

# The Key to Power?

## The Culture of Access in Early Modern Courts, 1400–1700

Antwerp, 8–9 November 2012

### FINAL REPORT

#### 1. SUMMARY

##### Basic data

##### CONVENORS:

Dries RAEYMAEKERS (University of Antwerp);  
Sebastiaan DERKS (Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands)

##### SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE:

Monique CHATENET (Centre André Chastel, INHA, Paris); Krista DE JONGE (University of Leuven), PALATIUM Chair; Luc DUERLOO (University of Antwerp); Bernardo J. GARCÍA (Fundación Carlos de Amberes), PALATIUM co-Chair; Pieter MARTENS (University of Leuven), PALATIUM Coordinator; Fabian PERSSON (Linnaeus University, Kalmar)

##### SUPPORTED BY:

ESF-RNP PALATIUM; Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO); University of Antwerp; Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands; The Society for Court Studies

##### VENUE:

Hof van Liere (University of Antwerp)  
Prinsstraat 13  
B-2000 Antwerp  
Belgium

##### DATES:

Thursday 8 and Friday 9 November 2012

##### CALL FOR PAPERS,

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS: <http://www.courtresidences.eu>

##### Basic intention

Over the past three decades, access to the monarch has emerged as an increasingly important theme in scholarship on early modern courts. In a society still highly dependent on the authority of a single ruler, and therefore subject to such volatile variables as princely favour and patronage, the ability to live, work or spend time in physical proximity to the monarch could become a vital asset in the struggle for individual and familial advancement and, in many cases, political power. In this perspective, different forms of access corresponded to

different levels of political influence and favour. It is therefore scarcely surprising that the notion of access and its importance for our understanding of the court's power system have been intensively debated. Control of access was long thought to have equated with control of power within the monarchy. More recently, others have contended that access was a lot more flexible, diffuse and transitory than is often accounted for. Although the notion has thus dominated historical writing on court politics, scholars have still not recovered the full meaning of access within court societies. This colloquium aimed to broaden the debate by consciously moving towards the more expansive notion of the culture of access. By taking into account palace architecture, spatial arrangements, court ceremonial, material culture and the arts, this approach enables us to achieve a much more nuanced and complete understanding of the ways in which access functioned in day-to-day court life.

## **2. SCIENTIFIC RESULTS**

### **General context and set-up**

In the decidedly transdisciplinary approach the conference sought to promote, the monarch's accessibility is not merely interpreted as a set of ceremonial rules and conventions but as a constant interplay of spaces, strategies, personalities and events. Thus, one of the aims of this colloquium was to illuminate the relationship between the notion of access and the architecture (in the broadest possible sense of the term) of court residences. Another aim was to offer a comparative, transnational view that potentially covers the whole of Europe. Contributions that considered international exchanges between the various actors in Europe's 'network' of courts were particularly welcomed, as well as papers that discussed methodological issues involved in studying networks, including notions such as 'examples', 'models', and 'influences'. The main topic was discussed in four sessions:

#### *I. Articulating Access*

This theme aimed to examine the ways in which the spatial arrangements of the princely residence contributed to the management of access. In most early modern courts, a sequence of entrances, courtyards, staircases, corridors and antechambers marked the walking route from the palace precincts into the ruler's private apartments and served to pre-sort visitors according to rank and status. The main questions were: How did palace architecture influence the accessibility or, by contrast, the isolation of the monarch? To what extent did court architects take these concerns into account when designing the palace? How were older residences adapted to new ideas about access, seclusion and/or openness? How was access articulated when rulers and their households were on the move because of warfare, hunting, or travel?

#### *II. Regulating Access*

This theme sought to explain how ceremonial culture facilitated or hampered the accessibility of the monarch. As a rule, spatial barriers in the palace were complemented by a sophisticated court ceremonial that served to regulate access. A detailed set of rules prescribed who was allowed to approach the monarch and who was not. The main questions were: What were the 'normal' procedures concerning access (audiences, interviews, ambassadorial visits and receptions, etc.)? How could they be circumvented, and by whom? What about the security of the monarch and unanticipated, possibly even hostile, infiltrations?

