

A Europe of Courts, a Europe of Factions

Veranstalter: German Historical Institute at Rome

Datum, Ort: 19.11.2014–21.11.2014, Rome

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The German Historical Institute at Rome has organised, between 19 and 21 November 2014, a conference concerning *A Europe of Courts, a Europe of Factions*. The event was also funded by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions of the European Commission, the University of Roma Tre, the Austrian Historical Institute of Rome, the Spanish School of History and Archaeology in Rome, and IULCE. The event was coordinated by Rubén González Cuerva and Alexander Koller.

The introduction of the conference outlined the scope and problems linked to the concept of factions. ALEXANDER KOLLER (Rome) offered an overview of the recent historiography on court factions and how this question has raised the interest of diverse authors from different schools in the last fifteen years. Meanwhile, RUBÉN GONZÁLEZ CUERVA (Rome) provided some reflections on the problems linked to research on factions: their identification, their continuity and the ways they coexisted and interacted.

The keynote lecture of the conference was delivered by JEROEN DUINDAM (Leiden). After more than two decades of reflection on the nature of court power, Duindam offered a very ample overview on the question of informal relations within the court environment. His comparative approach was wide enough to pay no attention to the better known Western cases and focus instead on Asian contemporary courts, namely the Ottoman, Mughal, Chinese, and Japanese examples. In brief, Duindam affirmed the existence of recurring patterns among so disparate palace environments but not of one all-encompassing formula, and that initiative and agency were more extensively shared among all groups at court.

JOSÉ MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN (Madrid) opened the session on the Spanish Habsburgs. He criticised the dominant sociological approach to elites of power because such a

methodology is not intended for a premodern reality grounded on an Aristotelian domestic understanding of politics. Millán proposed that, since the foundation of the Spanish Monarchy under the Catholic Kings Ferdinand and Isabella (1474–1504), there were two big groups of power with diverse variations but certain continuity. Those courtiers assembled around Ferdinand set the grounds for a „Castilian Party“ with imperialist plans and an ascetic spirituality, while the servers of Isabella evolved to constitute the Ebolist faction and thereafter the „Popish Party“.

GIUSEPPE MROZEK ELISZEZYNSKI (Teramo) chose a micropolitical approach to analyse the anatomy of a faction and the implications of the somehow decentralised Spanish structure of power. Under the dominant Duke of Lerma, a favourite's regime was established in Philip III's court (1598–1621), which was developed in the Italian vicerealties by two nephews of the favourite: the counts of Lemos and Castro. Mrozek compared the Italian successful careers of these two brothers and how their factional choices marked the defeat and retire of the ambitious Lemos and the continuity of his discreet brother Castro.

Continuing with the interactions between the royal court of Madrid and the Italian vicerealties, MANUEL RIVERO RODRÍGUEZ (Madrid) drew attention to an episode of the rebellions of Naples and Sicily of 1647–1648. Rivero warned of the risks of supposing general attitudes from factional labels, as was the case of an „Inquisitional faction“ in Sicily directed by Inquisitor Diego García de Transmiera. Actually, the restoration of the monarchical power derived from Transmiera's tendency to popular power: as local aristocracy was too powerful and disloyal, the Crown had to rely on the lower echelons of society.

LUC DUERLOO (Antwerp) closed the session on the Spanish Habsburgs with a detailed analysis of the implications of a 1607 episode at the Brussels Court. Duerloo updated the long-established Belgian tradition of identifying a Spanish ministry or faction during the reign of Albert and Isabella and showed that this people did not constitute a solid and united group. Among these „Spaniards“ there were also many Flemish whose liveli-

hood depended on the continuation of the war. Thus, this „hawks' faction“ is depicted as an alliance of interest whose goal was not the honour and reputation of the Spanish Monarchy but their enrichment and the appointment of friends and relatives in profitable military positions.

Moving to the Habsburg Courts of the Empire, PAVEL MAREK (Pardubice) provided an insightful account of the network raised by the successive Spanish ambassadors at the Imperial Court since 1558. Marek began with a history of the term „Spanish faction“ in Central European historiography and defined the courtiers involved not as members of an organised group but as individual clients of the Spanish King. Among them, the relations were far from placid and, depending on the closeness and continuity of relations with the Catholic King, their political attitude varied from a solid commitment to the Spanish positions to a fluctuant position in case they felt displaced from grace.

