salm. He

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Geoffrey Parker, *Europe in Crisis, 1598-1648* (London, 1979), p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> Herman Van der Linden, *Belgium. The Making of a Nation*, Sybil Jane, trans. (Oxford, 1920), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Précis historique des faits qui ont eu lieu lors de la conversion de Son Altesse le prince de Salm-Salm de la religion catholique-romaine au culte chrétien évangélique de la confession d’Augsbourg, le 17 mai 1826; suivi des motifs de ce changement de communion* (Paris, 1826); the event was deemed significant enough to warrant publication of the pamphlet in English as well: *Historical summary of facts attending the conversion of His Highness the Prince of Salm-Salm, from the Roman Catholic religion to the Christian evangelical worship of the confession of Augsburg, on May 17, 1826*, Evanson, trans. (London, 1827).

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Karl, Prinz zu Isenburg, *Stammtafeln zur Geschichte der europäischen Staaten* (Marburg, 1961-1978), vol. IV, tables 99-100. Other genealogical data is derived from the later editions of this monumental work (Neue Folge), edited by Detlev Schwennicke.

<sup>5</sup> Bishop of Strasbourg until 1823, then Archbishop of Rouen and Grand Almoner of France.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Baptiste de Courcelles, *Histoire généalogique et heraldique des pairs de France ... et maisons princières de l’Europe* (Paris, 1822-33), vol. VI, pp. 229-238.

was his cousin, and he understood his ‘family values’. This chapter will analyze the issues affecting the positions of such semi-sovereign families in the borderlands between France and the Empire and their impact on the development of national loyalty or identity and early modern state building, particularly in the Southern Netherlands (modern Belgium) and Alsace.

Large multilinear princely dynasties such as the Salm or the Croÿ were part of a wider European order of ‘transregional’ families, who appear with great regularity in political and cultural histories of most European nation-states but have never been systematically studied as a whole. The task of course is daunting, requiring reading knowledge of every major European language (with the exception perhaps of English) and an understanding of the politico-cultural workings of most European states. This chapter will attempt only to identify some common features, based on general prosopographical and genealogical sampling and some specific archival material, with an aim to define characteristics for a set of aristocrats with similar geographical origins and a similar *modus vivendi*. Their number can be set at about thirty distinct yet thoroughly interconnected dynasties, defined by a loose understanding of the concept of sovereignty and the title ‘prince’. Aside from the difficulty of fitting these princely transregional families into strictly national studies, this group has also been overlooked as neither typically noble, nor strictly speaking royal. They can be described as ‘the bottom of the top’ of the European hierarchical system and, in following a recent trend to rehabilitate and recognize the relevance of dynasticism in the political culture of the early modern world, are worth our attention, particularly in our understanding of the shift between conceptualizations of the state from a feudalist perspective of the state as merely those estates and individuals loyal to an individual sovereign to the view of a physical territory occupied by a distinct population, “imagined as an egalitarian horizontal comradeship.”<sup>7</sup>

Since the splitting of the Frankish dominions into eastern and western kingdoms in the ninth century, sovereignty over the middle portion was rarely formalized and often contested. The descendants of this ‘Middle Kingdom’—the future Belgium, Alsace, Lorraine, western Switzerland, Dauphiné, Provence, Savoy, and Piedmont—formed a patchwork of conflicting feudal loyalties to the king of France or to the German emperor, to both or indeed to neither. In the era before nationalism, these regions thrived not as a frontier, but as a meeting place for economic and cultural exchange.<sup>8</sup> As Strasbourg once again becomes a center of European political and economic activity for the twenty-first century, it is important to recognize that this region was once the center of imperial power, not the periphery. The nobles who established themselves in this middle corridor cultivated links with both east and west, and retained dual identities, as revealed in something as simple as their names: Ribeaupierre and Rappoltstein, Montjoye and Froberg, Petit-Pierre and Lützelstein, Deux-Ponts and Zweibrücken, Lorraine and Lothringen. Exact borders mattered little and families on the margins easily shifted alliances and loyalties across the generations. But the early sixteenth-century consolidation of government across Europe brought a need to define effective jurisdictions in the larger states and the need for smaller territories to define their status more precisely. Duke Antoine of

---

<sup>7</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983; revised 1991), p. 6. See also Jeremy Black, *Kings, nobles and commoners: states and societies in early modern Europe: a revisionist history* (London, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> See Daniel Nordman, *Frontières de France, de l'espace au territoire XVI<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1998); Samuel Clark, *State and Status. The Rise of the State and Aristocratic Power in Western Europe* (Cardiff, 1995).

Lorraine, for example, signed the Treaty of Nuremberg with Emperor Charles V in 1542, which clarified that only Antoine's Imperial fiefs (principally to the north and east of Lorraine) were directly accountable to the Emperor, while Lorraine itself was sovereign, "liber et non incorporatus," under the *protection* of the Empire.<sup>9</sup>

Several basic characteristics are shared by the transregional princely dynasties. The first is privilege generated from rank at birth. As princes, these men (and women) had the closest daily access to European monarchs, not because of their offices or military achievements, but because of their birth. The kinship network as a whole profited from individual success, whether in Paris or Vienna—the location did not matter. But a particular strategy appears in the genealogical record again and again, the strategy of 'two sons, two armies', placing sons on both sides of a political divide. This not only provided employment for younger sons, but 'hedged the bets' for the survival of a dynasty between the rivalries of its larger neighbors. The system also maintained a regular flow of information between these neighbors, useful to the families and the monarchs they served alike.<sup>10</sup> The second is privilege generated by location. These families were courted by monarchs and statesmen on both sides of the borders in ways that more 'central' nobles were not. In particular, provinces with an absentee ruler, like the Southern Netherlands, Alsace, Naples or Scotland, saw the elevation to the highest ranks in greater number than in locations closer to the sovereign, both to keep the local elites loyal and to create a surrogate court with enough sparkle and mystique to reinforce the loyalty of the rest of the population. In the processes of early modern nation building, border families were courted in newly annexed provinces to stimulate or maintain the loyalty of the entire province. The great powers competed with each other in awarding their highest titles and chivalric honors, to the obvious benefit of these nobles and their families. It is important to consider, however, that many of these families can be considered as transregional not because they moved but because the frontiers moved across them. The characteristics shared by this elite subset of European nobility represented both a centripetal and a centrifugal force in state formation: maintaining a separateness of regional identities in the midst of centralization and at the same time a more general sense of 'Europeanness', forged and supported by networks of kinship.

The existence of small sovereignties between larger sovereignties was problematic. They were ignored at the Great Powers' peril. Protestant dissenters found haven in Navarre and principalities in the Vosges like Salm and the county of Saarbrücken.<sup>11</sup> Debased coinage from small states blessed with mineral wealth like

---

<sup>9</sup> Jean-Daniel Pariset, "La Lorraine dans les relations internationales au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle", in J.-P. Bled, E. Faucher, and R. Taveneaux, eds., *Les Habsbourg et la Lorraine* (Nancy, 1988), pp. 50-51; Emile Duvernoy, "Recherches sur le Traité de Nuremberg de 1542", *Annales de l'Est* (1933). The original text of this treaty can be seen in Dom Augustin Calmet, *Histoire ecclésiastique et civile de Lorraine* (Nancy, 1728), vol. V, p. 537. The Duke agreed to pay the taxes required by the Imperial Diet (at two-thirds the amount paid by the other territorial princes) but would not contribute to levies for the Emperor's wars. The right of final appeal was vested in the Duke, removing Lorraine from the jurisdiction of the Imperial supreme court at Speyer.

