

H-France Review Vol. 16 (September 2016), No. 192

William Ritchey Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi à Versailles au xviii^e siècle. La grande et la petite écurie, les écuries de la reine, le grand chenil et la louveterie*. Paris Honoré Champion 2015. 771 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. €120 (pb). ISBN 9782745329714.

William Ritchey Newton, *Dans l'ombre de la cour. Les baraques autour du château de Versailles. Le nouveau marché. L'hôtel de Limoges*. Paris Honoré Champion 2015. 515 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. €99 (pb). ISBN 9782745329653.

Review by Jeroen Duindam, University of Leiden.

Les chevaux et les chiens du roi à Versailles and *Dans l'ombre de la cour* complete William Ritchey Newton's painstaking reconstruction of the buildings, apartments, services, and officeholders of Versailles between 1682 and 1789. Two previously published books, *L'Espace du roi* and *La petite cour*, outlined the royal household services at Versailles.^[1] The current titles move out of the *maison du roi* and the palace proper to the stables and the hunt, and bring us to the less dignified shops and taverns proliferating in the fringes of the palatial complex.

Newton's work on the king's horses and dogs opens with a brief general introduction explaining his priorities and methods. For every single service discussed, the author follows the same trajectory. He first explains and lists the hierarchy from leading officeholders to lesser staff, then moves to a second section devoted to numbers, costs, and reforms. A shorter third section provides a detailed "virtual tour of the buildings," while an extended fourth section outlines the documentary history of all buildings and apartments.

This procedure is followed for all stable services present at Versailles: the *grande écurie* catering to the king's horses, the *petite écurie* responsible for the king's carriages, and the queen's *écurie*—French queens had their own full households. The book then moves to the services for the hunt, the key outdoor entertainment at most royal courts. The French royal establishment for the hunt, the *grande vénerie*, included several specialised departments training and maintaining horses, hunting dogs, and birds of prey. The deer hunt was the focus of the *vénerie*, boar hunts were organised by the *vautrait*, and birds and small prey were the responsibility of the *fauconnerie*. Wolves were the domain of the *louveterie*. Finally, the *vol du cabinet* was a miniature falconry attached to the chamber staff of the palace. Newton discusses all these services, but provides a tour and a documentary history for the two main buildings only: the *grand chenil* (kennel) and the *hôtel de la louveterie*.

There is no general conclusion, but an appendix with sixteen tables provides useful information mostly on numbers, costs, and reforms. Newton cites numerous archival documents and frequently uses letters and memoirs on the French court, but only incidentally cites secondary literature. An overview of archival materials is included, but there is no bibliography. The book does include an index of persons.

Newton's shorter work on the "shadowy fringes" of the court carefully traces the gradual extension of the "baragues" around the palace. In Louis XIV's reign, very few *baragues* were allowed in the vicinity of the palace, and none of them visibly disturbed its grand architecture. This changed rapidly after his reign, and Newton shows in great detail how an indecorous strip of improvised constructions gradually proliferated along the walls of the approaches to the palace, obstructing its grand perspective. The initiative for this market-like construction of pavilions offering beverages, fast food, and services to passers-by originated in the palace itself. Officeholders at court brokered permissions to open shops for their followers and dependents. Moreover, the services offered were useful for court staff living in apartments without facilities for cooking. A chain of rights, privileges, and expected benefits connected the shopkeepers to the lower ranks of guard and household services, and to leading court dignitaries.

The history of this gradual expansion is presented with verve and precision in the first seventy pages of the book. Newton outlines the topography of the process and shows the ongoing attempts by palace administrators to regulate the shopkeepers. He does this first for the locations closest to the palace, the *pourtour du chateau*, then moves on to the *rue de la Chancellerie*, and finally to the *hôtel de Limoges*. These three locations form the basis for individual documentary histories, which together take up more than half of the book. A brief section on the *nouveau marché* of Versailles provides a comparative outlook. Again, there is no conclusion or bibliography, but Newton does include an index of persons and a list of archival materials. Finally, an appendix recapitulates the information in four very useful overviews, listing, among others, the dates of concessions of *baragues* with their "protectors" at court, and the trades of the occupants.

These two books together underline Newton's reputation as an erudite specialist. His explanations of staffs and officeholders are on the whole pertinent and entertaining. Newton has an unsurpassed knowledge of the archival history of Versailles and its occupants. Much of the information presented here can be seen as definitive. The dense framework of references to archival materials supports the reliability of the work, which will form a necessary starting point for future researchers. Moreover, the section on the shops emerging around the court breaks new ground. The outlines of the stables and hunt are more familiar from earlier studies, yet among the numerous details presented here, there are relatively unknown and interesting cases. Newton includes, for example, a rich and entertaining chapter on the training and daily routines of the pages in the court stables (pp. 147-192) and also presents details about the animals at court not usually found in the literature.

