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GIFT EXCHANGE AT THE COURT OF CHARLES THE BOLD

Mario Damen

Introduction

Guillebert de Lannoy's *Instruction d'un jeune prince* of ca. 1440, one of the many so-called 'mirror for princes' of the late Middle Ages, advised Charles the Bold, son of the duke of Burgundy Philip the Good, for whom it was written, that :

“A knight must be above all other men in honesty, generosity, and open-handedness, he must avoid disputes or wanton plunder ; he must always be accompanied by arms, horses, military officers and appropriate companions as fits his rank”.¹

Following recommendations contained in the widely circulated *Secretum secretorum*, a text attributed to Aristotle, or the popular tale, *Romance of Alexander*, which also invoked Aristotle's authority,² Lannoy's mirror went on to explain that the generous and open-handed prince or great lord will be amply compensated for such munificence :

“Generosity and open-handedness belong above all to princes and great lords, for they are praised and loved for them, as Aristotle attests, [and] who in his instructions to the king Alexander, admonished him that a prince who gives generously has no need of a fortified castle”.³

In this text, as in so many of the literary remains from this period, generosity and open-handedness were thus attached to the more traditional Christian virtues of temperance, fortitude, prudence, justice, faith, hope, and charity that formed the basis of the knightly code of conduct.⁴ But generosity and open-handedness were different from other virtues in that they were considered to have instrumental uses on earth. As Lannoy's text emphasizes, a prince should, to be sure, act as *homo generosus* because it was fitting for him to do so, but in doing so he was also acting as *homo economicus*. When a prince gave gifts to his followers or

¹ «Chevalier doit par dessus tous aultres hommes estre veritable, large et liberal, sans convoitise ne rapine desordonne, tousjours garny d'armes, chevaulx, sargans et habiles compaignons, necessaires a son estat». C. G. VAN LEEUWEN, *Denkbeelden van een vliesridder. De Instruction d'un jeune Prince van Guillebert van Lannoy*, Amsterdam, 1975, p.48.

² M. ANDRINGA, *Vorstenethiek in het werk van Maerlant*, in : J. REYNAERT (ed.), *Wat is wijsheid ? Lekenethiek in de Middelnederlandse letterkunde*, Amsterdam, 1994, p. 38-40 ; M. KEEN, *Chivalry*, New Haven /London, 1984, p. 11.

³ «Largesse et liberalité sur toutes chose appartient aux princes et grans seigneurs, car ilz en sont loés et amés, tesmoing Aristotle qui entre les enseignemens qu'il fist au roy Alexandre, luy remonstra qu'il n'est ja mestier de fort chastel a prince qui largement donne» : VAN LEEUWEN, *Denkbeelden*, p. 16

⁴ KEEN, *Chivalry*, p. 6-11 ; M. GREAVES, *The blazon of honour. A study in Renaissance magnanimity*, London, 1964, p. 50-54 ; A. GUERY, *Le roi dépensier. Le don, la contrainte, et l'origine du système financier de la monarchie française d'Ancien Régime*, in : *Annales*, 39, 1984, p. 1243-1245.

bestowed them on allies, he was assembling credits that could be cashed in when needed to secure his rule.

Although scholars have long recognized the political importance of gift-giving in medieval Europe, surprisingly little research has been done on the patterns and significance of such action in the court of the Burgundian dukes, arguably the epicenter of princely culture in the late medieval North.⁵ The recent studies by Carol CHATTAWAY and Jan HIRSCHBIEGEL constitute the only important exceptions.⁶ Their research on Philip the Bold's New Year's gifts illuminated the gift's role in building alliances in the French-Burgundian courts around 1400, but as we shall see there is considerably more to be learned about the political history of gift-giving in this culture. To a certain extent, the more extensive work done on gift-giving in urban governments can help guide us in this inquiry, for scholars focusing on these patterns have exposed the complexity of the motives and effects of such exchanges.⁷

Charles the Bold was not particularly well known for his liberality. According to DE BARANTE, the nineteenth century historian of the Burgundian dukes, he was seen by his officers and the nobles as *bien avare et peu liberal pour un prince si jeune et si nouveau*.⁸ One of this essay's purposes is to investigate this claim, but my larger concern is to make sense of the patterns of gift-giving evidenced by the available sources. As we shall see, in 1468, the year chosen for close analysis, Charles distributed gifts in implicit accord with two different principles. One set of gifts was given according to principles of reciprocity, another according to those of redistribution. In each case, the gifts served to mark and cement personal bonds, but each involved different sorts of people and created different kinds of bonds. The evidence displays another pattern as well, for it exposes the tension surrounding princely gift-giving in an age of increasing bureaucratization of government. On the one hand, gifts were coming to be seen as extravagant, purposeless and somehow illegitimate tools of government. On the other, they remained potent instruments of traditional rule, for they allowed the prince to bind his servants to him at a time when the administration was becoming ever more bureaucratic and to communicate with the powerful inside and outside the borders of the Burgundian state.

⁵ For other courts see M. VALE, *The princely court. Medieval courts and culture in North-West Europe 1270-1380*, Oxford, 2001 ; G. NIJSTEN, *Het hof van Gelre. Cultuur ten tijde van de hertogen uit het Gulikse en Egmondse huis (1371-1473)*, Kampen, 1992, p. 241-242 and IDEM, *Cultuur aan de hoven van Holland en Gelre : een vergelijking*, in : D. E. H. DE BOER, J. W. MARSILJE, J.G. SMIT (eds.), *Vander rekeninghe. Bijdragen aan het symposium over onderzoek en editieproblematiek van middeleeuws rekeningmateriaal, gehouden te Utrecht op 27 en 28 februari 1997*, The Hague, 1998, p. 159-160.

⁶ C. CHATTAWAY, Looking a medieval gift horse in the mouth. The role of the giving of gift objects in the definition and maintenance of the power networks of Philip the Bold, in : *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 114, 1999, p. 1-15 ; J. HIRSCHBIEGEL, *Étrennes. Untersuchungen zum höfischen Geschenkverkehr im spätmittelalterlichen Frankreich der Zeit König Karls VI (1380-1422)*, Munich, 2003. See also B. BUETTNER, Past presents : New Year's gifts at the Valois courts, ca. 1400, in : *Art Bulletin*, 83, 2001, p. 598-625.

⁷ See especially the publications of A. DERVILLE, Pots-de-vin, cadeaux, rackets, patronage. Essai sur les mécanismes de décisions dans l'État bourguignon, in : *Revue du Nord*, 56, 1976, p. 341-364 and Les pots-de-vin dans le dernier tiers du XVe siècle (d'après les *Comptes* de Lille et de Saint-Omer), in : W. P. BLOCKMANS (ed.), *1477. Le privilège général et les privilèges régionaux de Marie de Bourgogne pour les Pays-Bas*, [Anciens Pays et Assemblées d'Etats, Standen en Landen, LXXX], Kortrijk/Heule, 1985, p. 449-471 and M. BOONE, Dons et pots-de-vin, aspects de la sociabilité urbaine au bas Moyen Age. Le cas gantois pendant la période bourguignonne, in : *Revue du Nord*, 70, 1988, p. 471-487. W. PARAVICINI published a catalogue of gifts mainly given by town governments to Burgundian courtiers and officials on the occasion of a wedding : *Invitations au mariage. Pratique sociale, abus de pouvoir, intérêt de l'Etat à la cour des ducs de Bourgogne au XV^e siècle 1397-1478. Documents introduits, édités et commentés*, [Instrumenta, 6], Stuttgart, 2001.

⁸ M. DE BARANTE, *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne de la maison de Valois 1364-1477*, II, Bruxelles, 1838, p. 299.

The sources : accounts and ordinances

Princely mirrors and epic literature are helpful to sketch a general background of the gift-culture at the Burgundian court. However, other types of sources are needed to get a better view on the daily practice of gift-giving. The main source available for an investigation of the gifts of duke Charles the Bold are the accounts of the *argentier*, the highest financial officer of the duke. In the years 1468-1470 the *argentier* had to account both for the duke's personal expenses and the expenses of Burgundian state at a central level. The funds of the *argentier* consisted of the money the receiver-general of all finances collected from the domains and aides granted to the duke. Moreover, the receiver-general centralised the resources of the Burgundian state in the principalities at a regional and local level.⁹

This hierarchical financial machinery has provided us with the data for reconstructing the gift-culture at the Burgundian court. Although the accounts do not cover all the gifts and although financial officials time and again committed fraud, the information actually recorded, which is rendered in satisfying detail and precisely dated, appears to be reliable.¹⁰ It is also voluminous, for each year's account included over 2,300 entries, some 850 of them treating gifts or gift-like distributions. This essay is thus based on a close analysis of just one year, 1468, which can serve to typify the larger patterns. In 1468 Charles had been in power for some time and in spite of some extraordinary events – his marriage with Margaret of York – this year can be characterised as a relatively “normal” year.