<sup>10</sup> On secret diplomacy between Vienna and Versailles, Heinrich, ritter von Srbik, *Wien und Versailles, 1692-1697: zur geschichte von Strassburg, Elsass und Lothringen* (München, 1944), pp. 45-83.

<sup>11</sup> Guy Cabourdin, *Encyclopédie illustrée de la Lorraine: Les temps modernes—1. De la Renaissance à la guerre de Trente ans* (Nancy, 1991), pp. 105-107. The fortified town of Pfalzburg was established in 1568 by Count Palatine Georg-Johann of Veldenz, Comte de la Petite-Pierre (Lützelstein). He gave it a judicial officer, set up a mint, and settled refugees from both German Lutheran and French Calvinist confessions. The foundation was approved by Emperor Maximilian II in 1570, but by 1584, the Count was in financial trouble and mortgaged the territory to the Duke of Lorraine, and was never able to redeem it. It remained, however, the only town officially not Catholic in the Duchy as late as 1600, and

Lorraine or the Ardennes principalities of Château-Regnault or Sedan upset French and Imperial markets.<sup>12</sup> But larger states could make use of these factors as well, as seen in the Jewish creditors of Metz, theoretically under the jurisdiction of the king of France from 1552 (*de facto*; *de jure* from 1648), but exempted from French law banning Jews, as Metz continued to be a ‘foreign’ territory, not fully integrated into France until 1789.<sup>13</sup> Kings and capitalists could thus obtain funds in ways restricted in the capital, not unlike modern tax-havens in today’s surviving sovereign border principalities of Monaco and Liechtenstein. As a force counter to modern state building, ‘aristocratic internationalism’, in tandem with the ‘Republic of Letters’ of the Enlightenment, took the place of the Catholic Church as the main unifier of a single European consciousness after the splits of the Reformation. From this perspective, the transregional princely families can be represented as a conservative force in early modern Europe, which, from a nineteenth-century *étatist* centralist point of view is undoubtedly negative, but with a nod to recent reappraisals of decentralized, fragmented polities like the Holy Roman Empire, can be seen as defenders of an alternative system of governance that defied the absolutist tendencies of kings and middle-class bureaucrats.<sup>14</sup> Even as the appeal of federalism in Europe weakened in the nineteenth century, border princes continued to play formal and informal roles, particularly in diplomacy, before becoming obsolete in the aftermath of World War I. Yet it is worth noting that as late as 1943, Hitler purged members of the high aristocracy from sensitive positions in the Third Reich, mistrusting their loyalties due to their ‘cosmopolitan families’.<sup>15</sup> This chapter will focus on these two aspects of transregional princely families: their relationships with monarchy and their roles in the integration of border provinces and state building.

Historians have regularly highlighted the leading roles played by the high nobility of the Low Countries at the courts of the Burgundian dukes and their immediate Habsburg successors.<sup>16</sup> Yet attempts to locate these great nobles in

---

was created a principality for the Duke’s sister in 1624 (p. 160). Saarwerden was contested between Catholic Lorraine and Protestant Nassau from the beginning of the sixteenth century until the Treaty of Rijswijk, 1697, and was then held by Nassau until it was incorporated into France in 1798 (p. 185).

<sup>12</sup> Debased coinage from Lorraine and the bishopric of Metz was a constant problem for France, and one of the reasons behind the invasion of 1552. Cabourdin, *Encyclopédie illustrée de la Lorraine*, p. 21. Cabourdin also notes the reputation of Louise-Marguerite de Guise as a ‘billoneur’ (a maker of debased coins) in her tiny principality of Château-Regnault deep in the Meuse valley (p. 176). Her ‘state’ was forcibly exchanged for *rentes* with Louis XIII in 1629 (Bibliothèque Nationale de France [BN], Factum 10065). See also Simon Hodson, “Politics of the Frontier: Henri IV, the Maréchal-Duc de Bouillon and the Sovereignty of Sedan”, *French History*, vol. 19, no. 4 (2005).

<sup>13</sup> Gilbert Cahen, “La Région Lorraine” in B. Blumenkranz, ed., *Histoire des Juifs en France* (Toulouse, 1972), pp. 77-136. Jews were also protected in the neighboring sovereign Alsatian county of Hanau-Lichtenberg. André-Marc Haarscher, *Les Juifs du Comté de Hanau-Lichtenberg entre le XIVe siècle et la fin de l’Ancien Régime* (Strasbourg, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Peter H. Wilson, *From Reich to Revolution. German History, 1558-1806* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 11-17, following (with caution) the path laid down first by authors lauding diversity and federalism such as Francis Ludwig Carsten, *Princes and Parliaments in Germany from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1959) and Gerhard Benecke, *Society and Politics in Germany, 1500-1750* (London, 1974). See also Maiken Umbach, ed., *German Federalism: Past, Present and Future* (Basingstoke, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, it was acknowledged that until the 1940s the *lingua franca* of princely families across northern Europe was English, attributed to the singular dominance (some quipped ‘political power’) of the English nanny before 1918. Jonathan Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich. The Princes von Hessen in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 6-7, 35-36.

<sup>16</sup> Werner Paravicini, “The Court of the Dukes of Burgundy. A Model for Europe?”, in R. G. Asch and A. Birke, eds., *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility* (Oxford, 1991); and Georges Bischoff, “Une enquête: la noblesse austro-bouguignonne sous le règne de Maximilian I”, in *Les Pays de l’entre-deux*

subsequent periods becomes more difficult. Any collection of essays on the nobility will undoubtedly contain a chapter on the Dutch Republic, on France, or on the Empire, but where can one look to find out what has happened to those in between? After playing such a large part in the struggle between rebellion and loyalty in the 1570s, did the great Southern Netherlandish houses simply disappear? Were they completely impotent under Spanish rule as has been suggested?<sup>17</sup> In the words of Dutch historian Pieter Geyl, they were “glittering with honors, but with sadly restricted power.”<sup>18</sup> If this was so, why were these nobles courted so intensely by the major powers of western Europe, well into the seventeenth century?

Part of the answer to these questions can be found in prosopographical surveys of families who gained princely rank in the Southern Netherlands and other border regions between France and Germany in the period 1500 to 1800. Ever since the advent of detailed studies using the models of anthropology and sociology to identify and define trends in history emerged in the Annales School and the followers of Lewis Namier, prosopography has become an integral part of in-depth research into institutions of many western European states.<sup>19</sup> But most of these have focused on families and networks within one particular state. There have been studies of a more ‘European’ nobility in general and some that continue to divide the nobles into national groups.<sup>20</sup> But these too tend to avoid elites from regions in between the larger states such as Alsace or the southern Netherlands.<sup>21</sup> There has been no published systematic analysis of the princely border families as a type. Difficulties to overcome for such a study include the wide variety of languages and the geographical dispersal of archival materials. Sources for the Salm and the Croÿ, for example, must be sought in Paris, Brussels, Vienna, and Madrid.<sup>22</sup> Late medievalists have embraced the idea of

---

*au moyen-âge: questions d’histoire des territoires d’empire entre Meuse, Rhône et Rhin* (Paris, 1990). More recently, see contributions in D’Arcy J. D. Boulton and Jan R. Veenstra, eds, *The Ideology of Burgundy: the promotion of national consciousness: 1364-1565* (Leiden, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> For example, Van der Linden, *Belgium*, pp. 153-155.

<sup>18</sup> Geyl, *History of the Dutch-Speaking Peoples, 1555-1648* (London, 2001 [originally 1932]), p. 71. This view is being revised in more recent historiography, notably in Paul Janssens, ed., *La Belgique au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Brussels, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> See essays in Françoise Autrand, ed., *Prosopographie et genèse de l’état moderne* (Paris, 1986). Models were set in the 1960s by French historians like François Bluche, *Les magistrats du Parlement de Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, 1715-1771* (Paris, 1960), and Jean Meyer, *La noblesse bretonne au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1966).

