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# VIRTUS

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# Ennoblement and the control of grants of arms in sixteenth-century Lorraine

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Following the example of the French king, the dukes of Lorraine ennobled their most zealous servants from the fourteenth century onwards.<sup>1</sup> These new men required nobility letters and other documents to prove their new social status, while the reputation of nobles of ‘ancient extraction’ depended on a long history of landholding and military service. This article shows how in the course of the sixteenth century the Lorraine princes used heraldry and, more particularly, the keeping of heraldic registers to draw a clear distinction between the ennobled and the ancient nobility. The increased ducal control exercised in this matter corresponds to similar developments in other polities, such as France and the Habsburg Netherlands. In Lorraine, however, measures to keep track of ennoblements were taken relatively early. Moreover, as will be argued, the heraldic element took on a specific significance in the sources that ducal officers produced to that end.

Until the arrival of René of Anjou as duke of Bar and Lorraine (1431), ennoblement by letters patent was only a marginal phenomenon in the Lorraine territories. It

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



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Fig. 1. Letter of ennoblement for Claude Callot, 1584 (*Archives municipales de Metz*, ii 158, no. 2)

was René II of Lorraine (r. 1473-1508), however, who first developed a princely policy of integrating new elites into the Second Estate.<sup>2</sup> Hitherto insignificant (some thirty ennoblements are documented prior to 1473), the practice then expanded significantly during the reigns of Antoine (r. 1508-1544) and Charles III (r. 1545-1608).<sup>3</sup> As else-

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)', *Publications du Centre Européen d'Etudes Bourguignonnes* (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> s.) 37 (1997), 239-262; idem, 'Quatre lettres d'anoblissement de Nicolas d'Anjou, duc de Lorraine (1470-1473)', *Lotharingia* 18 (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). Tulois et comté de Vaudémont*, volume 2 (Nancy, 1977), 463-464; A. Fersing, *Idoines et suffisants. Les officiers d'État et l'extension des droits du Prince en Lorraine ducal (début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle-1633)* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Strasbourg, vol. I, 2017), 109-111, 526-531, 575-577, 883-886.

Fig. 2. Coat of arms granted to Claude Callot, as depicted on his letter of ennoblement, 1584 (*Archives municipales de Metz*, ii 158, no. 2)



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where, a fixed ingredient of princely ennoblements became the simultaneous grant of a new heraldic identity. The oldest nobility letters preserved for Lorraine do not mention any grant of arms, but such grants were systematically included from René I onwards.<sup>4</sup> During his reign the letters patent also took on a standard form that remained unchanged under his successors Nicolas d'Anjou (r. 1470-1473) and René II. They always begin with an ornate initial, yet the main emphasis is on the representation of the newly created nobleman's coat of arms. Emblazoned in the text, the arms are painted on the bottom right and protected by a fold.<sup>5</sup> From Antoine's reign onwards, the ducal coat of arms was added to adorn the initial and the model became fixed once and for all, reaching a certain perfection under Charles III.<sup>6</sup>

4 Examples of nobility letters without grants of arms include the eighteenth-century copy of the letters patent of Humblet de Gondrecourt (23 July 1363) and Vivien de Thiaucourt (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; 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 Letters patent for Mathieu de Metz (cf. previous note), Nicolas Moitret (22 March 1473 (n.s.); private collection; Blanchard, 'Quatre lettres' 101-109) and Drouet Laguerre (25 May 1486; AD54, E 419). Cf. A. Zajic, 'The influence of beneficiaries on the artistic make-up of imperial grants of arms' and M. Roland, 'Medieval grants of arms and their illuminators', both in: T. Hiltmann and L. Hablot, eds, *Heraldic artists and painters in the Middle Ages and early modern times* (Ostfildern, 2018), 113-132 and 135-155.

6 E.g., Adam du Bourg (28 February 1513 (n.s.); AD54, 1 J 1, without ducal coats of arms); César de Guebenhousen (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 the main intention lay in the act of ennoblement itself, that is the change in status such letters patent provided, the accompanying grant of arms was key to the process. This is evidenced by the care with which a grantee's new bearings were depicted on the documents, as well as by the words preceding their formal description or 'blazon':

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 (...)<sup>7</sup>

From the start, ennobled persons could use the arms they received in the same way as other nobles did. But, on a closer look, there is a clear difference in composition or they contain distinctive elements.<sup>8</sup> The arms of nobles created by the Lorraine dukes often have a more complex appearance than those of other nobles. Partitions and ordinaries are used simultaneously. Moreover, the charges in the shield, particularly animals, are represented in a different way or were unusual.<sup>9</sup> Such heraldic subtleties, however, were not enough to mark a difference of rank between nobles of ancient lineage and the new elites entirely devoted to the prince, to whom they owed everything.

The ancient nobility was unhappy with the competition from new men and therefore put pressure on the prince. He was forced to take measures to appease them, as can be seen in changes introduced in the customary laws of Lorraine ('*coutumes de Lorraine*'): after ignoring ennobled persons as a distinct category in 1519, the updated Custom of 1 March 1594 granted them a place of secondary importance, giving pre-eminence to the gentlemen ('*gentilshommes*').<sup>10</sup> In the meantime, attempts were made to document all or some of the letters patent and arms of new nobles. Émond du Boullay, who as ducal herald was responsible for matters of nobility, produced a first compilation in the form of a manuscript armorial (1543-1551). However, both re-

7 'And as sign of nobility and as decoration thereof, we have granted and do grant the coat of arms as it is hereinafter painted, with power to bear it and use it in all places, as other nobles are wont to use theirs', quoted from the letters patent for Claude Callot (30 July 1584; Metz, Archives municipales, ii 158, n° 2) which is published in: J. Choux, 'L'armorial de la famille Callot. Nancy, XVII<sup>e</sup> s.' *Lotharingia* 4 (1992), 12.