PETR MAŤA (Vienna) moved to the second half of the 17th century and acknowledged that identifying factions was a tendency of foreign diplomats in order to simplify the changing patterns of alliance among Imperial ministers. For these courtiers, the clue to power was the favour of the members of the dynasty, which was acquired through the rule of the different households. As the clearest factional example, Maťa analysed the „Dietrichstein faction“, which proved to be as influential as longstanding. This case demonstrated the centrality of the familiar structure and the value of large kindred to develop matrimonial alliances and to provide candidates to court positions.

ELISABETH ZINGERLE (Vienna) completed the image of the Habsburg centres of power with the case of Graz, the under-researched court of Inner Austria between 1564 and 1619. The disputes of power at the court of Graz were especially marked by confessional division. The resistance of Protestant courtiers evolved to a dissimulated spiritual attitude and a progressive marginalisation until the ordinances of 1609, which uttered that only Catholics could serve Archduke Ferdinand. His most trusted minister, Eggenberg, epitomised the rise of converts to

power.

After the two sessions devoted to the Habsburgs, it was the turn for the Papal Court of Rome, described as „theatre of the world“. MARIA ANTONIETTA VISCEGLIA (Rome) recognised the factional condition of Rome since the last centuries of the Middle Ages and the existence of a refined political language in which factions were publicly acknowledged. She analysed their evolution between 1570 and 1605 according to three trends: the clash between the families Orsini and Colonna, which evolved from the Guelph – Ghibelline opposition to the French and Spanish factions; the confrontation between two factions directed by two former cardinal-nephews (Farnese and Medici) and the new rise of a French faction in the last decade of the 16th century.

SILVANO GIORDANO (Rome) centred his intervention on the curial dynamics of the first half of the 17th century. The factional allegiance was a natural element in Roman political life: cardinals uttered publicly that they were adhering to the Spanish or French faction, placed in their palaces the coat of arms of their royal protector, and accepted his pensions. Giordano followed the fruitful career of Cardinal Giovanni Garzia Mellini between 1605 and 1629 as efficient follower of Pope Paul V Borghese who managed to politically survive during the next pontificates thanks to his active role at the Roman Inquisition.

FRÉDÉRIQUE SICARD (Caen) opened the session on the other great European courts. Her approach to the French Court raised the question of the female rule during the troublesome regencies of Marie de Medici (1610–1617) and Anne of Austria (1643–1651) as well as their problematic role as Dowager Queens. In the case of Marie, her role as Consort Queen was very limited and, as regent, she did not constitute speedily her own circle of trust. In the case of Anne of Austria's regency, she refused to share power and entirely relied on the Italian Cardinal Mazarin. The revolts of the Fronde showed the virulence of the factional propaganda and marked the peak of the aristocratic division of the kingdom.

SARA WOLFSON (Canterbury) drew attention to the household of Queen Henrietta Maria of Bourbon, Queen of England between

1625 and 1640. Wolfson challenged the dual perception of Charles I's Court between pro-Spanish and pro-French parties. These labels hid more complex political trends in which the Queen's household was a courtier microcosm. The interrelations between familiar politics and international choices led to curious outcomes. For example, since 1631 the household of the Queen was part of the conspiracies against Richelieu and offered a hesitant and unreliable image of the English Court.

EVREM TÜRKÇELİK (Ankara) demonstrated how Ottoman factional balances affected the international policy of the Empire through the case of Sinan Pasha Cigala, the last important *Kapudan Pasha* (admiral of the fleet). His appointment in 1594 was due to his excellent knowledge of Mediterranean warfare but especially to the patronage of his mother-in-law. His bellicose attitude was not approved by the entourage of the new Sultan Mehmed III and Cigala fell into disgrace in 1595. However, the Sultan summoned him back in 1598 to lead a difficult campaign and to demonstrate his independence from his influential mother: Meritocracy and court factionalism were the two required conditions for Ottoman political success.

Finally, the last session was dedicated to the smaller courts of Italy. STEFANO ANDRETTA (Rome) delivered a reflexive paper on the balances of power at Venice. The official chroniclers developed an image of virtue whereby Venice was free of the factional struggles which destroyed other Italian republics. However, the local patriciate was divided in competing commercial and matrimonial alliances and the biggest families acted as dynasties in order to control the highest institutions of the Republic. Andretta distinguished three stages, before, during, and after the times of Paolo Sarpi, who led in the two first decades of the 17th century the faction of the *giovani* against the *vecchi*. The conclusion of these groupings was marked by the Zeno's reforms of 1628, which meant an aperture of the oligarchic system.

