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Palace Networks at the Court of Carlos II: Maria Anna of Palatinate-Neuburg's Confessor, Gabriel Pontifesser, and the Queen's German Chamber (1690–1700)

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[See table of contents](#)

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Article abstract

The arrival in Madrid in 1690 of the future queen consort, Maria Anna of Palatinate-Neuburg (1667–1740), second wife of the Spanish king Carlos II (1661–1700), also brought about the establishment of an unofficial palace faction known as the German Chamber. Since the members of this faction were part of Maria Anna's household, the analysis of their social activities gives insight into court practices during the last decade of Carlos II's reign. This article intends to shed light on the new networks and agency of members of the German Chamber at the Madrid court, in particular, that of the queen's confessor, Gabriel Pontifesser di Chiusa. By investigating the activities and new court practices within the queen consort's household that enabled Pontifesser to build secure networks and achieve importance, the article reveals the significant power wielded by foreign courtiers at the Madrid court between 1690 and 1700.

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The arrival in Madrid in 1690 of the future queen consort, Maria Anna of Palatinate-Neuburg (1667–1740), second wife of the Spanish king Carlos II (1661–1700), also brought about the establishment of an unofficial palace faction known as the German Chamber. Since the members of this faction were part of Maria Anna's household, the analysis of their social activities gives insight into court practices during the last decade of Carlos II's reign. This article intends to shed light on the new networks and agency of members of the German Chamber at the Madrid court, in particular, that of the queen's confessor, Gabriel Pontifesser di Chiusa. By investigating the activities and new court practices within the queen consort's household that enabled Pontifesser to build secure networks and achieve importance, the article reveals the significant power wielded by foreign courtiers at the Madrid court between 1690 and 1700.

L'arrivée à Madrid de la future reine et seconde épouse du roi d'Espagne Charles II (1661–1700), Marie-Anne de Neubourg (1667–1740), engendra en 1690 la création d'une faction officieuse connue sous le nom de chambre allemande. Étant donné que les membres de cette faction faisaient partie de la maison de la reine, l'analyse de leurs activités sociales donne un aperçu des usages de la cour durant la dernière décennie du règne de Charles II d'Espagne. Cet article analyse les réseaux et l'influence des membres de la chambre allemande à la cour de Madrid, en particulier ceux du confesseur de la reine, Gabriel Pontifesser di Chiusa. En se penchant sur les pratiques et les nouveaux usages au sein de l'entourage de la reine, cet article met en évidence le pouvoir exercé par les courtisans étrangers à la cour de Madrid entre 1690 et 1700.

Early modern royal courts functioned as spaces of political, social, and cultural exchange. The courtly environment of the last Spanish Habsburg king, Carlos II, was a site of communication wherein courtiers could gain power and influence within the court's social structure.¹ The combination of honour

1. Silvia Z. Mitchell, "Introduction: The Spanish Habsburg Court during the Reign of Carlos II (1665–1700)," *The Court Historian* 23.2 (2018): 107–12, [dx.doi.org/10.1080/14629712.2018.1539458](https://doi.org/10.1080/14629712.2018.1539458); Ezequiel Borgognoni, "The Royal Household of Marie-Louise of Orleans, 1679–1689: The Struggle over Executive Offices," *The Court Historian* 23.2 (2018): 166–81, [dx.doi.org/10.1080/14629712.2018.1539449](https://doi.org/10.1080/14629712.2018.1539449); Luis Antonio Ribot García, "Carlos II: El Centenario Olvidado," *Studia Histórica, Historia Moderna* 20 (1999): 19–43; Luis Antonio Ribot García, "Epilogue. Carlos II: A Reign under Revision," *The Court*

and responsibility required to serve in the household of the monarchs was part of a robust symbolic capital that benefited individual courtiers and their relatives.² Moreover, the procurement of political and social gains by courtiers through their participation in palace factions was a common phenomenon at early modern European courts. The members of these factions were affiliated with a patron and represented his or her interests at court, yet these groups did not have a predetermined structure. Depending on the members' ambitions and interests, they would often transfer their loyalty from one palace faction to another, since numerous court factions coexisted within all European courts, and Carlos II's court was no exception.³

After the sudden death of Carlos II's spouse, Marie Louise d'Orléans, on 12 February 1689, the king's council urged him to remarry as soon as possible to ensure the succession of the Spanish Monarchy. On 8 May 1689, the majority of the council voted in favour of the princess Maria Anna of Palatinate-Neuburg, daughter of the elector of the Palatinate Philip William of Palatinate-Neuburg. The sovereign made his decision public on 15 May 1689. The Spanish king and the future queen consort celebrated their marriage *per procurationem* on 28 August 1689 in Neuburg. The future queen consort started her journey in September 1689 to the territories of the Spanish Monarchy.⁴ As her family was known for the fecundity of their female line, she was considered the ideal candidate as the second spouse of Carlos II. Also, the election of a German princess reinforced the political alliance between the two branches of the Habsburg dynasty indirectly, as she was the emperor's sister-in-law. Shortly after the queen consort's arrival in Madrid in 1690, a newly consolidated palace faction represented her interests and those of the Palatinate. The queen's wing,

Historian 23.2 (2018): 215–18, doi.org/10.1080/14629712.2018.1546462. Marie-Louise of Orleans was proposed and immediately confirmed after the two monarchies, Spain and France, signed the Peace of Nijmegen (1679).

