

# The Household of the Queen of France in the Sixteenth Century

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## Caroline zum Kolk

# The Household of the Queen of France in the Sixteenth Century<sup>1</sup>

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*In the long history of the household of the queen of France, the sixteenth century marked a peak: never before or since was its staff so numerous, or was it so deeply involved in life at court. This article will survey the history of the queen's household and its structure and functions in the sixteenth century.*

No systematic study has yet been dedicated to the history and function of the household of the queen of France. Of course, the structural and numerical evolution of royal households under the late Valois kings has been described at length and analysed as a rupture with the past,<sup>2</sup> with their increasing number of office holders, the appearance of new titles and the growing effort to define court ceremonial. Nonetheless, few studies highlight the specific role played by the queen and her entourage within this evolution. In general, the queen's household is briefly compared to the king's *hôtel*, with the conclusion that similar structures defined both institutions. Only the relatively smaller size, the presence of women and the existence of a few specific offices tend to be emphasised.<sup>3</sup>

Such an approach makes it impossible to define the contours of the queen's household and understand its importance for the court and its development. In the long history of this institution, the sixteenth century marked a peak. This

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article will illustrate this evolution through an account of the history of the queen's household, its structure in the sixteenth century and its role in the development of the Renaissance court.

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a thesis, Caroline zum Kolk, *Catherine de Médicis et sa maison : la fonction politique de la maison de la reine, 1533-1574*, supervised by Jacques Gélis et Joël Cornette, Université Paris VIII. I would like to thank Kathleen Wilson Chevalier for her careful proof-reading of this text.

<sup>2</sup> Robert J. Knecht, *The French Renaissance Court* (New Haven and London, 2008) presents a short history and analysis of the structure of the king's household; see also his article 'The Court of Francis I', in *European Studies Review*, 8/1, January 1978, pp. 1-22. Mack P. Holt examines the household of François de Valois, Duke of Alençon and Anjou in *The Duke of Anjou and the Politique Struggle during the Wars of Religion*, (Cambridge, 1986) and Jeroen Duindam's study *Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 2003) deals to some extent with the court at the end of the Valois dynasty. In France, Monique Chatenet considers the evolution and structure of royal households in *La cour de France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: vie sociale et architecture* (Paris, 2002). Nicolas le Roux examines the growth of the household of Henri III and its importance for patronage in *La faveur du roi: mignons et courtisans au temps des derniers Valois* (Seysse, 2000). Older, yet still very helpful, is Jacqueline Boucher's dissertation, *Société et mentalités autour d'Henri III* (Université de Lyon 2, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> I use both *hôtel* and *maison* to refer to the household. These expressions appear in royal administration documents to designate the officers and nobles who served a member of the royal family. *Hôtel* was used primarily in the Middle Ages; in the sixteenth century *maison* slowly replaced it.

## The Queen's Household in the Middle Ages

Beginning in 1957-9, excavations were undertaken in the crypt of the basilica of Saint Denis. An extraordinary discovery was made in an area beneath the *chevet*: a royal tomb from the Merovingian dynasty was found intact. A ring made it possible to identify the body of Queen Arégonde (who died between 560 and 580), the wife of Clotaire I. Her sarcophagus was also surrounded by a series of tombs of other women from the same time. Their fine accessories and gold-embroidered clothing bore witness to their high social rank. No object or inscription made it possible to identify these women, or establish whether they belonged to nobility or if they were kin to, or simple servants of, the queen. Yet, Michel Fleury and Albert France-Lanord suggested that their tombs formed 'a small island reserved for a special category of relatives which could have been that of a royal *gynaceum*'.<sup>4</sup> The fact that these women were buried beside their mistress offers one of the very first indications of the existence of a queenly retinue.

Chronicles provide further evidence of a household that was specific to the queen. Certain queens were landowners; others acted as regents during the minority of their sons. In either instance, the service of officers and servants was required. The king's responsibilities led to the frequent separation of the couple, and the queen must have had her own servants, who remained by her side during her husband's absence. Gregory of Tours speaks of a certain Florentien, who was mayor of the palace of Queen Faileuba, the wife of Childebert II.<sup>5</sup>

Beginning in the eighth century, more numerous sources make it possible to understand better the role of the queen at court. A crucial text, sometimes considered to be the first ordinance produced by the courts of western Europe, is the *De Ordine Palatii* by Hincmar of Rheims, written about 882. Hincmar opens his discourse on the organisation of the palace with the notion that 'the king and the queen, with their very noble family, rose above all others'. Thereafter, the author describes the responsibilities of the officers in charge of ecclesiastical and legal aspects of government, as well as the numerous figures who served the royal family. He concludes: '... each one of the officers invoked was independent in his office, had no one above him, and responded directly to the king himself, or, in certain cases, to the queen and the royal family.'<sup>6</sup> Her day-to-day role included overseeing gifts from visitors and vassals and working with the *Chambrier* to ensure that the court was well supplied with everything it needed. The queen was thus regarded as an auxiliary of the king, who could act in place of her husband in the control and management of the royal staff.

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On the other hand, Hincmar does not provide any information concerning the existence of a household specific to the queen. According to A. Föbel, such a staff must have existed, because a

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<sup>4</sup> Michel Fleury, Albert France-Lanord, 'Les sépultures mérovingiennes de Saint-Denis', in *Cahiers de la Rothonde*, 7, 1984, p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs* (Paris, 1963), p. 222.

<sup>6</sup> F. Guizot (éd.), *Hincmar de Reims: annales de l'Europe carolingienne, 840-903; annales de Saint Bertin et de Metz; lettre sur l'organisation du palais* (Clermont-Ferrand, 2002), pp. 229-264.

seneschal of Queen Judith, the wife of Louis le Pieux, is named in documents.<sup>7</sup> The queens were also accompanied by a group of military officers, not only for their protection but also as a sign of their dignity.<sup>8</sup> As in the case of the king, they had several *nutrii*, young noblemen who received their education at the court. When Charlemagne divorced his first wife Desiderata, two of her *nutrii* preferred to join a nunnery rather than serve the King's second wife.<sup>9</sup>

The advent of the Capetian dynasty and the feudal system marked a turning point. The entourage of the king lost its splendour: dukes and counts left the royal court, which was taken over by the nobles of the Ile de France. The responsibilities of major offices and positions were less well defined than in the Carolingian period.<sup>10</sup>

Until the twelfth century, documentation emanating from the court is rare, and no document from the chancellery furnishes information about its structure.<sup>11</sup> The king's officers are evoked in the writings of political thinkers such as Suger or Guibert de Nogent, but court literature provides little information regarding the queen's household. Joachim Bumke detected in the works of Chrétien de Troyes the presence of *chambriers* and seneschals of the queen and concluded that the formation of an autonomous *hôtel* for the queen occurred in France at a very early date, in the second half of the twelfth century<sup>12</sup>. As we have seen, it had already existed under the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties, so it would be more appropriate to say it re-occurred.

