Status Interaction during the Reign of Louis XIV

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Introduction

In the autumn of 1679 the new queen of Spain set out for a royal tour de France from the chateau of Fontainebleau to her kingdoms. Like Emperor Charles V before her and other sovereigns since, she was regaled by numerous towns and communities on her passage. The king of France nominated the prince and princess of Harcourt to escort the Catholic Queen across his realm and ordered his Master of Ceremonies, Nicolas Sainctot, to ensure that she received the honours due to her rank. Municipal authorities at Orléans, Poitiers, and other towns greeted her at the gates and offered to bear a canopy over her head. In Bordeaux, they prepared a magnificently decked ship to conduct her across the Gironde estuary from Blaye to their home port. Ecclesiastical and judicial authorities paid their respects and gave solemn harangues in her honour. At the border, the French retinue ceremoniously delivered the queen to a Spanish delegation, in a building specially designed for the occasion. The Harcourts accompanied her into Spain as extraordinary ambassadors, until she was finally united with her new husband, Charles II.

This account echoes many familiar descriptions of early modern ceremonies. Like them, it smooths over an important part of the picture. In Orléans, local officers also quarrelled over precedence at the queen's entry. The *jurats* of Bordeaux demanded—in vain—the right to wear their vestments of authority at Blaye and to hold the queen's hand as she embarked their ship. In the cathedral of Saintes, the canons expressed their independence vis-à-vis the local bishop in complimenting the royal guest. Judges and treasurers disputed the right of first visit in several provincial towns; the treasurers of Poitiers liaised with colleagues from other provinces, tried to influence Sainctot in their favour, and, when unsuccessful, did not pay their respects at all. These concerns, moreover, did not stop at the border. Rank disputes among the Spanish delegation delayed the delivery ceremony, and the long-awaited union of their Catholic Majesties saw a jostle for placement in church between Spanish grandees and French ambassadors.[1]

Such instances of 'status interaction' may seem strange to modern eyes, but they abound in early modern sources. They might appear amusing or trivial now, but contemporaries took them very seriously. The symbolic expression of social position was an ever-present source of concern and conflict, across geographical and

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[1] The context and sources of 1679 are discussed in detail in Chapter One. For the provincial disputes, see BM, MS 2741, fos. 45v–69v, *passim*; Adrien Bonvallet, 'Le bureau des finances de la généralité de Poitiers', *Mémoires de la société des antiquaires de l'ouest*, 2nd ser., vi (1883), 261 n. 1; Tillet, *Chronique bordeloise* (Bordeaux, 1703), pp. 64–6, 69–70. For the Spanish ones, AAE, CP, Espagne 64, esp. fos. 177–208; *Gazette* (1679), pp. 617, 628.

temporal boundaries and within a wide range of political and social configurations: from Ireland in the north to Naples in the south and from Russia in the east to colonial America in the west;[2] in the eighteenth as in the sixteenth centuries;[3] in city-states, in centralizing monarchies, and in the fragmented Holy Roman Empire;[4] from the level of local communities to the international 'Society of Princes'.

On the local level, status interaction was not limited to the salient moments of incursion by sovereigns and by other grand personages. Communities lived their own share of ceremonial highlights, routines, and contestations, as magistrates, municipalities, confraternities, and other parties regularly interacted and contended in civic processions, religious services, and social occasions. The symbolic contention between treasurers and judges in Poitiers, for example, raged on from well before 1679 to the town's Corpus Christi celebrations in the next century.[5] On state level, status interaction marked changes and continuities in the relations among rulers and elites. In the international arena, it was—and to a certain extent remains— part and parcel of diplomacy and power politics. Clashes over the minutest points of protocol regularly disrupted international relations and occasionally threatened war. In the most famous example, an earlier Franco-Spanish dispute from the 1660s, the order of ambassadorial carriages on the street delineated a new European order, as a Spain in decline gave way, under pressure, to a rising France.[6]

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[2] Brendan Kane, *The Politics and Culture of Honour in Britain and Ireland, 1541–1641* (Cambridge, 2010), esp. ch. 6 on precedence disputes; Gabriel Guarino, *Representing the King's Splendour: Communication and Reception of Symbolic Forms of Power in Viceregal Naples* (Manchester, 2010), esp. ch. 2; Jan Hennings, 'The Semiotics of Diplomatic Dialogue: Pomp and Circumstance in Tsar Peter I's Visit to Vienna in 1698', *International History Review*, xxx (2008), 515–44; Tamar Herzog, *Upholding Justice: Society, State, and the Penal System in Quito (1650–1750)* (Ann Arbor, 2004), pp. 221–32; Alejandro Cañeque, 'On Cushions and Chairs: The Ritual Construction of Authority in New Spain', in Laurie Postlewate and Wim Hüsken (eds), *Acts and Texts: Performance and Ritual in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Amsterdam-New York, 2007), pp. 101–48.

[3] Besides the examples cited in this and in the following paragraph, see the discussions of the longer *durée* of status interaction in the final section and in the Conclusion.

[4] Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1980), esp. chs. 8 and 9; Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, 1981), esp. pp. 201–3, 235–7; Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, 'La communication symbolique à l'époque pré-moderne: Concepts, thèses, perspectives de recherche', *Trivium*, ii (2008) (<http://trivium.revues.org/1152>); Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, 'On the Function of Rituals in the Holy Roman Empire', in R. J. W. Evans, Michael Schaich, and Peter H. Wilson (eds), *The Holy Roman Empire, 1495–1806* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 359–73.

[5] Bonvallet, 'Le bureau des finances', pp. 268–81. Notable studies include Stuart Carroll, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France* (Oxford, 2006), esp. chs. 2 and 3; Robert Darnton, 'A Bourgeois Puts His World in Order: The City as a Text', in Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984), pp. 107–43; Robert Descimon, 'Le corps de ville et le système cérémoniel parisien au début de l'âge moderne', in Marc Boone and Maarten Prak (eds), *Statuts individuels, statuts corporatifs et statuts judiciaires dans les villes européennes* (Leuven, 1996), pp. 73–128; Roger Mettam, 'Power, Status and Precedence: Rivalries among the Provincial Elites of Louis XIV's France', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., xxxviii (1988), 43–62; Robert A. Schneider, *The Ceremonial City: Toulouse Observed 1738–1780* (Princeton, 1995), esp. ch. 4.

[6] William Roosen, 'Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A Systems Approach', *The Journal of Modern History*, lii (1980), 452–76; Lucien Bély, *La société des princes: XVIᵉ–XVIIIᵉ siècle* (Paris, 1999), esp. pt 3; Alexandre Tessier, 'Des carrosses qui en cachent d'autres: retour sur certains incidents qui marquèrent l'ambassade de Lord Denzil Holles à Paris, de 1663 à 1666', in Lucien Bély and Géraud Poumarède (eds), *L'incident diplomatique (XVIᵉ–XVIIIᵉ siècle)* (Paris, 2010), pp. 197–240; Hennings, 'The Semiotics of Diplomatic Dialogue'.

Hierarchy was inherent in all these early modern arenas, and the open pursuit of its external manifestations both widespread and legitimate. Social reputations and political authority depended on such status symbols, and contemporaries invested in them a great deal of time, effort, and resources. While most did not question the general principle of hierarchy, few regarded their particular position as an immutable given. Status was open to contestation. Far from a unitary, consensual, or static chain of being, the early modern world was a patchwork of overlapping, competing, often poorly-defined hierarchies: lay and ecclesiastical, local and foreign, old and new. In these circumstances, status symbols did not simply reflect a predefined social and political order; they continually defined and redefined positions and identities.

Status regularly materialized at the level of concrete interactions, among persons and between persons and objects. These interactions occurred in solemn ceremonies as on everyday occasions, in public arenas and in private settings. Anything could figure in status interaction: from precedence in three-dimensional space to the temporal order of events; from canopies and pews to nightshirts and drinking cups; from the length of a textile train to the number of adjectives in a verbal formula. It involved diverse and subtle distinctions and gradations, which reflected—and shaped—the intricacy of early modern socio-political structures, identities, and relations. Such a micro-level, multifaceted, and complex object of historical inquiry calls on us to zoom in on a specific arena, where the political stakes, the social relations, and the cultural practices can be properly discerned on the basis of available sources.

This study accordingly offers an in-depth analysis of status interaction among the French aristocracy during the reign of Louis XIV. The court society of the 'Sun King' is among the most famous historical arenas of status interaction. Already at its time, it was perceived as a focal point and a model, in France and in Europe at large. As the centre of government, the court combined the social and the political, or the micro-political and the macro-political. Its hierarchy led up to the throne, and its stakes extended from localized contexts to wider 'national' and international ones. The temporal focus on a single yet remarkably long reign balances the need for an overall coherence of framework with scope for considering diachronic evolution and change. Last but not least, aristocrats have left traces more abundant and more diverse than have other strata of society, in their own writings and archives and in other contemporaneous accounts of the minutest aspects of their existence. They thus lend themselves better to the formidable challenge of deciphering and reconstructing codes of behaviour that are often subtle and implicit.

How instructive is this arena? Status interaction probably reached its highest level of intensity and complexity in aristocratic society. The French court in particular might seem exceptional in the degree of 'ritualization' of its daily life, most famously during the monarch's morning rising, the *lever*. Even the rising of the Sun King, however, has parallels elsewhere on the historical horizon.[7] More generally,

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[7] See Chapter Five.

as the opening paragraphs have already emphasized and as subsequent discussions will further demonstrate, most aspects of status interaction were by no means peculiar to Versailles. Solemn occasions like marriages or processions and everyday routines such as courtesy calls or letter-writing engaged the status of participants in a myriad of social, geographical, and temporal contexts. The insights to be gleaned from this highly influential and richly documented historical arena can thus contribute towards a better understanding of the significance of status interaction in the early modern world in general.