2. Katrin Keller, "Ladies-in-Waiting at the Imperial Court of Vienna from 1550 to 1700: Structures, Responsibilities and Career Patterns," in *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies-In-Waiting across Early Modern Europe*, vol. 4, *Rulers and Elites: Comparative Studies in Governance*, ed. Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben (London and Boston: Brill, 2014), 77–99, 85, dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004258396.

3. Rubén González Cuerva and Alexander Koller, *A Europe of Courts, a Europe of Factions: Political Groups at Early Modern Centres of Power (1550–1700)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004350588.

4. Félix Labrador Arroyo, "Preparing for a Queen: Maria Anna of Neuburg's Royal Entry into Spain," *The Court Historian* 23.2 (2018): 182–97, dx.doi.org/10.1080/14629712.2018.1539450.

known as the German Chamber or *camarilla alemana*, formed one of four separate palace factions, which also included the imperial or Viennese faction, the Bavarian faction, and the French faction. During the last decade of Carlos II's reign, the number of unofficial factions representing the political interests of numerous foreign rulers at the Madrid court increased. Initially, the palace factions should facilitate the collaboration of foreign sovereigns with members of the royal family, allowing them to strengthen their political influence at court. The members of the factions intended to access the Spanish king through the queen consort and the queen mother in order to intercede in governmental and diplomatic decisions of the Spanish Monarchy.⁵ However, from 1696 onwards, the absence of a rightful heir to the throne and the increasingly fragile health of Carlos II caused an interference of foreign rulers in the Spanish succession through the palace factions, including the queen's wing. During the last decade of the king's reign, the emperor Leopold I intended to strengthen the tie between the two branches of the Habsburg dynasty in order to reduce the French influence at the Spanish court after the death of Marie Louise of Orleans in 1689.⁶ The emperor hoped that the future queen consort would become the representative of his political interests at the Madrid court. Maria Anna of Palatinate-Neuburg needed to establish a strong palace network to assure her and the emperor's influence at court. Smaller palace networks of the imperial and the Palatinate factions would complement her initial network. Consequently, the networks of

5. Laura Oliván Santaliestra, "La dama, el aya y la camarera: perfiles políticos de tres mujeres de la Casa de Mariana de Austria," in *Las relaciones discretas entre las monarquías hispana y portuguesa: las casas de las reinas (siglos XV–XIX)*, ed. José Martínez Millán and María Paula Marçal Lourenzo, vol. 2 (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 2009), 1201–1355; María Victoria López-Cordón Cortezo, "Poder femenino e interpretación historiográfica: el gobierno de mujeres como manifestación de crisis política," in *La creatividad femenina en el mundo barroco hispánico: María Zayas, Isabel Rebeca Correa, Sor Juana Inés de La Cruz*, ed. Monika Bosse and André Stoll, vol. 1 (Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 1999), 67–88; María Victoria López-Cordón Cortezo, "Las mujeres en la vida de Carlos II," in *Carlos II: el rey y su entorno cortesano*, ed. Luis Antonio Ribot García (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, 2009), 109–39; Lucien Bély, *La société des princes: XVIIe – XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1999); Clarissa Campbell Orr, ed., *Queenship in Europe 1660–1815: The Role of the Consort* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Nicole Reinhardt, "Les relations internationales à travers les femmes au temps de Louis XIV," *Revue de l'Histoire Diplomatique* 3 (2003): 193–230.

6. Christoph Kampmann, "Leopoldo I y la política imperial, los derechos dinásticos y la sucesión española," in *Europa y Los Tratados de Reparto de La Monarquía de España (1668–1700)*, ed. Luis Antonio Ribot García and José María Inurrutegui (Madrid: Editorial Biblioteca Nueva, 2016); José Martínez Millán and Rubén González Cuerva, eds., *La Dinastía de los Austrias. Las relaciones entre la Monarquía Católica y el Imperio*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 2011).

the German Chamber permitted the queen consort to strengthen her position at court and to interfere in diverse governmental matters of the Spanish Monarchy. The initial members of the German Chamber were affiliated with the sovereign and had accompanied her from Neuburg to Madrid. Among the few original members who would remain at her service in the royal palace were the queen's mistress of honour, the future countess Maria Josepha Gertrude of Berlepsch; the queen's physician, Christian Geleen; and her Jesuit confessor, Francis Rhem. The German Chamber assumed a more active stance after the arrival on 15 April 1692 of the Capuchin friar, Gabriel Pontifeso of Chiusa, who, surprisingly to him, had been called by the sovereign herself to replace her Jesuit confessor. The queen substituted the Jesuit with a Capuchin friar so no association could be alleged between her confessor and the Jesuit John Eberhard Nithard, who had served as confessor and spiritual guide to Carlos II's mother, Mariana of Austria, from 1649 to 1669, and appointed inquisitor general and member of the Council of State and the Government Board in 1666.⁷ Because of his controversial political activities, Nithard was accused of all the evils that had occurred in the Spanish Monarchy and, in 1669, stripped of his appointments and exiled from its territories. However, even after his expulsion the queen mother's influence allowed him to be named archbishop of Edessa, and then Spanish ambassador to Rome, where he was finally elected cardinal.⁸ Wishing to protect herself from accusations similar to those brought against her mother-in-law for her support of Nithard, Maria Anna requested authorization to have her mother's Capuchin confessor sent to Madrid as her own spiritual guide.⁹ On 15 April 1692, Pontifeso started his journey together