During these two centuries, several queens left their mark on the politics of their age. Constance d'Arles (circa 984-1032) led a revolt against her son Henri I<sup>er</sup>; Alienor d'Aquitaine (1124-1204) played an active role in the government of Aquitaine while she was queen of France (1137-52); and Adèle de Champagne (1150-1206) was co-regent during the absence of her son, Philippe Auguste. She

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<sup>7</sup> Amalie Fössel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich* (Stuttgart, 2000), p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> Régine Le Jan, *Femmes, pouvoir et société dans le haut Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2001), p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> Janet NELSON, « Women at the court of Charlemagne: A case of monstrous regiment ? », dans John C. Parsons (éd.), *Medieval Queenship*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 1997, p. 52.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Bournazel, 'La familia regis Francorum', in A. Marchandisse, J.-L. Kupper (eds), *À l'Ombre du pouvoir; les entourages princiers au Moyen Âge* (Genève, 2003), pp. 115-133.

<sup>11</sup> The chancellery of the first Capetian kings was not very enterprising. Olivier Guyotjeannin has identified only 16 charters and ordinances from Hugues Capet, 61 from Robert le Pieux and 94 from Henri I<sup>er</sup>. It was under Philippe I<sup>er</sup> that documentation became more abundant (163 items). See O. Guyotjeannin, 'Résidences et Palais des premiers Capétiens en Ile-de-France', in Jean Chapelot, Elisabeth Lalou (eds), *Vincennes aux origines de l'Etat moderne: actes du colloque scientifique sur Les Capétiens et Vincennes au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1996), p. 124.

<sup>12</sup> In Frankreich scheint sich die Aussonderung eines Hofstaats für die Königin bereits in der zweiten Hälfte des 12. Jahrhunderts angebahnt zu haben. Entsprechende Nachrichten für Deutschland fehlen', Joachim Bumke, *Höfische Kultur* (München, 1986), p. 490. See also Peter Strohschneider, 'Kemenate', in Jan Hirschbiegel, Werner Paravicini (ed.), *Das Frauenzimmer: Die Frau bei Hofe in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit - 6. Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* (Stuttgart, 2000), p. 30.

seems to have had a personal chancellery at her disposal<sup>13</sup> and left more than 110 charters, one of which concerns one of her ladies-in-waiting, 'domicella Alice'. The Queen offered her a vineyard near Melun.<sup>14</sup>

The middle of the thirteenth century is a key moment for the study of the French court. The first ordinance dealing with the responsibilities and privileges of court officers is dated 1261.<sup>15</sup> Thereafter, this kind of document multiplied, especially under the reigns of the grandsons of St Louis.<sup>16</sup> After 1350 a second group of sources came into existence: the *états* - that is, lists of the members of a household, with information about their duties and wages.<sup>17</sup>

The queen's *hôtel* regularly appears in these sources. The ordinance from 1261 includes measures which targeted less her household than her behaviour: St Louis forbade Marguerite de Provence to invite ladies or noble persons to join her and to prolong conversations with visitors:

She must not summon to her presence ladies or other great persons, and when they come [to court] she should not keep them for a long time; she should not let herself talk lightly to so many visitors, but should excuse herself from their presence in honest terms, as is suitable.

Equally, the King made it clear that the Queen should neither appoint royal officers, nor give them orders:

She should not ask anything of, or give orders to, the Bailly, the Prevost du Roy or others who hold an office from the King, and she should not by her authority appoint anybody to Baillieships, sergeantships or any other office.

We have come a long way from the prestigious role assumed by Carolingian queens. The same instructions resurfaced sixty years later: Marie de Luxembourg remained subject to them in 1322.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jean Dufour, 'Adèle de Champagne, troisième femme de Louis VII, une reine méconnue', in Marcel Faure, *Reines et princesses au Moyen Âge: actes du cinquième colloque international de Montpellier Université Paul-Valéry (24-27 novembre 1999)* (Montpellier, 2001), p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Dufour, 'Adèle de Champagne', p. 37. See also Marion Facinger 'A Study of Medieval Queenship: Capetian France (987-1237)', in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 5, 1968, pp. 1-47, and Jean Dufour, 'Le rôle des reines de France aux IXe et Xe siècles', in *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres*, 1998, p. 913-932.

<sup>15</sup> The original is lost but several copies of this document are extant; the oldest, written by a clerk of the *chambre des comptes*, dates from 1317: Archives Nationales, JJ 57.

<sup>16</sup> Most of these documents have been edited by Elisabeth Lalou and can be consulted online (*Ædilis*, Publications scientifiques, <http://www.cn-telma.fr/ordonnances/>).

<sup>17</sup> The ordinance of 1261 already uses the term *état*: 'c'est l'ordonnance et estat de l'ostel de la royne'. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the word tends to designate administrative documents such as lists of the members of a household.

<sup>18</sup> BNF ms. fr. nouv. ac. 9175, folio 339; this reappearance has been already signaled by A.-M. Münster, *Funktionen der Dames et Demoiselles d'honneur im Gefolge französischer Königinnen und Herzoginnen (14. - 15. Jhd.)*, in Hirschbiegel, Paravicini, *Das Frauenzimmer*, p. 339.

An ordinance of 1286 gives information about the structure of the household of Queen Jeanne de Navarre, wife of Philippe IV 'le Bel', which provided all the

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services and officers that enabled her to move about on her own.<sup>19</sup> Her stable and *fourrière* included an equerry, a marshal, a *fourrier*, a *palefrenier* and several valets; two *coches* were at the disposal of the queen and her five ladies and maidens-in-waiting. At table, she and her retinue were served by *panetiers* and *échansons*. The kitchen was not separated into the *cuisine bouche* and the *cuisine de commun* as in the king's household, since the *hôtel* was not large enough to justify such an arrangement. The meals of the entire staff were prepared by two cooks, two *hasteurs*, one *saucier*, one *potier*, one *poulailler*, one *fruitier* and several valets and *aides*. A chaplain, an almoner and a chapel cleric attended to the spiritual needs of the Queen and her servants. The *chambre aux deniers* supervised expenditures under the control of a *maître de la chambre*, Michel de Morgneval. Like Philippe IV, the Queen had only one *maitre d'hôtel*, Jean du Chastelier, and two physicians (*fisiciens*). Her clothes were made by a tailor and a *valet couturier* and cleaned by two washerwomen along with the household linen.