Nevertheless, the accounts of the *argentier* cannot be used in isolation because gifts were also distributed at a lower level in the official hierarchy. Following orders received from the duke, the receivers of the demesne revenues at a local and regional level also handed out gifts to local officers, nobles, urban elites, ecclesiastical institutions and so on.¹¹ There do not appear, however, to have been a great many such distributions. In 1468, for example, Charles assigned only six gifts in the county of Holland, as is demonstrated by a survey of the ten available accounts of regional and local demesne officers in the archives of the *Chambre des comptes* in The Hague.¹² Moreover, the gifts registered in these accounts were mainly destined for locals,

⁹ See on the accounts of the receiver-general and the *argentier* : R.-H. BAUTIER, J. SORNAY, *Les sources de l'histoire économique et sociale du Moyen Age. Les états de la maison de Bourgogne. Vol I : Archives centrales de l'Etat bourguignon (1384-1500). Archives des principautés territoriales. 1. Les principautés du Sud. 2. Les principautés du Nord (supplément)*, Paris, 2001, p. 28-43. Accounts of the receiver-general were already published of the beginning of the reign of Philip the Good : M. MOLLAT a.o. (eds.), *Comptes généraux de l'état bourguignon entre 1416 et 1420*, Paris, 1965. Werner Paravicini and his collaborators of the German Historical Institute published the accounts of the *argentier* concerning the years 1468 and 1469 (1470 is forthcoming) : A. GREVE, É. LEBAILLY (eds.), *Comptes de l'argentier de Charles le Téméraire duc de Bourgogne, 1. Année 1468, 2. Année 1469*, Paris, 2001-2002 (hereafter *Comptes 1* and *Comptes 2*).

¹⁰ E. AERTS, De inhoud der rekeningen van de Brabantse algemeen-ontvangerij (1430-1440). Moeilijkheden en mogelijkheden voor het historisch onderzoek, in : *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis*, 59, 1976, p. 194 ; V. GROEBNER, *Liquid assets, dangerous gifts. Presents and politics at the end of the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, 2002, p. 20-21. See for financial fraud of the receiver-general (the official predecessor of the *argentier*) : H. KRUSE, Les malversations commises par le receveur général Martin Cornille à la cour de Philippe le Bon d'après l'enquête de 1449, in : *Revue du Nord*, 77, 1995, p. 283-312.

¹¹ See for example an analysis of the gifts distributed by the receiver-general of the counties of Holland and Zeeland among the officers of the Council and of the *Chambre des Comptes* in : M. DAMEN, *De staat van dienst. De gewestelijke ambtenaren van Holland en Zeeland in de Bourgondische periode (1425-1482)*, Leiden, 2000, p. 241-253.

¹² I investigated the accounts of the receiver-general of Holland and Zeeland (The Hague, Nationaal Archief, Grafelijkheidsrekenkamer, Rekeningen, inv. nrs. 169, 170 : gifts to secretary Pierre Milet, the receiver-general of Holland and Zeeland Klaas de Vriese and *maître des comptes* Jean Quevin), the receiver of Noordholland

while those listed in the account of the *argentier* were usually distributed among individuals and institutions in the duke's immediate surroundings and those he came across when he was travelling through his territories. It thus seems that the registration of gift-giving was being centralized during the reign of Charles the Bold, a suspicion that finds support in the fact that gifts distributed by Charles on his joyous entry in the county of Holland in July 1468 were not registered in the accounts of regional or local receivers, but in the account of the *argentier*.¹³

Alongside the *argentier*'s accounts, we have the household ordinances, normative financial documents that define the composition of the household.¹⁴ The ordinances always contain substantial information on the different kind of payments the members of the duke's household received. With the expansion of the Burgundian state in the 1430s, the number of courtiers named in the household ordinances increased. Because these years saw a series of problems on the international and internal level,¹⁵ the financial advisors of the duke thought it wise to impose financial restrictions on the payments to the members of the ever-increasing household and the administrative apparatus. For this reason gifts receive special attention in the household ordinances the duke issued.

In the ordinance of 1433 for instance, 11 of the 55 articles on the functioning of the household relate to gifts to officers and courtiers. One of the most important articles stipulates that although officers and courtiers were allowed to ask the duke for a gift, they could do so only once a year and then had to submit a written explanation for their request. Moreover, the gift could be authorized only in presence of three councillors. Finally, one of the secretaries had to keep a register in which all the gifts were written. In this way officers who made extravagant demands of the duke would be easily discovered and the value of the excess gifts could be deducted from their wages. It is thus clear that the financial advisors considered the duke's gift-giving a heavy financial burden that should be regulated and restricted.¹⁶

In 1437, when Burgundy was at war with England and the need to reduce costs most urgent a special ordinance suspended all gifts.¹⁷ However, exceptions to this rule were made for officers who received gifts on the occasion of a marriage or as a contribution to a ransom. Strangers and others who were not in the duke's service were also exempted ; to them, the duke

(nrs. 300, 301), the receiver of Kennemerland and West-Friesland (nrs. 898, 899 : a gift of a glass window to the beguinage of Haarlem, see also J. G. SMIT, *Vorst en onderdaan. Studies over Holland en Zeeland in de late middeleeuwen*, Louvain, 1995, p. 341, footnote 210), Gouda and Schoonhoven (nrs. 1711, 172), Woerden (nrs. 1870, 1871 : an annual gift to the St. George shooting confraternity of Oudewater), Arkel, Van der Leede en Schoonrewoerd (nrs. 2187, 2188), Gorinchem, Hals-Asperen, Heukelum, Leerdam en Ter Leede (nr. 2204 : an annual gift to the St. George shooting confraternity of Gorinchem), Amstelland, Waterland en Gooiland (nr. 2921), Texel (nr. 3175) and Putten (nrs. 3321, 3322).

¹³ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1021-1032, 1040.

¹⁴ Currently the German Historical Institute in Paris (DHI) is making a database collecting the entries of all household ordinances of the dukes Philip the Good and Charles the Bold. W. PARAVICINI already published most of Philip the Good's household ordinances in : *Francia*, 1982-1991. See also BAUTIER, SORNAY, *Les sources*, p. 107.

¹⁵ R. Vaughan, *Philip the Good. The apogee of Burgundy*, London, 1970, p. 54-126 ; W. BLOCKMANS, W. PREVENIER, *The promised lands. The Low Countries under Burgundian rule, 1369-1530*, Philadelphia, 1999, p. 72-130.

¹⁶ W. PARAVICINI, Die Hofordnungen Herzog Philipps des Guten von Burgund. Edition IV, in : *Francia*, 15, 1987, p. 215-217 (articles 449-459) and the analysis by H. KRUSE, Die Hofordnungen Herzog Philipps des Guten von Burgund, in : H. KRUSE, W. PARAVICINI (eds.), *Höfe und Hofordnungen 1200-1600*, Sigmaringen, 1999, p. 156.

¹⁷ Since the end of the 14th century, the Burgundian dukes issued regularly this type of restriction ordinances, mostly aimed to reduce the costs of the rising number of officers of the prince's household and administrative institutions : BAUTIER, SORNAY, *Les sources*, p. 70.

could make gifts *et bien faire a son bon plaisir*.¹⁸ Thus, despite the financial constraints, the duke was permitted to continue many of his traditional practices. If he thought it necessary, he could use gifts both to reward and to stimulate the loyalty of his own servants, and to preserve his “honour” with strangers.

The ordinances thus express competing ideas about the duke’s gifts. On the one hand, the financial experts regarded gift-giving as too expensive and, probably, not effective. Instead, they proposed a more rational system of rewarding : salaries paid on a daily basis and remunerations for all kinds of extra expenses. On the other, the prince did not want to give up his most personal instrument of government. In the expanding Burgundian household and bureaucracy gifts were a useful tool for the prince to create a special bond with a small group of clients, an inner circle of loyal officers.

The accounts of the *argentier* reveal that in the end the personal gift-policy of the prince, inspired by chivalric values, proved to be more enduring than the efficiency rules of the financial advisors. The “one-gift-only-measure” of 1433, although still valid under Charles the Bold’s rule, having been confirmed in one of his first household ordinances, was, for example, violated in 1468 when at least four courtiers received more than one gift. The *argentier* was well aware that he was breaking the rules : when he registered a second gift to a courtier, he remarked that the gift was granted even though it violated the court ordinance. The councillor-chamberlains, the trustees of the duke belonging to his inner-circle, seem to have been especially privileged in this way.¹⁹

The gifts to councillor-chamberlain Jean de Luxembourg show why it was so important for the duke to give gifts. Jean was a member of a branch of the powerful noble family of Luxembourg, which had its power base in Picardy and Artois. On this continuously moving frontier between France and the Burgundian territories, the lords of Luxembourg had to choose between the king of France and the duke of Burgundy, and made their choice based on an assessment of which prince would best promote their personal interests.²⁰ Jean’s father Louis, count of St. Pol, had first chosen the Burgundians, serving in Charles the Bold’s army during the war of the Public Weal in 1465. After that year, however, he switched to the service of Louis XI and became constable of France, in fact the head of the French army. Jean himself fought like his father in the war of the Public Weal and was active during the first campaign against Liège in November 1467.²¹ In contrast to his father, however, he remained faithful to the Burgundian duke and he would do well out of it. In July Charles rewarded Jean with 1,000 pounds (of 40 groats, the money of account used in the account of the *argentier* and in this essay) for services performed and because of a claim of a portion of a penalty, which the citizens of Liège had to pay to the duke after their revolt of 1467. Whereas the soldiers of an army had the right to loot after a victory, the army leaders traditionally had the right to claim

¹⁸ H. KRUSE, Philipp der Gute, der Adel und das Geld. Zur Bedeutung des Geldes am burgundischen Hof im 15. Jahrhundert, in : H. VON SEGGERN, G. FOUQUET (eds.), *Adel und Zahl. Studien zum adligen Rechnen und Haushalten in Spätmittelalter und früherer Neuzeit*, Ubstadt/Weiher, 2000, p. 149-165, based on W. PARAVICINI, Die Hofordnungen Herzog Philipps des Guten von Burgund. Edition V, *Francia*, 18, 1991, p. 120 (article [7]).

