



HAL
open science

Ennoblement and Grant of Arms Control in Sixteenth-Century Lorraine

Jean-Christophe Blanchard

► **To cite this version:**

Jean-Christophe Blanchard. Ennoblement and Grant of Arms Control in Sixteenth-Century Lorraine. 2020. hal-02778404

HAL Id: hal-02778404

<https://hal.univ-lorraine.fr/hal-02778404v1>

Preprint submitted on 4 Jun 2020

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Ennoblement and Grant of Arms Control in Sixteenth-Century Lorraine

From the end of the 14th century, following the example of the French King, the princes of Lorraine ennobled their most zealous servants by letters patent.¹ The phenomenon was of minor importance until the arrival of René I of Anjou as Duke of Bar and Lorraine in 1431, and increased slowly under his reign. It was René II of Lorraine (1473-1508), however, who was the first prince to develop a policy of integrating new elites into the Second Estate.² Hitherto marginal (some thirty ennoblements prior to 1473), the phenomenon increased significantly during the reigns of Antoine (1508-1544) and Charles III (1545-1608).³

The oldest ennoblement letters still in our possession do not mention any grant of arms, but the latter were granted systematically from René I onwards.⁴ The form of the letters patent was established during his reign and remained the same under René I, Nicolas d'Anjou, and René II. The initial was ornate but the emphasis was on the representation of the coat of arms of the new nobleman. Emblazoned into the text, the coat of arms was painted on the bottom right and protected by a fold.⁵ From Antoine's reign onwards, the ducal coat of arms adorned the initial and the model was fixed once and for all, reaching a certain form of perfection under Charles III.⁶

¹ In 1362 in the Duchy of Bar (M. Bouyer, *La principauté barroise (1301-1420). L'émergence d'un État dans l'espace lorrain* (Paris, 2014) 340-343). In the Duchy of Lorraine, the ennoblement of Thirion Mélian in 1382 may appear suspicious (A. Pelletier, *Nobiliaire de Lorraine et de Barrois* (Nancy, 1758) 558), Christophe Rivière questioned the existence of this figure (*Une principauté d'Empire face au royaume. Le duché de Lorraine sous le règne de Charles II (1390-1431)* (Turnhout, 2018) 443 (note 66)). It should also be noted that ennoblement was not one of the political levers used by Charles II.

² J.-C. Blanchard, 'L'héraldique des anoblis dans les duchés de Lorraine et de Bar des origines (1363) à la fin du règne de René II (1508)', *Publication du Centre Européen d'Etudes Bourguignonnes (XIV^e-XVI^e s.)*, 37 (1997) 239-262; idem, 'Quatre lettres d'anoblissement de Nicolas d'Anjou, duc de Lorraine (1470-1473)', *Lotharingia*, XVIII (2013) 101-109; idem, 'L'anoblissement, un instrument au service de la construction de l'Etat ? Le cas barrois sous le règne de René II', in: J.-C. Blanchard and H. Schneider, eds, *René II, lieutenant et duc de Bar (1473-1508)*, *Annales de l'Est*, special number (2014) 75-99.

³ G. Cabourdin, *Terre et hommes en Lorraine (1550-1635). Toulais et comté de Vaudémont* (Nancy, 1977) t. 2, 463-464; A. Fersing, *Idoines et suffisants. Les officiers d'État et l'extension des droits du Prince en Lorraine ducal (début du XVI^e siècle-1633)*, doctorate thesis, University of Strasbourg, 2017, 2 vol., t. 1, 109-111, 526-531, 575-577, 883-886.

⁴ Example of letters without grants of arms: eighteenth-century copy of the letters of Humbelet de Gondrecourt (23 July 1363) and Vivien de Thiauourt (1 September 1393) (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Fr. 18869, fol. 28r-29r and fol. 30r-31v); original letter for Jean Broutel (12 October 1406) Paris, BnF, Fr. 15522, n° 187. With grant of arms: Mathieu de Metz (25 August 1462; Nancy, Archives départementales de Meurthe-et-Moselle (AD54), 1 J 221).

⁵ Letter for Mathieu de Metz (cf. previous note), Nicolas Moitret (22 March 1473 (n. s.); private collection; Blanchard, 'Quatre lettres' 101-109) et de Drouet Laguerre (25 May 1486; AD54, E 419).

⁶ Adam du Bourg (28 February 1513 (n. s.); AD54, 1 J 1, without ducal coats of arms); César de Guebenhausen (23 January 1514 (n. s.); Montcabrier, Musée du livre et de la lettre, s. c., with ducal coats of arms); Pierre Petit (6 May 1529; Metz, Archives municipales, ii 158, n° 1, with ducal coat of arms).

Although ennoblement was the key to the deed and it was the change of status that was the main focus, the accompanying grant of arms was also important, as evidenced by the care taken in their representation and the wording that precedes their emblazoning:

Et en signe de noblesse et pour décoration d'icelle, avons (...) donné et donnons les armoyries telles que cy dessoubz elles sont emprainctes, avec puissance de les porter et en user en tous lieux, comme autres nobles ont accoustumé user de leurs armes (...)⁷

From the beginning, ennobled persons received coats of arms and used them in the same way as other nobles, but their coats of arms were composed differently and/or contained elements that distinguished them from the others.⁸ Nevertheless, these heraldic subtleties were not enough to mark a difference of rank between nobles of many generations standing and the new elites devoted to the Prince, to whom they owed everything. The ancient nobility were unhappy with this competition and put pressure on the prince, who was forced to take measures to appease them, as evidenced by changes to the Custom of Lorraine: after ignoring these ennobled persons in 1519, it granted them a place of secondary importance in its version of 1st March 1594, but gave pre-eminence to the gentlemen.⁹ In the meantime, there were several attempts to register all or some of the letters patent and coats of arms of the new nobles. Émond du Boullay, who was a herald from 1543 to 1550, produced a first compilation. However, both repeated protests from the old lineages and abuses of the ducal tax system pushed Charles III to ask for the ennoblement letters to be registered by the *Chambre des Comptes* of Lorraine in 1573 and to commission research into the nobility, which was carried out by herald Didier Richier from 1577 onwards.