This core staff later grew in size, despite a cut in 1315, when Louis X decided to merge his household with that of his wife in order to limit the number of court servants.<sup>20</sup> This decision was revoked a few month later, and in the following decade, the Queen's *hôtel* gained in autonomy. An important step was taken in 1316 with the creation of a household specifically for the royal children: prior to this date they had been served by their mother's staff.<sup>21</sup> In that year, the King's *hôtel* counted 164 members, the Queen's 102 and the household of the children 42.

In the ensuing years, royal households continued to grow, reaching their apogee in 1326: Queen Jeanne d'Evreux then had a staff of 212 people at her disposal. Her household was tightly structured, and, like the King's *hôtel*, comprised five *chambres* and six *metiers*. These increases did not, however, continue. A gap in the documentation between 1326 to 1450 makes it impossible to follow the evolution of the royal *hôtels* during this period of over a century. However we find that the household of Queen Marie d'Anjou at the end of the Hundred Years War was significantly smaller than that of Jeanne d'Evreux had been in 1326.<sup>22</sup> Between 1326 and 1452 there had been a two-thirds reduction in the number of the queen's servants.

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<sup>19</sup> The *Ordonnance de l'hôtel de Philippe IV le Bel et Jeanne de Navarre* (AN JJ 57, f. 1-1, n° 142, edited by E. Lalou (<http://www.cn-telma.fr/ordonnances/ordonnance1/>)) specifies that the spouses were regularly apart.

<sup>20</sup> *Ordonnance de l'hôtel du roi et de la reine, 1315*: 'C'est l'ordonnance qui est faite pour mettre l'ostel le roy et l'ostel la royne tout à un' (BNF, coll. Clair. 832, p. 646).

Edited by E. Lalou (<http://www.cn-telma.fr/ordonnances/ordonnance5/>).

<sup>21</sup> *Ordonnance de l'hôtel de Jeanne de Bourgogne, 1316* (BNF ms. fr. nouv. ac. 9175, folio 337).

<sup>22</sup> The *états* from 1452 and 1461 are not complete (the chancellery, the *chambre*, the kitchen, the *fruiterie* and the *fourrière* are missing; they surely existed, though, since Marie d'Anjou lived most of the time apart from the King). Nevertheless, when the staff of the various different departments is compared to 1326, the decline in numbers is obvious.

This unsatisfactory situation ended during the reign of Charles VIII and Anne de Bretagne. Scrutiny of preceding *états* can help us to understand this change of direction.

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### The Departments of the Household of the Queen in the Middle Ages (1326-1490)<sup>23</sup>

Offices	1326	1452	1461	1479	1484	1490
Dames	12	4	3	-	8	9
Damoiselles	6	13	11	-	10	14
<b>Métiers</b>						
Paneterie	13	4	4	6	7	8
Échansonnerie	16	4	5	6	6	6
Cuisine	32	-	-	10	13	13
Fruiterie	7	-	-	3	4	2
Écurie	35	2	2	17	5	11
Fourrière	11	-	-	5	5	4
Valets tranchants	0	3	3	1	3	3
<b>Total métiers</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Chambres</b>						
Maîtres d'hôtel	3	6	6	6	7	13
Chambre aux deniers	4	4	5	-	2	2
Chapelle	15	14	17	4	3	3
Chancellerie	2	-	-	1	2	2
Chambre	16	-	-	4	4	4
<b>Total chambres</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>24</b>
Divers	40	17	24	7	15	15
<b>Total état</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>109</b>

In 1484, Anne de France, duchess of Beaujeu and Bourbon, was regent of the realm. The household of the Queen, Marguerite d'Autriche, was serving a child: Marguerite was only four. Nevertheless, her *hôtel*, for the first time since 1326, was solidly structured, with ladies and numerous officers present in all of its divisions. With its ninety-four servants, its size had increased, and the number of

<sup>23</sup> BNF ms. fr. nouv. ac. 9175. 1326: Jeanne d'Evreux, wife of Charles IV le Bel, f. 341; 1452 and 1461: Marie d'Anjou, wife of Charles VII, f. 347; 1479: Charlotte de Savoie, f. 351; 1484-1490: Marguerite d'Autriche, promised in marriage to Charles VIII, repudiated in 1491, f. 353.

ladies and maids of honour was once again approaching the level of 1326. Only those who worked in the stables were fewer in number, a fact which can be explained by the Queen's youth. Six years later, Marguerite had at her disposal a well furnished *écurie* and five more *maîtres d'hôtel*.

A comparison between the offices in the *maisons* of 1326 and of 1484-1490 show an increasing specialisation and a heightened hierarchy:

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**Offices of the Household of the Queen (1326 and 1484-1490)**

1326	1484 and 1490
Dames	Femmes mariées
Damoiselles	Filles d'honneur
Damoiselles des Dames	Femmes de chambre
Chevaliers	Filles de chambre
	Femmes des filles
<b><u>Metiers:</u></b>	<b><u>Metiers:</u></b>
Paneterie	Paneterie
Échansons	Échansons
Cuisine	Cuisine
Fruiterie	Fruiterie
Écurie	Écurie
Fourrière	Fourrière
Valets tranchants	Valets tranchants
<b><u>Chambres:</u></b>	Écuyers d'Écurie
Maîtres d'hôtel	Maréchal des logis
Chambre aux deniers	Fourriers
	Tapissier
<i>Chapelle:</i>	Lavandières
Chapelains	<b><u>Chambres:</u></b>
Clercs de chapelle	Maîtres d'hôtel
Confesseur	Trésorier
<i>Chancellerie:</i>	Contrôleur de l'Argenterie
Notaires	<i>Chapelle</i>
<i>Divers:</i>	(no detail available)
Physiciens	<i>Chancellerie:</i>
Huissier d'armes	Secrétaires
Sergents d'armes	Clercs d'Office
Huissiers de salle	
Portiers	<i>Divers:</i>
Valets de porte	



Valets servant le vin en salle  <i>Valets of the Queen:</i> Écuyers servants Creue puis l'ordonnance	Médecin Apothicaire Huissiers de chambre Huissiers de salle  <i>Valets of the Queen:</i> Valets de Chambre Valets de Garde-robe
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## The Expansion of the Queen's Household (1496-1589)

In 1496 a major change occurred with respect to the *hôtel* of the queen. It began with a spectacular increase in the size of Anne de Bretagne's household. Her staff rose from 88 to 253 servants and stayed at this level until 1498,<sup>24</sup> at which date its size was 88 per cent of that of the King (286 members). Never in its history was the Queen's *maison* so close in size to that of her husband.

