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**Jeroen Duindam**  
**Vienna and Versailles**

Materials For Further Comparison and Some Conclusions

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The following text provides materials about the courts in Vienna and Paris/Versailles that can be used as a basis for further comparison. The results have earlier been published in 'Vienna and Versailles. The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals', Cambridge 2003, in most cases without the tables and overviews, or the spreadsheets with financial data. Brief statements offer background for the materials presented, and connect them to a more general discussion of nobles at court.

## **I. Introduction**

<1>

If we want to reappraise the historiography of early modern European nobilities we need to include the princely court. In the traditional decline-and-fall model of noble power, the court had a vital role to play. The idea that the Sun King had assembled the *grands* in Versailles to keep them from mischief was already present among contemporaries who had witnessed the turbulent decades halfway through the seventeenth century. The memoirs of the duc de Saint-Simon, circulating in various forms in the eighteenth century, and frequently edited in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, gave this notion a tragic quality. Nobles at Versailles not only had had to accept the rise of bourgeois administrators, they saw their king desecrate the noblest blood of France by forcing it into alliances with offspring of his adultery as well as with ministers' dynasties from the lowest of origins – says Saint-Simon. In contrast to Saint-Simon's apocalyptic vision, courts can with some justification be seen as lasting bulwarks of noble power from the sixteenth into the nineteenth century. Saint-Simon's Versailles-based image, however, seems to have won out in modern historiography, largely due to the work of Norbert Elias. Elias skilfully brought together various strands of nineteenth-century liberal and étatist historiography in a model that held sway until the 1990's.<sup>1</sup> He pictured the court as a

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<sup>1</sup> For an extensive bibliography, I refer to my discussion of Elias, Jeroen Duindam: Myths of Power. Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European

gilded cage, a magnificent environment for magnates that formerly had held power, but were now forced into a *fainéant* existence. Elias went beyond earlier historiography in precision and persuasion, yet noble loss of power remained an absolutely necessary starting point for the *Teufelszirkel* of various mechanisms unfolding in his model. As soon as we take distance from his primary assumption, the necessary sequences of his model lose their inevitability; the model itself loses its persuasive charm.

<2>

In the 1970's and 1980's Elias's model effectively created a new generation of court historians, studying a theme that had earlier been relegated to the domain of antiquaries. Elias's interpretation of the court as a gilded cage, of court offices as sinecures isolated from decision-making, fostered a concentration on the cultural side of the court. Ceremony and propaganda seemed to be the vital themes to study, the first capturing the noble elites in a labyrinth of status rivalry, the second securing the power of dynasty and state in the population as well as among the dynasties of Europe. For such themes, printed sources were readily available: *Zeremonialwissenschaftler*,<sup>2</sup> the emerging periodical press, and a variety of printed tracts would outline the ceremonies at court. Whether or not nobles were seen as victims of rising state power embodied by the king and his ministers, the court itself was frequently depicted as an ongoing performance of Broadway allure and precision. The initially positive influence of anthropology, most notably Clifford Geertz's study on the 'theatre state' in Bali, strengthened the tendency to inflate court life to implausibly histrionic proportions.<sup>3</sup> To make things worse, cultural history of the court, informed by post-modern and cultural studies discourse, was in danger of becoming a laboratory for theories and concepts rather than a field for archival research.

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Court, Amsterdam 1995; for detailed references to the literature, printed sources, and manuscript sources that form the basis of the following brief discussion I refer to Jeroen Duindam: *Vienna and Versailles. The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550-1780*, Cambridge 2003. See the authoritative discussion of the decline-and-fall thesis and more recent approaches to the history of nobility by Ronald G. Asch: *Zwischen defensiver Legitimation und kultureller Hegemonie: Strategien adliger Selbstbehauptung in der frühen Neuzeit*, in: *zeitenblicke* 4 (2005)/2, [2005-06-28], URL: [http://www.dipp.zeitenblicke.de/2005/2/Asch/index\\_html](http://www.dipp.zeitenblicke.de/2005/2/Asch/index_html), URN: urn:nbn:de:0009-9-1219

<sup>2</sup> See the excellent study by Milos Vec: *Zeremonialwissenschaft im Fürstenstaat. Studien zur juristischen und politischen Theorie absolutistischer Herrschaftsrepräsentation*, Frankfurt a. M. 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Clifford Geertz: *Negara. The theatre-state in nineteenth-century Bali*, Princeton 1980.

<3>

It should long since have been possible to go beyond the idealized façade of court life presented in commissioned descriptions of court festivals or printed sets of rules. Likewise, a more appropriate balance between the cultural and political aspects of court life could and should have been restored. The persistent imagery of Versailles, the set piece of Elias's interpretation and a barely challenged icon of French historiography, however, seemed to prevent such efforts. An in-depth reassessment of the French court in the later seventeenth century, based on archival materials, presented itself as a necessary precondition for breaking through the impasse of court history. Only if the concrete similarities and differences between Versailles and other major European courts could be clarified, would a more lasting revision become possible. This assumption stood at the beginning of my attempt to compare the courts of Vienna and Versailles. Vienna emerged as a suitable candidate for this comparison, although the markedly composite nature of the Habsburg ruler's domains, and most particularly the loose but important imperial dimension of his rule, did not match the more integrated structures of French monarchy.

<4>

My first goal was simply to find concrete data on structures, numbers, costs, conditions of service, and activities for these two courts. Initially focusing on the paradigmatic Versailles years in the later seventeenth century, I steadily widened my scope to include both the formative reform phase at both courts in the sixteenth century and the pre-revolutionary phase of reduction and reform. These major phases of reform had generated particularly interesting documents because authors tended to describe their motives for reform at some length – comments more rarely found in the ongoing series of court archives. Studying the long phase from the sixteenth into the eighteenth century revealed remarkable similarities in the essence and wording of ordinances.<sup>4</sup> Establishing the routines of the household recurring from the middle ages into the early modern age, moreover, made it easier to interpret the specific changes taking place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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Below, I will present results of my research project that seem relevant for this journal, mostly either concrete data that can offer a basis for

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<sup>4</sup> For still longer-term continuities, see Malcolm Vale's brilliant *The Princely Court. Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe*, Oxford 2001, and Holger Kruse / Werner Paravicini (ed.): *Höfe und Hofordnungen 1200-1600*, 5. Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Sigmaringen 1999.

comparison with other courts, or aspects related to nobility and the court. The history of these two courts shows two comparable structures developing in different directions. My findings call into question the reputations surrounding the courts of Vienna and Versailles; they underline the relatively vested position and highhanded posture of court nobles in France and the more deferential attitude of nobles in Vienna -- who, on the other hand, were more closely and lastingly involved in the formal apparatus of decision-making.