This effort to control ennoblement by the sovereign was not specific to the Duchy of Lorraine and can be seen both in the Kingdom of France and in the Empire, although with distinct chronologies and methods that set Lorraine apart, as did its particular focus on the coats of arms.

1. A first reaction: the armorial of Émond du Boullay (1543-1551)

1.1 Context

⁷ Letter for Claude Callot (30 July 1584; Metz, Archives municipales, ii 158, n° 2), published in: J. Choux, 'L'armorial de la famille Callot. Nancy, XVII^e s.' *Lotharingia*, IV (1992) 12.

⁸ Blanchard, 'L'héraldique des anoblis'.

⁹ G. Cabourdin, *Terre et hommes*, 472-479; A. Motta, *Noblesse et pouvoir princier dans la Lorraine ducale (1624-1737)* (Paris, 2015) 75-97.

In the years preceding the production of the armorial of Édmond du Boullay, there would not appear to be any legal or political evidence of concerns among the longstanding nobility. The custom of 1519 does not reveal any particular tension within the Second Estate, but does reflect its interest in coats of arms. It contains an article on inheritance which states that the eldest son shall bear "les armes entiers de leurs maisons et ses frères maynez sont tenuz mectre différence en leurs armes, à scavoir comme ung croissant, une molette esperon ou aultres seingz comme l'on a accoustumez."¹⁰ In 1530-1540, the production of a certain number of armorials is a sign not only of this interest, but also of the need of the old nobility to set itself apart symbolically from the new elites.¹¹ About a decade later, when ennoblements were recorded in the registers of letters patent, the Duke asked Édmond du Boullay, his herald since 1543, to draw up a specific armorial for the ennobled persons in order to show the distance separating the nobilities of Lorraine.¹²

1.2 The author

Édmond was the son of Pierre du Boullay, known as Marie, a man of arms in the service of Louis XII and then François I, and Richarde des Chapelles, governess of the nieces and daughters of Anne, Duke of Montmorency and Constable of France. He was also a grandson of Robert, a herald of Charles VIII, who died in 1497 during the retreat from Naples, and of Colette de Saint-Laurent.¹³ Édmond came from a Norman family of lower nobility and grew up at the

¹⁰ E. Bonvalot, *Les plus principales coutumes du duché de Lorraine* (Paris, 1878) 93.

¹¹ Three armorials were made over the period 1530-1540: Armorial de Nicolas de Lutzelbourg (Nancy, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 1727), Armorial de Jean de Haraucourt (Bibliothèque de la Société d'Histoire de la Lorraine et du Musée Lorrain, s. c.) and the armorial called *Clémery* (Paris, BnF, fr. 23076). On this subject: J.-C. Blanchard, 'L'Armorial de Jean de Haraucourt, manuscrit du XVI^e siècle conservé au Musée lorrain à Nancy', *Lotharingia*, X (2001) 81-125.

¹² H. Schneider, 'Les lettres patentes de René II. Jalons pour une étude', H. Say and H. Schneider, dir, *Le duc de Lorraine René II et la construction d'un État princier*, *Lotharingia*, XVI (2010) 31-45.

¹³ The letter of confirmation of nobility granted to him by the Duke of Lorraine on 18 March 1544 (n. st.) gives his genealogy (AD54, B 22, fol. 242r-243r). About Édmond du Boullay: A. Calmet, *Bibliothèque lorraine, ou histoire des hommes illustres* (Nancy, 1751) 138-143; J.-N. Beaupré, *Recherches historiques et bibliographiques sur les commencements de l'imprimerie en Lorraine, et sur ses progrès, jusqu'à la fin du XVII^e siècle* (Saint-Nicolas-de-Port, 1845) 105-112; H. Lepage, 'Notice sur Édmond du Boullay, héraut d'armes de Lorraine sous les ducs Antoine, François I^{er} et Charles III', *Journal de la Société d'Archéologie Lorraine*, 4 (1855) 36-48; H. Menu, *Études biographiques sur Edmond du Boullay, Claude Henriet Fournier et Dom Brocq* (Châlons-sur-Marne, 1866) 9-16; H. Jadart, 'Édmond Du Boullay : historiographe et poète du XVI^e siècle, héraut de France et de Lorraine : recherches sur sa noblesse, ses alliances et sa postérité, avec documents tirés des Archives de Reims et fac-similé de ses armoiries', *Travaux de l'Académie Nationale de Reims*, LXXI (1881-1882) 309-372; H. Vincent, 'Le voyage du bon duc Antoine de Lorraine à Valenciennes en 1543, avec récit du parcours à travers les Ardennes par Édmond du Boullay', *Travaux de l'Académie Nationale de Reims*, LXXII (1881-1882) 127-136; P. Choné, *Emblèmes et pensée symbolique en Lorraine*. "Comme un jardin au cœur de la chrétienté" (Paris, 1991) 35-42, 88, 140 et 299; A. Cullière, *Les écrivains et le pouvoir en Lorraine au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1999) 85-88, 132, 188-193, 241-269, 316, 495, 632, 639, 683, 782-783; R. A. Cooper, 'Le Mariage de François de Lorraine et Christine de