#### *III. Theorizing Access*

This theme aimed to address the correlation between a monarch's style of government and his accessibility, as it was discussed in contemporary treatises. Some monarchs governed in 'splendid isolation', which made it virtually impossible for anyone but their closest confidants to see or talk to them. Others preferred a more open approach and deliberately invited their subjects to see them and engage in conversation. The main questions were: How was the notion of access discussed and theorized in treatises, histories and pamphlets? To what extent did monarchs take these ideas into account when presenting themselves to the public? What role did the residences play in affirming this image? Did this image correspond to reality?

#### *IV. Monopolizing Access*

This theme aimed to study the ways in which certain individuals monopolized access to the ruler. To a number of people, access was unrestricted and assured (family members, favourites, secretaries, etc.). Their privileged status often enabled them to act as a screen for the ruler and to control the access of others. The main questions were: Which individuals enjoyed unlimited access, and how did they accomplish this? Which methods did they use to prevent others from doing the same? How did access relate to the establishment of friendship or intimacy with the monarch? What were the political consequences thereof? Where did the favourites themselves reside, in relation to the ruler?

#### **Results**

The call for papers for this conference was extremely successful, rendering it possible to select 21 contributions that focused especially on the visualization, the representation and the distribution of the privilege of access in both European and non-European courts. The resulting richness in topics and approaches renders it difficult to summarize the preliminary conclusions of the conference without doing injustice to the quality of the individual papers. Nevertheless, a few key characteristics were addressed by many contributors.

First, it is clear that architecture contributed in many ways to the management of access. The lay-out of the palace, and by extension, of all the various locations in which the court manifested itself, played a vital role with regard to the interaction between the monarch and his subjects, and it is obviously something that needs to be studied by anyone who works on court politics. Nevertheless, other papers pointed out that barriers such as gates, doors, walls and corridors could not prevent all sorts of uninvited guests from intruding, and this is also something that needs to be taken into account. The same goes for court ceremonial: another useful means that was mainly used to control the access to the monarch, but one that – as many contributions showed – could be easily circumvented as well.

These problems, it was generally agreed, are indicative of the limitations presented to historians by the sources and by the differences between norms on the one hand and practices on the other. This is obviously a weakness of this kind of historical research, and one that can only partly be solved by either finding new sources or by inventing new and creative ways to study existing sources. Indeed, as far as early modern court politics is concerned, the conference has demonstrated that the devil is often in the detail. Rather than studying high politics, court history is about looking for small but meaningful gestures, or seemingly obscure rituals, things or situations which are easily overlooked by many historians but which mattered greatly to contemporaries.

Furthermore, some of the papers confirmed the initial idea of the convenors that access should be studied as a protean phenomenon rather than as something that can be accurately defined. It is, for example, clear that historians need to focus a lot more on the problematic divide between public and private spheres and formal and informal practices in order to understand its full importance. Other papers pointed out that studying gift-giving, or rather the rituals that surround gift-giving, are hugely important to get a grasp of the complexity of access and what it meant.

All together, the conference clearly demonstrated that ‘obtaining access’ should be considered only the first stage of many towards obtaining political influence. Being able to get access to the monarch was important, but this ability needed to be accompanied by something more meaningful in order for it to be of use. As some contributors pointed out, this is demonstrated by the rise of the early modern princely favourite: his/her personal connection with the monarch, usually based on a long-term and free access, was key to getting real power. The general conclusion, then, is that access was clearly not something that can be accurately measured in terms of physical distance or any other criterion. It was not only subject to quantifiable dimensions of time, movement and space. Access, it would seem, was mainly about the quality of the interaction with the monarch,

not so much about the quantity. This quality depended on several factors, one of which was obviously a strong emotional component, such as trust, friendship and intimacy.

