

**International Conference:
“Bloody Politics: How Princes of the House of France Shaped
Political Life (1661-1848)”**

University of Trier, June 20-21, 2024

What political role did the princes/ses of the blood in France play between the Prince de Condé's return to favor in 1661 and the end of the monarchy (1848)? That is the central question that this international conference poses and proposes to address through consideration of recent historiographical contributions and works in progress on the topic. If historiography has long been interested in the role of French princes during the Wars of Religion of the sixteenth century and the Fronde of the seventeenth, the princes' military silence has long been confused with an intentional retreat on their part from the political arena. However, the quarrel of the legitimized princes during the Regency, the Prince de Conti's bringing of support to the Parlement of Paris during his conflict with Louis XV, or the Duc d'Orléans' oppositional “c'est illégal” to Louis XVI in séance royale in 1787 demonstrate that this was not the case. If they no longer took up arms against their king after the Fronde, the princes of the blood knew how to take political action by other means. Can one go so far as to speak of their “soft power”? Their status as “back-up dynasty” or “spare king,” their enormous fortunes, and their authority over considerable sections of the French kingdom, if only through their appanages, make the princes of the blood and their entourages the too often neglected key to understanding French political history.

Incompatible with the classic interpretation of absolutism that still carries a certain weight in French historiography despite the challenging of the concept by Nicholas Henshall beginning in 1992 (*The Myth of Absolutism*), then—more moderately—by Fanny Cosandey and Robert Descimon in 2002 (*L'absolutisme en France. Histoire et historiographie*), the history of the political role of the princes of the blood is the subject of Arlette Jouanna's final book (*Le sang des princes. Les ambiguïtés de la légitimité monarchique*, Gallimard, 2022). In it, Jouanna pays particular attention to the support of certain princes of the blood in favor of “constitutionalism” and presents a complex image of the continuities and ruptures in the conceptions of the princes/ses of the blood and their means of political action. Damien Tricoire (*Die Aufklärung*, 2023) has suggested that the patronage of the princes and of the high French aristocracy could play a role in the exceptional development of the French Enlightenment and, more broadly, of a deliberative and oppositional public space of which the Palais Royal would be one of the most successful materializations. This conference proposes to expand on the question of the role that the princes/ses of the blood and their entourages played in the public sphere and also at the court, understood as a field for clashes and rivalries between a hundred or so families holding major offices at court (Horowski 2012, 2019).

Beyond a study of Ancien Régime France, we would like to open this colloquium to comparative perspectives. What did the specific features regulating the succession of the French crown and the resulting status of the princes/ses of the blood entail for political ideas and practices? Do other conceptions of the positions of members of the royal family lead to other political and social configurations? The question arises from both a diatopic and a diachronic perspective. We, therefore, wish to compare the position and activities of princes/ses of the blood in Ancien Régime France with those of the first half of the nineteenth century and their equivalents in other European and non-European states.

Conference themes:

- Conceptions of the French constitution and of natural law in the entourage of the princes/ses of the blood;
- Princes/ses of the blood in intra-factional court conflicts in the Ancien Régime;
- Role of the princes/ses of the blood in parliamentary opposition during the Ancien Régime;
- Role of the princes/ses of the blood and the development of the public sphere in the Ancien Régime (creation of spaces of debates, development of clubs, patronage toward men and women of letters, printers, and booksellers);
- Princes/ses of the blood and the French Revolution;
- Status and activities of the members of the imperial dynasty under Napoleon I;
- Princes/ses of the blood during the Restoration;
- Princes/ses of the blood under the reign of Louis Philippe d'Orléans;
- Different configurations of the members of dynasties across Europe and the world.

Mode of abstract submission for proposed presentations: Abstracts for proposed presentations (2500 characters max.), accompanied by a short bibliography, should be sent to papa@uni-trier.de before June 30th, 2023.

English will be the working language of the conference, but it will be possible to submit abstracts and present papers in French.

The international conference will take place in Trier, Germany, June 20th and 21st, 2024. The organisers will apply for funding to cover the travel and accommodation costs of all participants.

Organization committee: “Pamphlets and Patrons” team of research