

Scientific Report on “*Un atto tanto pregiudiziale alla mia persona per l’ordini che ho: conflictos de precedencia entre Madrid y Viena (1648-1659)*”

The purpose of my visit during the Madrid Colloquium (from the 30th November-2nd December 2010) was that of showing the results of my last investigations in the framework of my Phd studies “*Infelix Austria: Relaciones entre Madrid y Viena desde la Paz de Westfalia hasta la Paz de los Pirineos (1648-1659)*”. In particular, I have focused on specific details concerning precedence conflicts between Spanish and Austrian representatives on both courts. Having examined the actual research status regarding these aspects of ceremonial studies, I found it suitable to talk about this sort of quarrels which have been rather unknown or seen as uncommon due to the asserted close bonds of the two Habsburg lines during the 17th century. The shown period in question, fits with an escalation of subtle confrontation between both branches as a result of the separation provoked by the treaties of Westphalia and the fragile context of the Spanish Monarchy during the 1650’s through its war with France. Therefore, the aim of my proposal has been that of underlining a visible feature of the then on-going differences concerning Madrid and Vienna’s political objectives through representative aspirations of familiar ambassadors and their environment.

In order to explain my theories, I begun contextualizing this problems in the framework of the so-called “Princely Society”, a hierarchical society with specific values focused on the prerogatives of European sovereigns. One of its most important aspects revolved around “reputation”, an ideology which centered on the prince’s superiority before other states. Its implementation in the ceremonial field had been a constant feature of international relations during the 16th and the 17th century.

Afterwards, I went on stressing the exchanged treatments in this context, before and after the rule of Charles V, between Madrid and Vienna. These took a new turn after the unilateral treaty signed by the emperor during the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, a turning point which worsened the two dynastical relations. Since then, the representatives’ prerogatives in the courts came to light more openly from the Spanish side with the aim of expressing the Catholic King’s preponderance as means of requesting help from the Austrian branch for the war against France. Likewise, due to the frustration caused by the death of the emperor’s heir in 1654 and Spain’s indecision to offer the hand of the Spanish *infanta* –

heir to the Spanish Monarchy—, the imperial ministers reacted with similar, but rather unsuccessful aims.

After the explanation of such political context, I came to fit this junctures in the existing ceremonial protocol of the two courts adding a couple of examples focused on the so-called “domestic ceremonial”, that is to say, the private spaces of palaces, instead of the non-conflictive “diplomatic ceremonial” regarding familiar relations. Those examples were enshrined in the most troubled spaces: the “chapel” and the monarchs’ “chambers”. Furthermore, the consequences of exceptional cases in which various family members from the two branches converged in a single room were explained in detail.

As a conclusion, far from being underestimated, these aggravating signs constituted an obvious political reality. My objective was in short to show that, from the emperor’s side, the importance’s visibility of the “imperial dignity” had to remain quite visible before the Spanish court’s subjects and above all, before foreign ambassadors such as that from Venice or the Papal nuncio. The Spanish context however, was far more complex. As on past decades in which Spanish interests were on risk, the 1650’s evidenced the beginning of a gradual withdrawal from the monarchy’s preponderance before Louis XIV’s France. For that reason, the need to show a powerful image in the Viennese court had grown bigger in order to assure Austrian help for the war.

Even if ceremonial disputes rarefied familiar relations, my deduction on this question allows me nevertheless to consider that these had no major consequence on dynastic interests. Therefore, the conclusions underlying my working paper have led to two main theories: on one hand, “domestic ceremonial” was the vehicle which most visibly expressed familiar tensions; on the other, when dealing with the relations from both Habsburg lines, a clear and cautious discernment must be set up between the concepts of “dynasty” and “family”, which, despite being related, were terms of quite different intentions.