## II. Numbers of courtiers and servants

<6>

The domestic apparatus at the heart of the court was operated mainly by non-nobles. Only a small upper echelon of domestic office was occupied by nobles. Through a variety of means, the proportioning of nobles and non-nobles at court could undergo major changes. Vienna and Versailles show markedly different developments in this respect. The system of *service par terme* or job rotation, pioneered at the French and Burgundian courts and later adopted at other European courts, allowed doubling, tripling or quadrupling of the number of noble attendants, by organizing service on the basis of semester, trimester, or quarter.

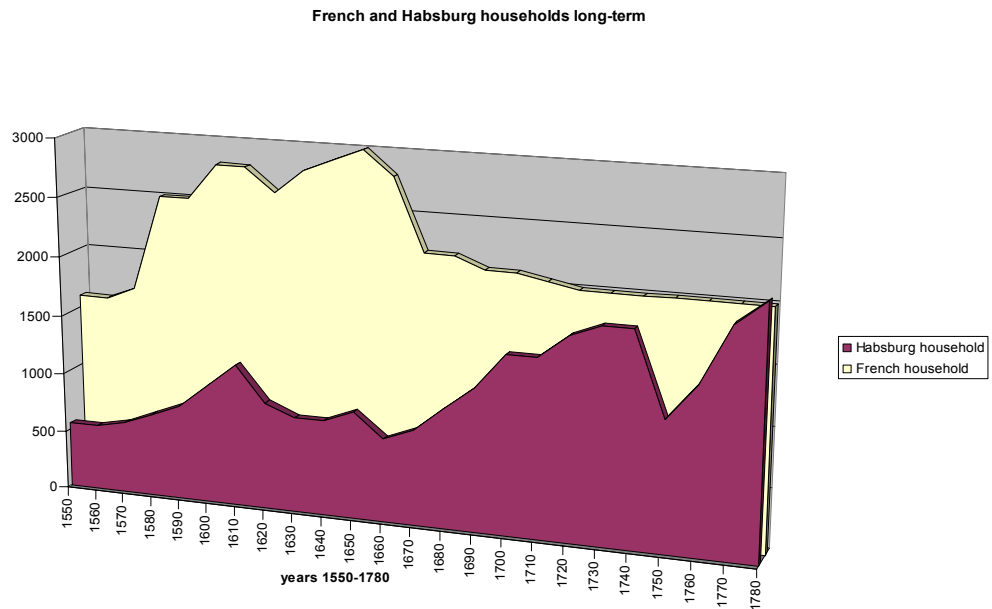
<7>

In addition to or as a variant of *service par terme*, we frequently see proliferation of noble officers. The multiple councillors and chamberlains at German courts, or the *gentilshommes servants*, *maîtres d'hôtel* and *écuyers* at the French court are examples of this tendency.

<8>

Proliferation of courtiers rarely was the ruler's intention: numbers would increase most conspicuously during phases of political turmoil. The 1580's and the 1650's mark the two high-points of the French court's numbers: restored stability brought reduction of numbers rather than expansion. It is important to note that during turbulent phases senior noble courtiers could take the initiative to fill the court with their own clients, as did the Guise in Henry III's reign, or senior courtiers in the later years of Rudolf II's reign. Proliferation of offices was not limited to nobles: it also occurred on the urban-artisan fringes of the court. There, however, it could be limited with less political risk

**Table 1 – Numbers of the courts in Vienna and Versailles [1550-1780]**



*Table 1 shows the approximate numbers of the households of king and emperor in a long-term view. Note that only the main household is included (no queens' and empresses' households, or households of other members of the dynasty). Nor is the substantial military establishment (maison militaire) of the French court included. See my *Vienna and Versailles*, pp. 45-89 for a discussion of sources and interpretations.*

<9>

Court office follows the logic of orders of chivalry: proliferation undermines exclusivity. Rulers would seek to restore the balance, but found it exceedingly difficult to dismiss courtiers or servants. Hence the frequent habit of abolishing offices only through the formula of 'vacation avenant', following the death of the incumbent. Pious wishes to reduce the number of officers in the services for table, stables and chamber recur in most listings of court personnel.

<10>

Contrary to the clichés about the late seventeenth-century French court, Louis XIV followed the logic of exclusivity rather than that of expansion: after a phase of extreme inflation of honours in the 1650's he effectively sought to reduce the numbers of noble courtiers and tied honorary office to strict limits. The more general effort to reduce the

numbers of officers holding tax exemptions also played a role. While Louis prevented senior courtiers from expanding their staffs without his permission, he did consolidate their very substantial rights of patronage. Increasingly non-noble staff (most conspicuously in the stables and in the musical establishment) was purged from the privileged ranks of those holding a *charge* and hired only on the basis of commission. Lesser officers maintaining their full status as *commensaux du roi*, on the other hand, could in the course of the Sun King's reign aspire to noble rank.

<11>

Habsburg rulers tried to reduce numbers, but particularly under Leopold I, expansion proceeded rapidly. The emperor soon accepted the rise in the number of his chamberlains, and only later and with more hesitation did likewise in the case of the councillors. While the exclusivity of these ranks was undermined, they would offer a lasting connection between the dynastic centre and nobles in the core lands of Habsburg monarchy.