PRELIMINARIES (I): HISTORIOGRAPHICAL AND CONCEPTUAL

Such a key arena has of course attracted the attention of a vast number of scholars from a variety of disciplines, including the burgeoning sub-discipline of court studies.[8] Surprisingly, though, court society at the time of Louis XIV has yet to receive its definitive treatment. In the domains of status, ceremony, and etiquette in particular, many studies continue to work with the same old paradigms, perspectives, and sources. There has been no satisfying account of status interaction 'on the ground', in all its complexity and multifacetedness, as experienced in practice by its various protagonists. Not least, even after decades of 'revisionism' by social and political historians, the ceremonial court is still primarily considered as a reflection of the monarchy's designs and interests.[9] Completeness being obviously impractical, the following paragraphs review the most influential past projects dealing with status and ceremony in early modern France, and the main studies of recent years. The subsequent discussion will consider general conceptual issues in relation to the aims and defining terms of this study.

The seminal work in this context has been Norbert Elias's analysis of court society, which played a pivotal role in the emergence of court studies and of cultural history in general.[10] Critics have subsequently exposed the historiographical and

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[8] For an analytic overview, see Jeroen Duindam, 'Early Modern Court Studies: An Overview and a Proposal', in Markus Völkel and Arno Strohmeyer (eds), *Historiographie an europäischen Höfen (16.–18. Jahrhundert)* (Berlin, 2009), pp. 37–60. See also John Adamson (ed.), *The Princely Courts of Europe: Ritual, Politics and Culture under the Ancien Régime, 1500–1750* (London, 1999).

[9] A pioneer of the 'revisionist' paradigm of social collaboration between monarchy and elites has recently perpetuated the image of the 'total control' of Louis XIV, who 'invented a whole science of petty distinctions that kept the courtiers competing among themselves and turning to him as arbiter': William Beik, *A Social and Cultural History of Early Modern France* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 330–1.

[10] The most relevant work is Elias's *Die höfische Gesellschaft* (*The Court Society*), written in the early 20th century, first published in 1969, and first translated into English by Edmund Jephcott in 1983. This study was part of the foundation for his most famous work, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation.* Both have recently reappeared as volumes ii and iii (respectively) of new German and English editions: *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt, 1997–); *The Collected Works of Norbert Elias* (Dublin, 2006–). See also Roger Chartier's preface to the French edition: *La société de cour* (Paris, 1985), pp. i–xxviii; English translation by Lydia G. Cochrane in Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* (Cambridge, 1988), ch. 3.

methodological flaws in Elias's model.[11] However, since his ideas continue to resonate in recent scholarship, and since some remain valid despite the general critique, it is worth noting how they relate to our inquiry. Elias has been hugely instrumental in transforming ceremony and etiquette from 'a dusty exhibit in an historical museum' to legitimate objects of scholarly inquiry.[12] Rightly accused of many anachronistic readings, he nonetheless had the vision to insist on the significance of status in early modern society, a significance that modern observers still tend to underestimate.[13]

 Elias pioneered in relating codes of behaviour and micro-interactions to macro-historical questions like the structure of society and the nature of political power. But while he was right to insist on the broad implications of minute ceremonial gestures, his analysis of these implications suffered from his reliance on dated historiography and on a highly partial sample of sources—notably the enticing yet problematic memoirs of the duke of Saint-Simon.[14] Elias famously posited etiquette as an instrument of power that enabled monarchs to domesticate nobilities obsessed with status competition. The domestication thesis appears questionable, however, in light of increasing evidence that the old 'sword' aristocracy retained dominance after 1661.[15] Granted, this does not rule out the potential for instrumental use of ceremony and etiquette, but by privileging the monarch's perspective as master manipulator of the system, Elias's interpretation has relegated courtiers to an essentially passive role.[16]

 Two other influential projects that have dealt with ceremony and status in early modern France are known as the 'American Neo-Ceremonialist School' and the 'Society of Orders'. The Neo-Ceremonialists produced in-depth analyses of individual ceremonies, beginning with Ralph Giesey's monograph on the royal funeral and continuing with works dedicated to the *lit de justice*, the coronation, and the royal entry.[17] Drawing extensively on series of contemporary sources, this school

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[11] See esp. Jeroen Duindam, *Myths of Power: Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court* (Amsterdam, 1995); Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie with Jean-François Fitou, *Saint-Simon, ou le système de la Cour* (Paris, 1997), pp. 515–20.

[12] *The Collected Works of Norbert Elias*, ii, 91.

[13] 'One does not need to share the values of court people to understand that they formed part of the constraints of their social existence, and that for most of these people it was difficult if not impossible to step out of the competition for socially valued opportunities': *The Collected Works of Norbert Elias*, ii, 83.

[14] Much of this literature was already dated at the time of composition and was hardly updated for publication in the 1960s: Duindam, *Myths of Power*, pp. 184–7. On Saint-Simon, see later.

[15] Roger Mettam, *Power and Faction in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford, 1988); Katia Béguin, 'Louis XIV et l'aristocratie: coup de majesté ou retour à la tradition?', *Histoire Économie et Société*, xix (2000), 497–512; William Beik, 'The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration', *Past & Present*, clxxxviii (2005), 195–224; James B. Collins, *The State in Early Modern France*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2009).

[16] See also Chapter Five, which revisits one of Elias's key examples of the function of etiquette.

[17] Ralph E. Giesey, *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France* (Geneva, 1960); Sarah Hanley, *The* Lit de Justice *of the Kings of France: Constitutional Ideology in Legend, Ritual, and Discourse* (Princeton, 1983); Richard A. Jackson, *Vive le roi!: A History of the French Coronation from Charles V to Charles X* (Chapel Hill, 1984); Lawrence M. Bryant, *The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony: Politics, Ritual, and Art in the Renaissance* (Geneva, 1986). Another work associated with this school is Michèle Fogel, *Les cérémonies de l'information dans la France du XVIᵉ au XVIIIᵉ siècle* (Paris, 1989). See also Ralph E. Giesey, *Rulership in France, 15th–17th Centuries* (Aldershot, 2004).

established the study of symbolic forms and their evolution on a firmer empirical basis. The range of forms, however, was largely limited to the special case of state ceremony in the period preceding what they saw as a shift in ceremonial idiom with the advent of absolutism. Analytically speaking, the main problem lies in their tendency to reduce ceremony to a single abstract framework of 'constitutional ideology'. The resulting analyses appear forced at times, and in any case do not convey the complexity of occasions that involved multiple meanings, protagonists, and agendas, practical as well as ideological.[18]

In the 'Society of Orders', Roland Mousnier and his followers interrogated status through a model of social stratification. Rejecting Marxist models of a 'Society of Classes', they argued that the social hierarchy of early modern Europe was ordered by an ideological principle of 'social function' rather than in relation to the means of production. In seeking non-economic measures of social position, proponents of this model experimented with methods that would remain useful for subsequent scholars, such as the sampling of honorific titles as status-markers. Ultimately, however, they too forced empirical measures to fit pre-conceived theoretical moulds. Mousnier's Society of Orders, especially in its later formulations, rested on an idealized notion of a unitary, consensual, and static hierarchy. In such a framework, status symbols become attributes of social essences rather than objects of social dynamics.[19]

Among more recent treatments, Jeroen Duindam has provided the best analysis of the early modern French court, opening up fresh avenues and archival sources for comparative research. Integrating the insights of the 'revisionist' critique of absolutism, he offers a nuanced reassessment of the use of ceremony and etiquette as an instrument of power. His main interest, however, lies in rulership and court organization rather than in the agendas and practices of courtiers or in status interaction per se.[20] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, in contrast, has focused on the courtier's viewpoint, illustrating the pervasiveness and subtlety of status and its symbols. Yet his 'system' of hierarchy and ranks is rather a brilliant reading of Saint-Simon and a few other celebrated sources than a systematic account of the court of Louis XIV.[21]

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[18] See esp. the critique of Alain Boureau, e.g. in his 'Les cérémonies royales françaises entre performance juridique et compétence liturgique', *Annales ESC*, xlvi (1991), 1253–64. See also Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, 2001), pp. 229–37.

[19] For a review of Mousnier's project and of other approaches to the social order, see 'À propos des catégories sociales de l'Ancien Régime', introduction to Fanny Cosandey (ed.), *Dire et vivre l'ordre social en France sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 2005), pp. 9–43; for a pungent critique, see Armand Arriaza, 'Mousnier and Barber: The Theoretical Underpinning of the "Society of Orders" in Early Modern Europe', *Past & Present*, lxxxix (1980), 39–57. See also M. L. Bush (ed.), *Social Orders and Social Classes in Europe since 1500: Studies in Social Stratification* (London, 1992); Gail Bossenga, 'Estates, Orders, and Corps', in William Doyle (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Ancien Régime* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 141–66; Gilles Chabaud (ed.), *Classement,* DÉ*classement,* RE*classement de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Limoges, 2011).

[20] Duindam, *Myths of Power*, and Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550–1780* (Cambridge, 2003), esp. chs. 5 and 6; cf. the more traditional account in Jean-François Solnon, *La Cour de France* (Paris, 1996[1987]), esp. pt 3.

[21] Le Roy Ladurie with Fitou, *Saint-Simon, ou le système de la Cour*, esp. ch. 1. An earlier Saint-Simon-based system of ranks is Henri Brocher, *À la cour de Louis XIV: le rang et l'étiquette sous l'ancien régime* (Paris, 1934).