7. For Nithard's political activities, see Rafaella Pilo, *Juan Everardo Nithard y sus causas no causas. Razones y pretextos para el fin de un valimiento* (Madrid; Córdoba: Sílex y Caja Sur de Publicaciones, 2010), 17; Rafaella Pilo, "La correspondencia del Cardenal de Moncada y la conjura contra Nithard," in Martínez Millán and González Cuerva, eds., *La dinastía de los Austrias*, 2:1075–88; José Rufino Novo Zaballós, "De confesor de la reina a embajador extraordinario en Roma: La expulsión de Juan Everardo Nithard," in *Centros de poder italianos en la Monarquía Hispánica (Siglos XV–XVIII)*, ed. José Martínez Millán and Manuel Rivero Rodríguez, vol. 2 (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 2010), 751–836; María del Carmen Sáenz Berceo, "Juan Everardo Nithard, válido extranjero," in *Los Válidos*, ed. Luis Suárez Fernández and José Antonio Escudero López (Madrid: Dykinson, 2004), 323–52; María del Carmen Sáenz Berceo, *Confesonario y poder en la España del siglo XVII: Juan Everardo Nithard* (Logroño: Universidad de la Rioja, 2014).

8. Sáenz Berceo, *Confesonario y poder*, 236–47, 256; Novo Zaballós, 751–835.

9. Melchor Pobladora, "Un capuchino alemán en la corte de Carlos II el hechizado," *Collectanea Franciscana* 34 (1964): 131–76, 135.

with his *socius* Tiburtius Stipler, without knowing the real reason for his call to Madrid.¹⁰

In the early modern period, the royal confessor was an omnipresent figure who played an essential role at court.¹¹ Because the appointment created an ambivalent relationship of dependence between the two, the confessor's activities as a sovereign's spiritual guide and political counselor permitted him to intervene indirectly in governmental matters. His direct access to the monarch enabled him not only to intercede in state affairs but also in granting ecclesiastic positions.¹² According to Jaime Contreras Contreras, the relationship between the sovereign and his or her confessor was comparable to that of patron and client. Although monarchs would ensure the protection of their spiritual guide at court, however, the confessor did not lend the monarch his exclusive attention in the court environment, as he often had interests of his own.¹³

Despite Pontifester's initial lack of social standing, his new appointment allowed him to connect with numerous courtiers, noblemen, and ministers at the Madrid court. He established several client-patron networks with the members of the German Chamber which ensured him continuous collaboration

10. Agapit Hohenegger, *Geschichte der tirolischen Kapuziner-Provinz unter dem Titel des allerheiligsten Sakraments 1593–1893*, vol. 1 (Innsbruck: Wagner'schen f. f. Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1913), 719–20.

11. Flavio Rurale, "Il confessore e il governatore: teologi e moralisti tra casi di coscienza e questioni politiche nella Milano del primo seicento," in *Storia Lombarda, La Lombardia Spagnola*, ed. Elena Brambilla and Giovanni Muto (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 1997), 343–70; María Amparo López Arandia, "El poder de la conciencia. fray Gabriel de Chiusa, confesor de Mariana de Neoburgo," in *La dinastía de los Austrias: las relaciones entre la Monarquía Católica y el Imperio*, ed. José Martínez Millán and Rubén González Cuerva, vol. 2 (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 2011), 1089–1110; María Amparo López Arandia, "El confesonario regio en la Monarquía Hispánica del siglo XVII," *Obradorio de Historia Moderna* 19 (2010): 249–78; Jaime Contreras Contreras, "'Descargar' la conciencia real: ¿confesor o ministerio?," in *Política y cultura en la época moderna: (Cambios Dinásticos, Milenarismos, Mesianismos y Utopías)*, ed. Jaime Contreras Contreras, Alfredo Alvar Ezquerro, and José Ignacio Ruiz Rodríguez (Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá, 2004), 491–506; Leandro Martínez Peñas, "El rey y su confesor en el Antiguo Régimen," in *El rey. Historia de la Monarquía*, ed. José Antonio Escudero López, vol. 3 (Barcelona: Planeta Historia y Sociedad, 2008), 112–24; Isabelle Poutrin, "Los confesores de los reyes de España: carrera y función (siglos XVI–XVII)," in *Religión y poder en la Edad Moderna*, ed. José Luis Beltrán Moya, Antonio Luis Cortés Peña, and Eliseo Serrano Martín (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2005), 67–82; Sáenz Berceo, *Confesonario y poder*, 25; Nicole Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience: Royal Confessors and Political Counsel in Seventeenth-Century Spain and France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

