

Jonathan Spangler. *The Society of Princes: The Lorraine-Guise and the Conservation of Power and Wealth in Seventeenth-Century France*. Farnham, UK-Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009. xi + 343 pp. + 5 illus. + 2 maps. \$124.95. Review by PAUL COHEN, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO.

One of the most exciting, recent areas of research on early modern France once seemed hopelessly old-fashioned: the aristocracy. Scholars such as Stuart Carroll, Jonathan Dewald, Sharon Kettering, Mark Motley, Kristen Neuschel, and Guy Rowlands—to name only a handful of historians writing in English—have breathed new life into the field by investigating questions as varied as marriage, clientage networks, the role of noblewomen, military service, violence, honor, and artistic patronage. Their work has transformed our understanding of France's traditional sword nobility between the Renaissance and the Revolution, demonstrating its dynamism as a social group and its crucial role in helping the Crown build the absolutist state.

Jonathan Spangler's new book represents a stimulating contribution to this scholarly conversation. A revised dissertation, his monograph offers a carefully researched study of the Lorraine-Guise family in the long seventeenth century, which sheds new light on the structure of early modern France's elite, French state-formation, and the social history of European nobilities. While the Guise are no strangers to historians, previous scholarship on the house has focused on the sixteenth century: on their power bases in Champagne and Normandy, Mary Queen of Scots (a Guise by her mother), and their involvement in Valois court politics and the Wars of Religion, most recently in the work of Stuart Carroll.

Spangler trains his sights on the Lorraine-Guise, the three cadet branches of the ducal House of Lorraine descended from Claude de Lorraine, a younger son of the duke of Lorraine who joined the French court, was married to a Bourbon, served François I with distinction during the Italian wars, and was rewarded with the duchy of Guise. He traces the family's fortunes between the dark 1630s—when Richelieu punished its support of the Queen Mother and Gaston d'Orléans' revolts by sending the house into exile in Brussels and Florence—and the happier 1720s, when it had become a prominent princely family at the French court and on the European stage. His

account is based on extensive research on marriage contracts, wills, inheritance inventories, and legal records of inheritance disputes housed in the French national archives and national library, and in provincial archives in the Lorraine power base, as well as triangulation between various court memoirists like Saint-Simon. By tracing the house's seventeenth-century social and political ascension (no small contribution, given that previous historians had believed the family to be in decline in this period), by documenting their important role in French political life, and by demonstrating that princely families like the Lorraine-Guise must be considered as transnational dynasties with interests across Europe, Spangler's work breaks new ground.

Spangler sets out to answer a simple question: how did a prominent French aristocratic family with substantial kinship connections and property interests outside the French kingdom augment and sustain its status, wealth, and power? He argues that the Lorraine-Guise successfully mobilized four strategies. The first is what Spangler calls "strength in numbers" (116): they multiplied lineages, rather than favoring one, and coordinated lineage strategies in order to strengthen the family as whole. One important consequence was that, at almost any given time, there were a dozen members of the family at court, all of them ready to cultivate royal favor. The second is the role of women as power brokers: dowagers in particular used their status and experience to help manage the house's resources, marriage strategies, and legal affairs. Third, the house made skillful use of the judiciary to advance its interests. Fourth, the Lorraine-Guise used their ties and interests abroad—as potential heirs to the duchy of Lorraine, and as property-owners in the Spanish Netherlands and Spanish Franche-Comté—to promote and maintain their status as a European princely house, rather than simply French *grands*. They engineered marriages with powerful Spanish, Italian and Portuguese families, sent sons into military service with France, Spain and the Empire, and maintained a veritable diplomatic network.

Spangler conjugates his argument in seven chapters. Chapter one traces the emergence of the *princes étrangers* as a distinct category at the French court, a group which derived their great prestige from their status as potential (and in certain cases, actual) heirs to sovereign states or principalities (like the duchy of Lorraine). With that status

came real power: the privilege enjoyed by *every* son and daughter of a *prince étranger* of free access to the monarch at court. Shared only with the princes of the blood, it provided the Lorraine-Guise a concrete instrument for exercising influence at court. Chapter two rehearses the origins of the Lorraine dynasty, the principle ducal branch's fortunes in Lorraine, the Guise's role during the French Wars of Religion, the establishment of the junior Lorraine-Guise lineages, and their extensive property holdings. Chapter three offers a case-study of how the house's leading mid-century figure, the comte d'Armagnac, used his position as Louis XIV's intimate, master of the horse at Versailles, and governor of Anjou to cultivate royal favor, dole out patronage, and promote his family. Armagnac fulfilled his familial duties with great success, sponsoring the next generation of Lorraine-Guise in France, as well as his Lorraine cousins. For instance, he convinced Louis XIV to restore Lorraine, occupied by the French since 1670, to duke Leopold in 1698.