Drawing on a mass of archival sources, Frédérique Leferme-Falguières has provided a vast panorama of court ceremonial in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from state ceremonies to everyday life. Such an ambitious scope has, however, inevitably strained the reliability of her findings.[22] In a series of articles, Fanny Cosandey has interrogated the question of precedence in the French monarchy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, based primarily on the manuscript compilations of later early modern erudites. She too highlighted the efficacy of ceremonial as an instrument of royal power, albeit in a more nuanced way than had Elias or the Neo-Ceremonialists. Cosandey has forcefully argued for the importance of the quarrels of precedence and delineated some of their complex mechanisms. Her analysis, though, has focused more on the level of social ranks than on that of symbolic codes, and on the question of order and sequence more than on other aspects of status relations.[23]

This study explores status interaction during the reign of Louis XIV: how and why individuals and groups expressed, shaped, and contested social positions in moments of interpersonal contact, from high ceremonies to everyday occasions. Since there never was a consensual or coherent Society of Orders, the symbolic dimension of social occasions became determinant. Certain aspects of these occasions—spatial, material, gestural, linguistic—signified the respective positions of interacting parties. To gain the upper hand in these de facto, micro-level orderings was thus to advance one's particular version of the social hierarchy at large. The 'Culture of Orders' created as much as reflected the Society (or societies) of Orders.

This book traces some of the major codes of status interaction and how contemporaries used them to achieve social and political objectives. By 'codes' I mean models or patterns of contemporary practices and of their associated meanings, not of normative or necessarily explicit sets of rules. For each status code, I have attempted to detect the relevant vocabulary and grammar, so to speak: which aspects of a ceremony, a dress item, a gesture, or a letter were meaningful with regard to status, and how they combined to signify social positions on concrete occasions. Given the arbitrariness of the symbol, any aspect could in theory be relevant; in fact, only a subset of potential aspects were consistently so in any given context.[24] Once deciphered, these codes reveal underlying regularities—and irregularities—in what had previously seemed like an undifferentiated sea of detail. Since the sources themselves do not usually explicate the codes, one could not tell the significant from the incidental in a given text, image, or object without systematic inquiry; the results of this study should thus prove helpful to readers of early

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[22] Frédérique Leferme-Falguières, 'Le monde des courtisans: la haute noblesse et le cérémonial royal aux XVIIᵉ et XVIIIᵉ siècles' (Univ. of Paris I Ph.D. thesis, 2004); the first half was published in Frédérique Leferme-Falguières, *Les courtisans: une société de spectacle sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 2007). For a more detailed critique, see Giora Sternberg, 'The Culture of Orders: Status Interactions during the Reign of Louis XIV' (Univ. of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 2009).

[23] For a useful summary and references to her main articles, see Fanny Cosandey, 'Classement ou ordonnancement? Les querelles de préséances en France sous l'Ancien Régime', in Chabaud (ed.), *Classement,* DÉ*classement,* RE*classement*, pp. 95–103.

[24] To give a simple example, in our historical context the upper margin of pages in letters was meaningful with regard to status, but the right-hand margin was not: see Chapter Six.

modern sources even when status is not their primary concern. I have also looked for cross-code regularities, or recurring principles that characterize status interaction in general.[25]

Although some of the resulting categories and generalizations transcend the consciousness or perspective of any individual actor, I have tried to draw as near as possible to contemporaries in order to recapture early modern perceptions of the stakes and the strategies of status interaction. In the study of symbolic forms and behaviour, there is an inherent danger of forced or anachronistic interpretations. Historians of pre-modern periods in particular are at a disadvantage compared with natural scientists or anthropologists: they cannot generate experimental data or question informants.[26] By the seventeenth century, though, the number and the nature of available sources—at least in better-documented contexts, like that of elite society—make the task arguably possible, if still formidable. Here as in other cases, the early modern period has left behind just the right balance of sources: ample and varied enough to enable us to go beyond wild conjecture, but limited enough to make the task particularly interesting.

The basic stakes of status interaction become clear already from a cursory glance. Early moderns did not conceal or sublimate the pursuit of status symbols: they quarrelled openly over a form of address and unabashedly disputed the length of a train. For us, this generates not only fascination, but also the confidence that we are dealing with intentional symbolic behaviour and not simply with a retrospective symbolic interpretation. The challenge remains, however, to go beyond such general claims as 'status was important', 'early modern ceremonies were intricate', or even 'train-length signified hierarchical position', and to make sense of specific moves and their significance. Did the trains worn on a particular occasion confirm or disrupt the status quo? Why did a journal-writer note down dress codes on some occasions but not on others? And what can all this tell us about social dynamics or power struggles? The reconstruction of 'insider' actions and perspectives requires patient and resourceful detective-work that, by piecing together extant material of diverse types and origins, can recover practices and assumptions which were often taken for granted, and hence were seldom formulated explicitly, let alone systematically.[27]

Status interaction took place in a wide variety of contexts and occasions. The Neo-Ceremonialists and others have traced a shift from state ceremonies to the ritualization of daily life in the course of the seventeenth century, in particular during the reign of Louis XIV.[28] This transformation has been overstated, and in any case the precise distinctions among 'ceremony', 'ritual', and 'etiquette' are not germane to this inquiry. Status interaction cut across these chronological and typological

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[25] See the Conclusion, esp. pp. 159–64.

[26] Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 15; Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*, p. 4.

[27] On sources, see next section. See also the more specific discussions of methodological challenges and solutions in the introductory sections of chapters.

[28] See e.g. Ralph E. Giesey, 'The King Imagined', in Keith Michael Baker (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture* (4 vols, Oxford, 1987–94), i, 41–59.

divides. The handing of the chemise at the daily *lever*, already prevalent in the sixteenth century, corresponds to the handing of the regalia in the course of the coronation and of other high ceremonies that continued until the end of the ancien régime. The codes and contestations of hat-wearing (covered or uncovered?) operated similarly at court and in *lits de justice*.[29] For heuristic purposes, though, it is useful to speak of a 'ceremonial spectrum', roughly ordered by frequency: from the rarer high ceremonies, such as the state events discussed by the Neo-Ceremonialists or other dynastic occasions like marriages; through recurring events on the religious or social calendar, notably including courtesy visits; to the routines of court life and other quotidian practices like letter-writing. The book journeys across this spectrum, illustrating differences as well as similarities along the way.

There is a tendency to view such ceremonial occasions in a prescriptive or normative sense, as the observance or performance of predefined formalities. From this perspective, status contestations become an aberration: they 'mar' ceremony, 'breach' etiquette, are 'bad' ritual.[30] Behind this normative view stand influential documentary and theoretical lenses. On the documentary side, one could point to the excessive scholarly reliance on prescriptive sources, not least on early modern courtesy literature. Although readily accessible and comprehensible to outsiders, such sources do not offer a reliable key to the actual practice of contemporaries.[31] On the theoretical side, 'performative' approaches to ceremony tend to assume a predetermined script and to regard any departure from it as a 'deviation' or 'failure' that 'represents a more general failure of the ritual ordering of society itself'.[32] In a similar way, Erving Goffman's framework describes an 'interaction order' that is geared to 'face-saving' and to the reduction of friction, according to the injunctions of 'our Anglo-American society'.[33]

Though sometimes useful as a point of departure, these lenses ultimately obscure the fact that, in early modern times, it was interaction disorder that was often the norm. In an account of the proceedings of the estates of Brittany in 1636, the writer noted in passing 'some contestations *quite ordinary in all assemblies*, over the seating and precedence of some nobles'.[34] Men and women literally threatened the face of their interactants as they grappled, shoved, and scratched one another during the

[29] On handing, see Chapter Five; on hats, compare, e.g. BN, FF 14119, fo. 278v, and Hanley, *The Lit de Justice*, p. 287.

[30] Giesey, 'The King Imagined', p. 48; Schneider, *The Ceremonial City*, p. 145; cf. Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*, pp. 8ff., 255. 'Etiquette' especially has this prescriptive connotation and I accordingly minimize use of the term.

[31] For a detailed illustration, see the discussion of letter-writing manuals in Chapter Six. See also John Walter, 'Gesturing at Authority: Deciphering the Gestural Code of Early Modern England', in Michael J. Braddick (ed.), *The Politics of Gesture: Historical Perspectives* (*Past & Present* Supplement 4, 2009), p. 103 (there, though, 'code' is used in a prescriptive sense). Court ordinances and official paperwork are similarly popular and problematic as mirrors of actual practice.

[32] Schneider, *The Ceremonial City*, p. 12 (a discussion of classic anthropological frameworks).

[33] The most relevant work in this context is his *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior* (New York, 1967). For recent historical uses and reassessments of Goffman, see Braddick, *The Politics of Gesture*.

[34] Theodore and Denys Godefroy, *Le Ceremonial François* (2 vols, Paris, 1649), ii, 377 (my emphasis).

most solemn occasions, a far cry from the dictums of courtesy.[35] The ordering of society was a matter for negotiation and contestation, not just observance or performance. One party's deviation was another party's return to immemorial tradition. Those who stood to lose often boycotted the occasion, showing little regard for its general success or failure. The notion of a consensual or stable script would have been foreign to their experience.