12. López Arandia, "El confesonario regio," 262–63, 278.

13. Contreras Contreras, 495.

with important persons at court. This article aims to analyze the evolution of these networks and examine their relevance in regard to the elaboration of new court practices such as administering favours, gifts, and honours in exchange for support and collaboration. It also demonstrates how networks could elevate relatively obscure characters to positions of power. As the queen's confessor and one of the most significant members of the palace faction, Pontifesper began networking from the Capuchin monastery of San Antonio del Prado, where he resided during his stay at Madrid. In 1693, worried for his well-being and comfort, the queen requested a German cook to serve Pontifesper in the monastery, and the Capuchin order sent Kosmas Strobl of Matrei, Brixen.¹⁴ Pontifesper also received daily food from the palace, and on occasions such as his birthday, the queen and her affiliates would also send sweets, cake, and his preferred dishes, or invite him for chocolate.¹⁵

The queen's confessor regularly received visits from ministers, diplomats, and courtiers in his cell of the convent. Almost daily, the key members of the German Chamber wrote him letters or notes to inform him about the latest development and arrange visits. The queen's confessor also regularly visited the members of the German Chamber, such as the Countess of Berlepsch.¹⁶ During his stay in Madrid he established important networks for various purposes: he formed an ecclesiastical network, a diplomatic network, and one for the court. The first ensured the confessor the opportunity to name religious figures to ecclesiastic positions and disburse dignities across the Spanish Monarchy. As mentioned before, his own appointment allowed him to intervene indirectly in political matters, which helped him create a diplomatic network. Furthermore, the court network was intended to strengthen the role of the German Chamber at the Madrid court. These networks thus favoured Pontifesper's successful implementation of social and court practices, strengthening his role at court. Nonetheless, his mission at court and his activities there were tied closely to those of the Countess of Berlepsch, most likely because they had collaborated in the same client-patron network at the court of the Palatinate.¹⁷

14. Hohenegger, 720.

15. Hohenegger, 722; Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv [hereinafter HHStA], Familienkorrespondenz A 50, p. 38r, p. 44r, p. 57, p. 58r–59v.

16. HHStA, Familienkorrespondenz A, 50-4-2, p. 41r, p. 49.

17. For the different client-patron networks of the Countess of Berlepsch and Pontifesper, see Valentina Marguerite Kozák, "The Ego-Networks of the Countess Maria Josepha Gertrude of Berlepsch

Gabriel Pontifester, Capuchin friar

The son of Peter Pontifester and Anna Maria Worelin, Gabriel Pontifester was born in Chiusa, Italy in April 1653. He studied philosophy and began studying law before entering the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin in Augsburg at only twenty years of age on 30 April 1673. After he was ordained a priest in 1679 and completed his formation, he returned to Augsburg in 1682. In 1685, he was appointed by his superiors to accompany the elector Palatinates's primary physician, Emmerich of Wesel, also known as Bernhard Becker, to the court of Heidelberg, where he remained at the service of Elector of the Palatinate Philipp William of Palatinate-Neuburg until 1690, as Emmerich of Wesel's *socius*.¹⁸ That same year, both friars accompanied the elector on his journey to Vienna, without knowing that neither Emmerich nor the elector of the Palatinate would ever return to Heidelberg. After Philipp William's death on 12 September 1690, Pontifester hoped to obtain authorization to return to his hometown in South Tyrol.

However, the young friar was instead appointed confessor to the elector's wife, Elisabeth Amalie of Hessen-Darmstadt, at her court in Neuburg. There, he also became spiritual guide to her children—among them, the future queen Maria Anna of Palatinate-Neuburg—and received a papal bull allowing him to remain close to the electress, travel with her, and reside at the palace or in an adjoining small house if no Capuchin convent was nearby. Once in Madrid, he opted to reside not at the palace but at the monastery of San Antonio del Prado and was granted another papal bull allowing him to receive monthly wages. He could also travel by carriage without any consequences.¹⁹ In preparation for his journey he was assigned a *socius*, friar Tiburtius Stipler of Innsbruck, who accompanied him until his death in 1706. Pontifester's voyage to Madrid to substitute the Jesuit Rehm was intended to be brief, yet after receiving permission from the general father of the Capuchin order, he was officially appointed queen's confessor in Madrid that same year.²⁰

(1654–1723): A Biographical Study of a Transnational *cursus honorum*" (PhD dissertation, Universidad Complutense Madrid, 2021).

18. Pobladora, 132.

19. Hohenegger, 718; López Arandia, "El poder de la conciencia," 1094.

20. Pobladora, 138–39, and Archivo General de Palacio [hereinafter AGP], Registros, 184, p. 191v.

Pontifester's early relationship with Maria Anna as his patroness explains his central position at the Madrid court. His affinity with the sovereign and her entourage propelled him to become an essential member of the Palatinate faction. Throughout his stay in Madrid, he was regularly consulted on governmental matters and became a guide or counselor to the Spanish monarchs.²¹ The different networks that he created at court ensured him a vital role in the political interests of the queen's palace faction.²² Although not all networks were equally as significant, they contributed in their entirety to Pontifester's implementation of court practices, not only at the monastery of San Antonio del Prado but directly in the palace.