<sup>20</sup> Recent examples include Jonathan Dewald, *The European Nobility, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 1996); George Lukowski, *The Eighteenth-century European nobility* (Basingstoke, 2003); Ronald Asch, *Nobilities in Transition, 1550-1700. Courtiers and Rebels in Britain and Europe* (London, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> The collection of essays edited by Hamish Scott, *The European Nobilities*, 2 vols. (London, 1995), for example, is being reworked but again without any inclusion of nobles of the Southern Netherlands. Transregional elites are briefly examined by Tom Scott, *Regional Identity and Economic Change. The Upper Rhine, 1450-1600* (Oxford, 1997); and by Georges Bischof, *Gouvernés et gouvernants en Haute Alsace à l’époque autrichienne* (Strasbourg, 1996). My own forthcoming book on the Lorraine-Guise analyzes a princely family that continued to be considered ‘foreign’ at the French court long after they had permanently settled in France: *The Society of Princes: The Lorraine-Guise and the Conservation of Power and Wealth in Seventeenth-Century France* (Aldershot, 2009). Similar cross-cultural work on elite dynasticism has been done by Robert Oresko, for example, “The Marriages of the Nieces of Cardinal Mazarin. Public Policy and Private Strategy in Seventeenth-Century Europe”, in Rainer Babel, ed., *Frankreich im Europäischen Staatensystem der Frühen Neuzeit* (Sigmaringen, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> Both have cartons in the Archives Générales du Royaume in Brussels and at the Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna, in the Reichskanzlei Kleinere Reichsstände, the Imperial Chancellery for small states of the Holy Roman Empire. The Croÿ also have documents in the Archives de l’Etat in Mons but also a private archive at the Château de Rumillies in Tournai and at their formerly sovereign town of Dülmen in Westphalia. The Salm archive is similarly split between their castle at Anholt in the

a transregional prosopographical study with greater gusto than modern historians, mostly in the context of Burgundy and its neighbors.<sup>23</sup> Not sharing any land borders with continental Europe, British historians have been involved only infrequently in such transregional studies, again, with the exception of medievalists, who have focused prosopographical studies on the Anglo-Norman barons or the Angevin empire.<sup>24</sup> Two recent collections of essays, however, have made linkages with these ideas for the early modern period, analyzing the relationships of William III of Orange and of the House of Hanover with the rest of Europe.<sup>25</sup> It is within this comparative context that the present research must be situated.

### Two trajectories: Salm and Croÿ:

Let us therefore return to the princes of Salm and Croÿ, one essentially Alsatian and one Belgian. Of all the border families in my survey of princely families, these two stand out as the ultimate success stories in playing up the rivalries between east and west to their own advantage. The Salm claimed descent from an ancient ruling dynasty of the German Empire and had established their mountaintop principality in the Vosges as early as the twelfth century.<sup>26</sup> They did not need to be encouraged in their princely pretensions but in order to secure their loyalty to him personally the Emperor Ferdinand II elevated them to the rank of *Reichsfürst* in 1623. They were given a vote in the Imperial Diet, thereby equating them with the ancient princes like Bavaria and Saxony, but without the significant territorial base to make them a threat to Imperial authority. These were among the first of the ‘new princes’ that would multiply across the remaining two centuries of the Holy Roman Empire, adequately fulfilling their function of increasing the Emperor’s control of the Diet.<sup>27</sup> The Salm princes of the seventeenth century served primarily in the Imperial armies and at the Imperial court. One of them rose to become leader of the Privy Council (and indeed uncle by marriage) of Joseph I. But because of their immediate proximity to the Duchy of Lorraine, several of the family members served at the ducal court or in ducal armies, until Lorraine itself became part of France in 1737. In fact, the first

---

Rhineland and the Archives Départementales [AD] des Vosges in Epinal (series 3C), with additional papers in Nancy (AD, Meurthe-et-Moselle, series B, 889-893, and 9026-9128). See Gabriel Wymans, *Inventaire des archives des ducs de Croÿ* (Bruxelles, 1977), and Michel Parisse, “La Lorraine, la maison de Salm et les archives d’Anholt”, *Annales de l’Est* (1975).

<sup>23</sup> Gerard Nijsten, *In the Shadow of Burgundy: the Court of Guelders in the Late Middle Ages*, Tania Guest, trans. (Cambridge, 2004); Robert Stein, ed., *Powerbrokers in the Late Middle Ages. The Burgundian Low Countries in a European Context*, Burgundica IV (Turnhout, Belgium, 2001), part of a wider project, “Prosopographia Burgundica”. Older examples include the previously cited *Les Pays de l’entre-deux au moyen-âge*, and H. Hardenberg, “Les divisions politiques des Ardennes et des Pays d’Outremeuse avant 1200”, in *Etudes sur l’Histoire du Pays Mosan au Moyen Age. Mélanges Félix Rousseau* (Bruxelles, 1958).

<sup>24</sup> C. Warren Hollister, ed., *Anglo-Norman political culture and the twelfth-century renaissance: proceedings of the Borchard Conference on Anglo-Norman History, 1995* (Woodbridge, 1997); Jean M. Bell, *Anglo-Norman Talbots: 11th-13th centuries* (s.l., 2000); *L’état angevin: pouvoir, culture et société entre XIIIe et XIVe siècle. Actes du colloque international organisé par l’American Academy in Rome, l’Ecole française de Rome, l’Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, ..., 1995* (Rome, 1998).

<sup>25</sup> Esther Mijers and David Onnekink, eds., *Redefining William III: the impact of the king-stadholder in international context* (Aldershot, 2007); Brendan Simms and Torsten Rott, eds., *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History, 1714-1837* (Cambridge, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Pierre de La Condamine, *Salm en Vosges—une principauté de conte de fées* (Paris, 1974); Michel Parisse, “Les comtes de Salm et l’évêché de Metz, XIème-XIIème siècles”, in *Histoire des terres de Salm*, Société Philomatique Vosgienne (Saint Dié-des-Vosges, 1994).

<sup>27</sup> Wilson, *From Reich to Revolution*, p. 45; Peter Moraw, “Conseils princiers en Allemagne au XIVème et au XVème siècle”, in Stein, ed., *Power Brokers in the late Middle Ages*, p. 175.

*fürst* (who incidentally had married a Croÿ) served in succession as a French lieutenant general, an Imperial field marshal, then governor of Nancy for the Duke of Lorraine.<sup>28</sup> After 1737, international treaties guaranteed the sovereignty of the enclave between Lorraine and Alsace, Salm princes built large palaces in both Paris and Vienna, and occupied positions at both courts. They became *grandeas* of the Austrian Netherlands as well, with the addition of the dukedom of Hoogstraten to their patrimony in 1740.<sup>29</sup> But the survival of what was now considered a feudal anachronism in the Vosges was anathema to the French Revolutionary government, which called for annexation in 1792, thus serving as the *causus belli* for the invasion of Imperial armies and the start of the Revolutionary Wars.