8 Blanchard, 'L'héraldique des anoblis'.

9 E.g., Richard Chavenel (18 April 1576; AD54, B 186, fol. 27Av): 'd'azur au chevron d'argent, accompagné en pointe d'une teste de lion arrachée d'or, au chef de mesme paré de trois estoilles de gueules' ('Azure a chevron argent with in point a lyon's head erased of the first; a chief or with three mullets gules'); Didier Coureur (8 July 1578; *ibid.*, fol. 34Br): 'd'asur au lyon d'argent armé, lampassé de mesme tenant avec ses deux pattes de devant une croix ancrée d'or' ('Azure a lyon argent armed holding a cross moline or'); Christophe Gastinois (30 August 1589; *ibid.*, fol. 202r.): 'd'azur au phoenix d'or, ardent et flamboyant de gueule au chef empesché d'argent, surmonté de trois estoilles d'or' ('Azure a bar enhanced argent between in point a phoenix or issuing from flame gules and chief three mullets also or').

10 J. Coudert, 'Le duc Charles III et la reformation des coutumes du Bassigny lorrain', *Annales de l'Est* 1 (1991), 29-59. See also: G. Cabourdin, *Terre et hommes*, 472-479; A. Motta, *Noblesse et pouvoir princier dans la Lorraine ducale (1624-1737)* (Paris, 2015), 75-97.

peated protests from the ancient lineages and abuses of the ducal tax system pushed duke Charles III to take further measures. Certainly, the loss of revenue for the ducal treasury caused by the tax exemption of false nobles was his prime motivation, but Charles also sought to mark distinctions within the 'real' nobility. He ordered the registration of letters of ennoblement by the *Chambre des Comptes* in 1573 and commissioned research into the nobility of his lands, which was carried out by herald Didier Richier from 1577 onwards. This *Recherche des nobles*, a measure that formed the culmination of princely control, is a curious aspect of the Lorraine case since it precedes the more famous French '*recherche*' initiated by Colbert in 1666 and the armorial d'Hozier (1696). In what follows, the successive steps in the control of ennoblements will be discussed in two chronological parts: first the initial response of the ducal authority (1543-1551) and then Charles III's reaction in the 1570s.

### Émond du Boullay's armorial as a first response (1543-1551)

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The call for a stricter control of ennoblements, as a distinct status within the Lorraine nobility, emerged gradually. Before Émond du Boullay produced his armorial, there seems to be no direct legal or political evidence of such concerns among the longstanding nobility. The Custom of 1519, for instance, reveals no particular tension within the Second Estate. It does, however, reflect a noble interest in the use of coats of arms as a marker of distinction. One article on inheritance states that the eldest sons shall bear 'les armes entiers de leurs maisons et ses frères maynez sont tenuz mectre différence en leurs armes, à sçavoir comme ung croissant, une molette esperon ou aultres seingz comme l'on a accoustumez'.<sup>11</sup> The production of a certain number of armorials in the 1530s and 1540s is a sign not only of this interest, but also of the old nobility's increasing need to set itself apart symbolically from the new elites.<sup>12</sup> About a decade later, when ennoblements were recorded in the registers of letters patent in the *Chambres des Comptes*, duke Antoine therefore urged Émond du Boullay, who served as his herald since 1543, to draw up a specific armorial of his ennobled subjects in order to show the distance separating the nobilities of Lorraine.<sup>13</sup>

11 E. Bonvalot, *Les plus principales coutumes du duchié de Lorraine* (Paris, 1878), 93: 'the plain arms of their houses and their younger brothers are required to introduce a difference in their arms, such as a crescent, a mullet pierced or other customary mark of cadency'.

12 Three armorials were made over the period 1530-1540: Armorial of Nicolas de Lutzelbourg (Nancy, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 1727), Armorial of Jean de Haraucourt (Bibliothèque de la Société d'Histoire de la Lorraine et du Musée Lorrain, s. c.), and the armorial called *Clémery* (BnF, fr. 23076). On this subject: J.-C. Blanchard, 'L'Armorial de Jean de Haraucourt, manuscrit du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle conservé au Musée lorrain à Nancy', *Lotharingia* 10 (2001), 81-125.

13 H. Schneider, 'Les lettres patentes de René II. Jalons pour une étude', in: H. Say and H. Schneider, eds, *Le duc de Lorraine René II et la construction d'un État princier*, *Lotharingia* 16 (2010), 31-45.



Fig. 3. Coats of arms of Gilles Conrard, Henri Vaultrel and Nicolas Aubertin in the armorial of Édmond du Boullay (*Bibliothèque municipale de Nancy, ms. 1396, fol. 42*)



### A herald in ducal service

Émond du Boullay came from a Norman family of lower nobility and had grown up at the French court where his parents held office. His father Pierre, also known as Marie, was a man of arms in the service of King Louis XII and then François I. His mother Richarde des Chapelles served as governess of the nieces and daughters of the Constable of France Anne de Montmorency.<sup>14</sup> Around 1533, Émond was discredited for stabbing to death a certain 'Jaspart Loyset' after the latter had slandered him. He was at that time master of the schools (*maistre des escolles*) of Revigny-sur-Ornain (in Barrois), where he resided with his wife Marguerite, daughter of the late Pierre Taupinet who had been a ducal *fourrier* (quartermaster). Exiled for seven years from the duchies of Bar and Lorraine, he finally obtained a pardon from the duke in 1541, thanks in particular to the good reputation he had enjoyed prior to his crime.<sup>15</sup>

We do not know why Émond settled in Barrois, but no doubt, he had won the favour of the Lorraine princes then residing in France: Duke Antoine or his brother Cardinal Jean de Lorraine.<sup>16</sup> The year he received his pardon, Émond dedicated to the former a long poem on the subject of the grace of God, which the dukes of Lorraine used in their title.<sup>17</sup> In this poem, Émond calls himself regent of the '*grand escole*' (great school) of Metz cathedral. Perhaps he spent his seven years of exile in the