court where his parents held office. He also did some studies and is mentioned with the degree of master in a letter of pardon granted by Duke Antoine of Lorraine in 1541. About eight years earlier (around 1533), Émond had killed a certain ‘Jaspart Loyset’ with a sword, after the latter had slandered him. At that time, he was master of the schools of Revigny-sur-Ornain, where he resided with his wife Marguerite, daughter of the late Pierre Taupinet, the Duke's *fourrier* (quartermaster) before his death. Forced to flee the dukedoms of Bar and Lorraine for seven years, he finally obtained a pardon from the Duke, thanks in particular to the good reputation he had enjoyed prior to his crime.¹⁴ We do not know how Émond settled in Barrois, but no doubt he won the favour of the princes of Lorraine - Duke Antoine or his brother Cardinal Jean de Lorraine – in France.¹⁵ In the year of his pardon, Émond dedicated a long poem to Antoine on the grace of God, which the Dukes of Lorraine refer to in their title.¹⁶ In it, Émond refers to himself as regent of the great school of Metz cathedral. Perhaps he spent his seven years of exile on the land of the bishopric and he no doubt owed this job to the cardinal of Lorraine, who had been the bishop of Metz since 1505. It was as a favour from the latter that in 1543 the Duke granted the office of Clermont pursuivant of arms to Émond who resided in Étain.¹⁷ The new pursuivant took up his pen immediately and demonstrated his heraldic knowledge by writing *Le Blason de l'escu de Lorraine*. Émond, herald and poet, crafted a more or less skilful mix between the two blazons, heraldic and poetic, in a poem in honour of the ducal coat of arms and in praise of the Duke and his house.¹⁸ The text was offered to the Duke in Bar on All Saints' Day 1543 and was followed by another poem, *L'origine de bataille et chevalerie, avec l'invention des couleurs d'armoyrie*, also devoted to heraldry art.¹⁹ In the same year, Émond composed a text, which was printed in Strasbourg, celebrating the birth of Charles, son of François I of Lorraine and Christina of Denmark.²⁰ This was followed in 1547 by an account

Danemark (1541) chanté par Jean Mallard et Edmond du Boullay’, in: J. Nassichuk, eds, *Vérité et fiction dans les entrées solennelles à la Renaissance et à l'âge classique* (Laval, 2009) 1-26.

¹⁴ AD54, B 22, fol. 72v-73v (23 August 1541). About remission: P. Pégeot, O. Derniame et M. Hénin, eds, *Les lettres de rémission du duc de Lorraine René II (1473-1508)* (Turnhout, 2013) 41 et seq. Revigny-sur-Ornain (Meuse, ar. Bar-le-Duc, ch.-l. c.).

¹⁵ Georges Poull, *La maison ducale de Lorraine* (Nancy, 1991) 200-202; Cédric Michon, ‘Les richesses de la faveur à la Renaissance: Jean de Lorraine (1498-1550) et François I^{er}’, *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 2003/3, n° 50-3, p. 34-61.

¹⁶ *L'illustration de la grace de Dieu...* (Nancy, Bibliothèque de la Société d'Archéologie Lorraine (BSAL), ms. 240).

¹⁷ AD54, B 22, fol. 137v (16 février 1543 n. st.). Étain (Meuse, ar. Verdun, ch.-l. c.).

¹⁸ Nancy, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 873. This manuscript is dated 1542 and was probably written between 16 February (the day Emond was appointed prosecutor) and 25 March (Easter Day) 1543, the day of the change of year in the Easter style then in use at the court of Lorraine. In this style, we were still in 1542.

¹⁹ Nancy, BSAL, ms. 193. Dated 1543, this manuscript was probably written between 1st November of the same year and 13 April 1544 (day of Easter and of the change of year according to the style of this name).

²⁰ *Les dialogues des troys estatz de Lorraine, sus la tres joieuse nativité de tres hault et tres illustre prince Charles de Lorraine...*, Strasbourg, 1543. Charles was born on 15 February 1543 (n. s.).

of the funeral of Duke Antoine and his son François, in 1549 by a genealogy of the Dukes of Lorraine and finally, in 1550, by an account of the funeral of Claude de Lorraine, Duke of Guise, brother of Antoine, and then that of Cardinal Jean.²¹ His career in Lorraine ended in 1551 when he left the Dukes' service. We then find him in Reims where he became herald of the King of France. He married the daughter of an officer of the city, where Jean de Lorraine and then his nephew Charles occupied the archbishop's seat from 1533 to 1538 and from 1538 to 1574 respectively. Émond du Boullay died there in 1577.

1.3 The armorial

From 1543 to 1551, Émond worked on an armorial of ennobled persons, which is currently preserved at the Public Library of Nancy under the number 1396. This 62-page parchment manuscript of 288 by 205 mm contains 194 entries.²² The first 48 pages each contain three coats of arms, two at the top and one at the bottom, with the name, status and date of ennoblement of each individual. The first to be mentioned is Guillaume de Mauléon, a sworn clerk of Clermont-en-Argonne, who was ennobled on 8 October 1500. The entry is noted as 'mortes' with the date 1509, however. The next two ennoblements are dated 1512. The final one in this first set was granted on 11 July 1539. From page 49 onwards, four shields are painted on each page. The ennoblements of Antoine's reign end with that of Hansel Merklin (1 April 1544). On page 61, we then find the only person ennobled by François I of Lorraine (Denis Fabri, 1544). On the same page: "comencent tos les blasons d'armes que ma dame madame la duchesse Chrestienne de Danemark, mere de monseigneur le duc Charles, et monseigneur de Metz, tuteurs et administrateurs des corps et biens de mondict seigneur". The four ennoblements granted during the regency are present on page 62, with the last one being that of Jean de Bouveron, ennobled on 23 March 1550 (n. s.). This last part is probably incomplete, as the damaged last parchment suggests that one or more membranes are missing. In addition to this, Émond only left Lorraine in 1551 and, unlike for the previous reigns, there is no subscription by him to mark the end of that portion. Most of the ennoblements recorded in the manuscript therefore concern the reign of Antoine (189 entries), with just one for the brief reign of François

²¹ *La vie et trespas des deux princes de paix, le bon duc Anthoine et saige duc François premiers de leurs noms (par la grace de dieu) ducz de Lorraine...* (Metz, 1547); *Les genealogies des tres illustres et tres puissans princes les ducz de Lorraine...* (Paris, 1549); *Le tres-excellent enterrement du tres hault, et tres illustre prince Claude de Lorraine, duc de Guyse et d'Aumalle, pair de France, etc.* (Paris, 1550); *Le catholicque enterrement de feu Monsieur le reverendissime et illustrissime cardinal de Lorraine* (Paris, 1550).

