

Françoise Hildesheimer, Louis de Carbonnières (dir.), Autour des États généraux de 1614, Paris (Honoré Champion) 2016, 369 p., 1 ill. (Histoire et archives, 15), ISBN 978-2-7453-3169-4, EUR 75,00.

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The fruits of a conference held to mark the four-hundredth anniversary of the Estates General of 1614, the 17 essays collected in this volume offer a wide-ranging set of perspectives on the origins and development of the Estates General, its relationship with the Parlement of Paris, and the emergence of Cardinal Richelieu's ministry under Louis XIII. All are well-researched and well-argued, and together they shed new light on this vital moment of transition in the history of France.

Alexandre Jeannin opens the collection with an essay on erudite efforts, beginning in the 16th century, to establish the early medieval origins of the Estates General. Legal humanist training and new diplomatics based on philology nourished this antiquarian impulse to link the Estates General to the Germanic assemblies found in Merovingian and certainly Carolingian records. This obsession with origins encouraged the invention of traditions freighted with implications about legitimacy and the making of law. Nowhere were these claims more contested than in the relationship between the Estates General and the *parlements*. Elizabeth A. R. Brown frames this problem in her discussion of the historiographical debates about the development of the English Parliament and the French Estates General. Drawing on a lifetime of work on the late Capetian monarchy, Brown reaffirms her longstanding contention that the French crown genuinely sought the consent of its subjects on questions of taxation through the Estates General. It thus had no need of a Magna Carta enshrining on parchment liberties rarely observed in practice under King John and his successors across the Channel. The rivalry between the Estates General and the Parlement of Paris only emerged during the Hundred Years' War, argues Gisela Naegle. Given its episodic character, the Estates General could not rival the judges in the Parlement in debates over which institution should help lead reform of the kingdom. With the end of the long war with the English came moves by the French crown, following the advice of its judges, to manipulate the composition of the Estates General to make them more pliable, as Neithard Bulst points out in the next essay. In fact, the Parlement began to claim it formed an essential part of the assembly and spoke for the kingdom when the Estates General were not in session.

This shift in favor of the Parlement became even more the case when contentions over the succession of Louis XI plagued the Estates General of 1484, so much so that the crown did not again convoke them until the onset of the Wars of Religion. However, the Estates General became even more discredited by factionalism after 1560, as Sylvie Daubresse makes clear, culminating in the bid by Philip IV of Spain to use the Estate General of 1593 to make his daughter queen of France. This move was only thwarted when two judges in the Parlement of Paris, Guillaume Du Vair and Jean Le Maistre, convinced their colleagues to assert the primacy of the Salic Law and to initiate negotiations with Henri IV that resulted in his conversion to Catholicism



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on July 25, 1593. Now ascendant under the first Bourbon, the Parlement of Paris soon became an object of criticism over the practice venality of office which Henri IV institutionalized in 1604 with the »paulette« which enabled judges to bequeath their offices by paying a special tax. Try as they did during the Regency of Marie de Médicis (1610–1615) and then again during the Regency of Anne of Austria (1643–1654), as Françoise Hildesheimer argues in her piece, the judges in the Parlement found it impossible to convince the nobility or clergy to take their calls for reform seriously. At the same time, the Parlement caused alarm in the king's council, especially during Richelieu's ministry, by reclaiming the right of remonstrance when registering new laws. The situation, however, did not come to a head until the fateful decision by the judges in 1648 to push their reformist agenda and self-claimed amplified role in governance in the crisis known as the Fronde.

The Fronde forms the focus of the next two essays, with Yves-Marie Bercé's examination of Cardinal Mazarin's threats to convoke the Estates General to parry the pretensions of the Parlement, though never seriously enough to risk the centralizing project of his predecessor. As Christophe Vellet then shows, these maneuvers prompted debates in the pamphlets known as the *mazarinades* over the Parlement's claims to supersede the Estates General, some of them based on actual decisions by the judges and others fabricated. Interest in the Estates General only found renewed life in the Regency of Philippe d'Orléans (1715–1723), who hoped to use the assembly to build public support of his reform program. However, as Madeleine Haehl demonstrates, it was now the Parlement of Paris that erected obstacles to its convocation. Such obstruction held firm until, of course, the fateful meeting of the Estates General in May 1789 – a meeting the Parlement, with its longstanding claims to represent the realm, positively endorsed in the hope the assembly would support its misbegotten agenda for reform. Catherine Lecomte traces the final demise and dissolution of the parlements in the months following the convocation and transformation of the Estates General into the National Assembly. Or so it seemed, except in the fevered dreams of the Abbé Sixte Ruffo de Bonneval to restore both the Estates General and parlements in the early years of the Bourbon Restoration, the subject of Solange Segala's essay that closes the first half of the collection.

The second, smaller set of essays shifts the focus to the career of Cardinal Richelieu, whose role in the Estates General of 1614 catapulted him from a minor provincial bishopric in Luçon to close confidant of the Queen Mother and then eventually first minister of Louis XIII. Joseph Bergin begins with an exploration of how Richelieu, as a deputy to the First Estate, perceived the political and ideological issues in play at the time. Noble agitations, the rapprochement with Spain, dealings with the Huguenots and the Jesuits, and the role of the Parlement, among others, roiled the assembly and certainly informed Richelieu policies later on to assert the crown's unquestioned authority, policies that cleaved most closely to those enunciated by the First Estate back in 1614. This clerical perspective, as discussed in the next essay by Françoise Hildesheimer, also informed Richelieu's deep misogyny, a feeling embodied in no one more than Marie de Médicis, whose reckless interference in her son's affairs never ceased to bedevil him. Building on the seminal work of Orest Ranum and Joseph Bergin, Lauriane Kadlec reconstructs the clientele network of »creatures« that Richelieu developed and employed to monitor and manipulate the Parlement of Paris as he dealt with agitations within the royal family and among the nobility. For this, he leaned heavily on members of his own family. Besides family, another near constant in Richelieu's career was the pastoral role he learned at seminary and took up as bishop of Luçon to

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promote Catholic teachings. Stéphane-Marie Morgain delves into this under-appreciated side of the cardinal-minister, one that informed both his political judgment and personal dealings with the king. The personal and the political form the subject of Orest Ranum's probing analysis of the »quarrel« between the Queen Mother and her son, and the opening it provided for Richelieu's rise to power. As Ranum shows, Louis XIII's deeply problematical relationship with his mother represented a mortal threat both to the monarchy and to him personally, as had been the case with some of his Valois predecessors and their mother.

Louis de Carbonnières concludes the volume with a discussion of what he calls the »liaison dangereuse« between the Parlement of Paris and the Estates General. The unresolved dialectic over which institution best represented the kingdom left unfettered personal rule of the king through his *état administratif* as the only viable governance option for France to pursue. Richelieu was, of course, among the first to recognize and then put France on this path of development. In this sense, the Estates General of 1614 marked a key, perhaps the key moment for the French monarchy following the tumult of the Wars of Religion, one that historians can now better appreciate thanks to the fine essays assembled in this collection.

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