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14 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. The letter of confirmation of nobility granted to him by the duke of Lorraine on 18 March 1544 (n.s.) gives his genealogy (AD54, B 22, fol. 242r.-243r.). On Émond du Boullay, see: A. Calmet, *Bibliothèque lorraine, ou histoire des hommes illustres* (Nancy, 1751), 138-143; J.-N. Beauprê, *Recherches historiques et bibliographiques sur les commencements de l'imprimerie en Lorraine, et sur ses progrès, jusqu'à la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Saint-Nicolas-de-Port, 1845), 105-112; H. Lepage, 'Notice sur Émond du Boullay, héraut d'armes de Lorraine sous les ducs Antoine, François I<sup>er</sup> et Charles III', *Journal de la Société d'Archéologie Lorraine* 4 (1855), 36-48; H. Menu, *Etudes biographiques sur Edmond du Boullay, Claude Henriet Fournier et Dom Brocq* (Châlons-sur-Marne, 1866), 9-16; H. Jadart, 'Émond Du Boullay: historiographe et poète du XVI<sup>e</sup> 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* 71 (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 Émond du Boullay', *Travaux de l'Académie Nationale de Reims* 72 (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 and 299; A. Cullière, *Les écrivains et le pouvoir en Lorraine au XVI<sup>e</sup> 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 Danemark (1541) chanté par Jean Mallard et Edmond du Boullay', in: J. Nassichuk, ed., *Vérité et fiction dans les entrées solennelles à la Renaissance et à l'âge classique* (Laval, 2009), 1-26.

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

16 G. Poull, *La maison ducale de Lorraine* (Nancy, 1991), 200-202; C. Michon, 'Les richesses de la faveur à la Renaissance: Jean de Lorraine (1498-1550) et François I<sup>er</sup>', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 50-3 (2003/3), 34-61.

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

prince-bishopric and certainly owed this office to the cardinal of Lorraine, who had been the bishop of Metz since 1505.

It was as a favour from the cardinal that in 1543 the ruling Duke Antoine granted to Émond, who then resided in Étain, the office of poursuivant of arms (a junior herald) with the title of ‘Clermont’.<sup>18</sup> The new poursuivant immediately took up his pen and demonstrated his heraldic knowledge by writing *Le blason de l’escu de Lorraine*. As both herald and poet, Émond exalted the symbolism of the ducal arms as a way of praising the duke and his house.<sup>19</sup> The work was offered to the duke in Bar-le-Duc on All Saints’ Day 1543 and was followed by another poem devoted to the art of heraldry, *L’origine de bataille et chevalerie, avec l’invention des couleurs d’armoyrie*.<sup>20</sup> That same year, Émond had another work printed in Strasbourg, celebrating the birth of Charles, son of François I of Lorraine and Christina of Denmark.<sup>21</sup> This was followed in 1547 by an account of the funeral of Duke Antoine and his son François, in 1549 by a genealogy of the Lorraine dynasty and finally, in 1550, by accounts of the funerals of the duke of Guise – Antoine’s brother – and Cardinal Jean.<sup>22</sup>

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Émond’s 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. As a widower, he married a second time with the daughter of an officer of the city, where Jean de Lorraine and then his nephew Charles occupied the archbishop’s seat. Émond du Boullay died there in 1577.

### The armorial: recording and controlling ennoblements

From 1543 to 1551, Émond kept an armorial of ennobled persons.<sup>23</sup> This heraldic overview of Lorraine’s ‘new’ nobility consists of 194 entries divided in five parts that each correspond to the reign of successive dukes. A closer look at the manuscript allows us to assess its completeness.

The first forty-eight pages each depict three coats of arms, two at the top and one at the bottom, with the name, status and date of ennoblement of each individual written

18 AD54, B 22, fol. 137v. (16 February 1543, n.s.); Étain (Meuse, ar. Verdun, ch.-l. c.).

19 Nancy, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 873. This manuscript is dated 1542 and was probably written between 16 February (the day Émond was appointed prosecutor) and 25 March (Easter Day) 1543.

20 Nancy, BSAL, ms. 193. Dated 1543 (o.s.), this manuscript was probably written between 1 November 1543 and 13 April 1544.

21 *Les dialogues des trois 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.).

22 *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 catholique enterrement de feu Monsieur le reverendissime et illustrissime cardinal de Lorraine* (Paris, 1550).

23 Nancy, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 1396. This 62-page parchment manuscript (288x205 mm) can be compared to another armorial preserved at the BnF (Fr. 18649).

underneath (see Fig. 3, p. 14). The first mentioned is Guillaume de Mauléon, a *clerc-ju-ré* (notary) of Clermont-en-Argonne, who had been ennobled on 8 October 1500. The next two ennoblements are dated 1512. The final one in this first part of the armorial was granted on 11 July 1539. From page forty-nine onwards, four shields are painted on each page. The section with the ennoblements from Antoine's reign ends with the arms and entry of Hansel Merklin, archer of the duke's guard (1 April 1544). On page sixty-one, we then find the only person ennobled by Duke François I of Lorraine, who only reigned for one year (Denis Fabri, 1544). On that same page, the author announces:

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 of 1545-1559 follow on page sixty-two, concluding with the entry of Jean de Bouveron, ennobled on 23 March 1550 (n.s.). This final section is probably incomplete, as a damaged last folio suggests that a part of the manuscript is missing. In addition to this, we know that Émond only left Lorraine in 1551 and, unlike for previous reigns, there is no subscription by him to mark the end of that section.

Hence, most ennoblements recorded in the manuscript concern the reign of Antoine (189 entries), with just one for the brief reign of François I and the last four being conferred during the co-regency of Christina of Denmark and Nicolas de Lorraine. Overall, the ennoblements from Antoine's reign are well recorded in Émond's compilation. Of the 202 ennoblements recorded in the registers of letters patent (see below), 189 feature in the armorial.<sup>24</sup> The data therefore seem reliable, which is also confirmed when comparing some of the original nobility letters with the information in the armorial.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, there is a clear break in the quality of information covering the period between the death of Duke François I (12 June 1545) and Émond's departure in 1551. For these years, the armorial gives evidence of just four ennoblements, while the registers of letters patent record twenty of them.<sup>26</sup> This discrepancy is undoubtedly due to the aforementioned potential loss of part of the man-

24 Cabourdin, *Terre et hommes*, 462.

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

26 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 recorded in the registers of letters patent. It should also be noted that the oldest known nobility 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.

uscript, rather than to any slackening in the efforts of the herald, who was then pursuing his mission in the service of the ducal house.