### The Size and Relationship of the Households of the King and Queen of France (1286-1786)<sup>25</sup>

Year	Household of the king	Household of the queen	Percentage
1286	98	47	48 %
1315	96	61	64 %
1490	318	109	34 %
1494-5	366	88	24 %
<b>1498</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>88 %</b>
1523	540	285	53 %
1555	1000	400	40 %
1572	1064	384	36 %
1584	1096	374	34 %
1605	1024		

<sup>24</sup> *Maison* of Anne de Bretagne, 1494: Ms. fr. 8269 (388-389). 1496-1498: BNF, Ms.fr. 8269 (403-408).

<sup>25</sup> Numbers between parentheses in italics are estimates based on the totals closest to the year in question. For the size of the households see, also: Monique Chatenet, *La Cour de France*, pp. 26-7; Alexis Diagne-Noël, *L'Hôtel de la reine de France à la fin du Moyen Âge, 1261-1422* (Université Paris IV, 1984), p. 32-33; Nicolas Le Roux, 'La Maison du roi sous les premiers Bourbons: institution sociale et outil politique', in Chantal Grell, Benoît Pellistrandi (ed.), *Les Cours d'Espagne et de France au XVIIe siècle* (Madrid, 2007), pp. 13-40; Jacqueline Boucher, 'L'Évolution de la maison du roi des derniers Valois aux premiers Bourbons', in *XVIIe siècle*, 1982, n° 137, pp. 359-380; Sophie de Laverny, *Les domestiques commensaux du roi au XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 2002); Mathieu da Vinha, 'La maison d'Anne d'Autriche', in Chantal Grell (ed.), *Anne d'Autriche, infante d'Espagne et reine de France* (Madrid, 2009); Caroline zum Kolk (ed.), *Curia - The Royal Households in the 17th and 18th Centuries: Databases, documents, studies* (Research project, Centre de recherche du château de Versailles, <http://chateauversailles-recherche.fr/curia/curia.html>); Philip Mansel, *The Court of France, 1789-1830* (Cambridge, 1988).

Year	Household of the king	Household of the queen	Percentage
1609	1024	465	46 %
1612 <sup>26</sup>	1780	(422)	24 %
1616		422	
1624	1080	(517)	48 %
1625		517	
1646	(1661)	701	42 %
1648	1661		
1663	833	443	53 %
1674	1139	559	49 %

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Year	Household of the king	Household of the queen	Percentage
1683	1866	610	33 %
1727	(896)	442	50 %
1729	896		
1736	(896)	434	48 %
1749	(921)	449	49 %
1755	921		
1781	(427)	501	117 % <sup>27</sup>
1786	427		

The extant *états de maison* allow us to follow closely the development of sixteenth-century households: no fewer than forty-nine years are well documented.<sup>28</sup> Despite gaps in the record and evidence of occasional downward trends (in 1530, 1544, 1560, 1575), there is a clear pattern of increasing household size. From 1496 to 1589, the average hovers around 319 individuals, while the average number of ladies and maids of honour is 54.

The life cycle of the Queen's hôtel becomes apparent: upon its creation (in 1530, 1547, 1571 and 1575), the staff was at first reduced but then grew rapidly, reaching its peak three or four years later. In 1552-4, when Catherine de' Medici controlled the regency, the size of her hôtel underwent an exceptional growth. Moments of economic difficulty or court reorganisation (1544, 1560) could

<sup>26</sup> Louis XIII was then a minor.

<sup>27</sup> In 1780, Louis XVI reorganised his household and seriously reduced its size; the Queen's household did not immediately follow suite. See Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, pp. 61 and 68.

<sup>28</sup> Besides the already quoted documents, my analysis is founded on the following *états* conserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale: Claude de France, 1523: Ms.fr. nouv. ac. 9175 (367-370); Eléonore d'Autriche, 1530-1547: Ms.fr. nouv. ac. 9175 (371-378); Catherine de' Medici, 1547-1585: Ms. fr. 7854 (13-36); Marie Stuart, 1560: Ms.fr. nouv. ac. 9175 (395-398); Elisabeth d'Autriche, 1571-1574: Ms.fr. nouv. ac. 9175 (399-404); Louise de Lorraine, 1575-1590: Ms.fr. nouv. ac. 9175 (405-412).

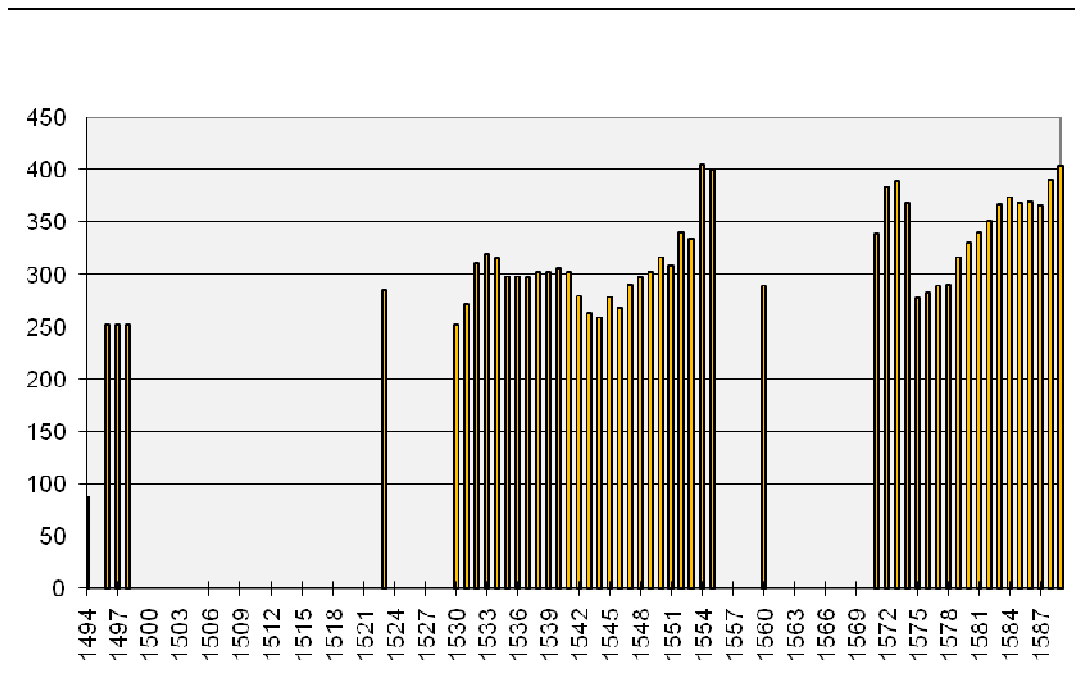
lead to a reduction in numbers. The largest increase took place between 1494 and 1496: in 1496, the household nearly tripled. How can this sudden expansion be explained?

There were several contributory factors. One was the influence of the Italian Renaissance, which saw the birth of courts on the Italian peninsula in which women were present in greater numbers than in the Middle Ages. Their participation in cultural and political life consequently gained in visibility. The wealth and luxury of the Italian courts thereafter became a model for all of Europe, facilitating the integration of women at court.