²² This manuscript can be compared to another armorial preserved at the BnF (fr. 18649; <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8528581h.r=armorial%20lorrain?rk=193134;0> (consulté le 12/02/2020)).

I and the last four being conferred during the regency of Christina of Denmark and Nicolas de Lorraine. Overall, the ennoblements during Antoine's reign are recorded well in this armorial. The registers of letters patent indicate 202 ennoblements and the armorial features 189 of them.²³ The data is therefore reliable, as evidenced by comparison of the original letters with the information from the armorial.²⁴ On the other hand, there is a clear break in the quality of the information concerning the period from the death of François I (12 June 1545) through to the departure of Émond in 1551. During this period, the armorial provides evidence of just four ennoblements, while the registers of letters patent record twenty of them.²⁵ This discrepancy is undoubtedly due to the aforementioned shortcomings, rather than to any slackening in the efforts of the herald, who was then pursuing his mission at the service of the ducal house. This manuscript served to keep track not only of ennoblements, but above all of the coats of arms that were granted. Thus, from the beginning, when a coat of arms changed ownership, the change was noted by the herald. This practice can be observed during Émond's term of office and continued long after his departure to France, with the last transfer being dated 1581.²⁶

This armorial created by a ducal officer represents an attempt to record and control ennoblements and, more particularly, the coats of arms granted with those ennoblements. It was becoming imperative for professionals in heraldic science and all things relating to nobility and honours to gather this information in a specific document where they could easily find the information they needed for their work and keep it up to date. Equivalent armorials do not appear to have existed in the Kingdom of France, however. There, attempts to uphold the social order and differences between commoners, the newly ennobled and old nobility were different in nature, due to the multiple forms of ennoblement. Jean-Richard Bloch distinguished three such forms: personal (by letters), collective (*noblesse d'offices* or *de cloche*) and legal

²³ G. Cabourdin, *Terre et hommes*, 462.

²⁴ Adam du Bourg, lieutenant and receiver of Bruyères, 28 February 1513 : Nancy, AD54, 1 J 1; Nancy, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 1396, p. 11 et Pierre Petit, tailor and valet of the duchess, 6 May 1529 : Metz, Archives municipales, ii 158, n° 1; Nancy, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 1396, p. 36.

²⁵ E. Delcambre, *Inventaire-sommaire des Archives départementales antérieures à 1790 [de Meurthe-et-Moselle], Série B. Lettres-patentes des ducs de Lorraine et de Barrois, t. 3, Lettres patentes de la minorité du duc Charles III (1546-1558) ; registres B 23 à 32* (Nancy, 1952). The first ennoblement specified in the armorial, that of Jhennot de Doncourt on 24 November 1547, is not present in the registers of letters patent. It should also be noted that the oldest known letter for this period, that of Fiacre Didier (24 November 1546), the original of which is kept in a private collection, is registered among the other letters patent but is not mentioned in the armorial.

²⁶ An addition of his hand is partially visible on page 6, it concerns the coat of arms of Pierre du Mans (here dated 1507) given back to a certain Pierre. He was valet and tailor of Anne of Lorraine, duchess of Arschot since her marriage with Philippe II of Croÿ in 1548 (the date of this concession is not visible but it is authenticated by the signature of the herald). It is the coat of arms of Nicolas Gilles, ennobled in 1532, which is attributed to Jean Le Labrier (or Labriet) in 1581 (p. 48).

(particularly linked to the possession of noble land) ennoblement.²⁷ The latter form was the origin of the main measures taken by royal power to control a phenomenon that was particularly detrimental to the military capabilities of the kingdom. Under François I and Henri II, there were several successive measures to adapt and reform the *arrière-ban*.²⁸ At the same time, the tax issue was also taken into consideration, such as in the Declaration of 9 October 1546 stating that “ceux qui se disent nobles, sans justifier leur qualité, seront imposés aux rôles des tailles et subsides ordinaires.”²⁹ These tax concerns are reflected in the Order of 26 March 1556 (n. s.) which imposed verification of ennoblement letters at the *Chambre des Comptes* and the *Cour des Aides* (art. 2) and forbade ‘d’usurper la qualité de noblesse, sous peine de 1000 livres d’amendes’ (art. 7).³⁰ The Ordinance of January 1561 reiterated this prohibition and included the wearing of coats of arms with a crest.³¹ In the Low Countries, the small number of ennoblements elicited little reaction from the Emperor and the only restrictions were related to clothing, until 1550.³² In the Duchy of Lorraine, the first legislative reaction was an ordinance dated 27 October 1556, during the regency of Nicolas de Lorraine. Similarly to the French Declaration of 1546, this ordinance stopped those who had recently obtained the ‘*privilège de noblesse*’ and who no longer payed the ‘*taille*’, aids and subsidies from ‘*trafiquer, ni de mener marchandises publiques, ni autrement exercer actes mécaniques ou de roture*’, which were liable to be taxed.³³ This decision came when the increase in ennoblements was detrimental not only to the ancient nobility, but also to the taxes collected by the Duke.

2. Reaction of Charles III

The Ordinance of 1556 was probably insufficient and Charles III took several concrete measures to control this phenomenon more effectively. Firstly, he made it compulsory to register new letters of ennoblement (1573) and then had his principalities investigated to find

²⁷ J.-R. Bloch, *L’anoblissement sous François I^{er}. Essai d’une définition de la condition juridique et sociale de la noblesse au début du XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1934).

