



Medieval/Early Modern History: one postdoc position (1 + 3 years) within the ERC Starting Grant Project “STATE – Lordship and the Rise of the State in Western Europe, 1300-1600”

Deadline: 15 May 2017

Ghent University (Belgium) – Department of History

Job Description

The postdoctoral researcher will participate in an ERC-funded research project that pursues a new interpretation of state formation in Western Europe between 1300 and 1600. This period is considered as a key phase in the genesis of the modern state, as various polities now centralized fiscal and military resources under their command. While there is debate whether this was primarily a top-down process carried out by princes, or a bottom-up process carried out by popular representation, scholars tend to agree that state building was essentially a process of centralization. This assumption must be questioned, as recent studies have raised awkward questions that cannot be answered by the current paradigm.

The research hypothesis is that the emerging states of Western Europe could only acquire sufficient support among established elites if they also decentralized much of their legal authority through a process of creating or endorsing a growing number of seigneuries as “states-within-states” for the benefit of elites who in turn contributed to state building. This project will study the interplay between states and seigneurial elites in five regions – two in the Low Countries, two in France, and one in England – to test whether fiscal and military centralization was facilitated by a progressively confederal organization of government. Together, the case studies cover four key variables that shaped the relations between princes and power elites in different combinations all over Europe: 1) state formation, 2) urbanization, 3) the socio-economic organization of rural society, and 4) ideological dissent. The comparisons between the case studies are aimed at the development of an analytical framework to chart and to explain path-dependency in Europe.

The postdoctoral researcher, starting 1 September 2017, will explore secular lordship in the Netherlandish principality of Guelders and the English shire of Warwickshire. The heuristic aim is to develop a snapshot survey of seigneuries/manors and their holders of a part of each region, combining earlier scholarship with primary sources such as manorial rolls and feudal registers that are preserved in various archives (travel expenses are borne by the ERC-project). The interpretative aim is to use these case studies to engage with current theories on state formation and elite formation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe.

You will be based at Ghent University in the Department of History and the Pirenne Institute for Medieval Studies and be part of the research team led by prof.dr. Frederik Buylaert in close collaboration with dr. Justine Firnhaber-Baker (University of St Andrews). The other members of the team are another postdoctoral fellow (dr. Erika Graham-Goering) and two doctoral students.

Ghent University was founded in 1817 and counts approximately 40,000 students and 9,000 staff. It is consistently listed in the top 100 of the universities of Europe (see <http://www.ugent.be/en>).

Qualifications

The successful candidate preferably has:

- A Ph.D. in Medieval or Early Modern History or a manuscript submitted to the Ph.D. committee.
- Demonstrated experience with archival work, preferably on English or Netherlandish history (a candidate who does not have experience with either late medieval English or Netherlandish sources can start with the region that suits their research experiences, during which (s)he is expected to develop the linguistic and technical skills that are necessary to study the other case-study).
- Demonstrated experience with qualitative and quantitative research methods, including an active interest in comparative history.
- Demonstrated capacity for creative and independent research.
- The ability and willingness to work as a member of an international research team, including contributions to a shared database as well as joint publications.
- Demonstrated experience in publishing at high academic standards.

Offer

We offer a postdoc-position of 1 FTE, beginning 1 September 2017. Initially, there is a one-year contract. After a positive evaluation, this contract can be extended with three more years (a total of three to four years maximum). The starting salary approximates 3,896 euros gross on a full-time basis, in concordance with the requirements of the Flemish Government.

Ghent University offers a pension scheme, a holiday allowance and end-of-year bonus. For more information, see www.ugent.be/en/work.

How to apply

Applications are to be sent as a pdf-file by email to prof.dr. Frederik Buylaert (email: frederik.buylaert@ugent.be). Applications must include the following elements:

- Motivation letter.
- Curriculum Vitae, including a survey of 1) language skills (active and passive); 2) experience with archival work; and 3) PC-skills.
- A pdf-copy of the doctoral dissertation.

- A writing sample (e.g. an article or book chapter), preferably in English unless the submitted doctoral dissertation is written in English).
- Certified copies of relevant diplomas.
- Contact details of two referees (name, institutional affiliation and email address) or two letters of reference.

In the second stage of the application procedure, the selected candidates will be provided with the full project description and be asked to submit a research proposal of max. 1,500 words that will be discussed during an interview. The hiring committee consists of dr. Frederik Buylaert, dr. Justine Firnhaber-Baker and dr. Erika Graham-Goering.

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Additional information

Are you interested? For more information, please contact the project leader Frederik Buylaert (email: frederik.buylaert@ugent.be)