¹⁹ J. VAN ROMPAEY, *De Grote Raad van de hertogen van Boergondië en het Parlement van Mechelen*, Brussels, 1973, p. 155-160. See for example the gifts to the councillor-chamberlain Philippe Pot (*Comptes* 1, nrs. 329, 845, 1009), Friedrich Flersheim (nr. 852, 1361 : *et ce oultre et par dessus certain don a lui fait par icelui seigneur*), Glaude de Vauldrey (nrs. 1381, 2035) and Jean de Poitiers (nrs. 1200, 1768, 1889).

²⁰ H. COOLS, *Mannen met macht. Edellieden en de moderne staat in de Bourgondisch-Habsburgse landen, ca. 1475 - ca. 1530*, Zutphen, 2001, p. 99-118.

²¹ R. VAUGHAN, *Charles the Bold. The last valois duke of Burgundy*, London, 1973, p. 250-252 ; R. DE SMEDT (ed.), *Les chevaliers de l'Ordre de la Toison d'or au XV^e siècle. Notices bio-bibliographiques*, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, nr. 75.

a part of the spoil of war.²² As a comparison, to earn a 1,000 pounds a master mason of Douai had to work 4,000 days.²³

Jean de Luxembourg continued to play an important role in the Burgundian army. In September 1468 Charles gave him another 400 pounds (1,600 days of work of a master mason) to help him with his preparations – *pour soy metre suz et le servir en sadicte armee* – for the new military campaign against Liège.²⁴ The duke did not seem to take into account that in March of that year he had already given him a complete harness and in July, on the occasion of Charles's wedding, he had also received a jousting harness.²⁵ Nevertheless, the *argentier* did not regard those harnesses as gifts ; instead, he registered them as expenses associated with the *ecuierie*, the stables. In other words, they belonged to the ordinary expenses of the household. Conversely, the *argentier* did register another gift of a harness, to Jean du Rieu to serve in the duke's army, in the chapter of the gifts.²⁶ The line between gift and maintenance, it seems, was not clearly drawn, and the *argentier* had some leeway in deciding how any expense should be registered. In effect, registration itself was a complex and unstable process, fraught with the same tensions that infected gift-giving itself.

Registration

Both the duke and his closest advisors obviously thought that gift-giving was an essential tool of government, but they nevertheless categorized the gift with extraordinary expenses, not with the costs associated with the daily business of government. A memorandum or plan of reform, probably written by Hue de Lannoy in 1439, sets forth the principle quite clearly. According to this memorandum the expenses should be divided into ordinary expenses, which concern the duke, the duchess, the heir, and their households ; and extraordinary expenses, which were expenses for clothes, harnesses, horses, dogs and birds, and finally gifts and alms. On this last category of expenses Hue de Lannoy estimated that some 7.5 % of the budget could be spent.²⁷

Guillebert de Lannoy has made the same distinction in the *Instruction d'un jeune prince*. Moreover, he makes a separation between charitable gifts and alms (those expressing his "largesse" or generosity), and gratuitous gifts (those expressing his "liberalité" or open-handedness) *qui appartiennent a la haultesse de son estat et a l'entretienement des nobles hommes de ses royaumes (...)*.²⁸ These gratuitous gifts reflect the prince's estate and contribute to the maintenance of the nobles of his principalities. The gifts born of generosity, in contrast, function in another register, that of the Christian ideal of brotherhood and the love of one's neighbour. Such *largesse* includes gifts for the poor and religious institutions.²⁹ Oddly, these

²² *Comptes* 1, nr. 1014. See J. L. CHARLES, *Le sac des villes dans les Pays-Bas au XVe siècle. Note sur les règles de guerre*, [Publication du Centre européen d'études burgundo-médianes, 12], 1970, p. 53-61.

²³ M. SOMMÉ, Que représente un gage journalier de 3 sous pour l'officier d'un hôtel ducal à la cour de Bourgogne au XVe siècle, in : J.-P. SOSSON a.o. (eds.), *Les niveaux de vie au Moyen Âge. Mesures, perceptions et représentations*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1999, p. 307. A master mason was paid the equivalent of 10 groats per day.

²⁴ *Comptes* 1, nr. 1372.

²⁵ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1502, 2298.

²⁶ *Comptes* 1, nr. 2063. In fact it was a gift to the armourer Ambrois Ruphin for delivering this harness. Whereas this payment (30 pounds) is registered in the chapter of the *dons*, the payment of a harness for Jean de Sombreffe (also 30 lb) to an armourer in Brussels in the same month is registered in the chapter of the *ecuierie* (nr. 2067).

²⁷ R. VAUGHAN, Hue de Lannoy and the question of the Burgundian state, in : R. SCHNEIDER (ed.), *Das spätmittelalterliche Königtum im Europäischen Vergleich*, Sigmaringen, 1987, p. 341 ; VAUGHAN, *Philip the Good*, p. 259-260 (12,000 crowns of the total expenses of 160,000 crowns).

²⁸ VAN LEEUWEN, *Denkbeelden*, p. 37.

²⁹ SH. KETTERING, Gift-giving and patronage in early modern France, in : *French history*, 2, 1988, p. 138.

terms had traditionally been used in almost the opposite sense. According to Cicero *liberalitas* referred to unselfish generosity in private life whereas *largitio* was a more public form of generosity, which aims to reach political goals.³⁰

The question is whether the accounts reflect the classification of gifts as extraordinary expenses, and the separation between charitable and liberal gifts. At first sight, the argentier does make a clear distinction between ordinary and extraordinary expenses in his account. The gifts are grouped in one chapter which is labeled *dons et recompenses extraordinaires*. However, not all gifts were considered extraordinary expenses. A special category of gifts for courtiers was marked as ordinary. These courtiers were rewarded with a month extra wages after their three-month term of service (the members of the Burgundian household served in a rotation system for only three months in the same office). This bonus was paid in proportion to the number of days the courtier was effectively serving the duke. Given to elicit loyal and honorable service, it also served to finance the courtier's travel home at the end of service, thus as a reimbursement for travel expenses.³¹ Added to the "basic salary" a courtier earned during his term of service, which did not in any case cover all expenses of daily life, these bonuses had come to be seen as a part of the salary, not as gifts.³² Effectively, they were institutionalized in the court ordinance of 1469.³³

As was stipulated by Hue de Lannoy, the *argentiers* account lists gifts given out of *liberalité* (*dons et récompensacions*) separately from those inspired by *largesse* (*aumônes et offrandes*), although the two chapters are grouped together in the account itself. Some gifts, however, escape either of these chapters. The chapter of the *ecuierie*, we have seen, absorbed some gifts,³⁴ as did the chapter of the *menus parties*.³⁵ Moreover, the duke had his own budget, which was registered in the account as money paid to my lord *pour en faire son plaisir*.³⁶ Probably part of this "pocket money" was spent on gifts as well.

Hence, the registration of gifts in one chapter or another was somewhat arbitrary. It may be that the *argentier* simply could not keep his accounts straight. After all, there were more than 2,300 entries in the account, and we know that it was not only gifts to courtiers and servants that escaped the expected registration. Alms for the poor and the needy and for religious institutions were also sometimes incorrectly listed. We may be permitted to suspect, however, that the *argentier* also purposely disguised gifts as ordinary expenses to cover up the policy of the duke who did not want to obey the strict rules concerning gift-giving.

³⁰ E. F. BRUCK, *Über Römisches Recht. Im Rahmen der Kulturgeschichte*, Berlin, 1954, p. 125 and HIRSCHBIEGEL, *Étrennes*, p. 127.

³¹ For example *Comptes* 1, nrs. 704 and 2025 : (...) *soyent de tant en plus enclins a servir mondit seigneur de bien en mieulx, et pour eulx plus honnestement entretenir en son service et retourner en leurz hostelz au bout de leurdit terme*.

³² Of course all depended of one's rank in the hierarchy. See on the financial possibilities of members of the household : SOMMÉ, *Que représente*, p. 297-315.