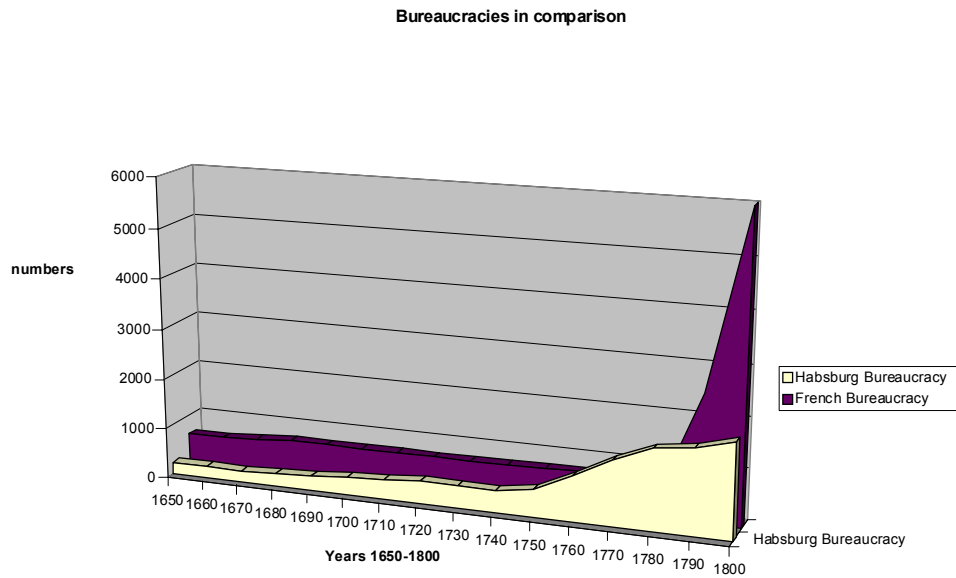
<12>

Did the bureaucracy expand beyond the numbers of the dynastic household? This only occurred towards the end of the eighteenth century. The households in Vienna and Versailles, pictured in the preceding graph, remained substantially larger than the aggregate of central administrative agencies pictured in the following graph. Counting necessitates choices, sometimes arbitrary choices. Which agencies should be included in the 'central bureaucracy'? Where does central government become regional government? How does venality influence this discussion? Where should we draw the line between bureaucracy and household, always in some contact? The very tentative graph following below gives the numbers in the councils and chancelleries in Vienna compared with the the 'six départements' in Paris-Versailles. Note that the table below is based partly on secondary sources.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to the works cited in 'Vienna and Versailles', 62-63; 81-83 see tables in Clive H. Church: *Revolution and red tape: the French ministerial bureaucracy 1770-1850*, Oxford 1981.

**Table 2 – Central bureaucracies in Vienna and Versailles [1650-1800]**



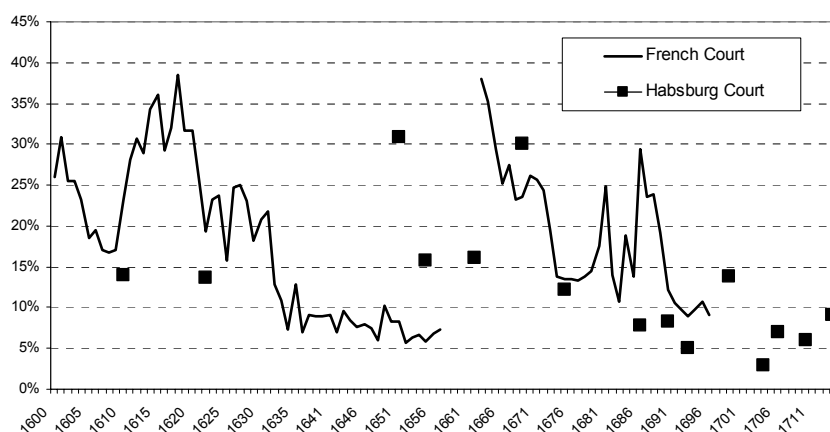
*Table 2 gives the numbers of the 'six départements' of the four secretaries of state, the chancellor and the controller-general in France; the councils and chancelleries for war, finance, court/ Austria and Empire in Vienna -- other and frequently changing councils after the 1740's*

### III. Costs and income

<13>

Court expenditure almost always represented the third category in total expenditure, following warfare and the debt service related to previous wars. Yet it was extremely variable, jumping from less than 5% in periods of warfare to almost 40% in the first years of peace.

**Table 3 – Court expenditure as share of total expenditure [1600-1720]**



*See comments on the categories used in tables 3a / 3b on the note on sources and method for finances at the end of this text.*

**Tables 3a / 3b – Overview of the major components of French court expenditure in Livres Tournois, 17<sup>th</sup> century**

1600-1656	Average costs	In percentages	maximum	minimum
<b>King's household</b>	2.996.780	36%	4.600.057 (1619)	1.677.082 (1604)
<b>Pensions</b>	3.044.255	36%	5.452.586 (1620)	1.443.062 (1625)
<b>Secondary households</b>	1.605.361	19%	3.353.982 (1644)	105.400 (1611)
<b>Building</b>	451.551	5%	1.358.137 (1634)	10.435 (1649)
<b>Military</b>	256.018	3%	375.253 (1619)	201.871 (1604)
<b>Totals</b>	8.353.965	100%	11.959.290 (1620)	4.959.899 (1605)



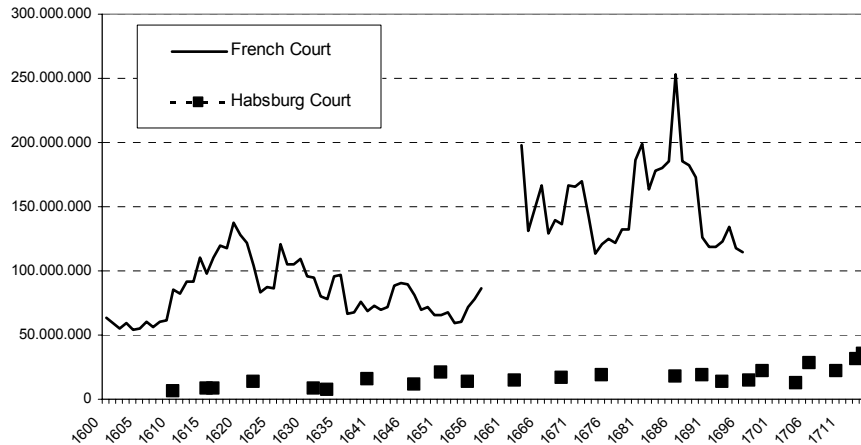
<b>1662-1695</b>	<b>average costs</b>	<b>In percentages</b>	<b>maximum</b>	<b>minimum</b>
<b>King's household</b>	5.103.035	27%	7.370.968 (1662)	3.733.643 (1666)
<b>Pensions</b>	4.796.122	25%	7.416.186 (1694)	2.578.049 (1670)
<b>Secondary households</b>	2.782.308	15%	5.401.069 (1662)	1.662.810 (1669)
<b>Building</b>	4.704.464	25%	15.340.901 (1685)	1.456.438 (1693)
<b>Military</b>	1.533.814	8%	5.352.481 (1662)	418.675 (1677)
<b>Totals</b>	18.808.038	100%	30.364.627 (1685)	13.604.106 (1673)