Clearly, Émond's manuscript served to keep track of not only ennoblements, but above all of the coats of arms granted to these new nobles. Their heraldry was painstakingly depicted. Also, from the start, when the arms of an extinct ennobled line were transferred to another grantee, the herald additionally noted down the change of ownership. This practice, observed during Émond's term of office, was continued long after his departure to France. The last such note in the manuscript indicating a later armorial transfer dated 1581.<sup>27</sup> Armorial like this were at that time becoming imperative for professionals in heraldic science and all things relating to nobility and honours. In the first place, they had a practical purpose. These documents allowed heralds to easily retrieve the information they needed for their duties and keep it up to date. But, in this case, they also served the princely control of arms. As such, Émond's armorial, which isolated the nobles created by the prince, manifests the affirmation of ducal power as the fount of honours.<sup>28</sup>

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In addition, the visual format of the manuscript testifies to a fixation on the heraldry of the newly ennobled that appears to have been specific to Lorraine. Equivalent armorials do not seem to have existed in the kingdom of France. There, attempts to uphold the social order and the differences between commoners, newly ennobled and old nobility took on a different form, due to the multiple types of ennoblement. Jean-Richard Bloch distinguished three such types: personal ennoblement (granted by letters patent), collective adoption into the nobility (*noblesse d'offices* or *de cloche*), and legal ennoblement (particularly linked to the possession of noble land).<sup>29</sup> The latter type was the origin of the main measures taken by the French kings to control a phenomenon that was particularly detrimental to the military and financial clout of the kingdom. Under François I and Henri II, several successive measures adapted and reformed the arrière-ban system or military conscription taxes.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, the tax exemption 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

27 An addition of his hand is partially visible on page 6, it concerns the coat of arms of Pierre du Mans (here dated 1507) regranted 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 mentioned, but it is authenticated by the herald's signature). 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).

28 L. Hablot, 'Le roi fontaine de justice héraldique. La captation de l'expression emblématique à la fin du Moyen Âge', in: J.-P. Boudet, S. Menegaldo and B. Ribémont, eds, *Le Roi fontaine de justice. Pouvoir justicier et pouvoir royal au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance* (Paris, 2012), 223-240, particularly 232-233 and 237-238.

29 J.-R. Bloch, *L'anoblissement sous François I<sup>er</sup>. Essai d'une définition de la condition juridique et sociale de la noblesse au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1934).

30 Bloch, *L'anoblissement*, 39-41; M. Nassiet, 'La noblesse en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle d'après l'arrière-ban', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 46 (1999), 86-116.

et subsides ordinaires'.<sup>31</sup> These tax concerns were further addressed by the Order of 26 March 1556 (n.s.) which imposed the verification of ennoblement letters by 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).<sup>32</sup> The Ordinance of January 1561 reiterated this prohibition, now also including the bearing of coats of arms with a crest and exterior ornaments ('timbre') as a noble privilege.<sup>33</sup> In the Habsburg Low Countries, offering another case of comparison, the small number of ennoblements initially elicited little reaction from Emperor Charles V and the only restrictions until 1550 concerned sumptuary regulation.<sup>34</sup>

### The reaction of Duke Charles III

The first legislative reaction concerning the ennobled in Lorraine was an ordinance enacted on 27 October 1556 during Nicolas de Lorraine's regency. Similar to the French Declaration of 1546, this ordinance forbade those who had recently obtained the 'privileège de noblesse', and therefore no longer payed the 'taille, aides et subsides', from 'trafiquer, ni de mener marchandises publiques, ni autrement exercer actes mécaniques ou de roture', all activities liable to be taxed.<sup>35</sup> This decision came at a point when the increase in ennoblements was felt to be detrimental not only to the exclusivity and reputation of the ancient nobility, but also to the tax revenue of the duke. Introducing a similar legislative approach as in France, the Lorraine case – still imperial territory – stands in contrast with the lack of such regulations in the Holy Roman Empire at large.<sup>36</sup> An explanation for the relative mismatch may lie in the mostly stricter rules of access to noble status in the Empire where proofs of nobility

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31 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: 'Those who claim to be nobles, without justifying their quality, will be included on the roll of taxes and ordinary subsidies.'

32 Bloch, *L'anoblissement*, 148: 'To usurp the quality of nobility, on pain of a fine of 1000 livres'; Chérin, *Abrégé chronologique*, 44.

33 F.-A. Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises, depuis l'an 420 jusqu'à la révolution de 1789*, volume 14, first part (July 1559-May 1574) (Paris, 1829), 91.

34 P. Janssens, 'De la noblesse médiévale à la noblesse moderne. La création dans les anciens Pays-Bas d'une noblesse dynastique (XV<sup>e</sup>-début XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle)', *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 123 (2008), 490-515, specifically 505-506. In fact, the Habsburg heralds tried to make a clear distinction between the old and new nobility from the 1530s-40s onwards, see: P. Couhault, *L'Étoffe des héralds. L'office d'armes dans l'Europe des Habsbourg à la Renaissance* (Paris, 2020), 354-356.

35 P. D. G. de Rogéville, *Dictionnaire historique des ordonnances, et des tribunaux de la Lorraine et du Barrois*, volume 2 (Nancy, 1777), 145-146: 'To do public business or carry out craft activities'.

36 C. Duhamelle, 'Les noblesses du Saint-Empire du milieu du XVI<sup>e</sup> au milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 46-1 (1999), 146-170, here 160-163. Imperial characteristics of the ancient nobility of the duchy of Lorraine were medieval in origin: C. Rivière, *Une principauté d'Empire face au Royaume. Le duché de Lorraine sous le règne de Charles II (1390-1431)* (Turnhout, 2018), 80-98 and 472-474. For a global study on the phenomenon in the Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: K. Margreiter, 'The notion of nobility and the impact of ennoblement on early modern Central Europe', *Central European History* 52-3 (2019), 382-401.