³³ W. PARAVICINI, *Ordre et règle. Charles le Téméraire en ses ordonnances de l'hôtel*, in : *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, jg. 1999, Paris, 2000, p. 332. However, in 1468 one "ordinary gift" was registered in the chapter of the "extraordinary gifts" : *Comptes* I, nr. 1374. It concerns a gift to councillor-chamberlain Jean de Hames of 80 pounds *tant pour consideracion et en recompensacion des fraiz et despens qu'il a euz et soustenuz pour se mettre sus, monter et habillier pour lui servir en ladicté armee, comme pour et a cause du don qu'il eust peu ou pourroit demander a mondit seigneur a cause de son estat de chambellan et a la fin de son terme*. A double motive for a gift to Jean comes out although the first motive (to prepare for war) seems to be more important than the second.

³⁴ See for example *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1060, 1062, 2067, 2076.

³⁵ See for example *Comptes* 1, nrs. 891, 1093, 1098, 1260.

³⁶ For example, the «pocket money» for Charles amounted in March to almost 2,620 lb. : *Comptes* 1, nrs. 480-483 (*pour en faire son plaisir et distribuer a certaines personnes et pour certaines causes dont il ne veult plus ample declaracion icy estre faite*).

The distribution of alms was handled separately from other gifts. A special chaplain (*aumônier* Innocent de Crécy in 1468) was given a monthly budget of 220 pounds to be distributed on his own discretion. He had to justify these alms in a special account, which has not been conserved for the year 1468.³⁷ In addition, two valets distributed alms, although they had a smaller budget of 10 and 20 pounds a month respectively and could make disbursements only on Charles's command.³⁸ Finally, Charles himself distributed alms ; his distributions are registered at random. Gifts to poor women, for example, appear in the most unexpected places, not only in the chapter of the *dons*,³⁹ but also in *menus parties*,⁴⁰ *offrandes*⁴¹ and they are even separately mentioned in the chapter of the *aumôines*.⁴² The only distinction is the amount of money involved : large sums are mentioned in the *dons* whereas small sums are registered in other chapters.

It is often difficult to decide whether a gift registered in the chapter of the *dons et récompensations* can be considered a gift, if we are to define a gift as a voluntary transfer that was considered exceptional by the recipient.⁴³ For example, Charles made a large number of gifts because of "services performed", without specifying what kind of services was performed. Most of the beneficiaries of these gifts were members of the duke's household. Since the courtiers had already received wages from the duke, these gifts might well be considered a reward for an extra effort, especially since they did not go to all the duke courtiers and were given gratuitously, not as part of expected compensation.

I qualified some 850 entries in the account of 1468 as gifts. As we have seen, they went to cover the costs incurred by his courtiers, as an extra reward for services rendered, on the occasion of an important event in an officer's life (for example, a marriage or baptism of a son), as courtesies (especially to diplomats) and as alms and offerings. Those given out of *largesse* were typically separated from those expressing the prince's *liberalité* or open-handedness to his peers. Not only do the accounts make this distinction in kind, they also clearly express the differential importance of gifts for alms and charities on the one hand and gifts for political partners or subordinates, on the other. In 1468 8,457 pounds of 40 groats was spent on alms and offerings, whereas almost 40,000 pounds, nearly five times as much, was spent on extraordinary gifts.

³⁷ W. PREVENIER, En marge de l'assistance aux pauvres : l'aumônerie des comtes de Flandre et des ducs de Bourgogne (13^e - début 16^e siècle), in : *Recht en instellingen in de oude Nederlanden tijdens de middeleeuwen en de nieuwe tijd. Liber amicorum Jan Buntinx*, Louvain, 1981, p. 105-110, 117. However, Oliver de la Marche maintains that «quand le duc doit partir d'une ville sans aumosnier luy apporte par escrit ce dont il peut enquerir et sçavoir où bienfaicts et aumosnes sont bien employés en icelle ville (...) ; et à chascun le duc à sa devotion départit ses aumosnes, et signe le papier et les sommes, et son payées avant que l'aumosnier parte de la ville» : H. BEAUNE, J. D'ARBAUMONT (eds.), *Mémoires d'Olivier de la Marche, maître d'hotel et capitaine des gardes et Charles le Téméraire IV*, Paris, 1885, IV, p. 2-3 (also cited by Prevenier).

³⁸ See for example the alms distributed in August : *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1237-1239.

³⁹ *Comptes* 1, nr. 593 : in April a gift of 8 pounds to a poor woman who stayed in Notre Dame de Grace nearby Brussels ; nr. 1430 : in September a gift of 6 lb. 6 s. to a poor woman from Burgundy ; nr. 1913 : in November a gift of 7 lb. 10 s. to a poor old woman who stayed in an abbey next to Huy.

⁴⁰ *Comptes* 1, nr. 477 : in March Charles rewarded a woman from Huy with 21 s. for *une pugnée de violettes* that she offered to him.

⁴¹ *Comptes* 1, nr. 1244 : a gift of 63 s. to a poor woman from the Hague.

⁴² *Comptes* 1, nr. 2087 : in October a gift of 42 s. to a poor woman who had lost *ung veau et certaine quantité d'avaine* and an identical gift of 42 s. to six poor women when Charles passed Miremont ; nr. 1959 : in November a gift of 10 lb. 10 s. to some poor women from Liège.

⁴³ GROEBNER, *Liquid assets*, p. 6 ; D. CHEAL, Moral economy, in : A. KOMTER (ed.), *The gift : an interdisciplinary perspective*, Amsterdam, 1996, p. 89-90.

All together 7.3 % of all expenses of the *argentier* – in concordance with de Lannoy’s prescription – was spent on gifts, alms and offerings. As the nineteenth-century historian DE BARRANTE had guessed, this suggests that Charles was a bit less generous than his father and great-grandfather. While Philip the Good averaged some 43.850 pounds of 40 gr. during his reign,⁴⁴ Charles gave away just a little more in nominal currency – and considerably less in real terms. Moreover, whereas Philip the Bold spent some 15 % of his demesne revenues on New Year gifts, this type of gifts seem to have disappeared during the reign of Charles the Bold.⁴⁵

Reciprocity

A gift is a specific kind of transfer, for it is given without immediate return and always implies generalised reciprocity, a concept elaborated by Marshall SAHLINS.⁴⁶ The gifts given by Charles to his courtiers can be understood in these terms, but only with some further qualification, for when the duke bestowed a gift on a courtier, he expected – but could not always be sure of getting loyalty and extra diligence.⁴⁷ The gift can be expected to confirm and deepen the relationship, just as anthropologists have emphasized, but it does not necessary follow that cooperation and solidarity will be the result. In fact, sometimes the gift-giving stimulated rivalry among courtiers, working to create divisions in their group.⁴⁸ The prince, of course, may benefit from this tension, for the rivalry may incite his courtiers to perform even better.

Some courtiers did more to repay their benefactor. At least four wealthy courtiers were able to offer a valuable present next to delivering loyal service.⁴⁹ The gift-exchange between the duke and these courtiers was closely connected with horses. In particular luxury horses were appreciated as gifts at medieval courts and were given to military captains as a reward for participating in campaigns.⁵⁰ The gifts between Charles and Anthony “Grand Bastard” of Burgundy can demonstrate this type of exchange. Anthony was a bastard of Philip the Good and in consequence a half-brother of Charles who appointed him first chamberlain, the highest office in the household after the chancellor. Moreover, Anthony played a fundamental role in the military campaigns of the duke.⁵¹ The close familial and official ties between both men justify the valuable gifts that were exchanged. In June Anthony received 1,200 pounds (the salary of a master mason during 4,800 days of work) for clothing for Charles’s wedding, the highest amount given to a courtier (in fact a direct family member) for this purpose. In

⁴⁴ VAUGHAN, *Philip the Good*, p. 260 based on an unpublished Phd. thesis of P. DANCOINE who calculated that Philip the Good spent annually 36,523 lb. of Tours (of 32. gr.) on gifts. It is not clear if Dancoine included gifts on alms and offerings in this calculation.

⁴⁵ CHATTAWAY, *Looking*, p. 8. See HIRSCHBIEGEL, *Étrennes*, p. 197-209 for exact figures from which appears that Philips was the most prominent giver of new-years’ presents in the circles around the French court.

⁴⁶ M. SAHLINS, On the sociology of primitive exchange, in : KOMTER (ed.), *The gift*, p. 34-35.

⁴⁷ KETTERING, *Gift-giving*, p. 142 : “(...) a patron had to reward the loyal service of a client if he wanted to retain his service and a client had to repay a patron’s material generosity with loyal obedient service if he wanted to receive patronage in the future”.

⁴⁸ GROEBNER, *Liquid assets*, p. 148-149 ; GUERY, *Le roi*, p. 1260-1261.

⁴⁹ One could as well imagine that they gave him (illustrated) manuscripts, but the surviving manuscripts do not reveal how they ended up in the ducal library : H. WIJSMAN, *Gebonden weelde. Productie van geïllustreerde handschriften en adellijk boekenbezit in de Bourgondische Nederlanden*, (unpublished dissertation, University Leiden, 2003), p. 185-188 ; BUETTNER, *Past presents*, p. 604.

⁵⁰ B. SCHNERB, Le cheval et les chevaux dans les armées des ducs de Bourgogne au XIVe siècle, in : PH. CONTAMINE a.o. (eds.), *Commerce, finances et société (XIe-XVIe siècles). Recueil de travaux d’histoire médiévale offert à M. le professeur Henri Dubois*, Paris, 1993, p. 82-83.