See spreadsheets with detailed information that formed the basis for tables 3, 3a, 3b, 3c and 4: Court expenditures [Versailles I](#) / [Versailles II](#) or Court expenditures [Vienna](#).

<14>

Note that the costs of court life in Vienna represented a smaller share of a much less impressive budget than the French budget. If we convert the money of account used in the sources to (grams of) silver, the gap between Bourbon and Austrian-Habsburg court expenditure becomes evident.

**Table 4 – Court expenditure in grams of silver [1600-1720]**



<15>

Courtiers' and servants' income usually consisted of low wages (*gages ordinaires*, *Ordinari Besoldung*) and all sorts of supplements: food, shelter, clothes, horses; gifts and perquisites, privileges. Wages frequently went unpaid in years of war, but extras could be expected to make good for this. French courtiers in the upper ranks received lower wages than their Habsburg compeers but their very substantial extras had turned into vested rights. Court income in all probability formed a greater share in the total income (i.e. including other offices, landed income) of French courtiers than of Habsburg courtiers. See the low wages, the sizeable extras, and the indication of the value of the office as used in financial transactions in the table below.

**Table 5 – *Gages ordinaires*, extras, and *brevets* for French court offices in livres tournois [c. 1680]**

Office	wages	Supplementary income	<i>Brevets</i>
grand aumônier	1.200	14.400	--
grand maître	3.600	56.800	--
premier maître d'hôtel	3.000	24.000	250.000-400.000
grand chambellan	3.600	23.600	800.000
premier gentilhomme	3.500	10.500-30.000	365.000-500.000
premier valet de la chambre	700	6.000	40.000-150.000
grand maître de la garde-robe	3.500	19.600	475.000
maître de la garde-robe	3.400	18.000	450.000
grand écuyer	1.200-3.600	30.000	600-800.000
premier écuyer	3.000	12.125	400.000
grand maréchal des logis	3.000	22.300	300.000-340.000
grand prévôt	10.750	19.750	300.000-390.000
grand veneur	1.200	17.487	230.000-500.000
grand fauconnier	1.200	19.200	150.000-250.000
grand louvetier	1.200	9.700	160.000-200.000
capitaine des gardes du corps	–	14.000	400.000-500.000
capitaine de la Porte	3.000	14.500	200.000-300.000
capitaine des cent suisses	3.600	20.400	600.000

<16>

Wages were higher in Vienna, but extras were lower, and certainly less constant. The emperor could not be expected to liberally recompense all courtiers for their services. Sizeable payments are registered in the

*Hofzählamtsbücher*, but we cannot readily verify whether these payments were gifts or repayments; courtiers frequently loaned the emperor money. Wages were not listed in the printed *Hofstaatsverzeichnisse* or *Schematismen* – data in the manuscript *Hofzählamtsbücher* differ widely, because they give actual payments instead of standard sums. The table below includes lesser offices, the presidents of councils and councillors. A more detailed and differentiated overview, with references to sources, is available [here](#). Note that Viennese courtiers would often double as councillors, in that case, they received double pay. *Kämmerer* and other honorary officers would only receive pay if they actually served at court.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 6 – *Besoldung* for Habsburg court offices in Gulden Rheinisch [c. 1680]**

Obersthofmeister	6200 plus 12000 for his 'Freytaffel'
Obersthofmarschall	1362
Oberstkämmerer	1200
Oberststallmeister	2000
Jägermeister	?
Falkenmeister	1600
Hartschierenhauptmann	2000
Trabantenhauptmann	600
Stabelmeister	600
Küchenmeister	600
Silberkämmerer	480
Fürschneider	400
Hofprediger	200
Elemosinarius	200
Oberhofkaplan	200
Kapellmeister	1280
Hofcontralor	600
Kämmerer	480

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<sup>6</sup> See Andreas Pečar: Die Ökonomie der Ehre. Höfischer Adel am Kaiserhof Karls VI., Darmstadt 2003, 103-25, with slightly different wages for Charles' reign and information about the share of wages in total income of nobles.

Kammerdiener	200
Obersthofmeister Kaiserin	7000
Obersthofmeisterin Kaiserin	884
Kammer- und Hoffräulein	432
Geheime Räte	2000
Geheime Sekretäre	1000
Reichshofratspräsident	2600
Hofkammerpräsident	2600
Hofkammerräte	1300
Hofbuchhalter	800
Hofkriegsratspräsident	2600
Hofkanzler	2000

#### **IV. Changing conditions of high court office**

<17>

The semi-feudal, personal tie between the sovereign and his senior servants underwent major changes from the later middle ages into the early modern age. The status and nature of court office changed concomitantly. Again, in France these changes were more marked than in Vienna.

<18>

Entry into the highest court offices demanded pledging an oath of loyalty to the ruler. The oath 'entre les mains de sa majesté' represented the supreme hierarchical position of the great courtiers. They in turn accepted the oath of the officers and servants in their staffs. The oath indicated the personal ties between ruler and courtier.

<19>

The personal nature of the connection between ruler of courtier caused the court staffs to be disbanded upon the death of the incumbent ruler – to be readmitted into his successor's service and taking a new personal oath, or to be pensioned off.