During his stay at Madrid, Pontifester maintained extensive correspondence with diplomats, ministers, clergymen, and principalities. He wrote mainly to provinces of the Spanish Monarchy, diverse territories in the Apennine Peninsula, and the Holy Roman Empire. Since he did not reside at the palace, his letters were less scrutinized, and thus, during the last decade of Carlos II's reign, he became the unofficial intermediary of the sovereign and her affiliates with the Holy Roman Empire. In 1702, after Carlos II's death and on Pontifester's journey to Rome, his vast correspondence was confiscated on the emperor's orders and was sent for inspection to Vienna.²³ To this date, only part of his correspondence has been located, yet it still provides an insight into his activities and networks at court.²⁴

Pontifester's ecclesiastic network: bishops' bonds

An important part of Pontifester's networking—not only within Spain, but across the Spanish Monarchy—consisted in nominating ecclesiastics to important positions of power. Between 1692 and 1702, he corresponded with several clergymen and made use of his position as the queen's confessor to intervene

21. López Arandia, "El poder de la conciencia," 1095; Alexander Stanhope, *Spain under Charles the Second; or, Extracts from the Correspondence of the Hon. Alexander Stanhope, British Minister at Madrid, 1690–1699*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Murray, 1884), 86.

22. López Arandia, "El poder de la conciencia," 1094–95.

23. Pobladora, 154; Luisa Kofler, "Die Bücher aus Spanien im Loretoschatz von Klausen," *Wissenschaftliches Jahrbuch der tiroler Landesmuseen* 10 (2017): 34–67, 38.

24. For Pontifester's extant correspondence, see Archivo Histórico Nacional of Madrid [hereinafter AHN], Estado, legajos 8668–8672; HHStA, Familienlienkorrespondenz A, 50-4-2.

in the appointments of dignities and offices. As an example, Pontifesar wrote regularly to Friar Juan de Santa María, bishop of the Spanish town of Solsona, who would become bishop of Lérida and Spanish ambassador to the court of Vienna.²⁵ After the bishop was nominated as ambassador, it was Pontifesar who assisted him in organizing his public entry into Vienna, and who, together with the queen's support, contrived to grant the bishop his second ecclesiastic position as bishop of Lérida. Pontifesar also aided the Spanish ambassador economically while in Vienna, representing him at the Madrid court when he did not receive his pay.²⁶

In exchange for Pontifesar's assistance, the bishop allowed the queen's confessor access to his diplomatic network and backed the sovereign and her entourage, representing her interests at the Viennese court, granting imperial benefices to members of the German Chamber. Consequently, the bishop of Solsona supported the petition of a valued member of the queen's wing, the administrator of dowry income Adam Selder at the court of Vienna. Yet the bishop's connections were not limited to the court of Vienna, as he occasionally also deployed his network in Naples and Genoa to serve the sovereign and her affiliates. The Viennese network included powerful women as well, such as Catalina, Countess of Caraffa, daughter of the Countess of Éril, a lady-in-waiting of Empress Margarita Teresa of Spain. Most important, however, were the networks in which he moved in Madrid. Through his agents and affiliates, the bishop served, among others, the interests of Queen Maria Anna; her mistress of honour, the Countess of Berlepsch; and, as we have seen, her confessor, Gabriel Pontifesar.²⁷

To reinforce his position within the ecclesiastic network, Pontifesar regularly corresponded with the Italian statesman and later state counselor Cardinal Francesco Giudice Palagano. Through him, Pontifesar—and by

25. See the following letters from Gabriel Pontifesar to the bishop of Lérida, in Adalbert von Bayern and Gabriel Maura Gamazo, eds., *Documentos inéditos referentes a las postrimerías de la Casa de Austria en España*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia : Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2004), 2:1153, 28 January 1700; 2:1156, 11 February 1700; 2:1161, 25 February 1700; 2:1171, 25 March 1700; 2:1123–24, 26 June 1700; 2:1241, 10 July 1700; 2:1283–84, 21 August 1700.

26. See AHN, letter from the bishop of Solsona to Pontifesar, Estado, legajo, 8669, 13 July 1699, n.p.

27. See letters from the bishop of Solsona to Pontifesar in AHN: Estado, legajo 8668, 11 February 1697, n.p.; legajo 8668, 20 April 1697, n.p.; legajo 8669; 16 June April 1699, n.p.; legajo 8669, 10 August 1699, n.p.

extension, Queen Maria Anna—had an agent in Rome. During the last decade of the seventeenth century, Cardinal Giudice, together with Luis Hurtado of Mendoza, 7th Count of Altamira and Spanish ambassador in Rome, served Spanish interests there. Giudice requested benefices for other clergymen and kept the queen's confessor informed about the recent developments in Rome.²⁸ The cardinal's participation in the confessor's network likely facilitated his promotion to state counselor in 1699. This important position allowed him to correspond with other members at court, such as those affiliated with the German Chamber, and even with the sovereign herself, revealing the extent of power wielded by those belonging to any one of Pontifesser's networks.

