

Review

**Valérie Bessey; Jean-Marie Cauchies; Werner Paravicini
(eds):**

***Les ordonnances de l'hôtel des ducs de Bourgogne.
Volume 3, Marie de Bourgogne, Maximilien d'Autriche et
Philippe le Beau 1477-1506***

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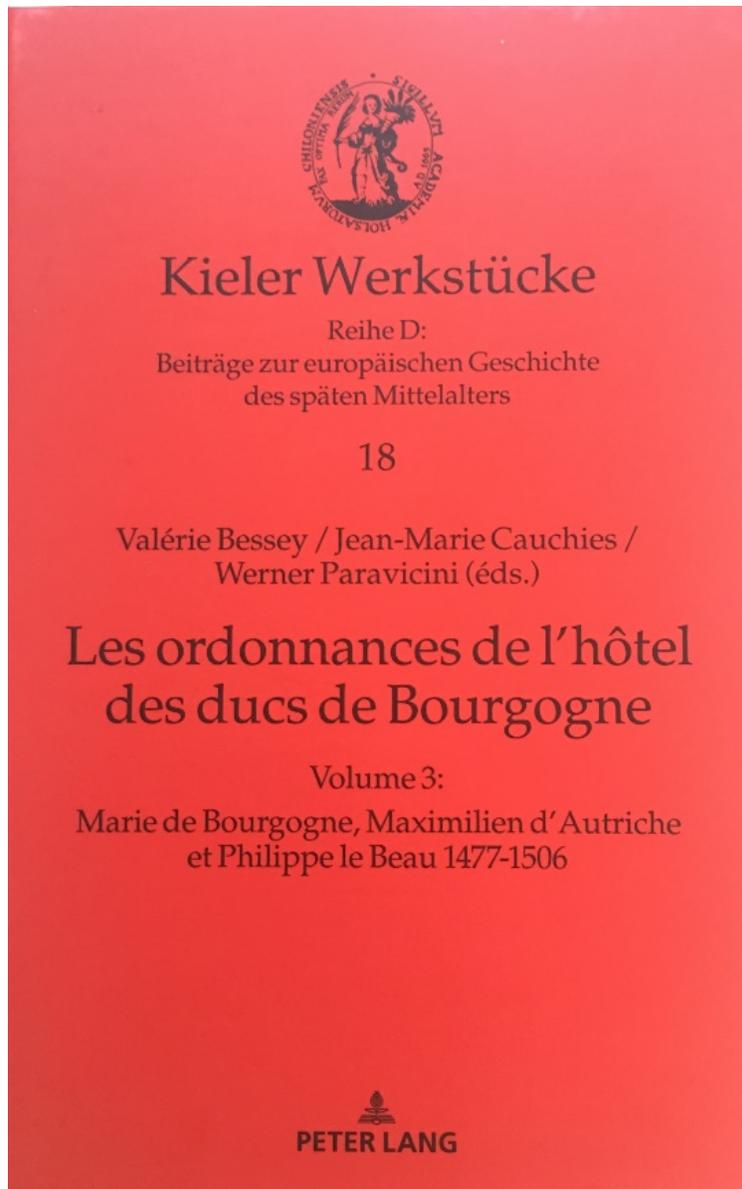
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Reviewed by Rolf Strøm-Olsen

The court from which the Valois and later Habsburg Dukes of Burgundy held sway over their various possessions, today comprising the Netherlands, Belgium and parts of Northern France, has long been understood as the late medieval court *par excellence*. In terms of the complexity, intensity and frequency of its spectacle, the court had an outsized presence across the ducal patrimony. The Dutch cultural historian, Johan Huizinga, in his famous work *Herfsttij der middeleeuwen*, famously saw it as the effulgent and lavish last gasp of a senescent medieval network of culture and values. More recent scholarship has placed the court at the centre of what has been termed the Burgundian theatre state, where ritual, cultural, and political modes of expression were as much novelising and innovative as they were atavistic and nostalgic. Werner Paravicini, series editor of the volume under review, has argued that the Burgundian court served as a model for Europe. Whatever the case, one thing is clear: it required considerable management and oversight. Behind the lavishness of the court lay a complex administrative system that covered the staffing, payment, and oversight of duties of the different parts of the court system. The administrative and bureaucratic demands of managing the Burgundian court were made more complex by the use of a part-time staffing system, called *service par terme*, for many courtier positions, under which

different court functions were staffed on quarter- and half-year terms. Limited in scope at first, by the second half of the 15th century, the *service par terme* was endemic across almost all functions of the Burgundian court. While this expanded considerably the reach of ducal patronage, it also created what today we could consider a Human Resources Management problem, namely the need for a bureaucratic toolset that could underpin the administrative apparatus needed to maintain order and control over the complexities that this system created.