<20>

In France, venality of (court) office gradually made it impossible to send away courtiers upon the death of the ruler: they would lose their huge

investment and would demand compensation. Through the system of *survivance*, sons would seek their father's office during his lifetime, securing their tenure. In the long run, venality and the *survivance* made court office *de facto* hereditary. From the later seventeenth century to the revolution, the highest offices at court were held by a small and exclusive group of families, each successfully using its monopolized court office to further its dynastic interests.<sup>7</sup>

<21>

In Vienna, courtiers and servants – and also honorary court officers such as chamberlains and councillors – needed the confirmation of the new emperor, who could choose to replace courtiers as well as servants, and did so mostly in the upper layers of the *Hofstaat*, introducing his own confidants. Emperors thus retained the possibility to redistribute offices and ranks, whereas the French king could choose to do so only within small margins. Though the circle of families frequently holding high court office in Vienna was relatively small, court office never became a vested right of any family, and it was usually the reward for dedicated service at court as well as in government.

## V. Hierarchy and order at court

<22>

The hierarchical distance between the emperor and his noble courtiers was greater than that between the French king and his courtiers. Tensions between the ruler and his highest courtiers were more significant in Versailles than in Vienna. The intermediate layer of governing and near-sovereign *Reichsfürsten* stood between emperor and high court nobles, and strengthened their interdependence because the social ascent of high courtiers to imperial counts and princes assisted the emperor's ambitions, promising him increased leverage in the Empire.

<23>

In Vienna, the hierarchy among the senior court officers was never entirely stable. The supremacy of the *Obersthofmeister* was not contested, but the *Obersthofmarschall* had to accept the steady strengthening of the

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<sup>7</sup> See Leonhard Horowski: "Such a great advantage for my son" Officeholding and careermechanisms at the court of France, 1661-1789' *The Court Historian Newsletter* 8, 2 (2003) 125-177 and the earlier presentation of his project 'Pouvez-vous trop donner pour une chose si essentielle? Eine prosopographische Studie der Obersten Chargen am Hof von Versailles', in: *Mitteilungen der Residenzenkommission* 11 (2001)/1, 32-53. Horowski's important dissertation will be published in the series of the DHI-Paris, *Pariser Historische Studien* (PHS).

*Oberstkämmerer* as well as the *Oberstallmeister*. In France, the staffs functioned more autonomously; the supremacy of the *grand maître* was recognized in theory, but in practice the *grand écuyer* and the *grand chambellan* would see themselves as subject only to the king. Among themselves, and between them and overconfident rivals in their staffs, conflicts were endemic, frequently vehement. In the chamber and in the services for hunting, proliferation of high office was particularly marked, and conflict a recurring routine.

**Table 7 – Staffs with highest court offices and approximate ranking**

	Versailles	Rank	Vienna	Rank
Table	Grand Maître de l'Hotel	1	Obersthofmeister	1
Chamber	Grand Chambellan	2	Oberstkämmerer	3/2
Stable	Grand Ecuyer	2	Oberstallmeister	4
Chapel	Grand Aumonier	2	Hofkaplan	--
Justice	Grand Prevot	3	Obersthofmarschall	2/3
Quartering	Grand Maréchal des logis	3	(also Obersthofmarschall)	
Hunt	Grand Veneur, Fauconnier (and others)	2	Oberstjägermeister, Falkenmeister	5
Guards	Multiple captains, colonels	3	Hartschierenhauptmann, Trabantenhauptmann	5

<24>

In Vienna most conflicts about *préséance* involved either *Reichsfürsten*, visiting sovereigns, or diplomats. At court, the Habsburg-created *neue Fürsten* at times were unwilling to fit themselves into the courtly hierarchy based on seniority in the first rank of *Gebeime Räte* and the second rank of *Kämmerer*. Yet they were never as unmanageable as the French princes and dukes, who were ready to demonstrate and improve their standing at court even at the expense of tumult and the king's anger. At the French court, moreover, conflict was widespread in all ranks and staffs, a tendency possibly exacerbated by the venality and semi-hereditary nature of all court office.

<25>

Court ordinances sought tirelessly to prevent and regulate conflict and court: there is little reason to expect that rulers habitually used dissent

and conflict among their servants to strengthen their own position. On the contrary we may expect that they preferred to live in a more serene and orderly environment.

## VI. Ceremony at court

<26>

Ceremony never dominated all settings and moments of court life. Changing levels of access structured court life, creating a secluded sphere for rulers and their intimates, where ceremonial forms had little relevance. Most public moments were expected to follow ceremonial routines, partly dictated by the liturgical calendar. Only for great dynastic ceremonies, such as coronations and marriages, would the court truly conform to its reputation for unending pageantry and splendour, enacted in a predetermined choreography.

<27>

Access was restricted in Vienna, where the emperors' rooms were not as a rule open to visitors. Easier access remained typical for the French court, though in his ordinances Henry III had introduced more distance. In fact, Henry's repeated attempts to secure a more secluded sphere for himself and his intimates lay at the root of the *entrées* for *lever* and *coucher*, made famous by Saint-Simon.

<28>

At the Habsburg court, no separate staff developed to oversee ceremony; an *Oberceremonienmeister* emerged only in the nineteenth century. From the 1650's onwards, however, a secretary in the *Oberstbofmeister's* staff kept orderly and ongoing notes in the *Zeremonialprotokoll*. The notes and diaries of masters of ceremonies, introducers of ambassadors at the French have often been read as proof of the highly ceremonialised setting of court life. The authors themselves, however, explicitly and implicitly convey the message that ceremony rarely proceeded entirely along the lines they set out. They themselves, in fact, were often hesitant about the complications of rank and forms. At both courts, ordinances and ceremonial regulations as a rule invoked a golden age of order in the distant past, and bewailed disorders that had since crept in; yet incidentally we find wise statements stressing the inevitable erosion of rules in daily practice.

<29>

It is implausible to present domestic ceremony as a royal tool to manipulate high nobles, because the high nobles the king was thought to manipulate were themselves responsible for order in their domains, chamber and table. They would never think of accepting meddling by



Masters of ceremonies who took care of ceremonial during great and solemn occasions, or by the introductors who oversaw diplomatic ceremonial. Nor should the king himself be pictured as creating or using conflict between his servants. If conflict occurred – for instance between the chamberlain and the master of the wardrobe – we can expect the ruler to have resented the punctilious pride of his servants. Where we know Louis XIV's reaction to such matters, he always sought to follow tradition and rank. In fact, only the famous offering of the *bougeoir* was not dictated by hierarchy, but explicitly left to the king's discretion.