Another factor, politically determined, was that at the end of the Middle Ages the dynastic principle became stronger and was accompanied by a new level of pageantry and pomp. The queen of France, closely associated with royal dignity, was by no means excluded from this rise in dynastic prestige. The court played a

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**The Size of the Household of the Queen of France (1494-1589)**



Queen	Year	Total	Queen	Year	Total
Anne de Bretagne	1494	88	Catherine de' Médici	1551	309
Anne de Bretagne	1496	253	Catherine de' Médici	1552	340
Anne de Bretagne	1497	253	Catherine de' Médici	1553	334
Anne de Bretagne	1498	253	Catherine de' Médici	1554	405
Claude de France	1523	285	Catherine de' Médici	1555	400
Eléonore d'Autriche	1530	253	Marie Stuart	1560	289
Eléonore d'Autriche	1531	272	Elisabeth d'Autriche	1571	339
Eléonore d'Autriche	1532	311	Elisabeth d'Autriche	1572	384

Eléonore d'Autriche	1533	320	Elisabeth d'Autriche	1573	389
Eléonore d'Autriche	1534	315	Elisabeth d'Autriche	1574	369
Eléonore d'Autriche	1535	298	Louise de Lorraine	1575	278
Eléonore d'Autriche	1536	298	Louise de Lorraine	1576	283
Eléonore d'Autriche	1537	297	Louise de Lorraine	1577	290
Eléonore d'Autriche	1538	303	Louise de Lorraine	1578	291
Eléonore d'Autriche	1539	302	Louise de Lorraine	1579	317
Eléonore d'Autriche	1540	306	Louise de Lorraine	1580	331
Eléonore d'Autriche	1541	302	Louise de Lorraine	1581	340
Eléonore d'Autriche	1542	280	Louise de Lorraine	1582	351
Eléonore d'Autriche	1543	263	Louise de Lorraine	1583	368
Eléonore d'Autriche	1544	259	Louise de Lorraine	1584	374
Eléonore d'Autriche	1545	279	Louise de Lorraine	1585	369
Eléonore d'Autriche	1546	268	Louise de Lorraine	1586	370
Catherine de' Médici	1547	291	Louise de Lorraine	1587	367
Catherine de Médici	1548	297	Louise de Lorraine	1588	390
Catherine de' Médici	1549	303	Louise de Lorraine	1589	404
Catherine de' Médici	1550	317			

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fundamental role in this new representation of power, and its growth can be observed in most European countries. Increases in the households of the prince, the princess and the other members of the family accompanied this development.

This expansion fulfilled another function, also political: it made it possible to create a large number of positions and offices which could be used to reward clients of the crown. The growing importance of the patronage system contributed to the increasing size and grandeur of the court.

These transformations, effected at the majority of European courts, form the context for the growth of the household of the queen, but cannot, alone, account for it: the households of princesses did not everywhere increase, nor did they necessarily maintain their independence. Several specific cultural and political factors contributed to the development of the queen's household in France.

First of all, France was influenced by the Burgundian court. The memoirs of a lady-in-waiting, Eléonore de Poitiers,<sup>29</sup> written in 1484-7, show that contact between the two courts was close. In the fifteenth century, the Duchess of Burgundy's *hôtel* was bigger than that of the Queen, its ceremonial more firmly developed<sup>30</sup>. As we shall see, several offices and dignities would be 'imported' from Burgundy into the household of Anne de Bretagne.

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Paviot (ed.), 'Les Etats de France d'Eléonore de Poitiers', *Annuaire Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de France* (Paris, 1998), n° 516, pp. 75-118.

<sup>30</sup> Monique Sommé, *Isabelle de Portugal, duchesse de Bourgogne: une femme au pouvoir au 15<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1998), pp. 229, 240, 249.

Another influence may have devolved from the *Querelle des femmes*, which began during the reign of Charles VI and Isabeau de Bavière. This polemical debate about female honour left its mark on ladies of high rank. When Anne de Bretagne settled at the French court, she brought from Brittany six tapestries illustrating *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* by Christine de Pizan,<sup>31</sup> the major text in defence of women produced in this debate. Anne developed a form of art patronage which proved her personal commitment to enhancing the role of women and their political status (Figure 1).<sup>32</sup> She had grown up in a duchy which was not subject to Salic law: women could exercise power there, and Anne intended to preserve her status as a 'ruler in her own right' at the court of France. An impressive and well staffed household was a basic requirement for this. Fortunately, Anne had the example of a predecessor near at hand. Her views coincided with the concept of female honour and dignity held by Anne de Beaujeu, the dominant figure at the French court from 1483 to 1491. During her regency, the sister of Charles VIII had to come to terms with violent opposition from those who believed that women were incapable of ruling. However, through her political activities - and also her patronage of the arts - she managed to impose her authority. In this way, the Duchess assumed 'a role as teacher and mentor to

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<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Lestrangle, 'Le mécénat d'Anne de Bretagne', in Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier (ed.), *Patronnes et mécènes en France à la Renaissance* (Saint Etienne, 2007), p. 172.

<sup>32</sup> Manuscrit Antoine Du Four, *Les Vies des Femmes célèbres*, Inv. Ms 18, F°1, Musée départemental Dobrée, Nantes, France.



*Anne de Bretagne and her ladies-in-waiting receiving from Antoine Dufour the manuscript 'Les vies des femmes célèbres'*

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several young ladies of rank, including Marguerite d'Autriche, Louise de Savoie, Anne de Bretagne and Diane de Poitiers'.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Lestrangé, 'Sainte Anne et le mécénat d'Anne de France', in Wilson-Chevalier, *Patronnes et mécènes*, p. 137.

It is this coming together of cultural and historical circumstances that explains the evolution of the household of the queen of France, the growth of which was not only a question of size but also of structural changes and the creation of impressive new offices.

## **The Divisions and Their Evolution**

The general increase in manpower did not affect all the services of the *hôtel* in a uniform way. Some areas changed considerably; others, hardly at all. Ten major divisions characterise the *états de maison* of the last Valois queens, arranged according to the prestige of their members and duties.