Fig. 4. Duke Charles III of Lorraine (engraved portrait, Pierre Woeriot de Bouzey, 1591; coll. Bibliothèque de Nancy, P-TS-ES-00236)

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and the quality of the ancestors were essential and guaranteed the pre-eminence of families of more ancient standing.<sup>37</sup>

In practice, however, the Ordinance of 1556 was probably insufficient. Duke Charles III therefore found it necessary to take several concrete measures to control this phenomenon more effectively. Firstly, he made it in 1573 compulsory to register new letters of ennoblement. Secondly, in 1577, the duke had his estates (the duchies of Lorraine and Bar) investigated to expose violators of the Ordinance of 1556 and men who usurped noble titles or misused coat of arms. Again, these princely efforts reveal a special interest in heraldry as a way of demarcating the ‘new’ nobility.

#### The register of the *Chambre des Comptes* of Lorraine (1573-1593): verifying ennoblements

A ducal edict of 11 June 1573 imposed the obligation to register one’s elevation in status. Henceforth, any new nobleman had to turn to the *Chambre des Comptes* of Lorraine to have his letters of ennoblement verified and registered, and his possessions inventoried.<sup>38</sup> The officers of the *Chambre* were then responsible for taxing one-third

37 E. Harding and M. Hecht, eds, *Die Ahnenprobe in der Vormoderne. Selektion – Initiation – Repräsentation* (Münster, 2014).

38 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; it has a 19<sup>th</sup>-century binding.



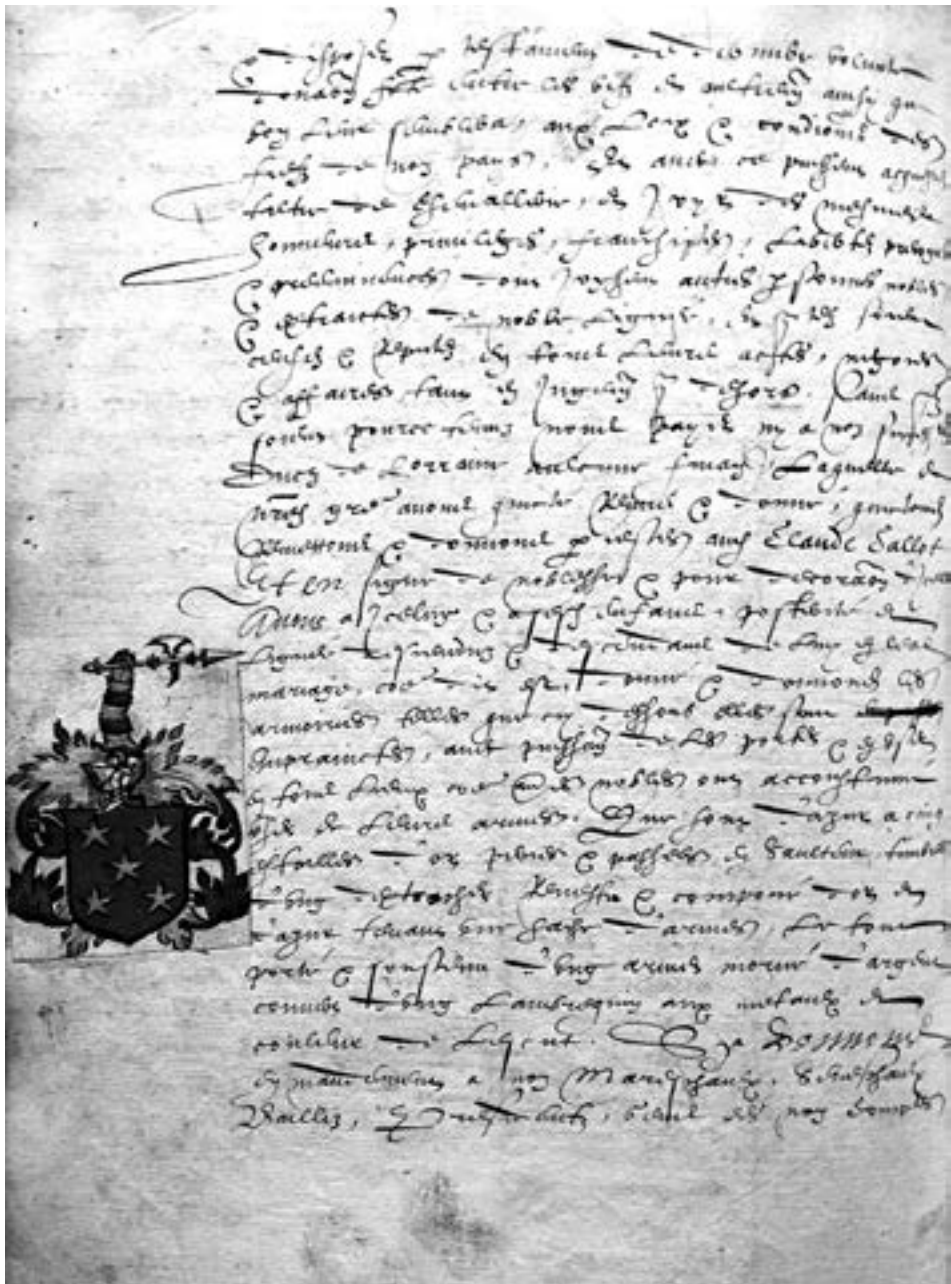


Fig. 5. Coat of arms of Claude Callot, depicted in the register of the 'Chambre des Comptes' of Lorraine (Archives départementales de Meurthe-et-Moselle, Nancy, B 186, fol. 169v)

of these possessions. Together with this edict, the prohibition of 1556 was reiterated. The first official register of this kind (AD54 B 186) furthermore contains a declaration of 3 November 1582 by which Charles III exempted the ennobled officers of his household and those of his children from all taxes and impositions, as well as a mandate of 1 January 1591 reiterating the two previous rulings.<sup>39</sup>

The way ennoblements were now registered is revealing of its efficiency. The first nobility letter granted and registered as such was that of Nicolas de Girmont, secretary to the duke's son, the Marquis de Pont-à-Mousson. The entry is dated 28 October 1573 and contains an entire copy of the letters patent. The grantee's arms are painted in the margin next to the written blazon. This ennoblement was ratified on 11 January 1574 (n.s.) and was followed by separate letters patent exempting de Girmont from all financial requirements.<sup>40</sup> After Nicolas de Girmont's letter, sixty-seven others are documented in the register, most of them with a financial exemption and endorsement, making a total of sixty-eighth registered ennoblements granted from 1573 to 1592.<sup>41</sup> The last nobility grant, however, which had initially been given on 7 January 1579 (n.s.) to Alexandre des Bordes, controller of the duke's finances, was not presented to the *Chambre des Comptes* until 1593, with letters of exemption obtained on 28 February and 3 March 1593, and ratified on the eighth of that month.<sup>42</sup> Alexandre des Bordes had not registered his letters beforehand and perhaps only reacted after the stern reminder of the 1591 mandate.