Indeed, was there a script at all? Even at the court of the Sun King no fixed body of rules regulated all the high ceremonies and everyday routines that expressed and shaped the hierarchy in practice. In lieu of positive codification, the system operated largely by customary law: precedents served to determine subsequent occasions. This introduced enough structure and regularity to allow complexity and conscious planning, yet without the rigidity that might have ruled out contention and change. In the case of formal dispute, the monarch as arbiter would normally rule with reference to past usage rather than simply by his discretionary authority as 'master of the ranks'. This logic of the precedent meant that any interaction could potentially set, confirm, or disrupt status codes, and hence redefine social positions and relations.[36]

Closely connected to the prescriptive viewpoint is the tendency to adopt the perspective of the monarch or of the state, and to measure status and ceremony by the yardstick of their designs and interests. Noticeable already in studies of non-monarchical political units such as the Italian city-states, this tendency is particularly strong in the case of the court of Louis XIV. Ceremony and etiquette are thus considered primarily as instruments of central power, either as part of a coordinated machinery of propaganda or as a means of domestication. This central perspective has both guided the selection of evidence and coloured its interpretation.[37] To be sure, the Sun King was the single most important and influential person at court: the pinnacle of the hierarchy, the master and arbiter of ranks, and the focal point of ceremonial activity. But status interaction concerned multiple actors who cultivated their own stakes even in the midst of the most monarchical state ceremony or the most heliocentric of Versailles's rituals. Much status interaction, moreover, took place outside the monarch's presence, knowledge, or indeed interest.[38] Even if we held the extreme view that the monarchy enjoyed absolute control over the system and sowed endemic contestation among the aristocracy,

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[35] See e.g. Godefroy, *Le Ceremonial François*, ii, 127; Sourches, iii, 423; Bonvallet, 'Le bureau des finances', pp. 269, 276–7; AM Nîmes, OO 27, no. 6; Carroll, *Blood and Violence*.

[36] 'If a certain "honor" had been usurped and no one objected, the honor could be defended as an acquired right thereafter. This is why the court is also referred to as Theatrum Praecedentiae': Duindam, *Myths of Power*, p. 125. In some cases, the monarch did issue positive regulations or ordinances (e.g. on the service of the household: AN, O¹ 756), but they never amounted to anything resembling a body of ceremonial law. For a comparable constitutional situation in the Holy Roman Empire, see Stollberg-Rilinger, 'La communication symbolique'.

[37] On the machinery of propaganda, see Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven-London, 1992), and Gérard Sabatier, *Versailles ou la figure du roi* (Paris, 1999); cf. Oded Rabinovitch, 'Versailles as a Family Enterprise: The Perraults, 1660–1700', *French Historical Studies*, xxxvi (2013), 385–416. On the instrumental approach and domestication thesis, see earlier, p. 5.

[38] The proposed perspectival decentring is thus somewhat akin to Tom Stoppard's famous strategy in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (I am grateful to Paul Friedland for this analogy).

the story of the 'victims' would still be worth telling, and in their own terms. This study thus interrogates the phenomenon from the multiple perspectives of contesting actors, stakes, and strategies.

Though different in perspective and unequal in rank, these actors shared a comparable competence in status codes. In other contexts and interactions, social distinction turned on differences in knowledge as well as in behaviour, between contemporary insiders and outsiders. Aristocrats, for example, notoriously used dress, language, and comportment in a manner different from other social strata, notably from the 'rustic' provincial nobility or from the 'vile' bourgeoisie.[39] My main concern here, however, is with mechanisms of distinction that operated through codes familiar and available to all protagonists and that involved direct, explicit, and informed contestation, not just passive resistance. Such an inquiry calls for a focus on a specific milieu or community (loosely defined). Here I have chosen French aristocratic society, but analogous cases can be made for other strata, down to the smallest provincial towns. Indeed, the limits of the phenomenon may well be documentary rather than social.[40]

After all, the notion of elite too is a question of scale and perspective. Distinctions marked shifting gradations along multiple hierarchies, not a simple or stable dichotomy between superiors and subordinates. One party's superior was another's inferior. Accordingly, my use of these two terms, even as nouns, retains the comparative rather than the absolute sense. This 'relativity principle', as we shall see, is particularly pertinent on the level of codes: whether or not a train was considered long or a term of address respectful did not derive from any inherent formal characteristic, but from its use relative to other forms or to other parties. The signification of forms, moreover, was not limited to the simple issue of sequential order. The use of the term *Monseigneur*, for example, signified great deference, not just the inferiority of addresser to addressee.[41] In other words, the question of precedence is only one facet of the wider and more complex phenomenon of status interaction.

What sort of agency did status interaction involve? It is useful to distinguish here between motivations and strategies. My working assumption is that the general preoccupation with status and its symbols was, as Elias put it, 'part of the constraints of social existence' under the ancien régime. It engaged not only fanatics like Saint-Simon, but also many others not famous for status-mindedness, throughout the social hierarchy. To renounce it, as to renounce society, was always

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[39] François de Callières, *Du bon, et du mauvais Usage dans les manieres de s'exprimer. Des façons de parler bourgeoises. Et en quoy elles sont differentes de celles de la Cour* (Paris, 1693).

[40] See e.g. Denise Turrel, 'L'identité par la distinction: les robes syndicales des petites villes de Bresse (XVᵉ–XVIIIᵉ siècle)', in *Cahiers d'histoire*, xliii (1998), 475–87. For a recent general overview, see Jean-Pascal Daloz, *The Sociology of Elite Distinction: From Theoretical to Comparative Perspectives* (Basingstoke, 2010). See also Alain Faudemay, *La distinction à l'âge classique: émules et enjeux* (Paris, 1992).

[41] And, correspondingly, on the level of social ranks: while it is true that, since 1576, no *dignité* could dispute the precedence of the princes of royal blood (Cosandey, 'Classement ou ordonnancement', p. 99), this by no means put an end to the latter's contestations with inferiors (see esp. Chapter Four; on the *Monseigneur*, see Chapter Six).

a possible course of action, but one that came at a price. Status was woven into the fabric of early modern life: it enjoyed ideological justifications, buttressed power and political authority, provided social distinction and prestige, even had economic implications.[42] Most of the time, most contemporaries must have pursued this compulsion without pausing to reflect on it, much as their modern counterparts would pursue money, a career, or family life.

This does not mean, however, that they pursued it blindly. The quest for distinction was but one of many motivations, which might call for contradictory courses of action.[43] Sometimes contemporaries would make deliberate status concessions to promote other agendas, not least in attempts to recruit support from influential persons or from potential allies. Most importantly, the pursuit itself gave much scope for creativity and ingenuity. Actors did not simply follow a rigid set of rules. The mastery and successful manipulation of the codes of status interaction involved a great deal of sophistication and cunning, as the following chapters will show. Disentangling motivations and strategies also helps to underscore that the calculated nature of manoeuvres by no means entails a lack of passion or emotion on the part of protagonists.

PRELIMINARIES (II): ANTECEDENTS, HIERARCHIES, SOURCES

Status interaction in its early modern form did not begin with the reign of Louis XIV.[44] The sixteenth century already abounds with comparable codes, contestations, and strategies. To give just a handful of examples directly related to the themes of the following chapters: in 1509, municipal and royal officials in Paris disputed two-dimensional spatial choreographies of precedence in processions. In 1553, a contestation over the hoods worn by members of the *Cour des Aides* delayed a special service at the abbey of Saint-Denis, while parties went to and fro to argue their case before the sovereign.[45] In 1570, the duke of Nevers boycotted the royal marriage ceremony after the king had ruled against his rank. A few years later, members of an ecclesiastical assembly admonished a correspondent who had

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[42] In 1739, the treasurers of Montpellier argued that a contrary decision on the protocol of a complimentary visit would risk their investment in their venal offices: AD Hérault, C 58, no. 33. Conversely, of course, the huge amounts that contemporaries spent on ennobling and honorary positions reflect the capital importance of status. See e.g. Bossenga, 'Estates, Orders, and Corps', pp. 151–2.

[43] Studies exploring alternative aristocratic motivations in this period include Jonathan Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture: France, 1570–1715* (Berkeley, 1993), and Jay M. Smith, *The Culture of Merit: Nobility, Royal Service, and the Making of Absolute Monarchy in France, 1600–1789* (Ann Arbor, 1996). The pursuit of offices was a related yet distinct motivation: Leonhard Horowski, '"Such a Great Advantage for My Son": Office-Holding and Career Mechanisms at the Court of France, 1661–1789', *The Court Historian*, viii (2003), 125–75.

[44] Nor did it end with the reign: see the Conclusion.

[45] François Bonnardot et al. (eds), *Registres des délibérations du bureau de la ville de Paris* (15 vols, Paris, 1883–1921), i, 151–3; iv, 89–90; Godefroy, *Le Ceremonial François*, ii, 949–50; cf. Descimon, 'Le corps de ville'.

addressed them as *Messieurs* rather than as *Messeigneurs*.[46] Intricate status codes like train-bearing and ritualized daily routines like chemise-handing during the *lever* were already in place under the Valois monarchs and continued under the first two Bourbons.[47]

A sense of continuity is thus evident enough to dispel the notion of a radical transformation of the system under the Sun King.[48] The same holds for the reign of Henri III in the second half of the sixteenth century, another conventional landmark in the evolution of ceremony and etiquette.[49] Although change in the personal inclination or involvement of monarchs is easier to trace, it cannot, as argued earlier, stand for the development of status interaction as a whole. Nor can other seemingly-related and better-studied aspects of ceremony and behaviour, such as splendour, familiarity, or refinement: that the sixteenth-century court was more 'familiar' than its successors does not entail that status was less important or less contested there.[50] Quantitative and qualitative differences in documentation pose a further obstacle to detailed diachronic comparison. Not least, there is no surviving prior equivalent to the serial inside accounts of Louis XIV's Masters of Ceremonies.

In the absence of comparably systematic studies of status interaction in these earlier contexts, it remains difficult to identify precisely what did change and what did not. It would be reasonable, though, to acknowledge growing standardization and complexity, in status codes as in social hierarchies. Easier to trace, the reforms of Henri III and the authority, inclination, and longevity of Louis XIV played an important role in these processes. So did the sedentarization of the court and the growing bureaucratic apparatus for ceremony. In 1585, the creation of the posts of Grand Master of Ceremonies and of Introductor of Ambassadors formalized and elevated earlier practices for regulating high ceremony and diplomatic protocol. In the following century, these officials were joined by a small supporting staff, notably by a Master of Ceremonies.[51]

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[46] Fanny Cosandey, 'L'insoutenable légèreté du rang', in Fanny Cosandey (ed.), *Dire et vivre l'ordre social*, pp. 171–3; Godefroy, *Le Ceremonial François*, ii, 312. Godefroy's compilation includes numerous other examples. See also Monique Chatenet, 'Quelques aspects des funérailles nobiliaires au XVIᵉ siècle', in Jean Balsamo (ed.), *Les funérailles à la Renaissance* (Geneva, 2002), pp. 52ff.