First named are the *dame d'honneur*, the *gouvernantes* and the noblewomen of the queen's retinue, as well as the female personnel that served them (chambermaids, washerwomen, linen maids, nurses). Like their male counterparts, the female nobility can be divided into three groups. The first consists of members of the most important aristocratic families, state servants and clients of the crown; in addition to women of the high nobility, this group includes the wives of the chancellor, the marshals and other dignitaries of the realm. The second group consists of clients of the queen's family who had followed her to France or who chose to join her after her accession to the throne; this group was sometimes stable (as in the case of the Medici-clients protected by Catherine de' Medici) and sometimes not. The third group consists of personal clients and friends whom she gradually introduced into her household.<sup>34</sup>

The women are followed by the most important offices held by men: the *chevalier d'honneur* and *gentilshommes d'honneur*, the *maîtres d'hôtel* and the noblemen who served the queen, her women and guests at table: *panetiers*, cupbearers, esquires and *valets tranchants*. Sometimes listed here are the First or *Grand écuyer*, and esquires of the stable, a fact which underlined the prestige of this office.<sup>35</sup>

The third division is the chapel of the queen, with a *Grand* or *Premier Aumonier* who directed the almoners, confessor, cantors, chaplains, clerics, musicians and singers.

Fourth comes the chancellery; its duties can be interwoven with those of the *chambre aux deniers*, the queen's treasury, because the *secrétaires des finances* were sometimes listed here. The chancellery staff was composed of secretaries, clerks and accountants. The counsellors and *maîtres des requêtes* formed a group of their own.

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<sup>34</sup> About the role of the household for patronage and the role of the king and the queen in its constitution, see Caroline zum Kolk, 'Les femmes à la cour de France au 16<sup>e</sup> siècle: la fonction politique de la maison de Catherine de Médicis (1533-1574)', in E. Santinelli, A. Nayt-Dubois (ed.), *Femmes de pouvoir et pouvoir de femmes dans l'Europe occidentale médiévale et moderne, actes de colloque, université de Valenciennes, 6-8 avril 2006* (Valenciennes, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> The stables (*écurie*) and their staff do not appear in all the *états de maison*.

The officers of the Chamber are numerous. In addition to the masters of the chamber, valets, doorkeepers, pages and *fourriers*, there are the officers responsible for the wardrobe and tapestries (masters and valets of the wardrobe, tailors, tapestry-makers). The doctors in charge of the health of the queen and her staff also appear in this section (physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, barbers).

After the Chamber staff are mentioned three divisions : the *sommeliers*, the *cuisine bouche* and the *cuisine du commun*. The *cuisines* were each overseen by an equerry. The *cuisine bouche* prepared meals for the queen and her noble entourage, while the *cuisine du commun* served the rest for her staff. More than sixteen different specialised roles could be found in the two kitchens.

The ninth division is the *fourrière*, which organised the journeys of the queen and her household under the direction of the *Maréchaux des logis*. They are followed by various functions related to hunting and by the *Gens de métier*, or craftsmen. In this division musicians, painters, stone-carvers, silversmiths and goldsmiths are sometimes listed.

The last division is that of the queen's treasury, the *Chambre aux Deniers*. Under the direction of the treasurer and the *Receveur Général*, the secretaries and finance clerks managed the income and expenditure of the queen and looked after her domains; the receivers and secretaries of the chancellery supported them in this task.

If we take all the divisions together, female staff are the most numerous, an average of seventy-one. Next comes the *sommeliers* (43 in number), the Chamber (41) and the ninth division (Fourrière / crafts, 38 or 39). The other divisions totalled between 20 and 30 employees (in descending order: Table, *cuisine du commun*, *cuisine bouche*, chapel and chancellery). The Treasury was the smallest, with only two employees; the *secrétaires des finances* were under the chancellery.

#### Average Numbers of the Divisions of the Queen's Household (1496-1589)

Department	Average
Women	71
Table / Maîtres d'hôtel	29
Chapel	22
Chancellery	21
Chamber	41
Sommeliers	43
Cuisine bouche	22,5
Cuisine commun	29
Fourrière and crafts	38,5
Treasury	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>319</b>

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The period from 1530 to 1588 is well documented, allowing us to make sense of the variations within the different divisions. The expansion of female personnel from 35 to 124 is particularly noteworthy, as are those of the Chapel (from 16 to 40) and the Chancellery (11 to 40). The Chamber (34 to 55) and the *Fourrière* (crafts department) (27 to 44) increased to a lesser extent. The Chancellery of the queen was volatile: in 1554-5 it had 48 / 47 members; in 1573-4, 34 / 35 members; and at the end of the 1580's its membership varied between 28 and 40.

In 1575, when the household of Louise de Lorraine was constituted, two divisions decreased quite significantly: the *Sommeliers* (44 in 1530, 53 in 1574, 26 in 1575, 28 in 1589) and the *Table / maîtres d'honneur* (31 in 1530, 37 in 1574, 22 in 1575, 29 in 1589). The decrease in the *Cuisine du commun* (28 in 1530, 22 in 1589) was less dramatic, and no particular variations affected the *Cuisine bouche* (24 in 1530, 20 in 1589) or the Treasury.

On the whole, the services responsible for the day-to-day management of the household remained stable or even decreased, except for the *fourrière* which experienced a slight growth. The increases were mainly in the divisions involved with pageantry (ladies-in-waiting, the Chamber), religion (chapel) and administration (chancellery). It is in these sectors, too, that most of the new offices arose.

## The Creation of New Dignities and Offices

The creation of new dignities took place at three crucial points: 1496, 1523-1534 and 1547.

In 1496 Anne de Bretagne integrated into her household three *Grands Officiers*. The most important new post was that of *Chevalier d'honneur*. This office had existed at the Burgundian court since 1430.<sup>36</sup> At the court of France, it progressively replaced the office of the *Grand maître de l'hôtel de la reine*, who in the fifteenth century directed her household.<sup>37</sup> The *Grand Maître* worked alongside the *Chevalier d'honneur* until 1523, when he disappeared from the *états*. This was the first year that one of the *Maîtres d'hôtel* was named *Premier maître d'hôtel* in order to support the *Chevalier d'honneur* in the performance of his multiple duties. The most prestigious task was to accompany the Queen through the palace and to assist her on every occasion. Physical contact was strictly monitored: he could lead the Queen only by touching her arm.<sup>38</sup> The *Chevalier d'honneur* was senior in rank to all the male officers of the household, and supervised the expenditure of all its divisions.

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<sup>36</sup> Sommé, *Isabelle du Portugal*, p. 289.

<sup>37</sup> The presence of an officer of this sort is documented in the *hôtels* of Isabeau de Bavière, Marguerite d'Autriche and Anne de Bretagne: Maurice Rey, *Les finances royales sous Charles VI: les causes du déficit (1388-1413)* (Paris, 1965), p. 193; Florence Trombert, 'Une reine de quatre ans à la cour de France: Marguerite d'Autriche, 1484-1485', Geneviève Contamine, Philippe Contamine (ed.), *Autour de Marguerite d'Écosse: reines, princesses et dames du 15<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1999), p. 127.