Some preserved original letters allow us to assess the application of the 1573 edict and the practice of endorsement by the officers of the *Chambre des Comptes*, 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*.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, that 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 (Figs 1 and 5, pp. 10 and 21).<sup>44</sup> The system therefore seems to have worked well. However, the practice was not foolproof. Indeed, Jean le Labrier's ennoblement of 4 May 1581 was not recorded in the register of the *Chambre des Comptes*. However, this ennoblement

39 The edict of 1573 is copied on fol. 1r.-2v. (Rogéville, *Dictionnaire historique*, II, 148-149; Motta, *Noblesse et pouvoir*, 76-77), the declaration and the mandate on fol. 3r.-5r.

40 AD54, B 186, fol. 12r.-14r., the coat of arms was blazoned and depicted on fol. 13v.; fol. 14r. (ratification, 11 January 1574 n.s.); fol. 14v.-15r. (exemption, 10 January 1574 n.s.).

41 AD54, B 186, fol. 265r.-266v. (ennoblement, 15 July 1592); fol. 267r.-268r. (exemption, 1 October 1592); fol. 268r.-v. (ratification, 6 November 1592).

42 AD54, B 186, fol. 269v.-271r.

43 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.

44 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).

ment did find its way into a collection of letters patent composed for the duke by his secretaries and was also noted down in the armorial of Émond du Boullay.<sup>45</sup>

Despite this counter-example, it does seem that a control of the nobility letters and income of the ennobled persons by the *Chambre des Comptes* of Lorraine became customary after the edict of 1573. Only one manuscript register of this type is preserved, which stops in 1593. Yet, a written endorsement on the back of an original letter of ennoblement granted on 18 July 1594 to Jacques d'Andernach, receiver and *gruyer* (verderer) of Dompaire, suggests that, despite the probable loss of documentation, the practice of registration did become well established.<sup>46</sup>

We know that the preserved register (AD54 B 186) was kept and written by a certain Claude Pariset.<sup>47</sup> He was first clerk to the *Chambre des Comptes* before becoming its auditor on 4 July 1578 and ordinary secretary to the duke on 2 July 1580.<sup>48</sup> In Pariset's register, each of the arms described is accompanied in the margin by a painted representation, made by another specialized officer (Fig. 5, p. 21). This officer can be identified as Didier Richier, also known as 'de Vic', who in 1573 worked as a court painter and later became a herald of arms. No official document confirms Didier's involvement, but the heraldic drawings in the register of the *Chambre des Comptes* are very similar to other documents that can be attributed to his hand.

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 by his name of office 'Clermont', is mentioned in the accounts, but he died in 1571.<sup>49</sup> As early as 1561, Didier Richier, was a painter at the duke's palace.<sup>50</sup> He also spent some time in Italy, from where he returned around 1567, before resuming his duties as court painter. On 28 June 1576, Richier 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 cho-

45 AD54, B 50, fol. 60r.-62r. (On the letters patent, see: n. 13); Nancy, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 1396, 48.

46 Metz, Archives municipales, ii 158, n° 3. It seems this practice continued in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Another register (AD54, B 187) contains similar documents from the reign of Duke Leopold I for the years 1698-1724.

47 His signature appears regularly from fol. 2v. (1573) to fol. 118v. (1581), then disappears and reappears on fol. 273r. (1593). Claude Pariset was the son of Didier, an auditor of the *Chambre des Comptes* of Bar who was ennobled on 22 May 1540, and of Barbe des Fours.

48 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. See: 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.

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

50 Didier Richier was a distant relative of the sculptor Ligier Richier. M. Wenusch, *Die Recherche des Didier Richier. Das lothringische Adelbuch von 1581* (Vienna, 2011), 1. Didier Richier und seine 'Recherche', 2.

ses qu'il auroit lors et du depuis pratiqué, 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 devoir des roy d'armes, heraults et poursuivans...<sup>51</sup>

Two years earlier, Richier had produced and decorated a manuscript copy of Jean d'Aucy's *Epitomé de l'origine et succession de la comté de Boulongne*, which he dedicated to the Duchess of Lorraine, Claude de France (Fig. 7). Nothing proves that this work was the reason for his promotion as poursuivant, but it does perfectly illustrate Didier's talents.<sup>52</sup> From 1577 to 1581, as will be discussed below, he worked on the *Recherche des nobles*. Richier died in 1585 and was succeeded in the office of Clermont poursuivant by Balthasar Crocq on 16 August 1585. Yet, on the same day, his son Pierre Richier became poursuivant as Vaudémont. When Pierre died in his turn in 1594, Crocq took the title of Vaudémont, leaving that of Clermont to Raphaël de Hault. In 1600, Crocq would finally be replaced by Jean Callot.<sup>53</sup>

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Throughout this period, Claude Pariset supervised the preparation of the register for the *Chambre des Comptes*. At least two different hands were responsible for drawing the coats of arms, but in a very similar style: probably Didier Richier (from at least 1576 to 1585),<sup>54</sup> then his son Pierre (from 1586 to 1593). The heraldic lions in the register (B 186, fol. 34r., 1579) (Fig. 6) strongly resemble those of the *Epitomé*-manuscript of 1574 (fol. 32r.) (Fig. 7) and those in a series of genealogical pedigrees of families from the Lorraine nobility in the second half of the sixteenth century (fol. 63v.).