⁵¹ COOLS, *Mannen*, p. 165-166 ; DE SMEDT (ed.), *Chevaliers*, nr. 54 ; VAUGHAN, *Charles the Bold*, p. 235-236.

September Charles gave him 160 pounds to buy a horse for the war against Liège. In return, Anthony donated a grey horse, one of the most expensive horses available, to his half-brother.⁵²

Anthony clearly distinguished himself from the rest of the household by establishing a relationship of reciprocity with the duke, but his was not a “balanced” reciprocity, for his counter-gift, although delivered reasonably quickly, did not equal the value of the gifts received.⁵³ Such a symmetric relationship was normally reserved for princes and dignitaries of the same rank. Charles maintained, for example, a relationship of reciprocity with King Louis XI of France that was much more nearly balanced, although the gifts of the king surpassed in value those of the duke. This difference was probably exactly calculated to express the difference in status between the king and the duke. It confirms Philippe de Comynes’ observation that Louis was “more liberal (...) than other princes who reigned at the same time and who were his enemies and neighbours”.⁵⁴

Whether exactly balanced or not, gifts evidently played an important role in the relationship between Charles and Louis. In October 1468 Louis presented Charles with three horses and in December with a harness. In those months Charles had given two horses to Louis in return.⁵⁵ At that time, the relations between Louis and Charles were relatively good : on 14 October, for example, they swore solemnly friendship to each other and “Charles agreed to do homage for his French lands”.⁵⁶ Louis paid a large amount of money of reparation and helped Charles in his campaign against Liège. The gifts may have been used to facilitate or to confirm the diplomatic and military transactions.

Normally, the messengers and courtiers who delivered the gifts on behalf of their masters were given a small amount of money for their wine. The servants of Louis XI, however, received significantly more valuable presents. For example, the servants who delivered the horses at Charles’s court in October received 50 pounds, which is a bit less than the annual salary of an officer of the household with a wage of 3 s. per day.⁵⁷ The king’s herald who brought the harness received 12 ells of black damask on which almost 22 pounds was spent.⁵⁸ And Charles’s generosity towards the king’s men did not stop there : between September and December Charles rewarded several royal trumpeters, messengers, secretaries and heralds with substantial gifts.⁵⁹ These expensive gifts stressed the importance of the duke’s diplomatic relationship with their master and his intention to preserve good relations. Both the gifts exchanged between the princes and those given to the present-bringers were forms of political communication ; as GROEBNER pointed out in his instructive *Liquid Assets, Dangerous Gifts*, the

⁵² *Comptes* 1, nrs. 837, 1371, 1931. Other examples : Philippe de Crèvecoeur presented a horse to Charles in June, after he had received a grey horse valued at 127 pounds from the duke earlier that year : nrs. 413, 891. In June councillor-chamberlain Pierre de Miraumont presented a horse to Charles and in the same month he received a gift of 48 pounds to buy a horse for a secret mission to Normandy : nrs. 846, 891. Guillaume de Cicon first equerry, received in September 80 pounds and a grey horse for services performed. Two months later he presented a grey horse to the duke : nrs. 1464, 1475, 1935. A clear difference comes out between grey horses (*de poil gris*) which costed round about 125 pounds, and bay horses (*de poil moreau*) which costed between 30 and 90 pounds. The most expensive horse-gift was donated to Jean V dit le Beau, the duke of Alençon, who received a horse *de poil rouan* (a mix of white, grey and bay) which costed 360 pounds (nr. 1039).

⁵³ SAHLINS, *On the sociology*, p. 34-35.

⁵⁴ PHILIPPE DE COMMYNES, *Mémoires*, II, ed. J. CALMETTE, G. DURVILLE, Paris, 1925, p. 69, cited by GUERY, *Le roi*, p. 1247.

⁵⁵ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1764, 1944, 2066, 2076.

⁵⁶ VAUGHAN, *Charles the Bold*, p. 55.

⁵⁷ SOMMÉ, *Que représente*, p. 307.

⁵⁸ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1764, 2076.

⁵⁹ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1443, 1772, 1787, 1914, 2031, 2038.

gifts to the present-bringers were “the demonstrative act[s] of transfer”, in effect, ritual acts of reconfirmation of the primary relationship.⁶⁰

It was not only other princes and their subalterns with whom Charles the Bold wanted good relations : powerful nobles within the Burgundian state were as important to him. In July 1468 on his *joyeuse entrée* through Holland and Zeeland, Charles stayed in the hotel of the influential nobleman Frank van Borselen at Brielle. Earlier that month Frank had sent him two oxen in celebration of his wedding in Bruges. Now, Charles donated thirty Rhine-guilders (31 lb. 10 s.) to Frank’s steward, to be distributed among all members of the nobleman’s household. Of course this generosity had to be reciprocated. Subsequently, Frank donated exactly the same amount of money to Charles’s steward with the same purpose. In this way not only the relations between the prince and the nobleman were confirmed, a bond was created between both men and their respective households.⁶¹ Again, the lower layers of the household proved to be useful targets in the maintenance of political relationships.

Inalienable objects

Gifts are not only reciprocal ; they are also inalienable in that the beneficiary of the gift so associates the object with the giver that he keeps it indefinitely. In this way the relationship between both parties is confirmed and the receiver of the gift feels linked and obligated to the giver.⁶² Silverware, a highly durable commodity that held its value through time, served this kind of gift exchange extremely well. In 1468 Charles gave silverware at the baptism of a son born to the receiver-general of Hainault, a member of the council of Holland, a carver of the household, and a mayor of Bruges.⁶³ Undoubtedly, the silver cups or plates, on which the coat of arms of the duke was engraved, would be prominently displayed in the homes of these men. In this way the silverware functioned as a visible symbol of the relationship of the giver, the duke, and the recipient. In the future not only the officer but also his child would feel obligated towards the duke, especially when the duke acted as godfather and the child was named after the duke, and all would be inclined to remain loyal to him.⁶⁴ The gift to the mayor of Bruges shows that the duke not only rewarded his own officers but also town officials

⁶⁰ GROEBNER, *Liquid assets*, p. 37-41.

⁶¹ *Comptes* 1, nr. 1018 and The Hague, Nationaal Archief, Grafelijkheidsrekenkamer, Rekeningen, inv. nr. 5592, f° 57 v° : on July 29 the money was given to Gerrit de bastaard van Culemborg *omme die bij him gedistribueert te worden den huisgesinne mijns heren van Oestervant*. Then Frank gave the same amount of money to Charles’s steward *tot behoef mijns genadichs heren huysgesinne*. It is not clear if Frank was present at the wedding in Bruges. The same householdaccount (f° 71 r°) reveals that a messenger informed Frank on June 30 that Margaret of York had arrived. The two oxen were sent a few days later (f° 71 r° also cited in extenso by H. VON SEGGERN, *Herrschermedien im Spätmittelalter. Studien zur Informationsübermittlung im burgundischen Staat unter Karl dem Kühnen*, Ostfildern, 2003, p. 275). See on Frank van Borselen DAMEN, *De staat van dienst*, p. 287-309 and A. A. ARKENBOUT, *Frank van Borselen. Het dagelijks leven op zijn hoven in Zeeland en het Maasmondgebied*, Rotterdam, 1994.

⁶² Well described by J. G. CARRIER, *Gifts and commodities. Exchange and western capitalism since 1700*, London/New York, 1995, p. 24-31.

⁶³ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 566, 733, 1013, 2048. Councillor Jean de Halewijn received 8,5 marks of silverware, mayor Jean Breydel 6 marks, carver Philippe de Vauldrey 5 marks, receiver-general Jean Boids 3 marks.

⁶⁴ B. GUENÉE, *Un meurtre, une société. L’assassinat du duc d’Orléans 23 novembre 1407*, Paris, 1992, p. 109 ; CHATTAWAY, *Looking*, p. 7 ; H. KRUSE, Der burgundische Hof als soziales Netz, in : *Francia*, 29, 1, 2002, p. 244-246. See for baptism gifts to the officers of the Council and of the *Chambre des Comptes* of Holland and Zeeland : DAMEN, *De staat van dienst*, p. 251-253. The sons of Jean Breydel and of Philippe de Vauldrey were named after Charles : *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1013, 2048.

because he found it useful to recruit agents within the town governments. These men often switched to the ducal service later on in their career.⁶⁵

There were more gifts of this kind in the accounts. In addition to those already mentioned, five *persevants* and one herald of arms received silverware on the occasion of their appointment or promotion. These gifts were in fact a kind of baptism gifts as the *persevants* and herald were given nicknames : *Arbre d'or*, *Quesnoy*, *Lothier*, *Lembourg*, *Gorinchem* and *Moruel*.⁶⁶ Although one silver cup is not a very expensive item, it accurately reflected the fairly low station of the recipients. But again the message is clear : the appointment of the officer was completed with a gift of silverware, which established a symbolic relationship between master and servant.