Chapter four analyzes the family's marriage and inheritance strategies. They used their prestige to broker excellent marriages, which brought great wealth into the family and were often with members of the royal family or of foreign princely families in the Spanish Netherlands, Italy, and Portugal. Spangler also traces a shift in strategy, as the family increasingly used marriage to reinforce its integration into the French court elite. They structured marriage contracts to protect non-Lorraine brides' fortunes from Lorraine husband's debts. Women who married into the family and found themselves widowed did not remarry, instead transmitting their titles and property within the house and wielding their princely status on the family's behalf. Chapter five considers the family's staggering litigiousness, examining court cases surrounding family successions and suits brought by bilked creditors. Spangler shows how the Lorraine-Guise used their status, access at court, and privileges to manipulate the judicial system to their advantage: they had cases transferred to friendly jurisdictions; they prolonged litigation so that only adversaries with deep pockets and strong stomachs would persist in the fight; and they mounted breathtakingly complex legal structures to separate debts from inherited property, transmit patrimony free of liabilities, and rob creditors of repayment. Chapter six offers a case study of the family's management of its

lands in the Vivarais, in order to illustrate how the Lorraine-Guise used landholding in the provinces to extend and maintain influence. The Vivarais offered income, a testing-ground for junior princes to cut their teeth as leaders, an arena for placing clients, and a means to exercise influence over provincial estates. In chapter seven, Spangler situates the Lorraine-Guise within a broader European noble society. As landholders with properties on both sides of the French borders with the Spanish Netherlands and Franche-Comté, as a family with ties to sovereign dynasties across Germany, Austria, Italy and the Iberian peninsula, the Lorraine-Guise were members of a veritable “society of princes” whose interests and fortunes were not tied to national interests alone.

Perhaps most interesting are the book’s implications for understanding state and nation-formation in France. Spangler demonstrates not only how much the French crown relied on *princes étrangers* like the Lorraine-Guise—as military commanders, officers at court, governors in the provinces, channels for diplomacy, and prestigious social presences at Versailles—but the extent to which it sought to elevate them (through offices, pensions, and marriages). That the crown built the absolutist state in collaboration with the traditional aristocracy is no longer a novel claim, ever since William Beik’s pathbreaking work on Languedoc or Guy Rowland’s more recent research on the nobility in Louis XIV’s army, but it receives ample confirmation here. That the monarchy relied so heavily on transnational dynasties like the Lorraine-Guise, however, is a more original finding. Spangler shows how the crown made ample use of the family’s property interests and connections on both sides of the French border with the Spanish Netherlands and Franche-Comté to consolidate its authority in newly acquired territories in these regions. Whereas traditional narratives link the rise of state and nation in predictably teleological ways, his work illustrates just how transnational the absolutist state was. Though the author soft-pedals his analysis by characterizing these international princes as simply a “transitional component” (264), his transnational approach may be the most original feature of his work, and invites future research. Were not such families part and parcel of European states and social elites up until the Revolution?

The volume would have been well served by closer proofreading. “Henry of Navarre” coexists with “Henri de Navarre” in various combinations—sometimes in the very same sentence (26); quotes are inconsistently presented in the French original and in English translation in the body of the text. These are, however, minor criticisms. This monograph will take its place as an important contribution to our understanding of the French—and indeed European—nobility in the early modern period.

Francis J. Sypher, Jr., ed. and trans. *Liber A: 1628-1700 of the Collegiate Church of New York*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. lxxvii + 374 + 11 illus. \$49.00. Review by ALLAN J. JANSSEN, NEW BRUNSWICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Students of American history, of the American church, and of the history of New Netherlands, as well as those interested in the history of Manhattan’s oldest church, owe Francis J. Sypher, Jr., a debt of gratitude. His transcription and translation of the folio-sized document entitled *Liber A* is not only a mine of vital information; it is a delight. This volume is a transcription of the original Dutch handwritten documents and a fine translation set out on facing pages. *Liber A* contains a variety of documents, including not incidentally the charter for that church, but also consisting of proclamations, negotiations concerning property, internal church matters, and so on. This volume does not include membership records, which have been available to the public in other venues. *Liber A* spans the period of time when Dominee Henricus Selijns was the pastor of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in New York (now known as the Collegiate Church), i.e., the years 1682-1702.

The Dutch church was the first church in Manhattan, established by the classis of Amsterdam and dates its beginnings to 1628 when the classis sent a “visitor of the sick,” Bastian Krol, to act in the stead of a minister. The church existed under the authority of the Dutch classis (a classis is a consortium of neighboring churches that functions under the Dutch church order much as a bishop does in a church governed by an episcopate). When Manhattan came under British rule