Newton's erudition has a downside. The lengthy documentary histories inserted in the text suggest a work of reference rather than a monograph. Most readers will skip or quickly scan these sections. Newton frequently introduces leading officeholders with long quotes taken from Saint-Simon's memoirs, an entertaining but somewhat risky procedure, as the duke was keen on blackening his adversaries at court. More importantly, the author rarely relates his findings to the secondary literature. He seems to have made a clear choice against involvement in academic debates. Readers will have to find out for themselves the extent to which Newton's account jives with accepted interpretations about Versailles, and where it extends or changes those interpretations. Newton's work can be read as a microhistory of venality and privilege at court, but there are neither references to the work of William Doyle nor general conclusions about the nature of officeholding.^[2] Likewise, while the two books provide detailed examples of the contacts between the court and its urban environment, mostly through lower staff (whether enjoying the privileges of formal office, hired on the basis of commission, or operating the *baragues*), there is little general reflection on these important matters, and Newton does not seek to connect his work to other publications in this field.^[3]

What do these books tell us about the French court between 1682 and 1789? Newton discusses attempts to reduce and reform the court throughout the eighteenth century, particularly in the 1780s, but he does not provide a general conclusion in either of these books. Implicitly, Newton's work seems to confirm Leonhard Horowski's recent authoritative monograph on the court in this period, written in German

but now in the process of translation.[4] Horowski underlines the semi-monopoly of leading families at court over the distribution of honours and the tenacious grip of these families on court offices.

Newton deserves praise for his learned oeuvre on the French court, and for these two recent additions to it. His unmatched knowledge of detail has been acknowledged in France, where the author has received a number of prestigious prizes. These two new books will find an enthusiastic audience among francophone *aficionados* of Versailles. Newton's choice or inclination to steer clear of wider academic debates and to assemble materials rather than to present clear conclusions will, however, limit the resonance of his work among historians worldwide.

NOTES

[1] William Ritchey Newton *L'Espace du roi. La cour de France au Château de Versailles, 1682-1789* (Paris: Fayard, 2000) and *La petite cour. Services et serviteurs à la cour de Versailles au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2006). See my review of Newton's *Derrière La Façade - Vivre Au Château de Versailles Au XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 2008) in *H-France Review* Vol. 9 (September 2009), no. 118, where his earlier works are also briefly discussed. Newton's *Versailles, côté jardins: splendeurs et misères, de Louis XIV à la Révolution* (Paris: Editions Tallendier, 2011) fits in the same series.

[2] William Doyle, *Venality: The Sale of Offices in Eighteenth-century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[3] See e.g., John P. Spielman, *The City & the Crown. Vienna and the Imperial Court 1600–1740* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1993); Herbert Haupt, *Das Hof- und hofbefreite Handwerk im barocken Wien, 1620 bis 1770. Ein Handbuch* (Innsbruck; Vienna: Bozen, 2007); Werner Paravicini and Jörg Wettlaufer, eds., *Der Hof und die Stadt. Konfrontation, Koexistenz und Integration im Verhältnis von Hof und Stadt in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2006); Malcolm Smuts and George Gorse, eds., *The Politics of Space: Courts in Europe c. 1500–1750* (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 2009); Robert Bucholz and Joseph P. Ward, *London: A Social and Cultural History 1550–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Irene Kubiska-Scharl, Michael Pözl, ed., *Die Karrieren des Wiener Hofpersonals 1711-1765. Eine Darstellung anhand der Hofkalender und Hofparteiprotokolle* (Innsbruck, Vienna: Bozen 2013).

[4] Leonhard Horowski, *Die Belagerung des Thrones. Machtstrukturen und Karrieremechanismen am Hof von Frankreich 1661-1789* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2012). See my review at <http://www.sehepunkte.de/2013/02/21971.html>.

Jeroen Duindam
University of Leiden
j.f.j.duindam@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Copyright © 2016 by the Society for French Historical Studies, all rights reserved. The Society for French Historical Studies permits the electronic distribution of individual reviews for nonprofit educational purposes, provided that full and accurate credit is given to the author, the date of publication, and the location of the review on the H-France website. The Society for French Historical Studies reserves the right to withdraw the license for edistribution/republication of individual reviews at any time and for any specific case. Neither bulk redistribution/ republication in electronic form of more than five percent of the contents of H-France Review nor re-publication of any amount in print form will be permitted without permission. For any other proposed uses, contact the Editor-in-Chief of H-France. The views posted on H-France Review are not necessarily the views of the Society for French Historical Studies.