Pontifesser's other correspondents held influential ecclesiastical positions across the territories of the Spanish empire, such as the cardinal of Córdoba, Alonso Francisco José Mateo Fernández de Córdoba y Figueroa, who was known to be an affiliate of Queen Maria Anna. By remaining in contact with him, the confessor reinforced his position at the Madrid court. The family ties of the cardinal of Córdoba with Nicolás María Fernández, the 9th Marquis of Priego and later 10th Duke of Medinaceli, allowed Pontifesser to connect with illustrious noble families of the Spanish Monarchy.²⁹ Pontifesser also maintained close communication with the bishop of Sigüenza, Francisco Álvarez de Quiñones, who supported his appointment as general inquisitor after the cardinal of Córdoba's death in 1699.³⁰ Although this appointment was only for those born within the Spanish Monarchy, Pontifesser would not have been the first foreign confessor to be so named—indeed, as mentioned before, Mariana of Austria's confessor, Nithard, had been given this position.³¹

During his stay in Madrid, Pontifesser also intervened—through Antonio of Ubilla and Medina, the state secretary and secretary of the Universal Dispatch of the Spanish Monarchy—in granting benefices to the bishop of Oviedo and Cuenca, Alonso Antonio of San Martín, and to the bishop of Ávila,

28. See letters from Cardinal Giudice to Gabriel Pontifesser in AHN: Estado, legajo 8668, 1697, n.p.; Estado, legajo 8669, 18 October 1699, n.p.; Estado, legajo 8672, 2 May 1702, n.p.

29. Manuel Muñoz Rojo, *Un hombre para la historia. El cardenal Portocarrero (1635–1709)* (Córdoba: Editorial Universidad de Córdoba, 2019), 224–25.

30. AHN, Letter from the bishop of Sigüenza to Gabriel Pontifesser, Estado, legajo 8669, 1699, n.p.

31. See Pilo, *Juan Everardo Nithard*, 17.

Diego Ventura Fernández of Angulo.³² The cooperation with Antonio of Ubilla was extremely beneficial to the queen's confessor since, after the king, the state secretary was the most informed person about the governmental decisions of the Spanish Monarchy.

Pontifeso's religious contacts permitted him to create a vast network with persons of influence in the Spanish Monarchy and strengthen his position at court. Pontifeso made use of the ecclesiastic network to ensure benefits and privileges for the queen's wing members. He most probably corresponded regularly with clergymen from the Holy Roman Empire, such as the diplomatic envoy from Trier, Friar Carpani, and Louis Anton of Palatinate-Neuburg, the grandmaster of the Teutonic order.³³ Yet his influence extended far beyond his ecclesiastic network. During his stay at the Madrid court, he made use of already existing networks that strengthened the German Chamber and permitted him to intervene indirectly in political matters. Pontifeso's competent counsel and his appointment as the queen's spiritual guide made him one of the most important advisors in matters of governance of the Spanish empire.

Pontifeso's diplomatic networks: ambassadors von Harrach, father and son

When Carlos II's first wife, Marie Louise d'Orléans, died in 1689, the imperial faction in Madrid favoured the election of Maria Anna of Palatinate-Neuburg as his second consort. Although the Viennese court hoped for the future sovereign's alliance, and although she supported the imperial diplomatic mission, her political interests were not always identical with those of Emperor Leopold. A series of conflicts between the unofficial palace factions created a rift between the queen and diplomatic envoys from 1692 onward. Indeed, the numerous unofficial factions at court caused conflicts due to their many pretensions and political ambitions. The growing rivalry between them after the queen mother, Mariana of Austria's death in 1696 increased Maria Anna's strategic value. As the exclusive intermediary for imperial diplomacy, her

32. HHStA, letter from Antonio Ubilla and Medina to Gabriel Pontifeso, 21 August 1698, Familienkorrespondenz A, 50-4-7, n.p.; HHStA, letter from Gabriel Pontifeso to Antonio Ubilla and Medina, 26 October 1698, Familienkorrespondenz A, 50-4-7, n.p.; HHStA, letter from Gabriel Pontifeso to Antonio Ubilla and Medina, 4 December 1698, Familienkorrespondenz A, 50-4-7, n.p.

