This is the first book in English to study the history of the Estates General of Burgundy during the classic period of absolute monarchy. Although not a representative institution in any modern sense, the Estates were constantly engaged in a process of bargaining with the French crown, and this book examines that relationship under the ancien régime. Julian Swann analyses the organisation, membership and powers of the Estates and explores their administration, their struggles for power with rival institutions and their relationship with the crown and with the Burgundian people. The Estates proved remarkably resilient when confronted by the challenges posed by the Bourbon monarchy, and by the reign of Louis XVI they were seemingly more powerful than ever. However, the desire to protect their privileges and to extend their authority had not been accompanied by an attempt to forge a meaningful relationship with the people they claimed to serve.

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Contents

List of illustrations .................................................. ix
List of figures ............................................................ x
List of appendices ....................................................... xi
List of map ............................................................... xii
Preface ................................................................. xiii
List of abbreviations ................................................... xv
Map: The duchy of Burgundy in the eighteenth century ............. xvi

1 Historians, absolute monarchy and the provincial estates .......... 1
2 Ancien régime Burgundy ............................................. 26
3 The Estates General of Burgundy .................................... 41
4 Nosseigneurs les élus and the officers of the Estates ................. 91
5 The provincial administration: authority and enforcement .......... 126
6 ‘It’s raining taxes’. Paying for the Sun King, 1661–1715 ............... 154
7 Provincial administration in an age of iron, 1661–1715 ............... 194
8 The limits of absolutism: crown, governor and the Estates ... 230
9 in the eighteenth century
10 Provincial rivalries: the Estates and the Parlement of Dijon ........ 262
11 Tax, borrow and lend: crown, Estates and finance, .......... 295
1715–1789
12 An enlightened administration? .................................. 330
Illustrations

1. The *grande salle* of the Estates of Burgundy (Source: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon) page 56
2. Plan of the chamber of clergy at the Estates of Burgundy in 1697 (Source: Archives Départementales de la Côte d’Or) 60
3. Plan of the chamber of the third estate at the Estates of Burgundy in 1697 (Source: Archives Départementales de la Côte d’Or) 72
4. Plan of the chamber of *élus* of the Estates of Burgundy (Source: Archives Départementales de la Côte d’Or) 127
Figures

3.1 Chamber of the clergy: attendance, 1682–1787  page 58
3.2 Chamber of the nobility: attendance, 1662–1787  65
3.3 Chamber of the third estate: attendance, 1688–1787  73
6.1 Triennial accounts of the Estates of Burgundy, 1645–1716  167
6.2 Annual cost of the military étapes, 1675–1715  170
6.3 Expenditure of the Estates of Burgundy, 1689–91  179
6.4 Revenue of the Estates of Burgundy, 1689–91  181
6.5 Taille levied in Burgundy, 1668–1715  182
6.6 Revenue of the Estates of Burgundy, 1706–8  184
10.1 Annual income and expenditure of the Estates of Burgundy, 1715–65  297
10.2 Taille levied in Burgundy, 1715–89  301
10.3 Cost of the military étapes in Burgundy, 1715–86  312
10.4 Annual borrowing by the Estates of Burgundy on behalf of the king, 1742–87  322
## Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Start Year</th>
<th>End Year</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Governors of Burgundy, 1661–1789</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>1789</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Intendants of Burgundy, 1661–1789</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>1789</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Élus of the clergy, 1662–1790</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Élus of the nobility, 1662–1790</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Élus of the third estate, 1662–1790</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vicomtes-mayeurs of Dijon, 1661–1790</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Treasurer generals of the Estates of Burgundy, 1661–1790</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Secrétaires des états of Burgundy, 1661–1790</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Procureurs syndics of the Estates of Burgundy, 1661–1790</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Conseils des états, 1661–1790</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Alcades of the clergy, 1668–1790</td>
<td>1668</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Alcades of the nobility, 1662–1790</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Alcades of the third estate, 1668–1790</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Receivers of the taille in Burgundy, 1661–1789</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>1789</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Map

1 The duchy of Burgundy in the eighteenth century  
(Source: Archives Départementales de la Côte d’Or C 3 860)  page xvi
Preface

This book has taken nearly a decade to produce and in the course of what has often seemed an interminable struggle I have accumulated a large number of debts. I would particularly like to thank James Collins, William Doyle, Joël Félix, Roger Mettam, Mark Gilbert and Munro Price who have kindly given up their time to read all, or part, of the manuscript and to offer much help and encouragement. The three anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press were also an invaluable source of constructive and helpful criticism. Together they helped me to avoid many pitfalls and errors, although all the remaining defects of this book are my own. Within the wider circle of Burgundian enthusiasts I have enjoyed and benefited from many discussions with Mark Bryant, Chris Corley, Simon Everett, Jim Farr, Mack Holt, Jeff Houghtby and Charles Papon. In Dijon, professor Hugues Richard generously shared his extensive knowledge of the Estates. I am also grateful to my former research supervisor, Tim Blanning, for his support at every stage of my career. I should also like to thank Richard Fisher and Michael Watson of Cambridge University Press for their patience and professional assistance.

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While working in Dijon and Paris, I have been helped immensely by the friendship and hospitality of Philippe and Flore Dollo, Alain and Sophie Meunier, Vincent and Sophie Moron and Anne Thierry. My Burgundian family, Gil, Pierre, Emmanuelle, Dimitri and Clara have all given their
xiv

Preface

constant support, as have my own family, Ron, Barbara, Jan, Paul and Rene. However, this book would never have been started had it not been for one very special Burgundian, my wife, Manon, to whom this book is dedicated. Manon and my daughter, Margot, never cease to remind me of the most important things in life.
Abbreviations

ADCO  Archives Départementales de la Côte d'Or
ADSL  Archives Départementales de la Saône et Loire
AN    Archives Nationales
BMC AC Bibliothèque du Musée Condé, Archives Condé
BMD   Bibliothèque Municipale de Dijon
BN    Bibliothèque Nationale
Map 1  The duchy of Burgundy in the eighteenth century