<30>

Burdened by the frequent presence of a public at court, French kings adhered to an unadventurous and defensive attitude in matters ceremonial. If they needed to subdue or chastise nobles, they had more effective means at their disposal than manipulation of the finely tuned mechanisms of ceremony. In Vienna, the more secluded dynastic environment made the emperor's situation somewhat easier: he could concentrate on the recurring, but relatively isolated, moments of public bustle and curiosity, when the court opened its doors, or progressed through the city of Vienna and its surroundings.

<31>

The French court offered its elites a series of sociable occasions, not necessarily ceremonialised, but still public. This intermediate stage, between relaxation or work among intimates and advisers, and the public appearances of the court, would also become more important in Vienna, particularly after the 1740's. Permanent diplomacy, *Verschriftlichung*, and the strengthening of intermediate levels of publicity at court (Khevenhüller used the expression: 'in mezzo publico'<sup>8</sup>) may have made the court more ceremonial in the eighteenth century, at the very time the legitimation of dynastic rule became less markedly religious. At no time in history, however, can ceremony have reached in practice the perfection and rigidity stipulated in prescriptive sources.

## VII. Household and government

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<sup>8</sup> Johann Josef Khevenhüller-Metsch: Theater, Feste und Feiern zur Zeit Maria Theresas 1742-1776, Vienna 1987; Elisabeth Grossegger (ed.): Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Sitzungsberichte, vol. 476, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Publikumsforschung 12, on p. 226, Khevenhüller notes that in January 1765, the court went to theatre 'in mezzo publico'.

Specialized councils and chancelleries had long since taken over administrative responsibility for warfare, finance, and justice from court officers ('going out of court'). Yet at court, collegial decision-making around the king remained the rule, and it most often included courtiers. Whereas in Vienna, the senior courtiers frequently doubled as presidents of councils, and almost as a rule served as *Geheimer Rat*, the connections in France were less close. Few French nobles seem to have been interested to change the focus of their education and identity to make room for financial and legal skills. They were happy to serve as the king's adviser or minister of state, to hold court office, serve in provincial government or as army commanders, but they rarely accepted a *cursus honorum* including less elevated administrative offices. This obviously did not make them powerless, but it limited their sphere of action. In the Habsburg lands, nobles retained and strengthened their direct responsibility for government as well as court office – thus, when the two spheres slowly moved apart, from the 1750's onwards, this did not markedly change the position of the families concerned. Habsburg nobles, however, did not share the strong connection of French nobles with military command – Saint-Simon's years at Versailles were certainly made less rewarding by the fact that he had left the army at a very early stage of his career.

<33>

Louis XIV's reform of the council, taking away the right of princes of the blood to sit in the council, would not be maintained in the long run. Nobles were never entirely removed from the council in Louis's reign; after 1715 even princes and cardinals would regain their seats. While in Vienna, the *Obersthofmeister* habitually chaired the council into the eighteenth century, no family could claim a right of membership: as in France after Louis's reforms, the invitation remained in the hands of the emperor. The hierarchical proximity of princely and ducal dynasties to the king at the French court, as well the presence of potentially overbearing relatives, must have guarded the king against leaning too heavily on this circle. The emperor, whose family members because of demographic and political incidents only incidentally represented a threat to his power, could feel comfortably aloof from his courtiers; they were dependent on him to gain access to the higher level of imperial nobility.

<34>

Senior French courtiers, holding a monopoly over high court office, reaping all sorts of lucrative extras, and maintaining a strong hold over high office in other spheres of government, could certainly not all secure a steady influence on decision-making in the king's council. Many among them, however, must have been happy to leave most decisions to specialist advisers among a select group of noble advisers and *secrétaires*

*d'état* – provided that they would retain their hold on the *Mikropolitik* (Reinhard) of distribution of favours.

### **VIII. Nobles at court: domestication, integration, consolidation**

<35>

Was it possible for major noble dynasties either in France or in the Habsburg lands to stay aloof from the court, while maintaining or strengthening their wealth and prestige? If families aspired to the greatest honours and wanted to demonstrate their power in a wider circle, it made sense for them to go to court. If they were happy to pursue regional interests and landholding, they would not need to go to court.

<36>

For nobles from the Habsburg lands, the Viennese court offered a connection with Imperial and European nobilities. Wealth and loyal service were preconditions for entering higher court office; there can be no question of 'domestication' in the narrow sense used by Elias. Yet if they wanted to reach their highest ambitions, service, whether at court or in councils, was necessary. Families would carefully maintain their connections with the court, even if individual family members could choose to stay away – as did for instance several of the Liechtenstein.

<37>

At the French court, the financial rewards for entering court service were higher, the position of leading courtiers in their staffs more autonomous. They held rights of nomination over offices in their staffs and were responsible for (substantial) budgets. Nor could they be removed from their positions short of very serious misdemeanours.

<38>

Did the Sun King succeed in luring his potential rivals into gilded captivity, or did the high nobles effectively conquer the heart of the dynastic state? These are misguided questions. The careers of the major courtiers from the 1660's to the revolution indicate that they can best be seen as a power elite, using to their advantage the core position at court consolidated during the reign of Louis XIV.<sup>9</sup>

<39>

Domestication is a misleading metaphor because it puts the initiative and weight on one side; integration of nobles around the court, a multifaceted process where motives, initiatives, and results are far more

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<sup>9</sup> See the works of Horowski, cited in note 7.

open, certainly occurred, but it led to consolidation of noble power in the dynastic state rather than to its erosion or decline.

## IX. Reputations

<40>

We should stop thinking about Louis XIV and his nobles in terms of taming, manipulating, subduing. The king certainly set limits to noble power, seeking to restore a *juste mesure* of power in service to the crown. In reconstructing a smaller, but more exclusive and privileged noble court in Versailles, Louis secured the highest nobles an impregnable bastion in the heart of the state. The nobles in turn accepted their part of the deal, and would not openly challenge the king's powers. At court, they jealously guarded their rights against all rivals -- only in the 1780's would new reforms again change the balance.