[47] See Chapters Three and Five.

[48] 'Continuity' here refers to the general principles and characteristics of the system; the specifics of ranks and codes changed all the time. Indeed, this state of continual change was a principle of the system (see later).

[49] Monique Chatenet, *La cour de France au XVIᵉ siècle: vie sociale et architecture* (Paris, 2002), esp. ch. 4; Nicolas Le Roux, *La faveur du roi: mignons et courtisans au temps des derniers Valois* (Seyssel, 2001), esp. 176–86; and the recent English synthesis in Robert J. Knecht, *The French Renaissance court, 1483–1589* (New Haven-London, 2008). The first two Bourbons have received less treatment, but see Robin Briggs, 'The Theatre State: Ceremony and Politics 1600–60', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, xvi (1994), 15–33; Orest Ranum, 'Courtesy, Absolutism, and the Rise of the French State, 1630–1660', *The Journal of Modern History*, lii (1980), 426–51.

[50] See Chatenet, *La cour de France*, pp. 109, 111–12; Carroll, *Blood and Violence*, p. 310.

[51] See Marie-Lan Nguyen, 'Les grands maîtres des cérémonies et le service des Cérémonies à l'époque moderne, 1585–1792' (Univ. of Paris IV *mémoire de maîtrise*, 1999); Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, pp. 188–93; [Auguste Boppe], *Les introducteurs des ambassadeurs, 1585–1900* (Paris, 1901).

The Grand Masters of Ceremonies hailed from a middling or rising sort of nobility, not on a par with other grand officers: the Pot de Rhodes family from 1585, then the marquis of Blainville (a younger son of Colbert) from 1685, and finally the Dreux-Brézés, from 1701 until the end of the ancien régime. The Sainctot family held the post of Master of Ceremonies since the first half of the seventeenth century. In 1691 its best-known member, Nicolas II, sold the post to the newly ennobled Michel Ancel Desgranges, whose family continued to hold it into the second half of the following century. Since the Grand Masters were often away from court, especially during the incessant wars of Louis XIV, the Masters managed the service for extended periods. While this involved direct interaction with the monarch, royal authority was channelled in many cases through the Secretary of State in charge of the king's household.

The duties of these officials concerned the higher end of the ceremonial spectrum, including, *inter alia*, state ceremonies and 'life-cycle' events of members of the royal house. They had little involvement in the daily routines of court life (these were mostly managed by other, more senior officers, such as the Grand Master of the Household or the First Gentlemen of the Bedchamber). For high ceremonies, the Masters drew up the plans, supervised the preparations, and orchestrated the events.[52] Throughout, they had to deal with streams of status claims and contestations from all sides. In many cases, especially those involving the high aristocracy, they would pass on the matter to the king who would personally decide.

Another means of standardization was the increasing reliance on writing as an aid to ceremonial memory. In a system of customary law, past precedents played a crucial role in determining future occasions, especially in deciding status contestations. But how would precedents be noted? In the mid-sixteenth century, Henri II commissioned Du Tillet, the clerk of the *parlement* of Paris, to comb parliamentary and other registers for the 'rank and order' of dignitaries in 'grand and solemn assemblies'.[53] In subsequent reigns, erudites and officials continued to collect information and to research the topic; in 1649, the Godefroys published the most cited reference-work in the field, the voluminous *Ceremonial François*. Besides such compilation of old data, Henri III instructed his officials to keep an 'accurate register' of ongoing ceremonies under their charge. Under Sainctot and Desgranges, this became a detailed and serial coverage, which enabled monarchs to make more informed decisions.[54]

While such standardization structured status interaction, it by no means put an end to contestations. Nor did it leave parties helplessly dependent on a centralizing bureaucratic state. In the absence of positive law, they could still point to contradictory precedents, argue the irrelevance of past cases due to a difference in circumstances, or introduce novel distinctions for which there was no precedent.

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[52] Where there is no contrast, I use 'Masters of Ceremonies' as shorthand for Grand Masters as well as Masters.

[53] Godefroy, *Le Ceremonial François* (unpaginated).

[54] More details in the discussion of sources later. The daily routines of court life received less serial coverage and occasional positive codification: see Chapter Five.

Parties, moreover, were quick to appropriate the new informational practices. Magistrates and municipalities had already been recording ceremonies before the household did, and aristocrats soon joined in the creation and assembly of status-related writings and archives. In the most remarkable cases, they even successfully manipulated the official record of the monarchy in their favour, in real time or after the fact.[55]

Status interaction thus remained unstable and contested, as did the social structures and relations that it signified. The French aristocracy never followed a clear-cut, comprehensive, or consistent table of ranks. Throughout the early modern period, new positions appeared, old positions evolved, hierarchies changed. And they all varied with context and perspective. To delineate a single, 'true' hierarchy at any given moment, let alone for a reign that spanned almost a century, thus goes against the grain. It is essential, though, to have a grasp of the main rungs and of those of their members who will appear frequently in what follows. Thus, those who 'held rank' at court during the reign of Louis XIV can be divided into several types. They include all members of the royal house, other princes and dukes subject to the king, and holders of high office. These ranks, like many others, had a strong patrilineal and patriarchal aspect. Most were at least to some extent hereditary, and all transferred to female spouses.[56]

At the top stood Louis XIV. One of France's most celebrated monarchs, in ceremonial as in other respects, he was born in 1638, became king five years later at the death of his father Louis XIII, and was crowned in 1654 after the rebellious Fronde. His 'personal reign' followed the death of Cardinal Mazarin in 1661, and lasted more than half a century until his own death and the accession of his great-grandson, Louis XV, in 1715. There were two queens at court in the course of his reign. The Queen Mother, Anne of Austria, served as regent at its turbulent beginnings and died in 1666. In 1660, the king married Maria Theresa, daughter of Philip IV of Spain. Following her death in 1683 he secretly married Madame de Maintenon, the governess of his bastards by another mistress, Madame de Montespan; this morganatic union did not make Maintenon queen, but allowed some ambiguities of rank in her favour until the end of the reign.

Next came the dauphin, the heir to the throne by strict male primogeniture. The main incumbent of this rank was Louis's eldest son, the *Grand Dauphin*.[57] But the demographic catastrophe of the final years of the reign saw a quick succession of heirs, as the *Grand Dauphin* died in 1711, his eldest son the duke of Burgundy in 1712, and his eldest grandson shortly thereafter. Another grandson, the only legitimate offspring to survive Louis XIV, then became dauphin and finally succeeded

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[55] See Giora Sternberg, 'Manipulating Information in the Ancien Régime: Ceremonial Records, Aristocratic Strategies, and the Limits of the State Perspective', *The Journal of Modern History*, lxxxv (2013), 239–79, and also in Chapters One, Three, and Four.

[56] In the minority of cases where princesses married beneath their birth rank, they normally retained it by special privilege. On the problematic of birth v. marital rank, see the first two chapters. For the exposition that follows; cf. Appendix I; unavoidably technical, it is nonetheless essential to make sense of subsequent discussions.

[57] Until the *Grand Dauphin*'s birth in 1661, the heir was the king's younger brother Philippe.

as Louis XV. The two dauphines of the reign were the *Grand Dauphin*'s wife, Maria-Anna-Christina-Victoria of Bavaria, from her marriage in 1680 to her death in 1690; and the duchess of Burgundy, daughter of Victor Amadeus II of Savoy. Officially dauphine only from 1711 to her premature death a year later, Burgundy enjoyed the rank of first lady of the court (and the favour of the royal couple) from her arrival in France in 1696.

The 'Children of France' (*enfants de France*) formed the following level. This most obviously applied to daughters or younger sons of French kings; in this case, to two dukes of Orléans: the king's uncle Gaston (son of Henri IV) and his brother Philippe (son of Louis XIII).[58] Both were known at court simply as *Monsieur*, and their wives as *Madame*. Gaston lived in exile from court since 1652, following his conduct at the Fronde, and died early in the reign, in 1660. Macro-politically submissive, Philippe nevertheless sought to aggrandize the house of Orléans, in rank as in other respects. He first married Henrietta-Anne, daughter of Charles I of England, who died in 1670, and then the Palatine Elisabeth-Charlotte, known for her prolific correspondence. Though impatient of ceremony, the second *Madame* was no less jealous of her rank.

Those 'of the direct eldest line, presumed heir to the throne' were also considered Children of France, even when removed from the king by more than one generation.[59] This notably applied to the three legitimate grandchildren of Louis XIV, sons of the *Grand Dauphin*, who were treated as status equals at birth and preceded *Monsieur* by virtue of their greater proximity to the throne. The eldest, the duke of Burgundy, attracted a group of aristocratic reformers critical of Louis XIV's policies (on status as in other matters), whose hopes were shattered by the news of his premature death in 1712. The duke of Anjou left France in 1700 to found the Bourbon line in Spain as Philip V. The youngest, duke of Berry, married the daughter of Philippe II of Orléans in 1710 and died of a riding accident four years later.