33. Pobladora, 147.

collaboration was perceived to be indispensable for the success of the imperial diplomatic mission.³⁴

As part of their ambassadorial duties, imperial envoys needed to access information on the monarchy's political situation, which they attained by integrating themselves into the court, participating in court activities, and remaining in contact with the local authorities. Because ambassadors and envoys could only influence the king's decisions by means of direct access to him, Maria Anna became an ideal intermediary, not least because she was related to the emperor, and ever since her arrival in Madrid in 1690, ambassadors tried to gain her confidence. Moreover, the emperor made use of unofficial residents and informants to collaborate with the official envoys and endorse their mission, and probably chose members of the German Chamber, the closest entourage of the queen consort, as his unofficial informants. As confessor to the queen, Pontifiser became one of the imperial envoy's most important intermediaries. His appointment at court and position within Maria Anna's palace faction granted him access to the monarchs and to their female and male entourage, as well as to Spanish courtiers. His closeness with the queen and influence over her was viewed as a strategic advantage in diplomatic circles.³⁵ Moreover, both Pontifiser and the queen's mistress of honour, the Countess of Berlepsch, played an essential role in the imperial diplomacy at the Madrid court, as they collaborated with imperial envoys and supported their embassies.³⁶

34. For a history of diplomacy, see Otto Krauske, "Die Entwicklung der ständigen Diplomatie vom Fünfzehnten Jahrhundert bis zu den Beschlüssen von 1815 und 1818," in *Staats- und socialwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, ed. Gustav Schmoller, vol. 5 (Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1885); Klaus Müller, *Das kaiserliche Gesandtschaftswesen im Jahrhundert nach dem Westfälischen Frieden (1648–1740)*, ed. Stephan Skalweit, vol. 42, Bonner Historische Forschungen (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid Verlag, 1976); and Heidrun R. I. Kugeler, "'Le Parfait Ambassadeur': The Theory and Practice of Diplomacy in the Century following the Peace of Westphalia" (DPhil thesis, Magdalen College, University of Oxford, 2006).

35. See the letter from the Marquis of Ariberti to the elector of the Palatinate and the letter from Ferdinand Bonaventura to the emperor in Bayern and Maura, 2: 814, 13 August 1698; 2:816–18, 14 August 1698.

36. See José Antonio López Anguita, "Madrid y Viena ante la sucesión de Carlos II: Mariana de Neoburgo, los condes Harrach y la crisis del partido alemán en la corte española (1696–1700)," in *La dinastía de los Austrias: las relaciones entre la Monarquía Católica y el Imperio*, ed. José Martínez Millán and Rubén González Cuerva (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 2011), 2:1111–56, 1145.

The German Chamber, therefore, gave envoys access to the sovereign, since its members had full liberty of action within the Madrid court. They could either facilitate political and diplomatic missions or impede them. Ambassadors and diplomatic envoys arranged meetings with Pontifesoer at the monastery of San Antonio del Prado to gather information on the current political and diplomatic state of affairs of the Spanish Monarchy.³⁷ In exchange for his co-operation and support, Pontifesoer received gifts and favours, such as religious objects and books, from the imperial envoys. From 1690 until 1696, the imperial diplomatic mission was focused on ensuring the election of Archduke Carlos, Emperor Leopold's youngest son, as the heir to the Spanish Monarchy, since it did not seem likely that Carlos II would have issue. With the birth of Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria in 1692, however, a new agreement between Spanish courtiers and the Bavarian parties threatened the diplomatic mission at the Spanish court; indeed, the lack of co-operation between the members of the imperial party and the German Chamber cost Imperial Ambassador Lobkowitz his position and influence at court.

The hazardous events and the ambassador's failure forced the emperor to choose his successor wisely. In 1696, Count Ferdinand Bonaventura von Harrach was named imperial ambassador extraordinary because of his earlier diplomatic experience in Spain and his wife's close connections at the Madrid court.³⁸ During his first mission, the Count of Harrach had integrated into court life and collaborated with Spanish courtiers and ministers. He realized he had to gain their favour to ensure the diplomatic mission, and therefore had to cooperate with the most important members of the German faction. Before the imperial ambassador commenced his mission in 1696, Ferdinand Bonaventura von Harrach's son, Aloys Thomas Raimund, Count von Harrach, was sent as an ad hoc envoy to Madrid with the official mission of expressing condolences to the Spanish monarchs for the death of the queen mother. His unofficial but no less important purpose was to gather information on the Spanish Monarchy's political situation and the social and political affairs at the Madrid court to prepare his father's embassy. During this first mission, he initiated relations with

37. Letter from Aloys Harrach to the emperor, n.d., Bayern and Maura Gamazo, eds., 2:1159.

38. Johanna Theresia, Countess of Harrach, had been lady-in-waiting to Mariana of Austria when she was young and regularly corresponded with the queen mother until her death in 1696. See Susanne C. Pils, *Schreiben über die Stadt. Das Wien der Johanna Theresia Harrach, 1639–1716* (Vienna: Franz Deuticke, 2002).

Pontifesser and the Countess of Berlepsch. The imperial envoy, Aloys Thomas of Harrach, worked closely with members of the queen's entourage to gain access to Maria Anna and help carry out the imperial diplomatic mission. Both Pontifesser and the Countess of Berlepsch became his intermediaries at court and facilitated his access to numerous members of their networks at the Madrid court.³⁹ The count knew that the queen's entourage had built a strong network able to ensure the success of the diplomatic mission of his father, and thus he met on a regular basis with Pontifesser and the countess to gather information.⁴⁰ Count Ferdinand Bonaventura von Harrach's embassy in Madrid lasted from 1697 to 1698. The ambassador's mission at the Spanish court was to resolve the issue of Spanish succession in favour of the Habsburg dynasty. Additionally, he should impede the neutrality of the Spanish Monarchy in the conflict against France.⁴¹ In an effort to support Archduke Carlos as heir to the Spanish throne, he tried ineffectively to reconcile some Spanish courtiers with the German Chamber and the queen.⁴² During his first embassy in Spain from 1673 to 1677, he had learned that it was necessary to create a strong network in order to achieve his goals.⁴³