More valuable gifts of silverware were meant for ambassadors. According to Petra EHM, visiting ambassadors were traditionally endowed with the cups they had used during their stay at the court. In the late Middle Ages these cups or flagons were especially made for them.⁶⁷ For example, Peter de Borges, a chamberlain of the king of Portugal, received in March 1468 a silver flagon with a value of more than 130 pounds (520 days of work for a master mason). Two English ambassadors who visited Charles in August to talk about some not specified secret affairs received even more : silverware with a value of 162 and 360 pounds respectively.⁶⁸

By the time Charles was ruling and distributing gifts so copiously, however, the culture of the gift was in some ways breaking down. The clearest evidence of this change is in the nature of the gift itself. While it had once been the norm to bestow material objects – horses that clearly spoke of shared chivalric values, silverware that represented dignity and luxury – it seems to have been becoming more common to substitute money for the object itself. Some such gifts, we have seen, served to pay travel expenses.⁶⁹ Others had less specifically named purposes, but they are nevertheless abundant in the records. Although the accounts of 1468 record three gifts of silverware, these are nothing compared to the seventeen gifts of money to diplomats. For example, Charles presented several English ambassadors with enormous amounts of money because of their efforts to promote the marriage with Margaret of York. The bishop of Salisbury received 1,200 pounds, John Woodville, the brother of the English queen got 630 pounds, whereas the English king's equerry Thomas Vaughan received 375 pounds.⁷⁰ They were present at the wedding and every one of them received a gift in correspondence with his status. These gifts can also be interpreted as a means to encourage the English to continue supporting Charles's campaigns with English archers who were renown for their military efficiency ; the sending of English infantry in 1467 by the same ambassadors was the starting point for the negotiations on a Burgundian-English marriage alliance.⁷¹

⁶⁵ W. PREVENIER, *Ambtenaren in stad en land in de Nederlanden. Socio-professionele evoluties (veertiende tot zestiende eeuw)*, in : *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 87, 1972, p. 49 ; DAMEN, *De staat van dienst*, p. 209-211.

⁶⁶ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 588, 1027, 1198, 1455-1457. Moreul, Quesnoy and Lothier received a *tasse d'argent* whereas the others received *ung marc d'argent de 6 escuz d'or*. The costs were in all cases 7 lb. 4 s.

⁶⁷ P. EHM, *Burgund und das Reich. Spätmittelalterliche Aussenpolitik am Beispiel der Regierung Karls des Kühnen*, Munich, 2002, p. 278.

⁶⁸ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 411, 1207-1208.

⁶⁹ EHM, *Burgund*, p. 278.

⁷⁰ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 992, 993, 1763, also quoted by EHM, *Burgund*, p. 280.

⁷¹ M. BALLARD, *An expedition of English archers to Liège in 1467, and the Anglo-Burgundian marriage alliance*, in : *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 34, 1990, p. 153-155, 165-166. See also the gifts paid in January and February 1468 ranging from 2 lb. 8 s. to 12 lb. to English archers who participated in the campaign against Liège in 1467 : nrs. 315, 318, 330 and 357.

Still, objects continued to circulate in Charles's gift networks. Expensive cloth was at least as frequently used as silverware or horses ; the standard gift seemed to be twenty ells of black velvet or damask like the steward and the secretary of the duke of Brittany, and the duke of Exeter and his servant received.⁷² It is not a coincidence that ambassadors of friendly nations like England, Portugal and Brittany were particularly rewarded in this way. EHM pointed out that Charles was much more generous with ambassadors of these nations than with ambassadors of German princes and the German Emperor, to whom he donated just the required minimum.⁷³ Like gifts of silverware, the cloths were stereotypical gifts, but they nevertheless could do important social work : they spoke of the prince's esteem for the ambassadors' masters and symbolized the relationship that princes wished to maintain with each other.

Objects given to religious institutions constitute a special category. These gifts were special as many played a role in the celebration of the mass and the devotion of a saint. Although the duke had his own chapel, he regularly attended mass in a "normal" church and regularly contributed an offering during the offertory and to the relics of the church.⁷⁴ In June 1468, for example, on the anniversary of the death of his father Philip, Charles donated 180 lbs. of wax to five churches, probably for candles.⁷⁵ Wax was also used for votive gifts as they did in May of that year when Charles donated a 60 pounds *personaige d'homme de cire a genoulx* to St. Adrian in Grammont in Flanders.⁷⁶

More valuable materials were also given to ecclesiastical organizations. Charles donated golden cloth to the churches of St. Donas and St. John on the occasion of his Joyous Entry in Bruges and Valenciennes respectively.⁷⁷ Furthermore, he ordered several glass windows to be installed in churches. Considering the amount of money involved these were probably stained-glass windows with the image, coat of arms or device of the duke. In any case the Burgundian dukes had established a tradition of donating glass windows to churches and convents, motivated by pious and propagandistic ends.⁷⁸ In 1468 Charles gave subsidies for glass windows to be installed in the Notre Dame of Boulogne-sur-Mer,⁷⁹ in the Notre Dame of Le Roeulx, Hainault,⁸⁰ and in the churches of the regular canons in Sion and Schiedam, Holland. Charles's trustees in Holland, stadholder Louis of Gruuthuse and councillor Antoin

⁷² *Comptes* 1, nrs. 878-880.

⁷³ EHM, *Burgund*, p. 282.

⁷⁴ H. VAN DER VELDEN, Karel de Stoute op bedevaart : de aanschaf van pelgrimstekens door de graaf van Charolais, in : H. J. E. VAN BEUNINGEN a.o. (eds.), *Heilig en profaan 2. 1200 Laatmiddeleeuwse insignes uit openbare en particuliere collecties*, Rotterdam, 2001, p. 234-241.

⁷⁵ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 871-875 : to the churches of St. Esprit in Rue, Notre Dame in Liesse, St. Martin in Tours, St. Hubert en Ardenne and St. Nicolas of Varangéville.

⁷⁶ *Comptes* 1, nr. 713 and VAN DER VELDE, *Karel de Stoute*, p. 238.

⁷⁷ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 617, 851.

⁷⁸ Y. VANDEN BEMDEN, Le vitrail sous les ducs de Bourgogne et les Habsbourg dans les ancien Pays-Bas, in : J. VANDER AUWERA (ed.), *Liber Amicorum Raphaël de Smedt 2. Artium Historia*. [Miscellanea Neerlandica, 24], Leuven, 2001, p. 19-46 ; M. DAMEN, Vorstelijke vensters. Glasraamschenkingen als instrument van devotie, memorie en representatie (1419-1519), in : *Jaarboek voor middeleeuwse geschiedenis*, 8, 2005, in press ; A. G. JONGKEES, *Staat en kerk in Holland en Zeeland onder de Bourgondische hertogen 1425-1477*, Groningen/Batavia, 1942, p. 244-245 ; L. NOORDEGRAAF, Mecenaat vóór en na de Opstand. Gebrandschilderde glazen in Hollandse kerken gedurende de late Middeleeuwen en vroegmoderne tijd, in : *Holland*, 33, 2001, p. 18-19, 24.

⁷⁹ *Comptes* 1, nr. 628 and *Comptes* 2, nr. 1383. See H. VAN DER VELDEN, *The donor's image. Gerard Loyet and the votive portraits of Charles the Bold*, Turnhout, 2000, p. 165.

⁸⁰ In August 1468 a gift of 48 lb. for a glass window : *Comptes* 1, nr. 1221.

Michiel, would advise on the *personaiges* that were to figure on the last two windows.⁸¹ Sion was the main convent of the so-called Congregation of Sion. The Burgundian dukes had a special interest in this and other observant congregations – the convent of the Crosiers in Schiedam also had an observant signature – and they repeatedly granted its members with gifts, both in money and kind.⁸² The gifts to the churches of Boulogne-sur-Mer and of Le Roeulx can be interpreted in more than one way. These houses of God contained miracle images of the virgin Mary, who, along with saint George, was one of Charles's favourite devotional figures.⁸³ But Charles had probably more than pious intentions. Both Boulogne and Le Roeulx were directly linked to the Croÿ family, with whom Charles maintained a troublesome relationship. The Croÿ's were protected by Philip the Good until 1465 when, on Charles's advice, they were expelled from the Burgundian court.⁸⁴ Until that year first chamberlain Antoine de Croÿ was not only governor of Boulogne but he also possessed the seigneurie of Le Roeulx.⁸⁵

So on the one hand the duke contributed in a material way to the celebration of the liturgy and the maintenance of the building, and on the other hand he appealed directly to the loyalty of the citizens, sometimes in direct competition with other lords. He publicly showed his devotion to the churchgoers, even attaching his coat of arms to the candles.⁸⁶ Candles would, however, be consumed in use, while a glass window would remain forever in the church, reminding the public of the donor even after he had died.⁸⁷ In other words, with gifts and offerings for the religious institutions, the duke tried to establish a reciprocal relationship with the here-after and to obtain divine compensation through the remission of sins.⁸⁸

Redistributions

While many of Charles's gifts can be understood under the rubric of reciprocity, some do not fit that mold. Instead, they must be considered part of the prince's traditional obligation to redistribute the wealth of his conquests (or of his realm) among his loyal followers. During the early and central Middle Ages, chiefs and warlords were expected to redistribute their conquered goods and lands among their *Gefolgschaft*, to reward them for their efforts and to secure their loyalty and assistance in the next military campaign.⁸⁹ Late medieval princes found

⁸¹ In September 1468 a gift of 80 lb. for the two windows : *Comptes* 1, nr. 1528.