This last document includes a subscription on fol. 73r. by Didier Richier ('*dict Clermont*') dated 7 June 1585.<sup>55</sup> The similarities in the heraldic designs of father and son Richier appear when comparing all the documents mentioned previously with a proof of nobility written and signed by '*Pierre Richier dict Vaudemont, poursuivant d'armes de son altesse*', dated 29 January 1586.<sup>56</sup> Finally, another set of documents

51 AD54, B 46, fol. 58r.: 'During all of his youth, he roamed Italy and conversed with the best minds of his art. He also occupied himself for a long time with both painting and the writing of chronicles and genealogies of our very illustrious ancestors, of which and of various other things that he then and since practiced, he profited a lot, both what concerns the blazon of arms, as for the chronicles, ceremonies and legations that are the task of kings of arms, heralds and poursuivants.'

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

53 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).

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

55 Paris, BnF, fr. 25238.

56 Private collection.

Fig. 6. Coat of arms with heraldic lion drawn by Didier Richier, from the register of the 'Chambre des Comptes' of Lorraine (*Archives départementales de Meurthe-et-Moselle, Nancy, B 186, fol. 34r*)



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makes it possible to link the arms painted in the register B 186 to the Richiers, and especially to Didier: the manuscripts of the *Recherche des nobles*.

**The *Recherche des nobles* of Didier Richier (1577-1581): countering usurpations of nobility**

Apart from the registration of ennoblements, Charles III took a second measure to stop abuses and usurpations of noble status. He commissioned his marshals to carry out an inquiry in his duchies known as the *Recherche des nobles*. The context, chronology, methods and manuscripts of the *Recherche des nobles* are well known, but it is worth recalling the main circumstances.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *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) and *Livre de la recherche et du recueil des nobles du bailliage de Saint-Mihiel* (Metz, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 1152). On the *Recherche*, see: 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); Wenusch, *Die Recherche des Didier Richier*.



Fig. 8. Reproduction of a stained glass window representing François Aubertin et Barbe Lescamoussier in the 'Recherche des nobles' of Didier Richier, 1577-1581 (*Bibliothèques-médiathèque de Metz-Pontifroy*, Ms. Mutelet 1307, fol. 35r)



title of Hainaut, Brabant, and then Burgundy. As proven by his contribution to two solemnities of the Order of the Golden Fleece (1586 and 1593), his heraldic expertise qualified him to carry out a project of reform.<sup>72</sup> As it happens, in one of his addresses to King Philip II of Spain he mentioned the nobility archive gathered by the heralds of the English College of Arms and conserved in a special place of the 'royal Palace'.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps the practices of the English officers of arms also influenced those of their Lorraine counterparts. Such a potential influence, however, would predate 1577. It raises the question whether and how the famous visitations of the heralds of England and Wales may have inspired Didier Richier's *Recherche des nobles*.<sup>74</sup> There was possibly an influence through the Scottish connection. William Barclay (1546-1608), former secretary to the queen of Scotland Mary Stuart (1542-1567), settled in Lorraine from 1576 to 1603. Professor at the University of Pont-à-Mousson, he was a dean of the Faculty of Law, with the titles of councillor and 'maître des requêtes' of Charles III.<sup>75</sup> Although visitations were not systematic in Scotland, it is plausible that a Scotsman like Barclay, having contacts with the upper echelons of power, knew these English practices<sup>76</sup>.

Nevertheless, when Deschamps became aware of usurpations in Franche-Comté in 1588, the Lorraine heralds had already been collaborating with the officers of the *Chambre des Comptes* for fifteen years, and Richier, pursuing Clermont, had completed his *Recherche des nobles* four years earlier (we have seen that he made his last additions in 1584). Therefore, the measures taken in Lorraine and Bar were not simply an imitation of what happened in neighbouring regimes. They testify to a relatively early and specific reaction to the phenomenon of ennoblement. Admittedly, the ducal initiative came later than the measures in France, where the focus was essentially fiscal. Yet, the ducal authority (through its officers of arms) produced specific documents that allowed a large place for heraldry, an aspect that seems to lack in

72 R.D. Casas, 'Escudo del I Duque de Lerma en el MUVa', *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología* 75 (2009), 181-190; Couhault, *L'Étoffe des héralts*, 83-84, 159, 254, 346, 398, 402, 417, 419, 421, 426, 543, 623.

73 Couhault, *L'Étoffe des héralts*, 419. This address is undated, but in his copy Jean-Jacques Chifflet proposed in the margin: 1586 (Besançon, Bibliothèque municipale, Chifflet 83, fol. 13v.-19r., for the English heralds see fol. 18v.).

74 C. Cheesman, 'Grants and confirmations of arms', in: N. Ramsay, ed., *Heralds and heraldry in Shakespeare's England* (Donington, 2014), 68-104; A. Ailes, 'Le développement des "visitations" de héralts en Angleterre et au pays de Galles 1450-1600', *Revue du Nord* 366-367 (2006), 659-679; idem, "'A herald, Kate? O put me in thy books": Shakespeare, the heralds' visitations, and a new visitation address', in: Ramsay, *Heralds and heraldry in Shakespeare's England*, 105-124.

75 H.F. Barclay, *A History of the Barclay Family with pedigrees from 1067 to 1933, part II, The Barclays in Scotland from 1067 to 1660* (Londres, 1933), 119-123; A. Cullière, *Les écrivains et le pouvoir en Lorraine au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1999), 734-737. For the links between the dynasties of Lorraine and Scotland: A. Morgat, 'Le douaire champenois de Marie Stuart (1561-1587)' and J. Spangler, 'Mary of Guise as a dynastic entity: re-asserting the Auld Alliance or something bigger', *Annales de l'Est*, 1 (2017), 75-91, 161-181.