The Croÿ, in contrast, originated as fairly ordinary nobles in Picardy but during the time that Picardy was under the influence of the dukes of Burgundy, they drifted across the frontier to become the most important landowners in Hainaut and amassed great wealth through the Burgundian patronage machine.<sup>30</sup> They nevertheless continued to play a balancing game between France and the Netherlands, acquiring the rich and fertile county of Porcean in Champagne and the semi-sovereign lordship of Aerschot on the frontiers of Brabant, a territory with genuine regalian rights over its small patch of territory (coinage, justice, etc).<sup>31</sup> The man who elevated the family to *grandee* status was Guillaume de Croÿ, seigneur de Chièvres, governor and tutor, then premier minister of Emperor Charles V in the Low Countries and Germany. He organized the Imperial elections of 1519 and was rewarded with titles and almost endless amounts of wealth in Spain and Southern Italy for himself and his family, champion of what John Elliott has termed the “rapacity” of the Flemings.<sup>32</sup> Chièvres was succeeded by his nephews, who, as was perfectly natural at the time, divided their attentions between French and Imperial service. The elder was created Duke of Aerschot in the Netherlands by the Emperor, while the younger retained the family loyalty to the king of France. In the next generation, both branches were raised to princely rank, the elder as Prince of Chimay by Philip II of Spain and the younger as Prince of Porcean by Henri II of France. Over the following century, the Croÿ would outstrip all other families of the Low Countries in the number of knights of the Golden Fleece awarded by the kings of Spain—twenty-seven, in contrast to an average of five or six.<sup>33</sup> The reason? The desirability of Hainaut as a border province and the need to secure its leading family by the contending powers. This is made evident from the late seventeenth century, when, after the annexation of southern Hainaut by France, the degree of Croÿ military, ecclesiastic and court service in France rose, as with other border families previously in Habsburg service who suddenly found their lands located primarily in France. In the sixteenth century, the Croÿ remained loyal to Spain; in the eighteenth century, they maintained their rank as

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Charles Fulaine, *Le Duc Charles IV de Lorraine et son armée, 1624-1675* (Metz, 1997), p. 47; La Condamine, *Salm*, pp. 65-69.

<sup>29</sup> My thanks to Luc Duerloo of the University of Antwerp for highlighting this.

<sup>30</sup> Père Anselme de Sainte-Marie (Pierre de Guibors), *Histoire Généalogique et Chronologique de la Maison Royale de France, des Pairs, des Grands Officiers de la Couronne & de la Maison du Roy, ...* (Paris, 1726-33), “Croÿ”, vol. V, pp. 631ff, with supplements for the later 18<sup>th</sup> century from vol. IX-b. Croÿ is spelled with a dieresis on the ‘y’ to indicate its full pronunciation, rather than as a diphthong.

<sup>31</sup> Piet de Fraine, “Gouvernés et gouvernants au Pays et Duché d’Aerschot”, *Assemblées d’Etats* (Leuven & Paris, 1965).

<sup>32</sup> John Elliott, *Imperial Spain, 1469-1716* (London, 1963; 1990 reprint), p. 145.

<sup>33</sup> R. De Smedt, ed., *Les chevaliers de l’Ordre de la Toison d’or au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Notices bibliographiques* (Frankfurt, 1994).

princes of the Empire but were nevertheless more firmly situated in the ranks of French service.

These two families, Salm and Croÿ, share several points of similarity, notably as representatives of the forces of national or supra-national identity. Both were involved in the attempt of the Burgundian dukes and their successors to form a centralized state by pulling together nobles from all over their dominions and were rewarded for remaining committed to the idea after the collapse of 1477 and after the revolt of 1568.<sup>34</sup> The Croÿ in particular maintained a strong presence in the Low Countries as regional governors and senior counselors.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the two dynasties helped to maintain a degree of separateness in their respective regions of Hainaut and Alsace. Alsatian nobles clung to the idea of ‘belonging’ to the Empire only when their separate identity was threatened, as with the threat of Burgundian expansion in the 1470s.<sup>36</sup> Salm princes governed Alsace during its occupation by Swedish forces in the Thirty Years War as relatives and coreligionists of the Swedish king and as local leaders with previously established clout. They were completely excluded from French administration of the province after 1648 for precisely the same reasons. Hainaut was increasingly divided between France and the Spanish (later Austrian) Netherlands from the mid-seventeenth century, but its magnates remained a constant presence in the province as a whole. The Croÿ retained direct control over their seigniorial lands in French Hainaut and dominated the local estates, despite the more centralized administration imposed from Paris after the annexation.<sup>37</sup>

#### The links between transregional princely families and monarchy

In analyzing border families as groups rather than individuals, we can discern patterns of distribution of honors like ducal and princely titles and chivalric orders with increasing frequency across the seventeenth century, sometimes in startling degrees in terms of overall number or concentration within single families. Having learned from the Dutch Revolt that a contented nobility was a loyal nobility, the kings of Spain created titles in ever-increasing numbers in Naples and Sicily, rising from seventeen in the middle of the sixteenth century to over four hundred in 1675.<sup>38</sup> This rise was greatest among the princes, multiplying by 5.6 between 1590 and 1675, to 118 in total.<sup>39</sup> Numbers were not so high in the Southern Netherlands, but individual families could gather together great prizes by playing off rivalries. When one branch

---

<sup>34</sup> Georges Bischoff notes in particular the prominence of the bilingual Alsatian nobles in the politics of Emperor Maximilian (“La Noblesse austro-bourguignonne”, *op. cit.*). His later successor in the Low Countries, Margaret of Austria, pursued a similar policy with her administration staffed largely with nobles from the Franche-Comté. Hugo de Schepper, “Le voyage difficile de Marguerite de Parme en Franche-Comté et en Flandre, 1580-1583”, in Silvia Mantini, ed., *Margherita d’Austria (1522-1586). Costruzioni politiche e diplomazia, tra corte Farnese e Monarchia spagnola* (Rome, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> The Croÿ appear at the head of the list of seven families that dominated the provincial governorships in the Low Countries throughout the sixteenth century, and were cited as particular threats to Habsburg centralization attempts. Paul Rosenfeld, “The Provincial Governors from the Minority of Charles V to the Revolt”, *Anciens Pays et Assemblées d’Etats*, XVII (Louvain, 1959).

<sup>36</sup> Scott, *Regional Identity and Economic Change*, p. 8, citing Claudius Sieber-Lehmann, *Spätmittelalterlicher Nationalismus: Die Burgunderkriege am Oberrhein und in der Eidgenossenschaft* (Göttingen, 1995).

<sup>37</sup> Louis Trenard, “Provinces et départements des Pays-Bas français aux départements du Nord et du Pas-de-Calais” in Christian Gras and Georges Livet, eds., *Régions et régionalisme en France du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours* (Paris, 1977), pp. 66, 68.

<sup>38</sup> Claudio Donati, “The Italian Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, in Scott, *European Nobilities*, vol. I, p. 249.

<sup>39</sup> Rosario Villari, *The Revolt of Naples* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 118-121.



of the Croÿ was created Prince and Hereditary Marshal of the Empire in 1594, the king of France countered with the creation of a duchy of Croÿ in 1598 in an (unsuccessful) attempt to create a rival branch based in France.<sup>40</sup> A family that is usually considered to be quintessentially French, the Montmorency, demonstrates a similar scenario, with one branch based at the French court, and the other, the princes de Robecque, prominently placed in the Spanish administration of the Southern Netherlands, until their lands (located primarily around Lille) were annexed by France following the treaty of Rijswijk in 1697.<sup>41</sup>

Families benefitted from these territorial rivalries but also manipulated confessional differences. Although the early seventeenth-century threat of a great northern Protestant dynastic alliance had abated, nevertheless, there remained several princely families split by confessional divides, notably the Catholic dukes of Neuburg, cadets of the Calvinist Electors Palatine; or the Catholic branches of the House of Nassau (Siegen and Hadamar), which were created *Reichsfürsten* to counter-balance the Protestant Orange and Dillenberg-Dietz branches. The Catholic margraves of Baden-Baden kept their distance from their Protestant Baden-Durlach kin. But religion could be changed to follow the needs of politics. A key ally of William of Orange during the Dutch Revolt was his brother-in-law Van den Berghe, but the latter's son followed the change in the wind and became a prominent leader of Spanish troops *against* the separatists in the 1620s.<sup>42</sup>