<sup>38</sup> D.L. Potter, P.R. Roberts, 'An Englishman's View of the Court of Henri III, 1584-1585: Richard Cook's Description of the Court of France', *French History*, tome 2, 1988, p. 341; quoted and translated by Chatenet, *La cour de France*, p. 25.

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Anne de Bretagne introduced a second dignitary who functioned as a counterpart to the *Chevalier d'honneur*: her stables were directed by a *Grand écuyer* who assisted the Queen during her excursions outside the palace.<sup>39</sup> He was second in the hierarchy of the household. At the burial of his mistress, the *Grand écuyer* walked behind the coffin, the *Chevalier d'honneur* along the right side of it.

The third office introduced by Anne was that of the *Grand Aumônier*, which appeared in 1496. He supervised the work of the chapel staff as well as the distribution of alms.<sup>40</sup>

The *Grand Ecuyer* and the *Grand Aumônier* had existed in the King's household since the Middle Ages and were two of the most prestigious offices of the court. Anne's intention in creating these roles was to place her household on the same level as her husband's.

During the reign of Francis I, changes affected mainly the noble ladies of the household, the *dames* and *demoiselles d'honneur*. In 1523 the office of the *Première dame d'honneur*, the highest of the women in the Queen's retinue, gave way to a new dignity, the *Dame d'honneur*.<sup>41</sup> From 1523 on, every queen had a *dame d'honneur*; Louise de Lorraine had two, each of whom served for a six month period. The *dame d'honneur* supervised the ladies-in-waiting and accompanied the queen wherever she went.<sup>42</sup> Like the *Chevalier d'honneur*, she was involved in the management of household expenditure. A letter from Catherine de' Médici indicates that her *dame d'honneur* oversaw the ordering of clothing, medicines and other objects useful to the queen and her ladies.<sup>43</sup> When the queen received visitors, it was she who introduced them and indicated to them their place in the room or at table.<sup>44</sup> At the end of the century, she tasted the queen's meat and began the service of the meal when, followed by a procession of the queen's ladies, she brought the first dish to her table. This duty fulfilled, she had the privilege of eating at her own table, placed near that of the queen.<sup>45</sup>

In 1531 another new dignitary, the *Gouvernante des filles*, appeared in the *hôtel* of Eléonore d'Autriche. This office had previously existed at the Burgundian Court under the name of *mere des filles*<sup>46</sup> and should not be confused with that of the governess of the royal children, who was responsible for the household of the royal couple's offspring. The *Gouvernante des filles* was in

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<sup>39</sup> Brantôme, Pierre de Bourdeilles, Abbé de, *Recueil des Dames, poésies et tombeaux* (Paris, 1991), p. 17: she had a *grande écurie* and a *Grand Ecuyer*, like the King. See also Potter, Roberts, *An Englishman's View*, p. 341.

<sup>40</sup> Boucher, *Société et mentalités*, p. 1344.

<sup>41</sup> To distinguish her from the other *dames d'honneur*, the ladies-in-waiting are henceforth called only *dames*, the suffix *d'honneur* from now on being reserved for their chief. See Münster, 'Funktion der dames et demoiselles', pp. 342-3.

<sup>42</sup> Potter, Roberts, 'An Englishman's View', p. 342.

<sup>43</sup> BNF ms. fr. nouv. ac. 7858.

<sup>44</sup> Brantôme, Pierre de Bourdeille, abbé de, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris, 1853), tome 1, p. 165.

<sup>45</sup> Potter, Roberts, 'An Englishman's View', p. 342.

<sup>46</sup> Paviot, 'Les Etats de France', p. 116.

charge of the young noblewomen of the queen's retinue, the *demoiselles*. She had to oversee their behaviour and education. In so doing, she took upon herself a portion of the

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responsibilities of the *Dame d'honneur*. The rise in the number of *demoiselles* led to the expansion of this office: from 1547 Catherine de' Medici employed two *Gouvernantes* and several *Sous-gouvernantes*.

Among the queen's ladies was a *Dame d'atours*, whose responsibility was to dress her mistress. The evolution of this office is instructive, since it demonstrates the growing prestige that surrounded members of the royal family. Isabeau de Bavière and Charlotte de Savoie had several *femmes* and *demoiselles d'atours*,<sup>47</sup> but most of these women were not noble: their rank and wages were those of a simple chambermaid. The status of this category of women did not evolve in the fifteenth century. It was under the reign of Francis I that physical contact with the queen was given greater importance. Only one lady of high rank, or a relation of the queen, would hold this privilege from this point on. She appeared with the designation '*Dame d'atours*' for the first time in 1534.

The third remarkable change concerns the queen's chancellery. Anne de Bretagne had just two secretaries in 1494; in 1496 their number grew to seven, and three counsellors also came to join them. In 1523, Claude de France had five secretaries, four counsellors and two controllers. Three *Maîtres des requêtes* are listed in the household of Eléonore d'Autriche in 1530, and secretaries are numerous (averaging five for the period between 1530 and 1546), but counsellors are absent from her household.

Catherine de' Medici had 8 counsellors in her service in 1547, but their number increased yearly, reaching 20 in 1555, the last year documented by complete *états de maison*. In these years a *Président du Conseil* made his appearance for the first time. The number of secretaries increased as well, growing in the same period from 6 to 20 and henceforth overseen by a *Premier Secrétaire*. The *clercs d'offices* appeared during these years too (3 in 1547, 6 in 1555); and in 1573 a superintendent. This elaborate structure persisted until the end of the period under scrutiny here.

More than any other household service, the council established a bond between the queen and the great institutions of the kingdom. It consisted of presidents of the various Parliaments of the realm, members of the major royal councils, lawyers and judges. Provincial officers were numerous, too, but of lower rank: provosts, bailiffs, lieutenants, prosecutors and advisors from various cities and regions.

When tracing the evolution of the different divisions of the queen's household, it becomes obvious that the first and second wave of the creation of offices relates to matters of pageantry and the inner organisation of the *hôtel*. The third relates to the services involved in the management of the

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<sup>47</sup> Münster, 'Funktionen der dames et demoiselles', p. 342.

queen's patrimony, her diplomacy and political patronage. This third step began before the personal reign of Catherine de' Medici and continued after it; it cannot be explained by the phenomenon of regency but instead seems to be related to the evolution of the court and the status of the queen.