Whereas the rank of Children of France had existed for centuries, the following one was a creation of seventeenth-century status interaction. 'Grandchildren of France' (*petits-enfants de France*) came to denote the children of Sons of France.[60] It began with the struggle of Gaston's only child of his first marriage, the *Grande Mademoiselle*, to distinguish herself from more distant cousins of royal blood. The new rank was still far from established at the beginning of the reign, as the *Grande Mademoiselle* was joined by three half-sisters, daughters of Gaston's second wife, Marguerite of Lorraine. These married in the 1660s, to become grand-duchess of Tuscany, duchess of Guise, and duchess of Savoy. When Tuscany returned to France

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[58]   None of the other legitimate children of Louis XIII or of Louis XIV reached adulthood. Three of Henri IV's daughters were still alive when Louis XIV acceded to the throne. They had all married foreign sovereigns by then, thus espousing other countries and rank-systems, though the youngest, Henriette-Marie, the wife of Charles I of England, spent extensive periods in France and was buried in Saint-Denis in 1669.

[59]   SSB, xix, 514.

[60]   Excluding those of the direct eldest line, considered Children of France. Children of Daughters of France no longer belonged to the dynasty, because born outside the male line.

in 1675 following the failure of her marriage, she retained her birth rank, as had her sister Guise.[61]

Philippe of Orléans also played a key role in establishing this new rank, which concerned his own children. His first marriage produced two Granddaughters of France: the queen of Spain of the opening example and a duchess of Savoy, wife of Victor Amadeus II from 1684. Of Philippe's marriage with Elisabeth-Charlotte, two children reached adulthood. Philippe II of Orléans, duke of Chartres until his father's death in 1701 and duke of Orléans since, married a legitimated daughter of the king in 1692. Although he did not get along well with his royal uncle and father-in-law, he became regent of France in 1715. His sister, Elisabeth-Charlotte, married the duke of Lorraine in 1698. The senior unmarried Granddaughter of France was referred to simply as *Mademoiselle*, a title first held by the *Grande Mademoiselle*, and then successively by Philippe's descendants.[62] Following Sainctot, I use 'Royal Family' (*famille royale*) to denote all ranks down to and including the Grandchildren of France.[63]

All other Bourbons of the legitimate male line were known simply as 'Princes of the Blood' (*princes du Sang*). The men thus stood in line to the throne. Orléans apart, these princes and princesses all belonged to the branch of Condé, founded in the sixteenth century.[64] When Louis XIV acceded to the throne, the head of the branch, 'First Prince of the Blood', was Henri II of Bourbon. His son Louis II, known as the *Grand Condé*, succeeded him in 1646. Military hero and patron of the arts, the *Grand Condé* rebelled during the Fronde, but returned to obedience following the peace with Spain in 1659. His only surviving child, Henri-Jules, was particularly passionate about status. Henri-Jules married two of his children to legitimated bastards of Louis XIV: his successor Louis III to Mademoiselle de Nantes and his daughter Anne-Louise-Bénédicte to the duke of Maine. He and Louis III died in the space of a year, succeeded in 1710 by Louis-Henri, First Minister of Louis XV in the 1720s.[65]

The *Grand Condé*'s brother, Armand of Bourbon, refounded the cadet line of Conti. His and his wife's early death brought their two sons under the tutelage of the head of the branch. The elder, Louis-Armand, was the first legitimate Bourbon to marry a legitimated child of Louis XIV, in 1680. When he too died, in 1685, the younger and more promising François-Louis became prince of Conti, but he suffered from an early disgrace. Another Condé cadet line, Soissons, left one member only by 1643: the princess of Carignan, who retained her birth rank as Princess of the Blood notwithstanding her marriage with a prince of the house of Savoy. Towards the end of the reign, the third Orléans generation reluctantly took its

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[61] Tuscany lived in retirement from court life, but participated in ceremonies.

[62] The Orléans usurped the title for Philippe II's daughter, even though she was not a Granddaughter of France, as part of their efforts to carve yet another new rank for the fourth generation.

[63] AN, K 1712, no. 6/3.

[64] See esp. Katia Béguin, *Les princes de Condé: rebelles, courtisans et mécènes dans la France du Grand Siècle* (Seyssel, 1999).

[65] Until 1709, the head of the branch was known as *Monsieur le Prince*, and his eldest son as *Monsieur le Duc*, but from Louis III onwards, the head was known as *Monsieur le Duc* only (because of the seniority of the Orléans).

place at the head of the Princes of the Blood, after Philippe II and his wife failed in the attempt to create yet another genealogical level, of 'Great-Grandchildren of France'.

The Royal Family and the Princes of the Blood together composed the 'Royal House' (*maison royale*) of France. What about the bastards of the royal dynasty? Legitimated princes occupied an uneasy intermediate space between the Princes of the Blood and the rest of the aristocracy. The four legitimated bastard lines that Louis XIV inherited from his predecessors (Longueville, Angoulême, Verneuil, Vendôme) had each followed its own path, periodically reconfirmed—and hence implicitly undermined—by successive rulers. The duke of Verneuil, son of Henri IV, benefitted from the early concessions that favoured Louis XIV's children. The Vendômes became a test-case for a third-generation line, receiving confirmation of their intermediate rank in 1694, in parallel with Louis's progeny.

In the course of the reign, the legitimated descendants of the Sun King gradually entered the Bourbon orbit. The daughters married into the legitimate Royal House, each union surpassing the previous in rank. The elevation of their brothers required more direct royal intervention. This process began with the count of Vermandois, son of the king's first *maîtresse en titre*, Madame de La Vallière. It reached its zenith with the duke of Maine and the count of Toulouse, the two surviving sons of Madame de Montespan, supported by their morganatic stepmother and sometime governess Maintenon. From obscurity at birth in the 1670s, these 'Legitimated Princes' (*princes légitimés*) became full-fledged Princes of the Blood at the close of the reign, triggering a constitutional crisis over the question of succession to the throne.

Such an extraordinary rise did not occur overnight. Rather, it depended on a continuous interplay between *de facto* gains in status and *de jure* promotions in rank, which powerfully demonstrates the macro-political ramifications of status interaction. Accordingly, it will occupy us throughout and will be analysed in detail at the end. By way of introduction, it would be useful to trace the main *de jure* landmarks here.[66] The first was legitimation itself, which occurred at an early age. Then, in May 1694, the *parlement* registered royal letters patent that awarded Maine, Toulouse, and their future (legitimate) children an intermediate rank between the Princes of the Blood and the rest of the aristocracy. The process was precipitated by the demographic catastrophe of the last years of the reign. In 1710, the king granted Maine's children the honours enjoyed by their father. A year later, an edict on the peerage gave the Legitimated Princes and their posterity an intermediate rank in state events, while private patents (*brevets*) awarded them, for life, the honours of the Princes of the Blood on all other occasions.

The rise of the Legitimated Princes culminated in the edict and declaration that made them full Princes of the Blood, complete with the right to inherit the throne. This happened in 1714–15, after the death of the duke of Berry left the future Louis XV as the Sun King's only legitimate descendant. Louis XIV's own demise reversed the fortunes of his bastard descendants, as their rivals from above and

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[66] For details and references, see the Conclusion, pp. 164–9.

from below took power during the Orléans regency. In 1717, the Legitimated were removed from the line to the throne, retaining honours on a personal basis only. A year later, Maine and his children lost even the intermediate rank in a celebrated *lit de justice*. The end of the regency, however, signalled a partial recovery for them. In 1723, Maine and Toulouse returned to the status that they had held before 1710. Subsequent decisions improved their position and extended it to their children.

The French rank system also uneasily encompassed princes from other dynasties. The 'Foreign Princes' (*princes étrangers*) came from families established in the kingdom but recognized as having 'the potential to exercise sovereign power, by right of inheritance, but not within France'.[67] At the top of this scale stood scions of the houses of Lorraine (most famously, the branch of Guise) and of Savoy, established already in the sixteenth century. The need to recruit support in the troubled first half of the next century made the crown recognize families with more questionable claims to sovereignty, including the houses of La Tour d'Auvergne-Bouillon, Rohan, La Trémoille, and Monaco. Indeed, it was status interaction that marked differences along this scale of recognition. Like the Princes of the Blood, better-recognized Foreign Princes passed on their rank to all children in the legitimate male line.

For non-princely families, a ducal title offered the prospects of attaining a permanent rank at court.[68] The most significant and prestigious sub-group among them were peers as well as dukes (*ducs et pairs*), nominated by the king and registered by the *parlement*, where they could sit by right. Other sub-groups included hereditary dukes who were not peers, and 'patented dukes' (*ducs à brevet*) who received ducal rank as a personal favour. Peers and hereditary dukes passed on their rank by the principle of (usually male) primogeniture, and numbered a few dozen families during the reign of Louis XIV.[69] Other noble titles did not confer official rank at court. The Foreign Princes and the dukes were thus collectively known as 'titled people' (*gens titrés*), while other marquises and counts were considered 'untitled'.

By the mid-seventeenth century, members of these hereditary groups held most of the high offices that conferred a functional rank at court, including the 'Grand Offices of the Crown'. Thus, the Condés were Grand Masters of the King's Household; the Bouillons—Grand Chamberlains; the Lorraines—Grand Equerries. Titled aristocrats also came to monopolize the four posts of First Gentleman of the Bedchamber that monitored access to the king. Though not formally hereditary, high court office tended to stay in the family.[70] On the other hand, the posts

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[67] Jonathan Spangler, *The Society of Princes: The Lorraine-Guise and the Conservation of Power and Wealth in Seventeenth-Century France* (Aldershot, 2009), p. 34.

[68] Note, however, that many princes were known by a ducal appellation (e.g. the dukes of Burgundy, Orléans, Bourbon, and Guise). See Jean-Pierre Labatut, *Les ducs et pairs de France au XVIIᵉ siècle* (Paris, 1972); Christophe Levantal, *Ducs et pairs et duchés-pairies laïques à l'époque moderne (1519–1790)* (Paris, 1996).