The Spanish monarchy in particular attempted to keep its disparate parts together through grants of titles and respect of local privileges and traditional grandee dominance. Though they did usually rely on governors and viceroys from other parts of the monarchy—a notable progression of ‘foreign’ ministers in Brussels included Gattinara and the Granvelles (father and son), Alba, Parma, and so on—they mostly left in place the system of self-rule for each individual province inherited from the Burgundian regime.<sup>43</sup> And like the Burgundian dukes, the Habsburgs used the Order of the Golden Fleece to bind together Flemings, Walloons, Sicilians, and Castilians into one transnational aristocratic elite, though there was no impulse towards the creation of anything like a common ‘enterprise’ for the various parts of the Spanish monarchy. Philip II encouraged intermarriage but no merging of institutions.<sup>44</sup> The award of the Golden Fleece helped maintain these elites in a position of exclusiveness and authority within their own localities and generated a new elite group in Europe, to whom borders continued to have little meaning at a time when ‘national’ nobilities were increasingly narrowing in scope. At a time of heightened crisis in the Spanish monarchy, we can correlate the highest rates of intermarriage between Belgians, Spaniards, and Italians in the later years of the reign of Carlos II to the fastest growth of princely and ducal titles in all three regions.<sup>45</sup>

The ‘business’ of these families remained for the most part war and peace. They continued to dominate military positions across Europe and they served as regional governors in their base locale (especially in the Southern Netherlands) or as

---

<sup>40</sup> Anselme, *Histoire Généalogique*, “Croÿ”, vol. V, p. 631.

<sup>41</sup> Anselme, *Histoire Généalogique*, “Montmorency”, vol. III, pp. 551ff.

<sup>42</sup> Geyl, *History of the Dutch-Speaking Peoples*, pp. 119-120, and 376-378. The Van den Berghe or Bergues were elevated to princely rank by the king of Spain in 1686.

<sup>43</sup> This would change with the regime in the early eighteenth century. Piet Lenders, “Trois façons de gouverner dans les Pays-Bas autrichiens”, in Roland Mortier and Hervé Hasquin, eds., *Unité et diversité de l'Empire des Habsbourg à la fin du XVIIIe siècle* (Brussels, 1988).

<sup>44</sup> Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, pp. 167, 256-257.

<sup>45</sup> Julio de Atienza, baron de Cobos de Belchite, *Nobiliario Español* (Madrid, 1954); Paul Janssens and Luc Duerloo, *Armorial de la noblesse belge du XV<sup>e</sup> au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Bruxelles, 1992).

viceroys or governors-general in a different locale. None of the ‘Middle Kingdom’ families served as viceroy in Spanish America, but they did act occasionally as viceroys closer to home in the late seventeenth century: Egmont in Sardinia, and Chimay, Bournonville, and Hesse-Darmstadt in Catalonia.<sup>46</sup> Princes continued to serve as statesmen in the fragmented Holy Roman Empire, but were mostly promoted to this rank for this purpose, such as Dietrichstein in the seventeenth century, Kaunitz in the eighteenth, or Bismarck in the nineteenth. Official political roles declined sharply in France, where fifteenth-century grandees were succeeded in the sixteenth century by cardinals (princes of the Church), then by nobility of the robe at the end of the seventeenth.

Habsburg attempts at keeping the multinational Spanish monarchy together through the kinship of its elites instead generated something else, a counter force to the emergence of nationalism: ‘aristocratic internationalism’. When the Austrian Habsburgs took over in Brussels in 1715, Charles VI actively discouraged intermarriage of princely clans in the Southern Netherlands, fearing further defections into Bourbon service.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, their kinship networks remained a cornerstone of the Habsburg multi-national state, typified by aristocrats like the prince de Ligne, the so-called ‘Prince of Europe’, at home in Paris, Vienna or St. Petersburg.<sup>48</sup>

#### The role of transregional families in state formation: internal and external.

The second general theme of this chapter concerns the usefulness of dynastic structures to the early modern state, both in its efforts towards centralization and integration of new territories and in the evolving mechanisms of international diplomacy. Border families of princely rank were useful to early modern governments for the links they maintained between the royal capital and frontier provinces but also for their kin relationships that crossed these same frontiers, potentially serving as convenient conduits for informal diplomacy from one capital to another.

The first of these key roles was in assisting the transferral of loyalties from one sovereign (or state) to another. Magnates in provinces far from the centers of power were appointed to regional administrative posts primarily because monarchs recognized that patronage needed to be regulated by locals who knew the territory and its people.<sup>49</sup> Such magnates owned large numbers of fiefs (both real estate and seigneurial property like tolls and fees) and retained the loyalties of hundreds of tenants, agents, lawyers, merchants, and creditors. These loyalties could thus be transferred *en masse* when a province was transferred from one power to another. Key examples for French expansion can be seen in the princes of Epinoy and Bournonville in Artois and Flanders in the 1660s, the princes of Bauffremont in the Franche-Comté in the 1680s, or the princes of Lorraine itself in Lorraine in the 1740s.<sup>50</sup> Monarchs

---

<sup>46</sup> It is probably too much of a stretch to include in the category of transregional princely families two viceroys in South America from the noble family of Croix, from Lille, and one O’Higgins, from an ancient Celtic ‘princely’ house in Sligo, Ireland.

<sup>47</sup> Arnout Mertens, “Noble Independence, Monarchical Power and Early Modern State Building”, unpublished chapter of his forthcoming book on nationalism and the upper nobility of Brabant.

<sup>48</sup> Philip Mansel, *Prince of Europe: The Life of Charles Joseph de Ligne, 1735-1814* (London, 2003).

<sup>49</sup> Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, p. 180.

<sup>50</sup> This process was in part hindered in Lorraine, however, by the fact that many of the local grandees such as the prince de Beauvau-Craon and the comte de Mercy departed with the ducal family when they transferred first to Tuscany, then to Vienna. It was a Mercy-Argenteuil who, as Austrian foreign minister, was largely responsible for the great reversal of alliances of 1756...a perfectly logical choice, as he was a relative and neighbor in Lorraine of the French foreign minister, Choiseul. See Alain Petiot, *Au service des Habsbourg. Officiers, ingénieurs, savants et artistes lorrains en Autriche* (Paris,

thus obtained ready-assembled patronage networks in newly acquired provinces. These families in turn looked to their new sovereigns for protection.<sup>51</sup>

Using the princes of Epinoy as an example, we can see how they attempted to gain favor of the French monarch soon after the annexation of their lands in Artois and Flanders by the Treaty of the Pyrenees, 1659, by marrying into two of the leading princely families at the French court, Rohan-Soubise and Lorraine-Guise. The Melun-Epinoy family's mixed loyalties derived from the fact that their main hereditary fiefs in Artois had been joined together to form a county (a real juridical term as much as an honorific) by Louis XII when Artois was under French suzerainty, but was then elevated to the status of a principality by Emperor Charles V in 1545 once it was within Imperial territory.<sup>52</sup> Prince Pierre was 'deposed' for his role in the Dutch Revolt in the 1580s but his son re-aligned himself with the Spanish government and served as Constable of Flanders. The Constable's son in turn abandoned his post as governor of Tournai to join the service of France after the Peace of the Pyrenees in 1659, for which he was rewarded with the Order of the Saint Esprit, the highest chivalric order in France. A younger brother, however, stuck to the pattern of splitting bets, serving as Spanish governor of Valenciennes and Gelderland and was awarded the Golden Fleece; his sons were in turn viceroys of Galicia and grandees of Spain.<sup>53</sup> The neighboring family of Bournonville was similarly doubly courted: members were created both princes of the Empire and dukes of France (both circa 1600). They too continued to play both sides of the political divide even after the annexation of Artois. One son served as governor of Paris in the 1660s, while another was viceroy of Catalonia in the 1680s.<sup>54</sup> Epinoy efforts to gain favor at the French court were done in part to counter the support their rivals enjoyed at the Spanish court in a struggle to reclaim the bulk of the Epinoy patrimony. These properties, sequestered during the Dutch Revolt, had been given to a sister of the prince and her heirs, the princes de Ligne from neighboring Hainaut.<sup>55</sup> But the Epinoy were not reliant on the French king alone and continued to cultivate their transregional status, as shown in a letter from 1714 written by the princesse d'Epinoy (a Lorraine-Guise) to her own distant cousin, the Emperor Charles VI, asking for his support as new ruler of the Southern Netherlands.<sup>56</sup> The Epinoy and Ligne families continued to pursue each other in French and Imperial courts throughout the eighteenth century for lands on both sides of the frontier.