²⁸ Bloch, *L’anoblissement*, 39-41; M. Nassiet, ‘La noblesse en France au XVI^e siècle d’après l’*arrière-ban*’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 46 (1999) 86-116.

²⁹ L.-N.-H. Chérin, *Abrégé chronologique d’édits, déclarations, règlements, arrêts et lettres-patentes des rois de France de la troisième race, concernant le fait de noblesse* (Paris, 1788) 41.

³⁰ Bloch, *L’anoblissement*, 148; Chérin, *Abrégé chronologique*, 44.

³¹ F.-A. Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises, depuis l’an 420 jusqu’à la révolution de 1789*, t. 14, 1^{ère} partie (juillet 1559-mai 1574) (Paris, 1829) 91.

³² P. Janssens, ‘De la noblesse médiévale à la noblesse moderne. La création dans les anciens Pays-Bas d’une noblesse dynastique (XV^e-début XVII^e siècle)’, *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review*, 123 (2008) 490-515, ici 505-506.

³³ P. D. G. de Rogéville, *Dictionnaire historique des ordonnances, et des tribunaux de la Lorraine et du Barrois* (Nancy, 1777), t. 2, 145-146.

those in breach of the Ordinance of 1556 and those usurping titles or misusing coat of arms (1577).

2.1 The register of the *Chambre des Comptes* of Lorraine (1573-1593)

That first decision was recorded in an edict promulgated on 11 June 1573, by which any new nobleman was obliged to have his letters of ennoblement checked and his possessions inventoried by the *Chambre des Comptes* of Lorraine. The officers of the Chamber were then responsible for taxing one-third of his possessions. The prohibition of 1556 was also reiterated. The first letter of ennoblement granted after the edict of 1573 and recorded in a specific register was that of Nicolas de Girmont, secretary to the Marquis de Pont-à-Mousson. It is dated 28 October 1573 and is an entire copy of the patent; the coat of arms is painted in the margin next to the written blazon.³⁴ It was ratified on 11 January 1574 (n. s.) and is followed by the letters patent from the Duke, dated 10 January (n. s.) and exempting the grantee from all finance.³⁵

After the edict of 1573, this register reproduces the declaration of 3 November 1582 by which Charles III exempted all officers in his household and those of his children, who were ennobled from all finance, and the mandate of 1 January 1591 reiterating the two previous ones.³⁶ After Nicolas de Girmont's letter, 67 others follow, most of them with a financial exemption and endorsement, making 68 registered ennoblements granted from 1573 to 1592. The last letter, however, which was given on 7 January 1579 (n. s.) to Alexandre des Bordes, controller of the Duke's money, was presented to the *Chambre des Comptes* of Lorraine with letters of exemption obtained on 28 February and 3 March 1593, and ratified on the 8th of that month.³⁷ Alexandre des Bordes had not registered these letters beforehand and his late reaction was perhaps due to the stern reminder of the mandate of 1591.

The original letters that have been preserved allow us to verify the application of the 1573 edict and the practice of endorsement, which became systematic after its promulgation. For instance, the letter of Nicolas Humbert, receiver of Einville (31 May 1573), was not endorsed and there is no mention of his going to the *Chambre des Comptes*.³⁸ Meanwhile, that

³⁴ This register is kept at AD54 under the number B 186; it comprises 273 sheets of paper (290x205 mm) foliated from 1 to 273 to which 3 + 3 non foliated sheets must be added, those placed at the beginning of the volume include a table; the binding is from the 19th century.

³⁵ AD54, B 186, fol. 12r-14r, the coat of arms can be seen at the fol. 13v; exemption patents to fol. 14v-15r.

³⁶ The edict is copied to fol. 1r-2v (Rogéville, *Dictionnaire historique*, t. 2, 148-149; Motta, *Noblesse et pouvoir* 76-77), the declaration and the mandate to fol. 3r-5r.

³⁷ AD54, B 186, fol. 269v-271r.

³⁸ Troyes, Archives départementales de l'Aube, 8 J 148, n° 2. I would like to thank Arnaud Baudin, Deputy Director of Archives and Heritage of the Department of Aube, for having been kind enough to send me a reproduction.

of Thiébaud Morlot (26 April 1580) was ratified and endorsed the following July 30, as was that of Claude Callot, an archer in the Ducal Guard (30 July 1584), the following 17 September.³⁹ The system therefore seems to have worked well. However, although the ennoblement of Jean le Labrier (4 May 1581) was recorded in a register of letters patent and his grant of arms was noted in the armorial of Émond du Boullay, there is no corresponding record in the register of the *Chambre des Comptes*.⁴⁰ Despite this counter-example, it does seem that a control of the letters of ennoblement and income of the ennobled persons by the *Chambre des Comptes* of Lorraine became customary after the edict of 1573. Manuscript B 186 is the only register of this type to be preserved. The last endorsement is dated 8 March 1593, but a visible endorsement on the back of an original letter of ennoblement granted on 18 July 1594 to Jacques d'Andernach, receiver and *gruyer* (verderer) of Dompaigne, suggests that, despite the probable disappearance of part of the documentation, the practice did become well established.⁴¹

Register B 186 was kept by Claude Pariset, son of Didier, an auditor of the *Chambre des Comptes* of Bar who was ennobled on 22 May 1540, and of Barbe des Fours.⁴² Claude was first clerk to the *Chambre des Comptes* of Lorraine before becoming its auditor on 4 July 1578. He also became ordinary secretary to the Duke on 2 July 1580. Claude resigned his office as clerk in favour of his son Antoine on 27 January 1596, and then as auditor in favour of his other son, Didier, on 16 September 1597.⁴³

Each coat of arms is accompanied in the margin by a painted representation which was the work of another ducal officer, whose speciality it was. This officer was Didier Richier, also known as 'de Vic', who was a court painter before becoming a herald of arms. There is no official document testifying to his participation, but the heraldic drawings in the register of the *Chambre des Comptes* are very similar to the other documents that can be attributed to Didier's hand. However, it should be noted that Didier was not an officer at arms yet in 1573. At that time, there was no herald in the service of the Duke. After the departure of Émond du Boullay, a certain Pierre Raulin, also known as Clermont, is mentioned in the accounts, but he died in 1571.⁴⁴ During this period and as far back as 1561, Didier Richier was a painter at the Duke's palace. He also spent some time in Italy, from where he returned in around 1567, before

³⁹ H. Deonna, 'Lettres de noblesse et d'armoiries de familles genevoises', *Archives héraldiques suisses* 31 (1917) 6-21, 17-20; Choux, 'L'armorial', 8-16 (Metz, Archives municipales, ii 158, n° 2).