[69] There were also half a dozen ecclesiastical peerages, attached to specific sees.

[70] See esp. Horowski, "'Such a Great Advantage for My Son'".

of marshal—Grand Offices of the Crown as well as military commands—were non-hereditary, and often conferred court rank on people who had not already possessed it, sometimes even on parvenus like Nicolas Catinat.[71] The ceremonially exalted and equally non-hereditary post of chancellor was the only Grand Office traditionally held by 'robe' nobles. As for female households, they were non-hereditary by definition; the two principal posts of the queen's—the Superintendent and the Lady of Honour—were also dominated by titled women.

This ordered outline idealizes a confused and dynamic reality. Although aristocrats liked to trace their claims to immemorial traditions, many ranks in the Old Regime were in fact new or renewed. The Princes of the Blood were formally set above the rest of the aristocracy in 1576 only. The rank of Foreign Prince was not much older, and most of its holders were recognized no earlier than the mid-seventeenth century. Far from resembling their medieval namesakes, the Dukes and Peers took their familiar shape—of a sizable and largely non-princely corps—only in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and continued to absorb new blood until the end of the ancien régime. One could hardly imagine a separate rank for Grandchildren of France before Gaston of Orléans became the first younger son of a French king to produce adult legitimate offspring since the early fifteenth century. The Legitimated Princes, finally, provide the most spectacular example of the plasticity of rank.

Such instability in the rank system created both threats and opportunities; no wonder that protagonists clashed perpetually about status. Untitled nobles resented the pretensions of the nouveau-dukes. For its part, the titled nobility could look back to a time, not long ago, when Bourbon princes had not automatically outranked its members. Within it, dukes and princes argued about the ultimate source of prestige: the highest dignity a French subject could attain or dynastic claims outside the realm? In the Royal House, the Orléans established their new branch, while the Condés would not be marginalized without a fight. And the meteoric rise of the royal bastards appeared to disrupt the entire social order. Within ranks too, the question of internal precedence generated numerous intractable problems.

What is more, the principles underlying this idealized order—French-, lay-, and sword-oriented—clashed with competing status regimes. Besides the naturalized Foreign Princes, aristocrats not subject to the crown frequently interacted with their French counterparts, in France and elsewhere. Sovereigns and non-sovereigns travelled, sometimes spending extended periods outside their native court.[72] Ambassadors had become a permanent presence, in particular during ceremonial occasions. Such international encounters generated much dispute and incongruity, in ranks and in codes, with no conventional mechanism for arbitration.[73] The

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[71] There were roughly a dozen marshals at any given time. The post of *connétable* was extinct. That of *amiral* was revived in 1669 in favour of the Legitimated Princes (first Vermandois and then Toulouse). That of *grand maître de l'artillerie* was largely held by dukes, and then by Maine's legitimated line.

[72] Including periods of exile, as in the case of the Stuarts in France, first during the civil war, then after the 1688 revolution. See Edward Corp, *A Court in Exile: The Stuarts in France, 1689–1718* (Cambridge, 2004), esp. ch. 6.

[73] See the first two chapters.

Catholic Church, a supra-national jurisdiction as well as a secular principality, formed a special case. As princes of the Church, cardinals received a rank roughly equal to the Princes of the Blood. But status also depended on context: whereas in lay settings cardinals had to remain standing in the presence of the king, in Church even clerics who had no rank at court officiated in an armchair before kneeling royalty. Given that most ceremonial occasions had some religious component, the hierarchical ambivalence between the two orders was structural.

Within the French lay framework, the sword aristocracy faced competing claims for prestige. The leaders of the *parlement* of Paris, at the apex of the nobility of the robe, famously refused to doff their hats before the Dukes and Peers.[74] Ministers proved another interesting case. Under Louis XIV, nearly all of them came from a robe background, but they enjoyed special personal status as long as they were in power.[75] Multiple regimes, moreover, could ambiguously converge in a single person. How should one treat Emmanuel-Théodose de La Tour d'Auvergne at the end of 1671: as a Foreign Prince, as a cardinal, or as Grand Almoner? Indeed, Foreign Princes repeatedly played on this ambiguity, using the cardinal's hat to demand status symbols which they believed were due to them by birth. The cardinal-ministers similarly gained pre-eminence in council through ecclesiastical rank.[76] Finally, married women frequently lived an ambiguity between their birth rank and their marital rank.

Where rank was contested, ambiguous, unstable, and—most importantly—perceived as such, its external manifestations became a powerful tool for shaping status. What is the source basis for studying such an elusive phenomenon?[77] Most works in this field have drawn mainly on a canon of published texts. For the second half of the reign in particular, there are three continuous accounts by well-placed personages.[78] Philippe de Courcillon, marquis of Dangeau, was an assiduous courtier who enjoyed intimate access to the king and to the royal family, *inter alia* as the senior male officer of both dauphines. From 1684 he made a personal record of court news on a daily basis, almost uninterrupted until his death in 1720. Dangeau's style is brief, factual, and circumspect; written for insiders, it usually lacks background and detail. Louis-François du Bouchet, marquis of Sourches and

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[74] That is, before the non-Bourbon ones. On this *affaire du bonnet*, see Harold A. Ellis, *Boulainvilliers and the French Monarchy: Aristocratic Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, 1988), ch. 5. As an arena, the *parlement* followed different hierarchical rules to those of the court (e.g. dukes who were not peers had no parliamentary standing). On the robe, see Robert Descimon and Élie Haddad (eds), *Épreuves de noblesse: les expériences nobiliaires de la haute robe parisienne (XVIᵉ–XVIIIᵉ siècle)* (Paris, 2010).

[75] See esp. Chapter Six. I use 'minister' as shorthand for the four Secretaries of State and for the Controller-General of Finances rather than as a literal rendering of the partially overlapping but not identical 'ministre'.

[76] Roger Mettam, 'The French Nobility, 1610–1715', in H. M. Scott (ed.), *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 2nd edn (2 vols, Longman, 2007), i, 141–2. This affected the order of opining, and hence carried macro-political significance too: Peter R. Campbell, *Power and Politics in Old Regime France, 1720–1745* (London-New York, 1996), pp. 112–13.

[77] See also later in the book for chapter-specific source evaluations.

[78] The editions used are abbreviated as 'Dangeau', 'Sourches', and 'SSB' (see List of Abbreviations for details).

Grand Provost of France, conducted a similar recording project between 1681 and 1712. Sourches was less interested in status interaction, but his account offers occasional corroboration or supplementary detail.

The third writer has had the most profound influence on the image of the court, especially as regards status, ceremony, and etiquette. Born in 1675, Louis de Rouvroy became duke of Saint-Simon following his father's death in 1693, and a full-time courtier since his resignation from military service in 1702. Saint-Simon was affiliated with the critical circles surrounding the duke of Burgundy and Philippe II of Orléans, and remained well-placed thanks to the appointment of his wife as Lady of Honour to the duchess of Berry in 1710. Following the death of Louis XIV, he became actively involved in high politics during the first years of the regency. In 1729, Saint-Simon gained access to Dangeau's journal, and in the following decade he annotated its text with 'additions' that refuted, expanded, or reflected on many of the marquis's curt entries. From 1739 to 1750 he used the journal and the additions as a scaffold for a more ambitious project: his own memoirs, covering the period from the early 1690s to 1723.[79]

Saint-Simon's testimony is far from impartial, and his writings reflect his strong opinions. He was highly critical of Louis XIV, and obsessed with status and ceremonial from an early age. Above all, he exalted his own rank as Duke and Peer and vilified its rivals, notably the Foreign Princes and the royal bastards. Written in long retrospect, the memoirs have been subjected to critical scrutiny since the second half of the nineteenth century, but have nevertheless continued to inform modern accounts. While Saint-Simon's assertions and analyses are questionable even in his areas of expertise, he crucially complements Dangeau by illuminating and explicating status interaction from an insider's perspective. His writings thus offer a valuable context of discovery; for verification, however, one must turn elsewhere.[80]

The nature and availability of other sources, in print and in manuscript, varies across the ceremonial spectrum. Predictably, high ceremonies have received more consistent coverage. First, there are the many accounts in contemporary publications and journals, such as the *Gazette* and the *Mercure*. These, however, tend to convey a harmonious image of ceremonial proceedings (along the lines of the opening paragraph), and seldom reveal the stakes and disputes of status interaction. The opposite is true of the manuscript registers of the ceremonial staff. The Masters of Ceremonies, as noted earlier, kept a detailed record of the events under

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[79] The standard biography is Georges Poisson, *Monsieur de Saint-Simon*, now in its fifth edition (Paris, 2007). See also Hélène Himelfarb, *Saint-Simon, Versailles, les arts de cour* (Paris, 2006); Le Roy Ladurie with Fitou, *Saint-Simon*. For a recent bibliography of the 'Saint-Simonian forest', see Philippe Hourcade, *Bibliographie critique du duc de Saint-Simon* (Paris, 2010).

[80] The scholarly apparatus of the monumental Boislisle edition points the way in many cases. The problem of retrospect is somewhat mitigated by the fact that Saint-Simon relied on an extensive private archive in compiling his magnum opus. Among pieces written during his active life, the most noteworthy for our purposes is his 'Estat des changements arrivéz a la dignité de duc et pair', prepared in 1711 for the benefit of the duke of Burgundy and published in *Écrits inédits de Saint-Simon*, ed. P. Faugère (8 vols, Paris, 1880–93), iii, 3–221 (re-edited in part in le duc de Saint-Simon, *Hiérarchie et mutations: écrits sur le kaléidoscope social*, ed. Yves Coirault (Paris, 2002), pp. 37–121).

their charge. When Desgranges took over in 1691, he copied the volumes of his predecessor Sainctot, and successively produced his own accounts until 1729. This continuous record of high ceremonies during the reign of Louis XIV has fortunately survived in its original form.[81]

Although it makes dull reading at times, such serial coverage offers a precious insight into the manifold aspects of early modern ceremony, including minutely detailed descriptions of costume, spatial position, and gesture. Since this record was intended to inform future decision-making rather than for public consumption, its authors frequently noted what occurred behind the scenes as well as on stage—notably problems, dilemmas, and contestations. One should nevertheless beware of treating this source as a definitive, transparent, or neutral account. There is first the inherent difficulty of capturing the multifaceted nature of early modern ceremony, especially when composers were participants as well as observers. More intriguingly, the description itself became an object of contestation. Aware of its role in determining precedents, interested parties surreptitiously sought to influence or to modify the record. While such efforts complicate the task of verification, they also illustrate the importance of the stakes involved.