Croÿ and Salm princes were also involved in lawsuits that serve to illustrate

---

2000); and Jean Peltre and Maurice Noël, "Les Mercy en Europe aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles. De la Lorraine au Banat", *Le Pays Lorrain*, vol. 77, no. 3 (1996).

<sup>51</sup> Early work on this topic was done by Roger Mettam in his still unpublished DPhil thesis, in particular concerning the province of Boulonnois (next to Artois) and the ducs d'Aumont: "The Role of the Higher Aristocracy in France under Louis XIV, with Special Reference to the Faction of the Duke of Burgundy and Provincial Governors" (Cambridge University, 1967).

<sup>52</sup> It was not 'sovereign' as principalities would be considered in the later, post-Westphalia, Holy Roman Empire, but it was held directly (or 'immediately') from the sovereign, not requiring homage to the count of Artois (who was in fact the same person), and obtained juridical rights and fiscal privileges not shared by other ordinary lordships. Archives Nationales [AN], 273 AP 76, papers of the Melun-Epinoy Succession.

<sup>53</sup> Anselme, *Histoire Généalogique*, "Melun", vol. V, p. 221.

<sup>54</sup> Anselme, *Histoire Généalogique*, "Bournonville", vol. V, p. 806.

<sup>55</sup> For this case, see BN, Factums 5661 to 5677.

<sup>56</sup> AD, Meurthe-et-Moselle, 3F 317, no. 62: "Madame la Princesse d'Espinoy estant de la maison de Lorraine a lieu d'esperer que la Cour de Vienne voudra bien luy estre favorable." She had written to the Duke of Marlborough as well, in 1708, when he was still in charge of the region. British Library, Ms. Add. 61366, Blenheim Papers, fol. 112.

border families playing off state rivalries. The heirs of the Lorraine-Guise pursued the Croÿ for a sizeable debt assigned for repayment on the principality of Chimay in Hainault, but had to contend with shifting frontiers, gaining satisfaction from the Parlement of Paris in 1706 when Chimay was occupied by France, but having to pursue this debt further in the high courts of the Austrian Netherlands once the borders had again been rearranged.<sup>57</sup> The Salm and other princes from Alsace similarly looked to preserve their independence by playing off rivalries between France and Germany. Alsatian nobles had looked to the king of France to defend them from aggressive Habsburg centralizing policies in the 1640s, only to find themselves aggressively centralized by France after 1648. In contrast to Flanders and Artois, more of the magnates of Alsace like Salm, whose lands were specifically excluded from French jurisdiction by the terms of the Treaty of Münster, migrated to the Imperial court in Vienna, and many of the large feudal estates remained in the hands of essentially ‘foreign’ dynasties in the last century of the Old Regime. There was no great presence at the eighteenth-century French court of the princes of Leiningen, Hanau-Lichtenberg, Hohenlohe-Bartenstein, Württemberg-Montbéliard, or Nassau-Saarbrücken.<sup>58</sup> French influence and authority was instead brought to the region by outsiders, but by outsiders with transregional qualifications, first through the Fürstenbergs in the 1680s, then the Rohans who held the position of prince-bishop of Strasbourg throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>59</sup>

Two Fürstenberg brothers in particular were courted by Louis XIV for their diplomatic skill and given key ecclesiastical posts (notably the bishoprics of Metz and Strasbourg), while the Emperor countered by raising the entire family to princely rank.<sup>60</sup> But like the Epinoys, the Fürstenbergs knew they had to solidify this hold on princely status, which brought with it tangible privileges at the French court, notably proximity to the royal family, the most lucrative source of patronage, crucial for the survival of any aristocratic family.<sup>61</sup> They did this by marrying into powerful French court families and other transregional princely families with similar aims. Contemporaries at Versailles commented on the marriage patterns of the Fürstenbergs in the 1680s and noted that while Louis XIV was content to grant them individual privileges, he also made it clear that French daughters were *not* to be married off to them for the sole purpose of obtaining the *honneurs du Louvre* (the visible recognition

---

<sup>57</sup> BN, Factums 11618, 12140-12145. It is worth noting that the principal Guisard heir was none other than the duc d’Orléans who was from 1715 regent of France.

<sup>58</sup> Louis Batiffol, *Les Anciennes Républiques alsaciennes* (Paris, 1918), p. 233. These princes were known during the French Revolution as the ‘princes possessionnés’ The termination of their sovereignty is an understudied aspect of the Revolution, with few works appearing between Theodor Ludwig’s *Die deutschen Reichstände im Elsass und der Ausbruch der Revolutionskriege* (Strasbourg, 1898), and a recent maîtrise, Daniel Fischer, “La France révolutionnaire face à l’affaire des princes d’Empire possessionnés en Basse Alsace, 1789-1801” (Université Marc Bloch, Strasbourg, 2004).

<sup>59</sup> The princes de Rohan, whose princely rank and transregional kinship links were forged in the early seventeenth century as prominent leaders of the Protestant movement in northern Europe, belong in this study through their (partially recognized) claims as ‘foreign princes’ at the French court. Their province of origin is not, however, from the ancient Middle Kingdom, but the formerly independent duchy of Brittany. Alain Boulaire, *Les Rohan, ‘Roi ne puis, duc de daigne, Rohan suis!’* (Paris, 2001).

<sup>60</sup> Scott, *Regional Identity and Economic Change*, pp. 59, 242. Much of the relationship between France, the Empire and the Fürstenbergs can be gleaned usefully from two older works: Claude Badalo-Dulong, *Trente ans de diplomatie française en Allemagne. Louis XIV et l’électeur de Mayence, 1648-78* (Paris, 1956); and Geneviève Moisse-Daxhelet, “La Principauté de Stavelot-Malmédy sous le règne du Cardinal Guillaume-Egon de Fürstenberg. Problèmes politiques et institutionnels, 1682-1704”, *Anciens Pays et Assemblées d’Etats*, no. XXIX (Namur, 1963).