### **3. SCIENTIFIC IMPACT OF THE EVENT**

#### **Projects linked to the conference**

The conference was organized as part of the ESF-RNP “PALATIUM. Court Residences as Places of Exchange in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe (1400-1700)” ([www.courtresidences.eu](http://www.courtresidences.eu)). The colloquium and its contents were developed in continuation to the results and discussions at previous PALATIUM conferences at Madrid (“Felix Austria. Family Ties, Political Culture and Artistic Patronage between Habsburg Court Networks in European Context (1516-1715)”), Paris (“Le Prince, La Princesse et Leurs Logis”), Vienna (“The Habsburg and their Courts in Europe, 1400-1700. Between Cosmopolitanism and Regionalism”) and Lisbon (“Inventories and Courtly Spaces”). At the end of the conference a forthcoming colloquium was announced: “Making Space for Festival, 1400-1700. Interactions of Architecture and Performance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Festivals” (Venice, 21-24 March 2013).

#### **Publicity**

The conference was announced at universities, research institutes, museums, libraries and to an interested public by sending out posters (10) and in particular by national and international email lists or websites ([www.courtresidences.eu](http://www.courtresidences.eu); [www.h-net.org](http://www.h-net.org), [www.history.ac.uk](http://www.history.ac.uk); [www.courtstudies.org](http://www.courtstudies.org)).

#### **Audience**

The total number of scholars directly involved in the conference included 2 convenors and 22 speakers (including 1 respondent). In addition, there were 28 free formal inscriptions (university and PhD students, researchers, professors). In all the conference was attended by 52 individuals from 14 different European countries.

#### **Proceedings**

The convenors intend to publish a selection of the conference proceedings in a volume that will be submitted for consideration to Brill Publishers (Leiden, NL). The selected authors have been contacted with the question as to whether they would be interested in contributing, and we are currently awaiting their response.

### **4. FINANCIAL REPORT**

*Additional information.* The first 80% of the allotted budget (9.600 EUR out of 12.000 EUR) have not been not completely used up. This is due to the fact that the convenors have been extremely successful in securing additional funding from the Research Foundation – Flanders (3.500 EUR) and the University of Antwerp (1.750 EUR), which will be used to cover expenses for speakers from countries that do not contribute to PALATIUM.

### **5. ANNEXES**

- 1 - Conference programme
- 2 - Abstracts
- 3 - List of participants (see the form submitted online for full details of speakers and participants)
- 4 - Budget overview

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Antwerp, Belgium**

*Organized by*

ESF Research Networking Programme PALATIUM  
Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO)  
University of Antwerp  
Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands  
The Society for Court Studies

## **THURSDAY 8 NOVEMBER**

**09.00 Registration**

09.30 *Welcome and introduction*

Dries RAEYMAEKERS (University of Antwerp)  
Sebastiaan DERKS (Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands)  
Krista DE JONGE (University of Leuven), PALATIUM Chair

09.45 Keynote lecture

Ronald G. ASCH (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)  
*Patronage, Friendship and the Politics of Access: The Role of the Early Modern Favourite Revisited*

10.35 Discussion

**10.50 Coffee break**

## **Session I. Articulating Access**

Chair: Sebastiaan DERKS

11.20 Christina ANTENHOFER (Universität Innsbruck)

*Meeting the Prince between the City and the Family: The Resignification of Castello San Giorgio in Mantova (14th-16th Century)*

- 11.40 Encarnación LÓPEZ (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)  
*Symbolic Spaces in Madrid's Alcázar: Doors and Keys Providing Access to the Planet King*
- 12.00 Neil MURPHY (Northumbria University)  
*The Court on the Move: Royal Entries and Access to the Monarch in France, c. 1400-1560*
- 12.20 Discussion
- 12.45 Lunch**

## **Session II. Regulating Access**

Chair: Fabian PERSSON

- 14.00 Alexandra BEAUCHAMP (Université de Limoges)  
*'Estant nós en la dita rambla ab tota aquella gran multitud.' Direct Contacts between the Kings of Aragon and their Subjects (14th century)*
- 14.20 Katarzyna KURAS (Jagiellonian University, Krakow)  
*Was it Easy to Get to the King? Access of the Nobles to the Monarch during the 16th and 17th Centuries in Poland*
- 14.40 Charles C. NOEL (New York University, London)  
*Access - Privileged and Unprivileged at the Changing Spanish Court, 1665-1788*
- 15.00 Discussion
- 15.30 Coffee break**