⁴⁰ AD54, B 50, fol. 60r-62r; Nancy, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 1396, p. 48.

⁴¹ Metz, Archives municipales, ii 158, n° 3.

⁴² His signature appears regularly from folio 2v (1573) to folio 118v (1581), then disappears and reappears on folio 273r (1593).

⁴³ C.-P. de Longeaux, *La Chambre des comptes du duché de Bar* (Bar-le-Duc, 1907) 102-104; A. de Mahuet, *Biographie de la Chambre des Comptes de Lorraine* (Nancy, 1914) 120-122.

⁴⁴ AD54, B 1101, fol. 70v (1555) et B 1158, fol. 149v (1571).

resuming his duties as court painter. On 28 June 1576, he became a pursuivant of arms under the title of Clermont. His letter of appointment sums up his career and his skills, explaining that he had:

...toute sa jeunesse hanté les Italles et frequenté avec les meilleurs espritz de son art, mesmement ung bien long temps vacqué tant à la peinture qu'aux escriptures des cronicques et genealogies de noz tres illustres progeniteurs, en quoy et en plusieurs autres choses qu'il auroit lors et du depuis practiqué, auroit de beaucoup profité, et tant en ce qui consiste le blason des armoiries que pour les cronicques, ceremonies et legations qui peuvent dependre du debvoir des roy d'armes, heraults et poursuiuans...⁴⁵

It is not known whether a copy of the *Epitomé de l'origine et succession de la comté de Boulongne*, composed by Jean d'Aucy in around 1555 and dedicated on 27 December 1574 to the Duchess of Lorraine Claude de France, was the reason for his accession to the office of pursuivant, but it does illustrate Didier's talents perfectly.⁴⁶ From 1577 to 1581, he worked on the *Recherche des nobles* that bears his name and which will be discussed below, and he died in 1585.⁴⁷ Balthasar Crocq succeeded him as Clermont pursuivant on 16 August 1585. His son Pierre Richier became pursuivant as Vaudémont on the same day. Pierre died in 1594 and Balthasar took the title of Vaudémont, leaving that of Clermont to Raphaël de Hault. In 1600, Jean Callot finally replaced Crocq.⁴⁸ Throughout this period, Claude Pariset supervised the preparation of the document for the *Chambre des Comptes*. At least two different hands created the coats of arms undoubtedly, but with a very similar style: probably Didier Richier (from at least 1576 to 1585), then his son Pierre (from 1586 to 1593). The heraldic lions of the *Epitomé* of 1574 (fol. 32r) can be compared with those of B 186 (fol. 34r, 1579) and with those of a collection of genealogical quarters of families from the Lorraine nobility in the second half of the sixteenth century (fol. 63v). This last document includes a subscription on page 73r by Didier Richier ('dict Clermont') dated 7 June 1585.⁴⁹ The similarities in the heraldic designs of the father and son appear when comparing all the documents mentioned previously with a proof of nobility written and signed by 'Pierre Richier dict Vaudemont, poursuiuant d'armes de son

⁴⁵ AD54, B 46, f. 58r.

⁴⁶ A. Cullière, 'Le véritable EPITOME de Jean d'Aucy (1556)', *Annales de l'Est*, 4 (1984) 243-286, about Didier Richier: 267-272; idem, *Les écrivains et le pouvoir*, 862-863. The manuscript of this *Epitomé* kept at Boulogne-sur-Mer (Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 833).

⁴⁷ On 28 July 1580, the Duke granted him 1000 francs, the currency of Lorraine, at the rate of 12 écus au soleil on each new ennoblement letter. These sums mentioned from 30 July 1580 to 12 January 1583 (AD54, B 186, fol. 103v-142r).

⁴⁸ Cullière, 'Le véritable EPITOME', 272; Choux, 'L'armorial', 29-31. In 1608, Jean Callot was forced to turn to the widow of Didier Richier to obtain "ung arbre de ligne de Dennemarck a faire et blasonner les dites lignes" (AD54, B 1311).

⁴⁹Paris, BnF, fr. 25238; <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b85297039.r=fran%C3%A7ais%2025238?rk=21459:2> (accessed 12 Feb. 2020).

altesse', dated 29 January 1586.⁵⁰ There are other documents which make it possible to attribute the coats of arms painted in B 186 to the Richiers, and especially to Didier: these are the manuscripts of the *Recherche* completed from 1577 to 1581.