<sup>61</sup> This subject forms one of the main themes in this author’s forthcoming *The Society of Princes*.

of the foreign princes) for the family as a whole.<sup>62</sup> The ambassador from Brandenburg, in particular, was watching the Fürstenbergs closely, as they were at that time potential claimants to the vast inheritance of the House of Orange in the Franche-Comté and the sovereign county of Neuchâtel, properties that were also claimed by his master in Berlin.<sup>63</sup>

At the same time that the transregional princely families were working in partnership with early modern statesmen in the centralization process, they were also continuing to act as useful middlemen between European capitals. They were not normally employed as formal ambassadors, because such a person had to represent (or 'be') his prince, so being oneself a prince complicated issues of representational sovereignty.<sup>64</sup> There were, however, informal roles adequately suited to these princely families based in large part on kinship ties. Financial networks, for example, like that of the Grimaldi, whose *albergo* or clan included both sovereign princes at Monaco but also bankers in Genoa and Brussels, were crucial in funding Spanish military enterprise across Europe.<sup>65</sup> Such transregional financial networks worked alongside transregional confessional networks to drive politics and diplomacy. 'International Protestantism' connected regions via kinship between the Stuarts, Orange-Nassau, Hesse, and the Palatinate, and with French Huguenot grandees like the Rohan and La Trémoille.<sup>66</sup> Once again, relationships in the borderlands were significant, as seen in the marriage of the count of Zweibrücken (Deux-Ponts), a leader of Calvinist troops, and the sister of the duc de Rohan, general of the French Huguenots, in 1604. The French genealogist Père Anselme commented that this marriage made Rohan an effective leader on the international stage because it enabled him to understand the interests of the German princes.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the Prince of Orange's advantage as leader of the Dutch Revolt was said to be his 'European-ness' which gave him the vantage point, status, and connections to make good decisions, and to make them heard.<sup>68</sup> The contrasting concept of 'international Catholicism' is a tautology, but it is certainly worth considering continuous links among princely dynasties who remained loyal to Rome. These family links could be used for political ends: James VI was raised a Protestant but on more than one occasion allowed rumors to circulate that he was sympathetic to the cause of his Catholic Guise cousins, unbalancing his advisors and those in England who feared that Elizabeth I would be succeeded by a Catholic.<sup>69</sup> Indeed it was a Guise who represented James' son Charles in a proxy wedding to Henriette-Marie of France in 1625.<sup>70</sup> This was a formal role apt for transregional

---

<sup>62</sup> Marquis de Sourches, *Mémoires sur le règne de Louis XIV*, G.-J. de Cosnac and A. Bertrand, eds. (Paris, 1882), vol. I, p. 179; Primi Visconti, conte di San Maiolo, *Mémoires sur la Cour de Louis XIV, 1673-1681*, J.-F. Solnon, ed. (Paris, 1988), p. 107.

<sup>63</sup> Baron Spanheim, *Relation de la Cour de France en 1690*, E. Bourgeois, ed. (Paris, 1973), p. 125.

<sup>64</sup> Ellen McClure, *Sunspots and the Sun King: Sovereignty and Mediation in Seventeenth-Century France* (Urbana, IL, 2006), p.10.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Coles, "The Crisis of Renaissance Society Genoa, 1488-1507", *Past & Present*, 11(1) (1957).

<sup>66</sup> Simon Hodson, "The Power of Female Dynastic Networks: a brief study of Louise de Coligny, princess of Orange, and her stepdaughters", *Women's History Review*, vol. 16, no. 3 (July 2007); Sonja Kmec, "'A Stranger Born': Female Usage of International Networks in Times of War", in Glenn Richardson, ed., *The Contending Kingdoms: France and England, 1420-1700* (Aldershot, 2007).

<sup>67</sup> Anselme, *Histoire Généalogique*, "Rohan", vol. IV, p. 73.

<sup>68</sup> Geyl, *History of the Dutch-Speaking Peoples*, p. 105.

<sup>69</sup> Albert Loomie, "Philip III and the Stuart Succession in England, 1600-1603", in *Spain and the Early Stuarts, 1585-1655* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 501-502.

<sup>70</sup> AN, K 539, no. 42.

princes: performing proxy services for royal marriages or acting as escorts for royal brides across frontiers.<sup>71</sup>

In these ways, princes acted as informal conduits of information between courts, due to the particular nature of their rank: a prince could ‘let his hair down’ in front of another prince, even if one was a powerful king and the other merely sovereign of a few small villages. An example of a ‘friend’ network that spanned Europe in the 1680s can be seen in the links between the prince de Vaudémont, whose ambiguous status as illegitimate son of the sovereign duke of Lorraine both forced and allowed him to meander across Europe’s borders in the course of his career. He was at one point ally of William III of Orange in his anti-Louis XIV coalitions and Spanish governor of Milan. He maintained links with his cousin the prince of Salm, governor and confidant of Archduke Joseph, and with another cousin, Duke Charles V of Lorraine, governor of the Tirol and commander of imperial troops. At the same time, Vaudémont cultivated connections with the French court via his sister, a favorite of the Dauphin, and via another Lorraine cousin, the comte d’Armagnac, a favorite of Louis XIV.<sup>72</sup> Transregional kinship connections like this were watched by the meticulous memoirists of the French court: Dangeau and Saint-Simon both commented on the brief dispute and reconciliation in 1707 between Salm and (now Emperor) Joseph I, carefully noting that Salm was uncle of the Empress and brother-in-law of both the princesse de Condé and the duchess of Hanover.<sup>73</sup> It has been suggested that this same Paris to Vienna via Hanover network had been instrumental in the secret negotiations for the granting of the electoral dignity to Hanover in 1692.<sup>74</sup>

Monarchs continued, therefore, to monitor and cultivate loyalties of the transregional princes. One of the primary defining characteristics of a prince was the *potential*, actualized or not, to rule as a sovereign. The succession of the duc de Nevers (Charles de Gonzagues, who was also sovereign prince of Arches-Charleville in the Ardennes) to the sovereign duchy of Mantua in 1627 sparked one of the early phases of conflict in the Thirty Years War between France and the Empire.<sup>75</sup> A century later, Prince Friedrich Michael, younger brother of the Duke of Zweibrücken, was watched by the Great Powers for a similar reason, though at the time of his birth, he was the most junior of all the princes of the house of Wittelsbach. He was an Imperial field marshal during the Seven Years War but not particularly reckoned as a leading military figure. He was nevertheless a potential power to be watched by the Emperor, Prussia, and France as the *only* Wittelsbach with legitimate sons. In anticipation of his dynastic rise, he became a Catholic in 1741 but died before he could rise further in the princely hierarchy.<sup>76</sup> Instead, it was his second son, known for much of his career as Prince Maximilien-Joseph de Deux-Ponts, French lieutenant-

---

<sup>71</sup> Spangler, *Society of Princes*, chapter one, “Introducing the Foreign Princes”.

<sup>72</sup> There is no modern biography of the fascinating Vaudémont, though his papers can be found in AN, AP 273 74; AD, Meurthe-et-Moselle, 3F 317; BN, Collection de Lorraine, no. 566; and in collections of correspondence with William III at the British Library, Ms. Eg. 1172 and Ms. Add. 21493. Correspondence with Salm apparently once existed at the Kriegsarchiv in Vienna but has been lost.

<sup>73</sup> Marquis de Dangeau, *Journal*, E. Soulié, L. Dussieux, *et al.*, eds, with *Additions inédites du duc de Saint-Simon* (Paris, 1854-60), vol. XI, p. 482 (7 October 1707); vol. XII, p. 21 (30 November 1707).

<sup>74</sup> John Spielman, *Leopold I of Austria* (London, 1977), p. 155.

<sup>75</sup> David Parrott, “The Mantuan succession, 1627-1631: A sovereignty dispute in early modern Europe”, *English Historical Review*, vol. CXII (1997), pp. 20-65.

<sup>76</sup> 1758, *Zweybrücken in Command: a journal of the speedy army of execution of the Empire under the orders of His Most Serene Highness the Prince von Pfalz-Zweybrücken in 1758*, Neil Cogswell, ed. (Guisborough, 1998).

general and colonel of the Régiment d'Alsace, who rapidly succeeded his distant patrilineal cousins as Duke of Zweibrücken in 1795, then Elector Palatine and Elector of Bavaria in 1799, and was finally elevated to the rank of king by Napoleon in 1805.