Chair: Jonathan SPANGLER

- 16.00 Michael TALBOT (SOAS - University of London)  
*Accessing the Shadow of God on Earth: Gifts, Feasts, and Humiliation in Ottoman Diplomatic Ceremonial*
- 16.20 Maartje VAN GELDER (University of Amsterdam)  
*Rebel Diplomats: The Dutch Envoys' Access to the Court of Henry IV of France, 1598-1609*
- 16.40 Neil YOUNGER (University of Essex)  
*Access, Favour and Religious Division at the Court of Elizabeth I of England*
- 17.00 Discussion
- 19.30 Conference dinner (by invitation)**

## FRIDAY 9 NOVEMBER

**08.30 Registration**

### Session III. Theorizing Access

Chair: Dries RAEYMAEKERS

- 09.00 Florence BERLAND (Université Lille 3 - IRHiS)  
*Access to the Prince's Court in Late Medieval Paris*
- 09.20 Orsolya RÉTHELYI (Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest)  
*Access to the King and Queen in Late Medieval Hungary. Conflicting Conceptions of Order in Princely Households*
- 09.40 Audrey TRUSCHKE (Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge)  
*European Experiences and Interpretations of Access at Indian Courts*
- 10.00 Discussion
- 10.30 Coffee break**

### Session IV. Monopolizing Access

Chair: Ronald G. ASCH

- 11.00 Eric HASSLER (Université Paris I - Sorbonne)  
*Quantifying the Approachability of the Emperor: The Question of the Number of Chamberlains on Duty in the Court of Vienna (1670-1720)*
- 11.20 Anna KALINOWSKA (Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of History)  
*The King, the Favourite and the Ambassador. Sir Thomas Roe at the Polish Court, 1629*
- 11.40 Discussion
- 12.00 Lunch**
- 13.30 Fabian PERSSON (Linnaeus University, Kalmar)  
*The Battle for Access: Access During a Royal Minority, 1660-1672*
- 13.50 Jonathan SPANGLER (Manchester Metropolitan University)  
*Those Who Hold the Keys: Princes, Grand Chamberlains, and Grand Equerries and the Rivalry of Access at the Early Modern French Court*
- 14.10 Discussion
- 14.30 Coffee break**

## Session V. Presentations by Early Career Researchers

Chair: Pieter MARTENS (University of Leuven), PALATIUM Coordinator

Respondent: Hans COOLS (University of Leuven)

- 15.00 Aubrée DAVID-CHAPY (Université de Paris IV - Sorbonne)  
*Anne de France, Closeness to the King and Power*
- 15.15 Steven THIRY (University of Antwerp)  
*Forging Dynasty. The Politics of Dynastic Affinity in Burgundian-Habsburg Baptism Ceremonial (1430-1505)*
- 15.30 Klara PAKO (Academy of Sciences, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Romania)  
*Access to Power at the Confines of Europe. The Case of the Princely Court of Alba Iulia in Transylvania in the 16th and 17th Centuries*
- 15.45 Sara J. WOLFSON (Manchester Metropolitan University)  
*Distinguished Guests, Diplomacy and Foreign Policy at the Caroline Court, 1638-1641*
- 16.00 Discussion
- 16.30 Concluding remarks**

**Convenors:** Dries RAEYMAEKERS (University of Antwerp)  
Sebastiaan DERKS (Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands)

**Scientific Committee:** Monique CHATENET (Centre André Chastel, INHA, Paris)  
Krista DE JONGE (University of Leuven), PALATIUM Chair  
Luc DUERLOO (University of Antwerp)  
Bernardo J. GARCÍA (Fundación Carlos de Amberes), PALATIUM co-Chair  
Pieter MARTENS (University of Leuven), PALATIUM Coordinator  
Fabian PERSSON (Linnaeus University, Kalmar)

**Co-ordination:** Dries RAEYMAEKERS  
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**Venue:** HOF VAN LIERE  
University of Antwerp – City Campus  
Prinsstraat 13  
B - 2000 Antwerp (Belgium)

**Registration:** Attending the conference is free, but for practical reasons registration is required. Please submit the *Registration form* available on the PALATIUM website ([www.courtresidences.eu](http://www.courtresidences.eu)).