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## The 'Great Court of Ladies'

Of all these changes, one in particular attracted the attention of contemporary observers: the emergence of noblewomen at court. In 1496, the expansion of Anne de Bretagne's household went hand in hand with the increase in the number of ladies and maidens-in-waiting (23 in 1490; 39 in 1496-1498). The Queen insisted on their presence at court - according to Brantôme: 'She [Anne de Bretagne] was the first to begin to gather together the great court of ladies which we still know today, because she had a very great retinue, of both ladies and maidens, and never refused any; and indeed, she asked the *gentilshommes*, their fathers, who were at court, if they had daughters, and if so who they were, and requested their presence.'<sup>48</sup>

This evolution continued under the reign of Francis I. As K. Wilson-Chevalier noted, their presence at court was used by the King to make the behaviour of noblemen more polished and introduce into court society a new civility.<sup>49</sup> Ladies and *demoiselles* were numerous in the entourage of his wife, his mother and his sister. A new peak was attained in the years 1553-1554, when Catherine de' Medici was regent. The end of the period studied here is marked by a final spectacular increase, beginning in 1579. At the end of the reign of Henri III, 98 women served Louise de Lorraine; the queen mother, Catherine de' Medici, had 112 *suivantes*.<sup>50</sup>

The high visibility of women in the royal entourage provoked contradictory reactions. Brantôme relates a discussion with a prince (whose name he fails to give) who made the mistake of assigning to Francis I the installation of women at court:

He much blamed him for two things which have brought harm to the court and the realm, under his reign and those of his successors: first, to have introduced at court large crowds, access to and the constant presence of women; and second, to have summoned, integrated and settled there such a mass of Churchmen.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> 'Ce fut la première qui commença à dresser la grand Court des Dames, que nous avons veu depuis elle jusques à cest heure; car elle en avoit une très-grande suite, et de Dames et de filles, et n'en refusa jamais aucune; tant s'en faut, qu'elle s'enquerroit des gentils-hommes leurs peres qui estoient à la Court, s'ilz avoyent des filles, et quelles estoient, et les leur demandoit.' in Brantôme, *Recueil des Dames*, p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier, 'Feminising the Warrior at Francis I's Fontainebleau', in Philip Ford, Paul White (eds), *Masculinities in Sixteenth-Century France: Proceedings of the Eighth Cambridge French Renaissance Colloquium, 5-7 July 2003*, (Cambridge, 2006) and online at Cour-de-France.fr: <http://cour-de-france.fr/article253.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Maison de Catherine de Médici, état de 1547-1585, BNF ms. fr. 7854 (13-36) et état de 1583, BNF ms. fr. 21451 (363-368).

<sup>51</sup> Brantôme, *Œuvres complètes*, tome 1, p. 257

For others, like Blaise de Monluc, the presence of women at court allowed them to act in areas which should normally have been prohibited to them:

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Misfortune has it that in France women interfere in too many matters; the king should shut the mouths of women who speak at court; from them come all the stories and malicious gossip.<sup>52</sup>

Yet the prominence of women at court did not provoke criticism alone; certain noblemen reacted with enthusiasm, especially amongst the younger generation. Ladies quickly became the main attraction of the court because ‘discussions between men about matters of state, hunting and games rapidly become boring, but one is never bored when conversing with honest ladies’.<sup>53</sup> Brantôme reports that if the King left the Queen and ladies to go hunting, or for any other reason, he and his friends were so ‘upset, lost and annoyed’ that they thereafter referred to ‘the court’ not as where the King was, but where the Queen and her ladies were. His conclusion is that ‘a court without ladies is a court without a court’.<sup>54</sup>

This enthusiasm was not without danger for those concerned: Brantôme compares ladies to fortified towns, which, quite naturally, leads him to the conclusion that it ‘is allowed to every gallant gentleman to enter there if he can.’<sup>55</sup> Where this desire for conquest was put into practice, there was no major risk for a nobleman but real danger for the noble lady: a bad reputation, or even worse a pregnancy, could destroy the prospect of a suitable marriage and bring discredit on her family. The risks were thus unevenly distributed, and led to warnings such as those that Anne de France had addressed to her daughter Suzanne, in a book of advice on how to preserve oneself from such mishaps and maintain a ‘good reputation’ at the head of one’s household. The *Instructions of Anne de France to Her Daughter*,<sup>56</sup> written about 1503-5, provides numerous details about how to manage a household. Catherine de’ Médici perhaps knew this remarkable account, either personally or via Diane of Poitiers, since the manuscript was in the library of the *sénéchalle* in her chateau of Anet.

Anne de France lists the qualities which characterise not only a good mistress but also a good lady-in-waiting, since her daughter Suzanne could have been chosen to serve a lady of higher rank. A woman at the head of a *hôtel* is responsible for the good behaviour of her officers, especially the ladies and *demoiselles*. She must closely supervise her staff and above all ensure respect for hierarchy and rank. Women must be decent in clothing and speech. They should be occupied in honest pastimes because leisure ‘leads to vice and perdition’. Women of loose morals must be

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<sup>52</sup> Quoted by Thierry Wanegffelen, *Catherine de Médicis: le pouvoir au féminin* (Paris, 2005), p. 37.

<sup>53</sup> Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, tome 1, p. 258.

<sup>54</sup> Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, tome 1, p. 258.

<sup>55</sup> Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, tome 1, p. 258.

<sup>56</sup> Anne de France, *Enseignements à sa fille, suivis de l’histoire du siège de Brest*, Eliane Viennot (ed.) (Saint-Etienne, 2006).

dismissed; it is 'foolish to keep such people, or liars, chatterers and quarrelers, because of the danger they represent. Often their faults are imputed to their mistress or master.'<sup>57</sup>

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Such warnings show how difficult it was to bring together at court men and women little accustomed to such propinquity. It is impossible to outlaw intimate relations between men and women; as E. Viennot stressed, they are tolerated in the end because they make it possible to 'channel and socialise the sexual energy of a group which contains five to ten times more men than women'.<sup>58</sup> Relations may move on to a more intimate level, 'but the rule is clear: nothing must be known, so that everyone's honour is respected and order reigns'.

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The queens of the sixteenth century managed this sensitive situation well. Their households came to be the epicentre of social and cultural life at court. Scandals were rare; when they occurred, exemplary punishment was meted out. By the spectacular expansion in numbers, the elevation of the hierarchy and the creation of prestigious offices, the household enhanced both the dignity of the queen and the pageantry of the court. The development of separate departments to manage the queen's patrimony, diplomacy and political patronage are an indication of the rising political status of the *hôtel* and its royal mistress. In the sixteenth century, it could be used as a power base and serve as a 'miniature government' in times of regency. The integration of women at court is another factor which marked the exercise of policy in the French Renaissance: the ladies-in-waiting often functioned as political actors and intermediaries. They also used their position at court for their own family patronage. The queen and her women thus formed a society inspired by the ideals of Christine de Pizan's 'Cité des Dames' and her high ideas about female honour and female responsibilities.

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<sup>57</sup> Anne de France, *Enseignements à sa fille*, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> Eliane Viennot, *Marguerite de Valois: histoire d'une femme, histoire d'un mythe* (Paris, 1993), p. 61.