2.2 The *Recherche des nobles* of Didier Richier (1577-1581)

The manuscripts, context, chronology and methods of the *Recherche des nobles* are well known, but it is worth recalling the circumstances and main dates of these investigations.⁵¹ During the *Assises* of Lorraine on 10 December 1576, the gentlemen of Lorraine asked the Duke to investigate the nobility of his principalities, dissatisfied as they were with the measures he had taken in 1573. On 12 September 1577, Charles III finally gave a commission to his marshals of Lorraine and Barrois to “discerner ceulx de ladictte ancienne chevallerie contre les nouveaux annoblis.”⁵² Jean, Count of Salm, Marshal of Lorraine, commissioned Didier Richier to carry out this research in the Duchy of Lorraine on 16 April 1578 and Richier did so from 1 July 1578 to 26 August 1579. On 20 February 1580, it was the turn of African d'Haussonville, Marshal of Barrois, to instruct Didier to undertake his investigation in the Duchy of Bar from 1 June 1581 to 30 July 1581. He carried on his mission of collecting titles until 1583-1584. For three years or more, Didier Richier travelled the highways and byways to investigate the authenticity of the supposed nobles of the Dukedoms of Lorraine and Bar. Official documents were presented to him. He heard the testimonies of inhabitants in the towns and villages, and saw monuments that attested to ancient use of coats of arms, recording these elements in documents in order to serve as proof and avoid disputes as he went along.

As we have seen, the King of France was the first to react to the increase in the number of ennoblements and the socio-economic problems it was causing. The ordinances of Amboise (1556) and Orléans (1561), which likely inspired the commission given by Charles III in 1573, were renewed or extended by the edicts of July 1576 and January 1577.⁵³ However, it seems

⁵⁰ Coll. particulière.

⁵¹ *Livre de la recherche et du recueil des nobles de la duché de Lorraine* (Metz, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. Mut. 1307; Nancy, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 1362) et *Livre de la recherche et du recueil des nobles du bailliage de Saint-Mihiel* (Metz, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 1152 : <https://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr/mirador/index.php?manifest=https://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr/iiif/24273/manifest> (accessed 12 Feb. 2020). On the *Recherche* : R. des Godins de Souhesmes, *Armorial de la recherche de Didier Richier (1577-1581), précédé d'une notice* (Nancy, 1894); A. Cullière, *Bibliothèque lorraine de la Renaissance* (Metz, 2000) 31-34; O. Eyraud, *Livre de la recherche et du recueil des nobles du duché de Lorraine par Didier Richier* (Nancy, 2009); M. Wenuch, *Die Recherche des Didier Richier. Das lothringische Adelbuch von 1581* (Vienne, 2011).

⁵² Metz, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 1152, fol. IIv.

⁵³ Isambert, *Recueil général*, 305; Bloch, *L'anoblissement*, 148. Sur la noblesse et les anoblissements en France : A. Jouanna, ‘Perception et appréciation de l’anoblissement dans la France du XVI^e siècle et du début du XVII^e

that in matters of research into the nobility and systematic investigations, the initiative came from the Low Countries. On 17 February 1576, Don Luis de Requesens, governor on behalf of Philip II, sent a letter to the President and people of the King's Council ordering them to "faire diligente recherche de ceux qui usurpent indeüement lesdictz titres et qualités de nobles, et d'escuiers". These requests were repeated in 1583 and 1587.⁵⁴ At the same time, in the Kingdom of France, the Ordinance of Orléans of May 1579 reconfirmed the previous ones and clarified them by its article 258: the acquisition of noble fiefdoms did not constitute ennoblement.⁵⁵ The ordinance of Paris of March 1583 on the *taille* and usurpation of noble titles further reinforced the previous provisions, especially with regard to ennobled persons.⁵⁶ These measures were to lead to the regulation for the *taille* and the search for usurpers of nobility on 29 October 1583.⁵⁷ The term 'recherche' thus appeared for the first time in Artois in February 1576, then in Lorraine in September 1577 and, finally, in the Kingdom of France in October 1583. It is difficult to go further in the analysis, as comparison with equivalent documents to the manuscripts of Didier Richier is impossible. However, it does seem that on the French side, these research operations were carried out by tax officers and not by one or more heralds of arms. The commissioners for the *régallement des tailles* were not supposed to give credence 'aux copies collationnées des titres que les nobles, exempts ou privilégiés leur présenterons, et se feront représenter les originaux, et prendront bien garde que les roturiers ne supposent des noms et armes des familles vraiment nobles'⁵⁸. In the Low Countries, meanwhile, an officer of arms brought about a major change for the nobility. Nicolas Deschamps asked for more stringent legislation, leading to the edict of 23 November 1595 by which only the prince had power henceforth to grant nobility.⁵⁹ As a historian and painter, Nicolas Deschamps was successively officer of arms of Hainaut, Brabant, and then Burgundy. As proven by his

siècle', in: *L'anoblissement en France XV^e-XVIII^e siècles. Théories et réalités* (Bordeaux, 1985) 1-36; J.-M. Constant, 'Les structures sociales et mentales de l'anoblissement. Analyse comparative d'études récentes XVI^e-XVII^e siècles', in: *L'anoblissement en France*, 37-67; R. Descimon, 'Chercher de nouvelles voies pour interpréter les phénomènes nobiliaires dans la France moderne. La noblesse "essence" ou rapport social?', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 46 (1999) 5-21; N. Le Roux, 'L'épreuve de la vertu. Condition nobiliaire et légitimation de l'honorabilité au XVI^e siècle', in: J.-P. Genet, eds, *La légitimité implicite (Le pouvoir symbolique en Occident (1300-1640), I)* (Paris-Rome, 2015), t. 2, 57-72.

⁵⁴ Janssens, 'De la noblesse', 506.

⁵⁵ Bloch, *L'anoblissement*, 39.

⁵⁶ Isambert, *Recueil général*, 540-548.

⁵⁷ This declaration is mentioned in: G. Blanchard, *Compilation chronologique contenant un recueil en abrégé des ordonnances, édits, déclarations et lettres patentes des rois de France...*, t. 1 (Paris, 1715) 1160: "Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 29 octobre 1583, registre en la Chambre des Comptes, coté 4 A fol. 25)". Another search of this type on 12 April 1596 (Chérin, *Abrégé chronologique*, 81).

⁵⁸ *Règlement des commissaires pour le régallement de la taille*, 23 août 1598, art. 2 (Chérin, *Abrégé chronologique*, 82); B. Barbiche, 'Les commissaires députés pour le "régallement" des tailles en 1598-1599', *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*, 118 (1960) 58-96.