# **The Key to Power? The Culture of Access in Early Modern Courts, 1400-1700**

**Antwerp, 8-9 November 2012**

## **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

### **Convenors**

1. Dries Raeymaekers (University of Antwerp), convenor
2. Sebastiaan Derks (Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands), convenor

### **PALATIUM Committee**

3. Krista De Jonge (University of Leuven), PALATIUM Chair
4. Bernardo García (Universidad Complutense de Madrid / Fundación Carlos de Amberes), PALATIUM Co-Chair
5. Uwe Albrecht (Universität Kiel), Member of the PALATIUM Scientific Committee
6. Birgitte Bøggild Johannsen (National Museum of Denmark), Member of the PALATIUM Scientific Committee
7. Prokop Muchka (Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic), Member of the PALATIUM Scientific Committee
8. Nuno Senos (Universidade Nova de Lisboa), Member of the PALATIUM Scientific Committee
9. Pieter Martens (University of Leuven), PALATIUM Co-ordinator

### **Keynote speaker**

10. Ronald G. Asch (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

### **Respondent**

11. Hans Cools (University of Leuven)

### **Speakers**

12. Christina Antenhofer (Universität Innsbruck)
13. Alexandra Beauchamp (Université de Limoges)
14. Florence Berland (Université Lille III – IRHiS)

15. Eric Hassler (Université Paris I – Sorbonne)
16. Anna Kalinowska (Institute of History – Polish Academy of Sciences)
17. Katarzyna Kuras (Jagiellonian University, Krakow)
18. Encarnación López Rodríguez (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)
19. Neil Murphy (Northumbria University)
20. Charles C. Noel (New York University, London)
21. Fabian Persson (Linnaeus University, Kalmar), Member of the PALATIUM Scientific Committee and speaker
22. Orsolya Réthelyi (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest)
23. Jonathan Spangler (Manchester Metropolitan University)
24. Michael Talbot (SOAS – University of London)
25. Audrey Truschke (Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge)
26. Maartje van Gelder (University of Amsterdam)
27. Neil Younger (University of Essex)

#### **PALATIUM Grantees**

28. Aubrée David-Chapy (Université de Paris IV – Sorbonne)
29. Steven Thiry (University of Antwerp)
30. Klára Pakó (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca)
31. Sara J. Wolfson (Manchester Metropolitan University)

#### **Registered participants**

32. Maartje A.B. (Radboud University Nijmegen)
33. Houssine Alloul (University of Antwerp)
34. Andrew Barclay (History of Parliament Trust / The Society for Court Studies)
35. John Condren (University of St. Andrews)
36. Letitia Cosnean (National University of Arts, Bucharest)
37. Stefaan Grieten (University of Leuven)
38. Dirk Jansen (Independent researcher)
39. Oliver Kik (University of Leuven)

40. Kelly Krijntjes (Radboud University Nijmegen)
41. Nina Lamal (University of Leuven)
42. Petra Maclot (University of Leuven)
43. Mirella Marini (University of Antwerp)
44. Kazimir Muijlwijk (Radboud University Nijmegen)
45. Laura Piek (Radboud University Nijmegen)
46. Pierre-François Pirlet (Université de Liège)
47. Jeroen Puttevils (University of Antwerp)
48. Juliette Roding (Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society)
49. Paul Schuster (Schloss Eggenberg)
50. Stefanie Alexa Stork
51. Kristel Van Audenaeren (Musea Brugge)
52. Klaas Van Gelder (Ghent University)