#### Finale:

With the coming of the French Revolution, the golden era for transregional princely dynasties came to an end. Though they continued to serve as ambassadors and continued to marry across national lines, members of these families were required to choose one state and one citizenship. As the early modern shifted into the modern, the demands of government shifted, and transregional princely families were no longer needed. A widening electoral franchise and improved bureaucracies allowed monarchs and their governments to communicate directly with their subjects, eliminating the need for strong regional families to act as middlemen. The role of princes as ministers had long been given over to men of education rather than birth, but diplomacy remained an essential sphere of activity well into the modern period.<sup>77</sup> Although elite groups in border regions continued to express their loyalties to dynasties not nation-states in the Revolutionary period, by the early nineteenth century, the forces of nationalism forced the transregional princely families to choose sides.<sup>78</sup>

In the centuries that preceded this change, we have examined periods of growth, consolidation, and decline in the prominence of such families in two areas. Firstly in their relationships with individual monarchs and secondly in their roles in the processes of state formation. They made use of their rank and connections to gain political, honorific, and fiscal privileges for their families from monarchs across Europe. In return, they aided these monarchs by contributing to national centralization, both in royal capitals and in the provinces in which they maintained large and powerful clientage networks. This task continued into the eighteenth century, especially in regions along the linguistic-cultural frontier such as Alsace or the Austrian Netherlands. But transregional families also worked to consolidate existing monopolies on power in these regions and at court by regulating dynasticism and through increasingly exclusive endogamous marriage practices.

Further research is required to uncover the details of efforts made by these families to regulate dynasticism, optimally for the betterment of the dynasty rather than the individual. Families like the Salm and the Croÿ maintained several sub-branches, each with high rank and socio-political profile. But how regular and regulatory was communication between these branches? And did they adhere purely to patrilineal loyalties or function more loosely across both male and female relations? By the eighteenth century some transregional dynasties, notably the Croÿ, had evolved into what might be called 'super-clusters'. Rather than one single family, these were multiple families who descended from mixed paternal and maternal successions, keeping sizeable properties tightly locked inside their kinship circle. Properties like the principality of Chimay thus were guarded within the Belgian super-cluster of Arenberg, Ligne, Croÿ and Hénin-Liétard for several centuries. Following the inheritance pathways of properties held by foreign princes like the Lorraine, Rohan and Epinoy in France in the eighteenth century reveals a more tightly knit

---

<sup>77</sup> For example, Stefan Lippert, *Felix Fürst Schwarzenberg. Eine politische Biographie* (Kiel, 1995).

<sup>78</sup> Gilbert Trausch, "Les Habsbourg, incarnation de l'Empire au Luxembourg à la fin du XVIIIe siècle: fidélité dynastique et manque de conscience impériale", in Mortier and Hasquin, *Unité et diversité de l'Empire des Habsbourg à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*. The same can be said for Franche-Comté: Maurice Gresset, "Les Franc-Comtois entre la France et l'Empire", in Gras and Livet, *Régions et régionalisme*.

group, the ‘matriclan’, who all descended from one woman. This group accumulated a geographically spread collection of estates from Brabant to Languedoc, in an effort to minimize damages in one region with sustainability in another. These were then passed back and forth from one branch to the other, ensuring dowries and dowager pensions for several generations, but maintaining patronage networks as well.<sup>79</sup>

In the eighteenth century, both the dynasties of Croÿ and Salm included several branches active on the wider European stage. Preliminary assessment using genealogical data can track an increasing pattern of clan endogamy. A pattern emerges of both steady rates of intermarriage between the same elite regional families, and *also* an increase in marriage with princely families from other regions. The Croÿ spent most of the sixteenth century marrying other Netherlandish grandee families, while in the eighteenth century, increased the percentage of cosmopolitan marital alliances, and at the same time continued to marry within their own patrilineage. The Salm display a more varied pattern much earlier, marrying across linguistic frontiers from the late fifteenth century. By the eighteenth century, Salm marriages were cosmopolitan and almost exclusively of princely rank.

The professional activities of the Croÿ and Salm in the last decades of the ancien régime demonstrate the continued flourishing of the transregional princely order and its decline following revolutionary upheaval and the development of truly ‘national’ identity. The Croÿ moved more conspicuously into French service, as their main estate (Solre) was now on the French side of the border. These included a prominent marshal of France and the last governess of the children of Louis XVI.<sup>80</sup> They were officially recognized by treaty in 1767 as both dukes of France and princes of the Empire. But with the loss of sovereign territory they held west of the Rhine to France (notably Fénétrange), they emigrated and were rewarded with the sovereign duchy of Dülmen in Westphalia in 1803. Dülmen had formerly been a possession of their cousins the Salm, and though it did not survive the mediatization of the small princely houses in 1806, it remained the seat of the family into the nineteenth century.

The Salm princes also operated in the French sphere but maintained a more ‘foreign’ identity overall. Prince Friedrich III of Salm-Kyrburg, or Frédéric-Jean, began his military career in Imperial service but by the 1770s had firmly settled on a French career and, like the duke of Deux-Ponts, was colonel of the Régiment d’Alsace. In the 1780s, he built a grand palace on the banks of the Seine (today’s Palais de la Légion d’Honneur) and joined the liberal opposition led by the duc d’Orléans and the marquis de Lafayette.<sup>81</sup> He maintained his ties with the Empire, of course, marrying a princess of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, while his sister married his bride’s brother. In late 1789 he was named by Lafayette as commandant of a battalion

---

<sup>79</sup> See the marriage contract of Marie-Louise de Rohan-Guéméné and the prince de Rohan-Rochefort in 1780 (AN, 273 AP 373), in which the bride’s dowry was in large part made up by her aunt, a Rohan-Soubise, who had married a Lorraine-Guise. These estates had been given to her by her grandmother, the princesse d’Epinoy, Anne de Lorraine. The duchy of Joyeuse in Languedoc, passed from the last of the Guise in 1688 to the princesse de Lillebonne, who donated it to her Epinoy grandson in 1714; on his death it passed to his Rohan nephews, who continued to pay, for example, the wages of nuns in a school there as late as 1788. AD, Ardèche, B125, fol. 6 (donation of duchy); 1 E 1060 (wages).

<sup>80</sup> André Delcourt, *Le duc de Croÿ, maréchal de France, 1718-1784: un grand seigneur au siècle des lumières* (Saint-Amand-les-Eaux, 1984); Marie-Pierre Dion, *Emmanuel de Croÿ, 1718-1784: itinéraire intellectuel et réussite nobiliaire au Siècle des Lumières* (Bruxelles, 1987); *Mémoires de la duchesse de Tourzel, gouvernante des enfants de France de 1789 à 1795*, J. Chalon, ed., (Paris, 1969).

<sup>81</sup> AN, R<sup>3</sup> 211, sale of property on the quay d’Orsay by the prince de Conti to the prince de Salm-Kyrburg, 1759. The prince made an unfortunate appearance in a well-known scandal of the period, detailed by Jeffrey S. Ravel, “The Coachman’s Bare Rump: An Eighteenth-Century French Cover-Up”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2 (2007).



of the National Guard, and in 1792 he went so far as to abolish feudal rights and to introduce a French-style constitution in his principality. Nevertheless, providing us with an exemplar of the dangers of transregional princely identity, on his return to Paris he was confused with his cousin, the more reactionary prince of Salm-Salm, and was arrested during the Terror and executed on 5 Thermidor, Year II (23 July 1794). The prince who escaped was none other than Constantine, prince of Salm-Salm, with whom this chapter began. He had been condemned somewhat contradictorily by the Republic as both a threatening foreigner *and* a treasonous citizen but had survived, only to court controversy again when he converted to Protestantism in 1827.