⁸² JONGKEES, *Staat en kerk*, p. 44, 246. On his visit to Holland in July 1468, Charles made donations to the convents of regular canons of 's Gravenzande and Leiden of 30 lb and 22 lb. 10 s. respectively because of *certain service divin par eulx célébré pour le salut de l'ame dudit feu monseigneur le duc et pour ses nobles predecesseurs et successeurs*. Both to the convent of observant friars of Middelburg and to the Dominican nunnery of Leiden he gave 15 lb. for the construction of new buildings. *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1021-1025.

⁸³ In 1457 Charles donated together with his first wife Isabel of Bourbon a precious calvary to Notre Dame of 's Gravenzande out of gratitude for the birth of their daughter Mary : JONGKEES, *Staat en kerk*, p. 245.

⁸⁴ VAUGHAN, *Philip the Good*, p. 377-378 and P. A. MEILINK, *Holland en het conflict tussen Philips de Goede en zijn zoon van 1463-1464*, in : *Bijdragen voor Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde*, 7e reeks, 6, 1935, p. 63-66.

⁸⁵ DE SMEDT, *Chevaliers*, nr. 15.

⁸⁶ *Comptes* 1, nr. 344 : candles given to the fraternity of St. Barbara in Valenciennes with *unze blasons armoyes des armes de mon dit seigneur et mis ausdiz cierges et flambeaulx*.

⁸⁷ TR. VAN BUEREN, W. C. M. WÜSTEFELD, *Leven na de dood. Gedenken in de late middeleeuwen*, Turnhout, 1999, p. 12-14.

⁸⁸ A.-J. A. BIJSTERVELD, *The medieval gift as agent of social bonding and political power : a comparative approach*, in : E. COHEN, M. B. DE JONG (eds.), *Medieval transformations : texts, power, and gifts in context*, Leiden, 2001, p. 128-129.

⁸⁹ G. DUBY, *The early growth of the European economy. Warriors and peasants from the seventh to the twelfth century*, New York, 1974, p. 48-51.

other ways of rewarding their followers but redistribution of (a part of) the resources still was a common practice on special occasions.⁹⁰ We have already seen some examples of this “redistributive” mechanism, as when Charles bestowed gifts on his own retinue. The pattern was common enough – and important enough – however, to warrant more extended discussion.

In 1468 two extraordinary events took place, both costing a lot of money : the wedding of Charles and Margaret of York in July, and the military campaign against Liège in October. The two events not only implied ordinary expenses but stimulated the generosity of the duke (extraordinary expenses) as well : the months preceding each (June and September) register a peak in the duke’s gift-giving. In these two months and in July, the duke spent almost half of his gift budget. Remarkably, the same type of gifts and objects were given before, during and after the wedding and the military operation.

When the ducal household presented itself in society, the prince normally covered the expenses required to dress his courtiers properly.⁹¹ This arrangement formed part of the livery that not only served to mark the status and function of the courtier within the household but also functioned “as a sign of dynastic and personal allegiance”.⁹² Therefore, on the occasion of his wedding in Bruges, Charles ordered all kinds of *draps d’or, de soye et de laine*, golden, silken and woollen cloth, with a value of more than 30,000 pounds from the Italian merchant Thomas de Portinari. He donated the cloth to his own courtiers and those of Margaret so that they would make appropriate clothes for the wedding. Everybody received cloth in concordance with his “estate and faculty” ; while the chancellor and some of the knights and nobles received gold cloth, other courtiers did not.⁹³

Although the cloth formed part of the livery, the costs were registered as “ordinary” expenses, appearing in a chapter called, simply, “other expenses”. Since all courtiers received cloth, one could say that it was what they could expect from their lord ; at the wedding of Philip the Good with Isabel of Portugal all members of the household were similarly given woollen, damask and satin clothes.⁹⁴ The chronicler Olivier de la Marche noted specifically that on the first day of the wedding, the chamberlains and servants were all equally dressed in the livery of the duke of Burgundy, everybody according to his rank, a comment confirming that courtiers were only exceptionally all dressed in the duke’s livery.⁹⁵

Next to these “normal” gifts of cloth, thirteen family members, courtiers and trustees were given an extra clothing allowance intended for wedding clothing. Most courtiers received amounts ranging from 40 to 60 pounds.⁹⁶ The value of these gifts reflects the position these nobles had in the household and in society as they were supposed to dress not only themselves but also their retinue. Charles gave both his half brother Anthony and his cousin Adolph of Cleves no less than 1,200 pounds, two of the highest amounts of money granted in 1468.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ K. POLANYI, *The great transformation. The political and economic origins of our time*, 7th edition, Boston, 1967, p. 47-49. See also GROEBNER, *Liquid assets*, p.10.

⁹¹ R. STEIN, Mourning-cloth at the Brabantine court, in : W. BLOCKMANS, A. JANSE (eds.), *Showing status. The representation of social positions in the late Middle Ages*, Turnhout, 1998, p. 53-55.

⁹² VALE, *The princely court*, p. 135. See also R. VAN UYTVEN, Showing off one’s rank in the Middle Ages, in : BLOCKMANS, JANSE (eds.), *Showing status*, p. 29-33.

⁹³ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 2288-2290.

⁹⁴ M. SOMMÉ, *Isabelle de Portugal, duchesse de Bourgogne. Une femme au pouvoir au XVe siècle*, Villeneuve d’Asq, 1998, p. 38.

⁹⁵ BEAUNE, D’ARBAUMONT, *Mémoires*, III, p. 122 : «(...) et disna monseigneur en la sale pour luy ordonnée, et tous ses chambellans en leur reigle, quie estoit moult belle chose à veoir, pour ce que tous estoient vestuz pareil de la livrée de monseigneur, et tous les serviteurs de mesmes à leur degree (...)».

⁹⁶ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 852-854, 981-982.

⁹⁷ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 836, 837.

Baldwin, another half brother and councillor-chamberlain of Charles, received 480 pounds, whereas Philip, son of Anthony Grand Bastard, and John, one of Philip the Good's bastards, received both 240 pounds.⁹⁸ His trustees received these extreme high amounts because they played an important role during the jousts and tournaments held in the days after the wedding. Unlike most of the courtiers, they had to perform during the festivities, and the gifts may well have been intended to offset the extra costs incurred. The descriptions of the jousts illustrate that Anthony and Adolph were richly dressed and accompanied by several servants and horses that were as lavishly adorned. Anthony was the central figure in the "Pas de l'Arbre d'Or", the joust celebrated on Bruges' Market Square, where he had to defend himself against 26 challengers.⁹⁹

From tournament to war was only a small step for a medieval courtier. One of the primary duties of the chamberlains was the physical protection of the prince, although the Burgundian dukes went much further than that. In 1433 Philip the Good ordered that every member of his household was to maintain a certain "number of armed servants and archers, commensurate with the number of horses he kept".¹⁰⁰ Charles the Bold intensified this militarization of the household. The forces connected to the household "constituted a body of elite troops which was given pride of place in the Burgundian order of battle". These household troops counted in 1476 for example more than 2,000 combatants. The cores of these troops were of course the chamberlains and the equerries of the four estates.¹⁰¹

When the duke issued a call to arms, his courtiers and their servants had to buy themselves a military outfit. Therefore, the duke granted more than a hundred courtiers, esquires and others a gift *de sa grace pour luy aidier a monter et habillier et a servir mon dit seigneur en son armee*, that is to help them to mount a horse and clothe themselves to serve in the duke's army, when he wanted to defeat once and for all the insurgent city of Liège in the autumn of 1468. Again, everybody received a gift corresponding to his functional and social status. For example, minstrels, office clerks and doorkeepers (*huissiers d'armes*), received 18 pounds.¹⁰² The esquires pantlers (*pannetiers*),¹⁰³ cup-bearers (*echansons*),¹⁰⁴ carvers (*ecuyers tranchants*)¹⁰⁵ and equerries (*ecuyers d'ecuierie*)¹⁰⁶ got 24 to 50 pounds, whereas councillor-chamberlains received 32 to 120 pounds.¹⁰⁷ Besides these extraordinary gifts, the duke donated ordinary gifts, those after three months of service, to some 100 courtiers in the frame of the preparations for war.¹⁰⁸ While these distributions were "ordinary" and would have been made even had there been no more, the hostilities served as a convenient excuse. Elsewhere in the accounts we find

⁹⁸ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 840-842.

⁹⁹ BEAUNE, D'ARBAUMONT, *Mémoires*, IV, p. 110-144 ; W. G. BRILL (ed.), *Huwelijksplechtigheden van Karel van Bourgondië en Margaretha van York*, in : *Kronijk van het Historisch Genootschap gevestigd te Utrecht*, 1866, p. 37-38, 44 ; W. PARAVICINI, Die zwölf "Magnificences" Karls des Kühnen, in : G. ALTHOFF (ed.), *Formen und Funktionen öffentlicher Kommunikation im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart, 2001, p. 335. Another ten courtiers (Philippe de Poitiers, Guillaume du Vernay, Jean de Luxembourg, Jacques de Harchies, Jean de Ligne, Glaude de Vauldrey, Antoine d'Usye, Hervé Garlot, Jean de Rochefay and Louis de Chalon) received a special jousting harness : *Comptes* 1, nr. 1502.