⁵⁹ Janssens, 'De la noblesse', 505.

participation in two chapters of the Golden Fleece (1586 and 1593), his heraldic expertise qualified him to carry out this reform project.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, when Deschamps became aware of the usurpations in Franche-Comté in 1588, the officers of arms in Lorraine had been collaborating with those of the *Chambre des Comptes* for fifteen years, and Didier Richier, *pursuivant* Clermont, had already completed his research four years earlier (we have seen that he made his last additions in 1584). Therefore, it seems that there was a specific reaction to the phenomenon of ennoblement in Lorraine. In the Duchies of Lorraine and Bar, the measures came later than those of Kingdom of France, where the focus was essentially fiscal. This is reflected in the documents allowing a large place for heraldry in Lorraine, an aspect that does not seem to be found in France and only appears later in neighbouring Franche-Comté.⁶¹

However, the situation in Lorraine could be little more than an illusion due to an evidence effect. The measures pronounced by the Duke of Lorraine and Bar were not necessarily followed up by action, since in December 1592 Charles III ordered “aux baillis de faire la recherche de ceux qui n’avoient fait entériner leurs lettres de noblesse, et acquitté la finance, ou y avoient dérogé, et de les empêcher de jouir desdits privilèges et franchises y attachés.”⁶² Yet, there was now a clear distinction between the longstanding nobility and more recently ennobled persons. In the Duchy of Bar, the distinction was unclear at first or even non-existent. For instance, the Custom of the Bailiwick of Bar of 14 October 1579 distinguished only between nobles and non-nobles, but the Custom of the Bailiwick of Saint-Mihiel of 1598 was more precise: to be noble, an individual must be born to a noble father and mother, to a noble father and a commoner mother, or to a non-noble father and a noble mother who had renounced the paternal succession, or must have been ennobled by letters from the Prince (Title 1, art. 2).⁶³ In the Duchy of Lorraine, the Custom of 1 March 1594 defined three kinds of lay people: gentlemen, ennobled persons and commoners.⁶⁴ Pre-eminence was given to the former and two paragraphs clearly marked the lesser status of the ennobled persons. The latter could lose their nobility if they did not live in a noble manner (Title 1, art. 6) and the bastards of

⁶⁰ R. D. Casas, ‘Escudo del I Duque de Lerma en el MUVa’, *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología*, LXXV (2009) 181-190.

⁶¹ J. Finot, *Les anoblissements en Franche-Comté pendant la période espagnole : d’après les registres de la Chambre des comptes et du Parlement* (Angers, 1868).

⁶² Rogéville, *Dictionnaire historique*, t. 2, 152.

⁶³ C. A. Bourdot de Richebourg, *Nouveau coutumier général ou corps des coutumes générales et particulières de France et des provinces...*, t. II, second part, (Paris, 1724) 1019-1039 et 1048-1065.

⁶⁴ Bourdot de Richebourg, *Nouveau coutumier général*, 1099-1119 (article 1, titre 1, alinéa 4).

gentlemen had the same status as ennobled persons, whereas the bastards of ennobled persons were commoners (Title 1, arts. 12 and 13).

At the end of the sixteenth century, the customs of the dukedoms, and more particularly those of Lorraine, reflected the new contours of noble society and marked a clear distinction between the new aristocracy – recently promoted by the sole will of the prince – and the older families, proud of their ancient origins and honourable lineage. Under pressure from the latter, but also from fiscal concerns, the Duke had the ennoblements and coats of arms he had granted registered in separate documents by his accountants and officers of arms. As we have seen, heraldry was important. It manifested itself on several levels and at the same time that the prince was ordering his heralds to verify and compile the proof and coats of arms of the lesser fringes of his nobility, his gentlemen were having the same heralds paint pictures of quarters proving the prestige of their alliances and the quality of their ancestry over several generations.⁶⁵ However, the ancient nobility was not alone in reacting to this social promotion. Commoners were also sensitive to these questions, as ennoblement exempted the holders from taxation and thus increased the tax burden on the community in which they resided. In 1586, there was a lawsuit between the inhabitants of Varennes-en-Argonne and Claude Gervaise, a controller of the said place. One of the questions raised was about ‘le fait de congoistre l’origine de la noblesse dudict Gervaise’. Pierre Richier was then ordered to display ‘tous tiltres, lettres et enseignemens concernant ledict fait’ and in his evidence, Pierre referred to various documents, including the *Recherche* made by his father in the bailiwick of Clermont, which he still held, and a copy of the letter of nobility from René II of Lorraine on 11 March 1508 (n. s.) which was then in the possession of Claude Gervaise. The herald also reproduced the coat of arms granted by the Prince twice.⁶⁶ Thanks to this document, we can deduce that the *Recherche* of Didier Richier served as proof of nobility and that coats of arms were a component of noble identity in the principalities of Lorraine. In 1606, Florentin Le Thierriat asserted in his *Traité de la noblesse civile* that the funerals of ennobled people were more sumptuous than those of commoners and that “leurs armoyries sont portées du convoy de leur corps, avec les blasons accordez aux lettres de leur anoblissement, et les timbres mornez, à la différence de la noblesse de race qui les porte grillez.”⁶⁷ Even in death, it was essential that the new social order of Lorraine should be upheld.

⁶⁵ BnF, fr. 25238, with the signature of Didier Richier in 1585 (cf. *infra*).

⁶⁶ Cf. *infra*.

⁶⁷ F. Le Thierriat, *Trois Traictez scavoir 1. De la Noblesse de Race, 2. De la Noblesse Civile, 3. Des Immunittez des Ignobles* (Paris, 1606). On the author: A. Cullière, ‘Le procès de Florentin Le Thierriat (1608)’, *Cahiers lorrains*, 4 (1984) 277-289.