PAOLA VOLPINI (Rome) moved to the ducal court of Florence and analysed the factional groupings during the minority of Ferdinand II (1621–1628). The Regency was dom-

inated by his mother Magdalene of Austria and his grandmother Christine of Lorraine, who represented respectively the Spanish and French preferences of the Tuscan Court. The chief minister of the Council of Regency was the Count Orso d'Elci, who was considered the head of a „Spanish faction“. Volpini suggested that Elci copied the „single faction system“ of the Duke of Lerma in Madrid, with a mixture of cooptation and negotiation.

The last paper was delivered by TOBY OSBORNE (Durham), on the Court of Turin during the minority of Charles Emmanuel II (1638–1648). The young Duke was also surrounded by elder relatives who represented a pro-French and a pro-Spanish side in Savoyard politics. Escaping from a dichotomist division, Osborne provided a unique document: a contemporary list of the courtiers of Turin according to 12 categories of allegiance: obedient to or disgusted with the Regent Christine, Cardinal Maurice and Duke of Carignano, members of the Spanish or French faction, friends or adversaries to Christine's favourite Agliè, and „authentic Piedmontese“. Thus, the alignments were more complex than dual blocks: priorities regarding international politics and familiar loyalties engendered different linkages.

As a conclusion, the speakers emphasised the importance of reflecting on the conceptual tools when analysing early modern politics in order to avoid clichés and oversimplifications. It was observed as an almost constant pattern that premodern politics offered a space for discussion and taking sides when the most serious issues were at stake: firstly, the succession of the regime, not only in elective cases, but also when the dynastic logic was tested (royal weddings, regencies, dubious heirs); secondly, the choice of the princely confession; and thirdly, the decisions on war or peace.

Conference Overview:

Public Keynote Lecture

Jeroen Duindam (Leiden), Groups of Power at early modern Courts

Alexander Koller (Roma), Saluto

Alexander Koller/Rubén González Cuerva (Roma), Introduction

1. *The Spanish Habsburgs, the Labyrinths around the Catholic King's Court*

José Martínez Millán (Madrid), L'immagine e il funzionamento delle fazioni nella corte spagnola della Casa d'Austria

Giuseppe Mrozek Eliszezyński (Teramo), Il servizio al re e la fedeltà al duca. I Castro e il governo di Napoli e Sicilia durante il vassallaggio del duca di Lerma

Manuel Rivero Rodríguez (Madrid), Corte reale e corti vicereali: i rapporti fazionari

Luc Duerloo (Antwerp), Hawks, Doves and Magpies: The Business of Faction at the Court of the Archdukes

2. *The Habsburgs Courts of the Empire, Mirror of Europe*

Pavel Marek (Pardubice), La fazione spagnola nella corte imperiale? La nobiltà di Boemia al servizio del re cattolico

Petr Mat'á (Wien), The Court of Leopold I: national, strategic or familiar groups?

Elisabeth Zingerle (Wien), Tra l'arciduchessa madre e i gesuiti: gruppi di potere alla Corte Arciducale di Graz

3. *Rome, Theatrum Mundi*

Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Roma), Fazioni o partiti nella Curia del tardo Cinquecento

Silvano Giordano (Roma), Dinamiche e dialettica politica alla corte di Roma nella prima metà del Seicento

4. *The other great European Courts: Paris, London, Istanbul*

Frédérique Sicard (Caen), Continuity and Identity of the Parties at the Court of Paris around Queen Mary of Medici and Anne of Austria

Sara Wolfson (Canterbury), Factional Politics, Patronage and Dynastic Interest: the Role of Aristocratic Court Women at the Court of Charles I, 1626–1640

Evrin Türkçelik (Ankara), Between Realpolitik and factional Rivalries: Ottoman Policy-Making in the Early Modern Mediterranean

5. *Factional struggles in the Small Italian*

Courts: Venice, Florence, Turin

Stefano Andretta (Roma), Giovani e vecchi: l'immagine fazionaria della Repubblica di Venezia

Paola Volpini (Roma), Granduchesse e segretari: fazioni alla Corte dei Medici e relazioni fra gli Stati al tempo della Reggenza

Toby Osborne (Durham), The Court of Savoy: Factions and Family Politics during the Thirty Years War

Tagungsbericht *A Europe of Courts, a Europe of Factions*. 19.11.2014–21.11.2014, Rome, in: H-Soz-Kult 14.03.2015.