¹⁰⁰ W. PARAVICINI, The court of the dukes of Burgundy, a model for Europe ?, in : R. G. ASCH, A. M. BIRKE (eds.), *Princes, patronage and the nobility : the court at the beginning of the modern age*, Oxford, 1991, p. 73-75.

¹⁰¹ VAUGHAN, *Charles the Bold*, p. 21.

¹⁰² *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1466, 1468, 1470-1472, 1482.

¹⁰³ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1402-1405, 1414.

¹⁰⁴ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1360, 1391, 1394, 1407, 1413.

¹⁰⁵ *Comptes* 1, nr. 1397.

¹⁰⁶ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1398, 1401, 1408, 1409, 1476.

¹⁰⁷ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1373-1381.

¹⁰⁸ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1353, 1354.

expenses made for horses, harnesses and armour for the military campaign, all of which were “gifts” of some kind, made to courtiers who received something extra on top of their normal wages to encourage them to go to war. It may also be, however, as Bernard SCHNERB has suggested, that the payments were made because the prince himself was not always able directly to acquire horses, harnesses and armours needed for the courtiers. So the duke gave the money, requiring them to outfit themselves.¹⁰⁹

The duke was unrelenting in his stimulation of the commitment of his courtiers to the war against Liège. Before and after the war several courtiers were given additional gifts not clearly connected to the war but presumably intended to secure loyalty. In September the five stewards (*maîtres d’hôtel*), among them Guillaume de Bische and Olivier de la Marche, were rewarded with 90 pounds each “for services performed (and to perform) in the present army and in order to serve the duke even better and more honourably” – language that decisively set forth the duke’s expectations.¹¹⁰ In addition to his own courtiers the duke endowed servants of the duke of Normandy and the duke of Brittany who fought in Charles’s army. They received 30 and 60 pounds respectively for services performed. Charles’s delight at the news of the victory was registered when he gave 25 pounds to Chasteaubelin, his persevant of arms, who was the lucky messenger.¹¹¹

The gifts given before and after the war against Liège were very similar to the gifts given on the occasion of the wedding. Several of his own courtiers were rewarded for services performed during the festivities, just as soldiers were “rewarded” for services in the field of battle. For example, he gave Jean de Chassa, councillor-chamberlain, and Philippe Coppin, equerry, 56 and 120 pounds respectively for services performed during the tournaments.¹¹² But Charles’s appreciation extended beyond the ranks of these high officials. For example, as Olivier de la Marche recorded, after dinner on the last day of the wedding festivities, Charles gave 600 francs to his *officiers d’armes, trompettes et menestrelz (...) et lors commencerent ilz a crier ‘largesse, largesse’ à puissance*. They shouted *largesse* and passed along the tables, showing the money to the guests, as is added in a Dutch description of the wedding by Anton de Roovere.¹¹³ The act of giving was important: *largesse* was used to increase the social prestige of the prince by showing his wealth and his ability to give.¹¹⁴ Probably, the heralds and musicians expected the wedding guests to follow suit and to give them a gratuity as well. Next to the money gift, Charles also granted a personal gift to Cestre, an English herald. According to de la Marche he received a long robe *d’un riche drap d’or vert fourré d’ermes*.¹¹⁵

Both the gift of money and the gift of cloth are registered in the account of 1468, albeit with slight differences. The account tells us that Charles distributed 400 francs (of 32 groats) among his heralds and doorkeepers during the wedding festivities and especially states that the money was given *de largesse*.¹¹⁶ This is the only entry in the account where the word *largesse* is

¹⁰⁹ SCHNERB, *Le cheval*, p. 83.

¹¹⁰ *Comptes* 1, nr. 1355.

¹¹¹ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1891, 1895, 1897, 1898, 1908, 1911, 1912, 1921.

¹¹² *Comptes* 1, nrs. 1005, 1015. See on the performance of De Chassa at one of the jousts: BRILL, *Huwelijksplechtigheden*, p. 48.

¹¹³ BEAUNE, D’ARBAUMONT, *Mémoires*, IV, p. 143. See also the description of Anton de Roovere in BRILL, *Huwelijksplechtigheden*, p. 66, who gives a slightly different and more vivid version of this gift: “den herauden van Engelant (...) hingen den zack metten goude up eenen stoc ende droughene lancx der zale van tafle te tafle, roupende met blyden voys: “largesse” hertelic bedanckende de edelhede van onsen gheduchten heere ende prinche”.

¹¹⁴ KETTERING, *Gift-giving*, p. 138; BUETTNER, *Past presents*, p. 615-616.

¹¹⁵ BEAUNE, D’ARBAUMONT, *Mémoires*, IV, p. 143.

¹¹⁶ *Comptes* 1, nr. 985. Also quoted by VON SEGGERN, *Herrschermedien*, p. 288, footnote 80.

mentioned. The number of beneficiaries of the gift (some thirty according to De Roovere) is not confirmed by the account, but according to Harm VON SEGGERN's count, a maximum of seventeen heralds were present at the wedding.¹¹⁷

Probably, the robe for the English herald refers to a gift of black velvet and damask to Henry Holland, the duke of Exeter (Excestre = Cestre ?), and a similar, but inferior, gift of black woollen cloth to his servant Guillaume Joseph. Henry Holland was present at Charles's court in June, when he was endowed with 300 pounds *pour aler en certain lieu*, some secret mission on which the duke did not want *plus ample declaracion icy estre fait*.¹¹⁸ If Cestre is the same person as Guillaume Joseph, de la Marche upgraded the cloth given to the herald substantially, as he did with the amount of money given to Charles's own heralds. So the chronicler wanted his master to look more generous than he in reality was. This proves again that the duke considered *largesse* more important than the financial means permitted. In any case there is a discrepancy between the (financial) reality reflected by the account and the princely virtues propagated by the duke's chronicler.

Conclusions

Although we do not have complete records of all Charles's gift-giving, the *argentier's* account, combined with the household ordinances and a few narrative sources, provide a good overview of the importance and nature of gift-giving in Charles's court. These texts reveal a charged and unstable culture of gift-giving, one in which the category of "gift" itself is in some disarray and where bureaucratic pressures both distort the gift and intensify Charles's need to deploy gifts in order to secure his power.

Although many gifts were made in kind, as the traditional notion of "gift" requires, many more were made in coin. Several factors combine to explain this pattern. First, money gifts could be more easily accounted for, more precisely registered, and thus more conveniently tracked through the labyrinth of ducal finances. Furthermore, a travelling prince probably found it difficult to keep the appropriate horses, bolts or cloth, or silverwares in stock, a necessary condition to be able to distribute gifts *ad hoc*. It is meaningful that horses that were given away were nearly always bought from a courtier. But there may be another reason. When the prince wanted to distribute gifts on a special occasion (his wedding, or a military campaign), he needed big quantities of goods in short term. Probably the market was not always able to deliver large quantities of cloth, harnesses and horses of the same quality.¹¹⁹ Then it was easier to distribute money expecting that the recipient could purchase his own necessities. As a consequence, the special bond between giver and recipient, which is typical of giving objects, disappeared.

Although in the court ordinances the gift-giving of the Burgundian dukes was bound with all kind of restrictions, the "spirit of *largesse*", in the words of Werner PARAVICINI, was difficult to bring under control. Although Charles spent less money than his predecessors on gifts, he still regarded gifts as a useful instrument in the political communication both within and outside the household. During a period when household maintenance and all kind of compensations in kind were converted into fixed payments on a daily, monthly or yearly

¹¹⁷ VON SEGGERN, *Herrschermedien*, p. 288-289. He also remarks that the baptism gifts to four persevants and one herald, which were given on the same occasion, are only mentioned indirectly by de la Marche.

¹¹⁸ *Comptes* 1, nrs. 855, 2284.

¹¹⁹ R. VAN UYTVEN, *De zinnelijke middeleeuwen*, Louvain, 1998, p. 129 ; VALE, *The princely court*, p. 110 ; SCHNERB, *Le cheval*, p. 83.

basis,¹²⁰ gifts remained as one of the scarce means of personal communication between the duke and his courtiers. They allowed relationships of reciprocity to be constructed and perpetuated, for a gift of an object is never exactly compensated as a gift of money might be, and the apparent inequality of the gift exchange can thus compel repetition – and long-term relationships.

¹²⁰ Until 1445 the officers of the household of the Burgundian duke received both payments in kind and in money. After that year the officers would receive only a fixed amount of money per day per *bouche*, that is per mouth to be fed (including servants and horses) : H. KRUSE, *Hof, Amt und Gagen. Die täglichen Gagenlisten des burgundischen Hofes (1430-1467) und der erste Hofstaat Karls des Kühnen (1456)*, Bonn, 1996, p. 135-145 ; SOMMÉ, *Isabelle de Portugal*, p. 242-243.