<41>

In Vienna, high court office never became hereditary, no family could claim the right to any high court office, neither was office ever venal – although we find transactions in the *Hofzählamtsbücher* that indicate movement in this direction. A new emperor could dismiss or confirm officers and servants according to his own wishes, establishing not only a new court, but also a new hierarchy for court occasions, as the personal date of nomination or confirmation in the two ranks at court, councillor and chamberlain, determined *préséance*. The potential for conflict between emperor and nobles remained limited, but the emperor had more leeway than the king.

<42>

The dimension of the Holy Roman Empire complicates the comparison, but also helps to illuminate certain aspects. The great French court families stood in rank between the princes of the empire and the Viennese court nobles. The emperors could only incidentally attract electors or major princes of the empire to their court in Vienna, which in some respects can be seen as the *curia minor* of the imperial court as it served during the great ceremonial occasions of the empire. In France, *curia minor* and *curia maior* overlapped; the highest *grands officiers* had their noble *premier* and everyday *ordinaire* substitutes. Situating the greatest French court families on this level makes it easier to understand the exceedingly generous distribution of privileges and pensions by French kings, as well as the more conflict-ridden atmosphere at court in Versailles.

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## Court finances: a note on sources and methods

### Sources for the Bourbon court

<43>

For the seventeenth century, an invaluable basis can be found in Margaret and Richard Bonney (ed.): Jean-Roland Malet premier historien des finances de la monarchie française, Paris 1993, tables 6, 13, 20, 43, 66 and figures 6, 7, 37, 44, 51, 74, 97, as well as the analysis on 31-37, 55-57: the spreadsheets published in *Zeitenblicke* present a selection of materials taken from the more comprehensive Malet data, available on the ESFDB. Compare the different reworking of Malet's material in William Beik: *Louis XIV and Absolutism. A brief study with documents*, Boston/New York 2000, 96-107, particularly tables 4 and 5 on 104-106. Partly overlapping figures in A. M. de Boislisle: *Correspondence des contrôleurs généraux des finances avec les intendants des provinces*, Paris 1897, III, 624, 662-672: a comparison of expenses in 1683 and 1715, and a more detailed breakdown, including pensions, for 1708-1709; Pierre Clément, *Lettres [...] de Colbert*, 1863, II, 771-784: *recettes* and *depenses* for 1680, expenditure for the *maison du roi* and connected costs on 781-782.

<44>

For the eighteenth century there is no source as rich as Malet; data can be found in F. Véron de Forbonnais: *Recherches et considérations sur les finances de France depuis l'année 1595 jusqu'à l'année 1721*, Basle 1758, I-II (available at the ESFDB); for the second half of the eighteenth century see Archives Nationales, Paris, K 885, 4: 'Rapport de la situation des finances, janvier 1768, par M. de Laverdy, contrôleur-général des finances', 102, 106-108; Mathon de la Cour: *Collection de Comptes rendus, pièces authentiques, états et tableaux, concernant les finances de France depuis 1758 jusqu'en 1787*, Lausanne 1788, 3-10, 50-53, 88-89, 111, 141-165, 203-223; Jacques Necker: *Compte rendu* (1781), 118, and his 'De l'administration des finances de la France' (1784), II, 390-398, 442-464, 517-518; Étienne-Charles Loménie de Brienne: *Compte rendu au roi Au moi de Mars 1788, et publié par ses orders*, Paris 1788, 94. Overviews and tables in Michel Morineau: 'Budgets de l'État et gestion des finances royales au XVIIIe siècle', in: *Revue Historique* 104 (1980), 288-336, 315, 293; James C. Riley: *The Seven Years War and the Old Regime in France. The Economic and Financial Toll*, Princeton 1986, 55-59 for 1752.

### Sources for the Austrian Habsburgs

<45>

The *Hofzählamtsbücher* (HZAB) in the Vienna *Hofkammerarchiv* offer extensive materials on all civil revenue and expenditure. HZAB have been consulted for most years from 1570 into the eighteenth century; for the spreadsheets, I have used the years 1610, 1615, 1616, 1622, 1631, 1633, 1640, 1647, 1651, 1653, 1655, 1662, 1669, 1675, 1686, 1690, 1693, 1697, 1699, 1710, 1704, 1706, 1710, 1713, 1714. Information on military expenditure was found for 1610, 1622, 1651, 1655, 1662, 1669, 1675, 1686, 1690, 1693, 1699, 1704, 1706, 1710, 1714: this information, however, is less reliable than the civil expenditure in the *Hofzählamtsbücher*. For 1610 and 1623, I rely on the data kindly provided by Géza Pálffy; see also Géza Pálffy: *Gemeinsam gegen die Osmanen. Ausbau und Funktion der Grenzfestungen in Ungarn im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Budapest/Vienna 2001, Kat.-Nr. II-9a, 13-14. Note that I use military expenditure for 1623 whereas I list court expenditure in 1622. For other years I have used Jean Bérenger: *Finances et Absolutisme Autrichien dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle*, Paris 1975, 293-294, and his 'À propos d'un ouvrage récent: les finances de l'autriche à l'époque baroque (1650-1740)', in: *Histoire, Économie et Société* III (1984)/2, 221-245, at 228. In deducting the payments to the *Kriegszählamt* and the *Proviandamt* from the total expenditure as listed in the HZAB, we may still leave a varying margin of military expenses in the civil budget, included in the extraordinaria and the payment of debts – studying the breakdown of the totals given for these in the HZAB was infeasible for my book. As the years of court and military expenditure do not always match, and the latter is rarely established beyond doubt, the percentages given here may serve as a rough indication only. Supplementary data can be found in the following manuscripts: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, codices 8025, 14027, 14233, ser. N. 1849, and Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, Harrach Handschriften 145, and in Adam Wolf: *Die Hofkammer unter Leopold I (= Oktoberhefte des Jahrganges 1853 der Sitzungsberichte der Philos.-histor. Classe der kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften, XI. Band)*, 440 ff, but separately published 1-47.

