



Ghent University – the Department of History and the Department of Interdisciplinary Study of Law are hiring

3 doctoral researchers for the GOA-Project

“Lordship and Agrarian Capitalism in the Low Countries, c. 1350-1650”

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND THE POSTDOCTORAL POSITIONS WITHIN THE PROJECT

In the context of the GOA (Geconcerteerde Onderzoeksactie) funding scheme of Ghent University, a five-year research project will be launched in September 2022 by Frederik Buylaert (promotor-spokesperson), Thijs Lambrecht, Dirk Heirbaut and Jim van der Meulen (promotors). Bringing together the expertise of historians and legal scholars, this project engages with the ongoing debate on political economy in the Low Countries.

From an international perspective, the Low Countries are a natural laboratory of history in that this patchwork of wildly divergent landscapes and societies saw the precocious development of agrarian capitalism in some regions (esp. Coastal Flanders, the Guelders riverlands, Holland) whereas other regions saw the persistence of traditional peasant societies until the nineteenth century. Building on older debates on coercive surplus-extraction vis-à-vis markets, historians have speculated that the economic success stories of seventeenth-century Holland, for example, are rooted in the relative absence of seigneurial (‘feudal’) institutions that hampered economic development in most other parts of the Low Countries and Europe. While increasingly influential since the 1990s, this hypothesis has not yet received empirical scrutiny.

The GOA-Project aims to remedy this situation by pursuing three lines of enquiry. The first is assessing the relative distribution of seigneurial institutions as a proxy for coercive surplus extraction in Flanders, Hainaut, Holland, Zeeland, Brabant, and Guelders, an approach that proceeds mainly from rich sets of feudal registers and pre-existing datasets (Work Package 1: one postdoc and one doctoral student; lead researchers: Buylaert, Heirbaut, van der Meulen). The second line of enquiry is calculating the nature and scale of seigneurial surplus-extraction with detailed case-studies of seigneuries for which serial accounts survive (Work Package 2: one predoc; lead researchers: Lambrecht, Buylaert, van der Meulen). The third approach is probing the regulatory constraints of seigneuries on markets for capital, land and labour and how this intersected with the growing involvement of the princely government. This line of enquiry revolves around the cross-checking of extensive sets of seigneurial regulations and ordinances issued by the administration of the Burgundian-Habsburg Low Countries (Work Package 3: one postdoc and one doctoral student; lead researchers: Heirbaut, Lambrecht, van der Meulen).

The full research proposal will be made available to interested candidates who are invited to the interview stage (see below).

The three doctoral researchers will each receive 48 months of funding and they will be supervised by both the project promoters and the two postdoctoral researchers. Apart from two article submissions peer-reviewed journals, the doctoral students are expected to write a doctoral dissertation. They will also be involved in the development of a monograph in collaboration with the project leaders.

The project's home is the History Department of Ghent University ((Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 35, 9000 Gent) but the empirical research will involve archival studies for various parts of the present-day Benelux. Intensive collaboration is also expected with Dr Mario Damen (Universiteit van Amsterdam), and Dr Arie van Steensel (Groningen University), who will co-supervise the doctoral researchers of Work Package 1 and 2 respectively, as well as with affiliated researchers such as Maarten Prins and Bram Van Hofstraten (Maastricht University).

The doctoral researchers will also be enrolled in the training programme of the Posthumus Institute, the Research School for Economic and Social History in the Netherlands and Flanders.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH POSITIONS

Because the project leaders may need to reassign the work packages to optimize the strengths of the best applicants, interested candidates would do well to familiarize themselves with the doctoral positions of all three work packages. If you are only interested in one position specifically, please indicate that explicitly in your motivation letter. We offer:

1. A full-time doctoral research position of up to 48 months. The successful candidate will receive a one-year appointment which will be prolonged after satisfactory performance in the first year.
2. Opportunities to participate and co-organize international workshops and conferences.
3. Opportunities for teaching if so desired, within limits.
4. Extra work benefits for transport, cost of living, 26 days of vacation per year, medical insurance.
5. The exact starting date will be decided jointly by the successful candidates and the promoters.

PROFILE

1. You have an MA in history, preferably with proven interest in and expertise with political economy in Ancien Regime societies in Europe. Applicants with an Master in Law are also welcome to apply, provided that they have relevant expertise with legal history.

Nota bene: Students who complete their MA dissertation in the summer of 2022 are welcome to apply.

2. Mastery of Dutch and French, or the ability to master an excellent passive understanding of Middle Dutch and French, are a must as most sources are in Dutch and, to a lesser extent, French. Next to this, a good working knowledge of English and a willingness to develop academic English at a high level for publication purposes is also a must.

3. Experience with primary sources from the Late Middle Ages or the Early Modern era.
3. You are critical thinker with a proven capacity for teamwork.
5. You have a good knowledge of Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Access) or equivalent programmes.

HOW TO APPLY

Apply before 31 July 2022 via email to Frederik.Buylaert@ugent.be with in attachment the following documents in pdf-format.

- Motivation Letter
- CV including a list of publications and two references
- The MA dissertation

Shortly after the deadline, the applicants will be informed whether they are invited to the interview stage. For the interview, the applicants will receive the full project proposal. Based on that, they will be expected to provide a two-page reflection on how they would operationalize their assignment within the team. This text will be used for the interview, next to the other application documents.

The provisional date for the interviews is Friday 12 August 2022.

If you have any queries, please reach out to Frederik.Buylaert@ugent.be.