76 J. H. Stevenson, *Heraldry in Scotland*, volume 1 (Glasgow, 1914), 82-83, 91-92.

France and only appears later in neighbouring Franche-Comté.<sup>77</sup>

Do the exceptional sources preserved for the Lorraine case indeed reflect actions on the ground and societal change, or is this merely an illusion? Aside from the abovementioned measures to control and register ennoblements and corresponding grants of arms, the Customary Laws of the Duchies attest to the changes concerning noble hierarchy. Still, the measures pronounced by the duke of Lorraine and Bar were not necessarily followed up by action. In December 1592 Charles III had to order ‘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’.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, there was now a clear distinction between the longstanding nobility and more recently ennobled persons. The same can be noted in the duchy of Bar where such distinction had at first been unclear or even non-existent. For instance, the Custom of the Bailiwick of Bar of 14 October 1579 had only distinguished nobles and non-nobles, but the Custom of the Bailiwick of Saint-Mihiel of 1598 was more precise. To be considered ‘noble’, an individual now had to 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 he had to be ennobled by letters from the prince (Title 1, art. 2).<sup>79</sup> In the duchy of Lorraine, the Custom of 1 March 1594 defined three kinds of lay people: gentlemen (‘gentilshommes’), ennobled persons and commoners.<sup>80</sup> Pre-eminence was given to the former, while two separate paragraphs of the legal text clearly marked the lesser status of ennobled persons. Men of this category, as the Custom stated, could lose their nobility if they failed to uphold a noble lifestyle (Title 1, art. 6). The status of ennobled persons was equated with that of the bastards of gentlemen, whereas bastards of ennobled persons were considered commoners (Title 1, arts. 12 and 13).

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## Conclusion

At the end of the sixteenth century, the Customs of the duchies, and more particularly those of Lorraine, reflected the new contours of the noble society. They marked a clear distinction between the new aristocracy – recently promoted by the sole will of the prince – and families of older nobility, proud of their ancient origins and honourable lineage. Under pressure from the latter, but also because of fiscal concerns,

77 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).

78 Rogéville, *Dictionnaire historique*, II, 152: ‘To the bailiffs to search for those who had not had their letters of nobility ratified, and paid the finance, or had departed from it, and to prevent them from enjoying the said privileges and franchises attached to them’.

79 C. A. Bourdot de Richebourg, *Nouveau coutumier général ou corps des coutumes générales et particulières de France et des provinces...*, volume 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> part (Paris, 1724), 1019-1039 and 1048-1065.

80 *Ibid.*, 1099-1119 (article 1, titre 1, alinéa 4).

the duke had the ennoblements and coats of arms he had granted registered in separate documents by his administrators and officers of arms. As we have seen, heraldry was a central concern in this matter. The particular attention paid to arms as a 'marker of nobility' manifested itself on many levels, not only on that of the prince. While he ordered his heralds to verify and compile the proofs and bearings of his lower nobility (essentially the 'new' ones), the members of the higher nobility commissioned the same heralds to paint, under princely control, heraldic pedigrees (quarters) proving the prestige of their alliances and the quality of their ancestry over several generations.<sup>81</sup> Coats of arms were the symbol of the lineage and its virtues. By granting, modifying or registering them for both his old and new nobility, the prince thus established himself as the source and protector of noble honours.<sup>82</sup> He also proved his capacity to control his elites.

32 However, whereas the princely sanction of their new arms and status were necessary for the ennobled to secure their newly aquired position, the situation created ambiguity for the old nobles. By requesting the officers of the prince to distinguish themselves from the new nobility, they implicitly recognised his power, while at the same time protecting their old privileges. The successive efforts to control noble identity in Lorraine led to a clear division in the nobility through measures that were quite specific in comparison to neighbouring polities.

As such, a new division arose within the Lorraine nobility. A division that even had to be upheld in death, a moment of weakness for the lineage and a juncture that had to reaffirm familial legitimacy and continuity.<sup>83</sup> In 1606, Florentin Le Thierriat reflects this new social divide when he asserted in his *Traité de la noblesse civile* that the funerals of ennobled people, like other nobles, had to be more sumptuous than those of commoners. Yet, their arms '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'.<sup>84</sup>

81 BnF, Fr. 25238, with the signature of Didier Richier in 1585 (cf. infra).

82 M. Nassiet, 'Nom et blason. Un discours de la filiation et de l'alliance (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)', *L'Homme* 129 (1994), 5-30; Hablot, 'Le roi fontaine de justice héraldique', 223-240; S. Thiry, 'The forge of honour: interpreting early modern policies on heraldry', in: S. Thiry and L. Duerloo, eds, *Heraldic hierarchies*, 171-190.

83 For these aspects, see for example: I. Brinkmann, 'Ahnenproben an Grabdenkmälern des lutherischen Adels im späten 16. und beginnenden 17. Jahrhundert', in: E. Harding and M. Hecht, eds, *Die Ahnenprobe in der Vormoderne. Selektion – Initiation – Repräsentation* (Münster, 2011), 107-124.

84 F. Le Thierriat, *Trois Traitez scavoir 1. De la Noblesse de Race, 2. De la Noblesse Civile, 3. Des Immunités des Ignobles* (Paris, 1606) 58-59, 224: 'Their coats of arms [those of ennobled] are worn at the convoy of their body, as granted in the letters of ennoblement, with a closed helmet, unlike the ancient nobility who wear them a barred helmet'. On the author: A. Cullière, 'Le procès de Florentin Le Thierriat (1608)', *Cahiers lorrains* 4 (1984), 277-289.

Jean-Christophe Blanchard

## Ennoblement and the control of grants of arms in sixteenth-century Lorraine

From the end of the fourteenth century, following the example of the king of France, the dukes of Bar and Lorraine ennobled their most zealous servants. Later, under the dukes of Lorraine of the house of Anjou, the number of ennoblements increased. Yet it was under the reigns of René II (1473-1508), Antoine (1508-1544), and above all Charles III (1545-1608) that the number of ennoblements significantly rose. From the very start, this new noble elite distinguished itself from the original nobility by means of differently composed coats of arms. Nevertheless, the taxonomic role played by the latter was not enough. From the 1540s onwards, the sovereigns of Lorraine had the arms of ennobled subjects distinctly listed. Émond du Boullay, herald from 1543 to 1550, undertook a first compilation. However, renewed protests of the old lineages as well as abuses affecting ducal taxation, led duke Charles III to legislate. The *Chambre des Comptes de Lorraine* had to register the letters of ennoblement. In the meantime, the herald Didier Richier was commissioned to initiate an inquiry on nobles. In ducal Lorraine, the princely state, concerned with its own interests, scrupulously monitored the promotion of nobility and the attribution of the main emblem that manifested this status: the coat of arms.

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