There is no equivalent testimony for the routine activities of the court, where recurrence may have made serial coverage seem redundant. Normative sources, like household ordinances, remain useful, but can never be taken as evidence of actual practice. One must therefore look for the occasional illuminating needle in the haystacks of narrative sources and court paperwork. This problem highlights the considerable advantage of analysing codes that were embodied in the written medium in the first place. In the case of epistolary ceremonial, twenty-first-century readers can still observe with their own eyes the status interaction that took place in correspondence centuries ago.[82] Such opportunity for unmediated observation is impossible even in the best-documented instances of high ceremony, where one can only rely on textual representations of events that did not originally occur on the page.

In contrast with the retrospective and embellished nature of most standard sources, the manuscript working papers of protagonists offer glimpses of real-time actions and insider perceptions. Besides yielding fresh insights into specific themes and codes, the very existence and organization of these papers point to another dimension of the phenomenon. Documentation was not just a by-product of status interaction; it became an essential tool and target. As the system of customary law increasingly relied on the written medium, aristocrats created their own ceremonial

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[81] BM, MSS 2737–2751. The first of these fifteen volumes is a collection of documents from the early years of the reign, emanating from Sainctot's family predecessors. Continuous coverage begins in the second volume, from 1660. I have also drawn on other copies of this record and on other working papers of the ceremonial staff, e.g. in AN, K 1042–1044. There is no equivalent continuous record by the Grand Masters of Ceremonies for this period. In addition, I have occasionally drawn on the registers of the Introductors of Ambassadors, especially those of Louis-Nicolas Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, who served between 1698 and 1715: Baron de Breteuil, *Mémoires*, ed. Evelyne Lever (Paris, 1992); Arsenal, MSS 3859–3865.

[82] See Chapter Six and Giora Sternberg, 'Epistolary Ceremonial: Corresponding Status at the Time of Louis XIV', *Past & Present*, cciv (2009), 33–88.

archives. They secretly copied the official record, wrote down their own accounts, and gathered other status-related evidence. These private knowledge-bases demonstrate the benefits to be gained by looking beyond the monarch's perspective.[83]

In the case of manuscript knowledge-bases as in the case of epistolary ceremonial, written objects provide material and not just textual evidence. Other types of objects, such as dress items, have proved less resilient to the ravages of time. I have nevertheless tried, as far as possible, to consider the implications of their past materiality. For this purpose, visual media (drawings, tapestries) offer a useful complement to texts, illustrating the form of lost objects, spaces, configurations, and postures. The Masters of Ceremonies and others used diagrams to illustrate spatial choreographies of precedence. For the purpose of reconstructing specific events, however, the verisimilitude of visual media can be misleading. They are often inaccurate, at times wholly fictitious.[84] Their coverage of status and ceremony is uneven, particularly sparse on the everyday end of the spectrum. An image is thus not always worth a thousand words.

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This book investigates status interaction from four distinct but complementary angles, on successive points along the ceremonial spectrum: a key high ceremony; a quintessential ceremonial dress-item; a celebrated court routine; and an elaborate written code-system.

It begins with one of the ceremonial highlights of the reign of Louis XIV: the marriage of his niece to Charles II of Spain in 1679. Chapter One demonstrates the complex interplay, on a single occasion, among multiple status codes, regimes, and rivalries: spatial, gestural, linguistic, and sartorial; French and international. High ceremonies articulated status relations in public, in a series of special events and interactions. This included processions and parades, where spatial position indicated precedence according to elaborate three-dimensional choreographies. Any aspect of procedure or appearance, from pen-handing to dress emblems, could have a lasting effect on the rank of participants. This effect, in turn, was mediated via printed and manuscript accounts. For status interaction did not end with the event: what ultimately mattered was how it was reported and remembered. In the information warfare over ceremonial memory, even the mouthpieces of the Bourbon monarchy were not immune to partisan influence.

Chapter Two traces the anatomy of a ceremonial crisis based on a remarkable archival dossier. After the ceremonies, the transformation of the bride from French princess to Spanish queen would show in the protocol of courtesy visits, and in particular in the type of seats that she would offer her visitors: armchairs, chairs, or perhaps only stools? This seemingly minute detail brought about an intense sequence of deliberations behind the scenes, involving the king personally, the rival clans of Orléans and Condé, the Spanish ambassador, and other international parties. Scarcely mentioned in the standard sources of the period, the affair received

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[83] See Sternberg, 'Manipulating Information'.

[84] Of course, images do not necessarily purport to represent reality. When misrepresentation is deliberate, it becomes interesting (see Sternberg, 'Manipulating Information', pp. 260–72), but this is not always the case.

real-time coverage in a neglected dossier of correspondence between the *Grand Condé* and his trusted agent Gourville. Such extraordinary coverage enables us to reconstruct status negotiation and dynastic politics to a degree of precision normally denied by the nature of surviving sources.

Whereas the first two chapters illustrate and integrate the multiple facets of a single occasion, the following ones analyse select status codes and explore their evolution in time. Chapters Three and Four examine the quintessential item of ceremonial dress in pre-modern Europe: mantles. I first consider the signification and significance of the mantles worn for high ceremonies such as obsequies and nuptials. Thus, the length of trains signalled status differences throughout the court hierarchy, from the royal couple to minor officers. Train-bearing involved the interaction among and between wearers, bearers, and others present, turning on the number, rank, and even gender of train-bearers and on choreographic subtleties of location, position, and occasion. An unravelling of the grammar of these distinctions is followed by a diachronic analysis of their dynamics in Bourbon rivalries from 1643 to 1715. Based on a serial examination of the official ceremonial registers, complemented or challenged by other inside data, this analysis reveals the cross-generational vitality, adversarial tactics, and dynastic strategies of status interaction.

Like Chapter Two, Chapter Four shifts focus from high ceremony to social protocol, by examining mantles in the context of courtesy calls. The right to wear this garment during complimentary visits on mourning occasions was a sumptuary privilege, limited in theory to select sword nobles. Yet the exercise of the privilege also signified deference, or even subordination, towards the hosts of such 'mantled visits'. The act of wearing was thus not simply a static or absolute attribute of wearer identity, but rather a dynamic interaction between wearers and others. This relational aspect could turn an otherwise prestigious garment into a liability. Pitting hosts and visitors close to one another on the social ladder, mantled visits generated bitter disputes and subtle manoeuvres. With the rapid succession of Bourbon deaths in the early eighteenth century, they became a familiar sight at court. Their tempestuous evolution in this period reflected and shaped social and political changes: the dynastic upheavals within the ruling house; the development of its relations with the rest of the aristocracy; and the social climbing of those in the margins.

Completing the journey across the ceremonial spectrum, the last two chapters turn to everyday routines of status interaction, at court and beyond. Chapter Five revisits a celebrated act of court ritual that served as a key example in Norbert Elias's classic account: the gesture of handing the king his chemise as he rose each morning. Re-contextualizing this gesture thematically, socially, chronologically, and functionally, I underscore the inherent duality of such 'honourable service' and the degree to which it was shaped by extra-royal agendas even in the heyday of the Sun King. In place well before Louis XIV, these acts occurred in sub-royal as well as in royal settings; in the former, a more complicated perception of service emerges, of a humiliating task as well as a 'prestige fetish'. Givers, moreover, were also receivers: each time an aristocrat was to hand the king his chemise, he would receive it from

other persons, often high-ranking themselves; in many cases, this was the more important interaction. The final section of the chapter uncovers the macro-political stakes of these acts in the struggle of the Legitimated Princes to equate themselves with the legitimate princes of royal blood, from surreptitious beginnings early in the personal rule to the succession crisis that surrounded its end.

Chapter Six investigates epistolary ceremonial. Letters were not only vehicles of narrated information, but also social acts, a statement of addressers about their position relative to the addressee. Documented at regular exchanges as well as in moments of conflict, in prescriptive as well as in descriptive sources, epistolary status interaction enables us to compare norm and practice, equilibrium and crisis. A highly elaborate code, it manifested itself in forms of address, in ending formulae, in subtler aspects of word-choice and grammar, and—probably least self-evident to most modern readers—in non-verbal features, such as letter material, spatial layout, and graphic elements. These were no mere niceties: disputes over epistolary formulae could disrupt military chains of command and even lead to incarceration. Opening a window into everyday encounters in a variety of social and geographical arenas, epistolary ceremonial illuminates the pervasiveness of status interaction in the early modern period.

The Conclusion draws together key themes and points out inter-connections and wider implications. An analysis of the general mechanics of status interaction is followed by a discussion of the dynamics of codification: what were the relations between status symbols and status, between status de facto and status *de jure*, and between customary and positive law? These questions then inform a cross-code, longitudinal analysis of the Legitimated Princes, which provides a strong case for the link among status symbols, rank, and power. I end by highlighting the significance and broader ramifications of the phenomenon in this and in other social, geographical, and temporal contexts and hence the importance of developing a comparative framework of status interaction in the early modern world.