<46>

For the eighteenth century see Franz von Mensi: *Die Finanzen Österreichs von 1701 bis 1740 nach archivalischen Quellen dargestellt*, Wien 1890, tables on 746-747; and the extensive materials in P. G. M. Dickson: *Finance and Government under Maria Theresia 1740-1780*, Oxford 1987, I-II, particularly II, 385-387, table 3.10; supplementary materials in: Brigitte Holl: *Hofkammerpräsident Gundaker Thomas Graf Starhemberg und die österreichische Finanzpolitik der Barockzeit (1703-1715) (= Archiv für österreichische Geschichte 132)*, Wien 1976.

### Comparison

<47>

Silver contents of the Livres Tournois (lt) can be found in Nathalis de Wailly: *Mémoire sur les variations de la livre Tournois depuis le règne de Saint-Louis jusqu' à l'établissement de la monnaie décimale*, Paris 1857, Extrait des Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles Lettres, XXI, 2ème partie (available on the ESFDB website); compare George Frêche / Geneviève Frêche: *Les prix des grains des vins et des légumes à Toulouse (1486-1868)*. Extraits des Mercuriales suivis d'une bibliographie d'histoire des prix, Paris 1967, 127, 131 for the silver contents of Livres Tournois, mostly, but not entirely conforming to the range given in the ESFDB. For the Gulden Rheinisch (fl) silver contents are given in Alfred Pribram / Rudolf Geyer/ Franz Koran (ed.): *Materialien zur Geschichte der Preise und Löhne in Österreich*, Vienna 1938, I, 28-29. These data allow a rough comparison of the data in the Bourbon and Habsburg spreadsheets, based on the changing relationship of lt and fl, hovering between 1 fl = 1.7 lt and 1 fl = 2.3 lt between 1550 and 1715, with the Gulden relatively stronger in the eighteenth century, from 1727 to 1747 1 fl = 2.83 lt, from 1750 to 1790 1 fl = 2.63 lt.

### Categories of expenditure

The full spreadsheets show subtotals as well as all items included in these subtotals; in the general comparative tables I have used three categories for both courts:

**- costs for the main household** (i.e. the king's or emperor's household)

<48>

These categories usually represent totals computed by me from lists that frequently did not use these subtotals. Delineating the main household does not present problems: we have the usual staffs for table, chamber, stable, chapel, guards, musicians, hunt, and so on – sometimes grouped differently, or listed under different names. The Habsburg materials in the earlier seventeenth century for several years add the wages of administrative staffs to courtiers' wages, under the 'Besoldungen' – these years have not been included here. Usually, wages ('gages ordinaires', 'Besoldungen') are given per staff, and thus included here; other payments or special rights are listed under pensions.

**- costs for secondary households within the dynasty** (i.e. the queen's, queen-mother's, empress, dowager-empress: in France secondary households were both more numerous and more extensive)

<49>

Secondary households were extremely variable, as they were determined most of all by dynastic demography. In this category, only the immediate expenses and wages of these households are listed: structural forms of extra financial support can be found under pensions. Thus de 'Deputat' of the dowager-empress, an important sum, is not included in this category; the same holds true for the high pensions granted to French princes of the blood.

**- costs for pensions, gifts, and a variety of other special financial compensations** (paid largely, but certainly not exclusively, to persons attached to the court)

<50>

Without a doubt, pensions form the most problematic category. It includes the ruler's 'cassette' or 'Geheime Cammer' – his privy purse used for a variety of expenses as well as for rewarding loyal servants. Important payments to members of the dynasty, major nobles, ministers, and favourites form the major component of the pensions ('pensions,' 'Gnadengaben'); yet minor contributions to the income of lesser courtiers and servants ('Provisionen', 'Adiuta', 'Recompens), or in France the minor sums paid to Protestants who converted to Catholicism, are also included. The 'gages du conseil' in France were granted to courtiers, but also to ministers – they cannot be seen exclusively as court expenditure, and the same holds true for the pensions paid to the troops. In the *Hofzählamtsbücher*, gifts to major courtiers frequently seem to represent a financial transaction, e.g. the repayment of earlier loans, rather than a simple reward. While it seems justified to present the pensions as court-related expenditure, the category hides a remarkable variety of payments, that can be appreciated only by consulting the primary sources.

For France, the material suggests two other categories:

**- costs for building and maintenance of buildings**

**- costs for the military establishment** connected to the court (the 'maison militaire')

<51>

At the Habsburg court, outlay on building was less extensive, and not invariably included in the *Hofzählamtsbücher*; only in the later eighteenth century did the Habsburg court include more numerous elite units. For France these categories do not need further discussion, as they are taken from Malet directly, and are usually listed in other primary sources. See



the detailed breakdown of expenditure on building at the French court on the ESFDB.

### **Further explanation and discussion**

<52>

Financial matters form a minor part only of my 'Vienna and Versailles. The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals 1550-1780', Cambridge 2003, yet the data presented here, and the relevant sources, are discussed at some length. Complications, such as the interaction of extraordinary and ordinary financing, or the problems connected with separating court expenditure from other forms of expenditure, are by no means wholly solved there, but an attempt is made to put them into perspective for both realms. Tables of eighteenth-century court expenditure and further breakdown of courtiers' wages and special rights are also included. Court expenditure consistently was the major category of civil expenditure, but usually trailed far behind military expenditure and debt service. The alternation of years of war and peace was the single most important factor in determining court outlay, with high points usually following in the first years of peace (when outstanding wages were paid, and the court was reconstituted on a more dignified level), depths in protracted wars. High points rarely went beyond 35% of total expenditure, depths rarely below 5%. The rapid rise of military expenditure in wars partly explains the low percentages for court expenditure, but it usually declined in absolute figures as well. Overall averages are misleading, because they hide these extreme fluctuations: we may accept 14-18% as a rough approximation of average court expenditure in seventeenth-century France and the Habsburg lands. The Habsburg budget, however, represented a small share only of the French budget. In the Habsburg monarchy, percentages were falling in the eighteenth century, but this was caused first and foremost by the rise in overall revenue and expenditure – court outlay rose, but didn't keep pace with the expanding budget.

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