As a result, the Burgundian court kept detailed records, as part of its regular administrative practice, on who was serving in the ducal court, for how long, and at what salary or pension. These were not simply, however, a list of names, but often also included detailed instructions and descriptions pertinent to the different functions within the court. As such, they are an invaluable resource, not only for prosopographical studies, but also for what they tell us about the administrative and institutional regimes of the late medieval court.

The appearance of the current volume is thus a highly welcome one. It represents the continuation of a series originally embarked upon by Professor Paravicini, the longtime (now former) director of the Deutsches Historisches Institut (DHI) in Paris, which, under his tenure, supported a variety of initiatives pertinent to Burgundian scholarship. The first volume of this series was, in fact, published by the DHI in their *Instrumenta* series (no. 15) under the title *Die Hofordnungen der Herzöge von Burgund* in 2005.

The series, still under the general editorship of Professor Paravicini, now has a new home (and new livery) as part of the late-medieval historical studies series collected together in the *Kieler Werkstücke*. This third volume collects together the extant administrative rolls of court (*ordonnances de l'hôtel*) from the period immediately following the death of Charles the Bold in 1477 up to the death of Philip the Fair in 1506, which is to say the period during which the Burgundian patrimony moved into Habsburg hands by virtue of the marriage of the Valois Charles's daughter Mary to the Habsburg Maximilian I. The decision to extend the collection to cover this period of Burgundian history is, historically, an important one, since it helps to rectify the limitations of a traditional periodisation of 15th-century Burgundian statecraft that is bookended by the reigns of the four famous Valois Dukes.

For this exercise, there could be no more competent oversight than that provided by the principal editor of the volume, Jean-Marie Cauchies, whose indefatigable scholarship on Burgundian law, politics, culture and society has, as much as anyone's, helped to establish the point that, despite the political upheavals occasioned by the collapse of the Valois dynasty in 1477, Burgundian practice and policy not only remained intact, but that Charles's grandson, Philip (father of Charles V) was as much a Burgundian Duke as any of his forebears. The publication of this documentary corpus helps further cement the point by demonstrating the degree to which the administrative regime erected by the Valois dukes continued to underpin the ducal court in its many different facets.

Beyond this, Professor Cauchies, along with Valérie Bessey, have provided a deftly edited collection that includes, for each of the fourteen transcribed *ordonnances*, not only voluminous and invaluable clarifications, annotations and corrections, but also, very helpfully, archival and bibliographical details. A

comprehensive index of places and, more importantly, names further boosts the scholarly value of the collection; a general, up-to-date bibliography rounds out the scholarly tools that the editors have provided. In sum, the appearance of this volume is salutary and will certainly prove to be an indispensable research tool for scholars, not only of Burgundy, but the late-medieval court more generally. The editors are to be commended for their efforts in bringing this forward to publication.

As a concluding excursus, one curiosity should be noted. This third volume has been published ahead of the second of the series, which will cover the *ordonnances* issued during the reign of Charles the Bold (1467-1477). Given the high quality of the first two volumes of the series, the appearance of this final volume, described by the editors as the “*pièce maîtresse de toute l’entreprise*,” is thus eagerly anticipated.

About the reviewer

Dr. Rolf Strøm-Olsen is professor of humanities at IE University in Madrid (Spain), a position he has held since 2010. Earning his Ph.D. in History from Northwestern University (Illinois, United States), he is a specialist in late-medieval Burgundian history and has published a variety of articles on 15th-century Burgundian court culture. He is a former Belgian American Educational Foundation fellow and currently a fellow of the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto (Ontario, Canada).