39. Arnold Gaedecke, *Das Tagebuch des Grafen Ferdinand Bonaventura von Harrach während seines Aufenthaltes am spanischen Hofe in den Jahren 1697 Bis 1698: Nebst zwei geheimen Instructionen* (Wien: Karl Gerold's Sohn, 1872), 84; Arnold Gaedecke, "Die Mission des Grafen Aloys Louis von Harrach an den spanischen Hof und seine Finalrelation an Kaiser Leopold I (1696 u. 1697)," *Historische Zeitschrift* 29.1 (1873): 68–110, 106.

40. Gaedecke, *Das Tagebuch*, 25–26, 60, 94, 119, 121; Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv [hereinafter AT-OeStA/AVA], FA. Harrach, 219, n.p.

41. Had Catalonia become neutral, the French troops positioned in Piedmont could have been transferred to the frontier of the Holy Roman Empire and prolonged the War of the League of Augsburg. See M. de la Torre, *Mémoires et négociations, secretes de Ferdinand Bonaventure, comte d'Harrach, ambassadeur plenipot. de sa majesté impériale à la cour de Madrid*, vol. 1 (Den Haag: Pierre Husson, 1720), 48–53; Gaedecke, *Das Tagebuch*, 120–40; Gaedecke, *Die Mission des Grafen*, 71; Antonio Espino López, *Cataluña durante el reinado de Carlos II. Política y guerra en la frontera catalana 1679–1697* (Bellaterra: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 1999), 176.

42. Letter from the elector of the Palatinate to the empress, 2 January 1697, Baviera and Maura Gamazo, eds., 1: 597; Gaedecke, *Das Tagebuch*, 23, 32–33.

43. "Conviene ganar a la Berlips prometiéndola cuanto sea necesario y formar a la reina un partido tan fuerte como el bávaro: porque una vez que disponga de tropas en España se podrá hacer lo que se quiera" (We need to to win over Berlips by promising her whatever is necessary and form a faction as strong as the Bavarian for the queen; because as soon as we have troops in Spain, we can do whatever we want). (All translations in this article are mine.) Letter from the Landgrave of Hessen to Count Aloys Thomas

As soon as he arrived at Madrid, Ferdinand von Harrach reached out to Maria Anna through her entourage. Harrach kept a diary of his activities; in his *Tagebuch* the count mentions that he often visited the Countess of Berlepsch and the queen's confessor.⁴⁴ Their co-operation was essential for the success of the imperial diplomatic mission, as they used the networks created by the queen's faction to support his embassy. The first to learn that Harrach had arrived in Madrid informed the queen.⁴⁵ During his embassy, Harrach developed a strategy through which to access Spanish courtiers and appoint ministers who would favour the imperial cause.⁴⁶ By maintaining close contact with the queen's confessor, Pontifeso, who himself was entirely supportive of the imperial cause in Madrid, Harrach hoped to gain the favour of influential Spanish courtiers, such as Juan Tomás Enríquez of Cabrera, 7th Duke of Medina Ríoseco and 11th Admiral of Castile.⁴⁷ The ambassador hoped to convince the admiral and his political affiliates to side with the imperial party; to that effect, he planned to appoint two or three ministers who would favour the imperial cause. The election was made among several important nobles.⁴⁸ Since Harrach needed to collaborate with the members of the German faction to reinforce his diplomatic mission, he strategically communicated with numerous Spanish noblemen through Pontifeso's and the Countess of Berlepsch's networks

of Harrach, 1 March 1697, Bayern and Maura Gamazo, eds., 1:607. See also Ferdinand Menčík, *Tagebuch über den Aufenthalt in Spanien in den Jahren 1673–1674* (Wien: Selbstverlag zu Gerold und Co., 1913); and Laura Oliván Santaliestra, "Pinceladas políticas, marcos cortesanos: el diario del Conde de Harrach, Embajador Imperial en la corte de Madrid (1673–1677)," *Cultura Escrita y Sociedad* 3 (2006): 113–32; Gaedecke, *Die Mission des Grafen*, 71.

44. Gaedecke, *Das Tagebuch*, 19, 22–23, 25–26, 32, 36, 41–42, 48–49, 58, 60, 63, 65, 70–71, 76, 81, 85, 89, 94, 101 and 104–07; Letter from the Countess of Berlepsch to the Count of Harrach, 9 November 1697, Bayern and Maura Gamazo, eds., 1:693; AT-OeStA, AVA, FA Harrach, 219, n.p.

45. Gaedecke, *Das Tagebuch*, 17; Letter from the Countess of Berlepsch to the Countess of Harrach, 10 October 1696, Bayern and Maura Gamazo, eds., 1:577.

46. Gaedecke, *Das Tagebuch*, 23.

47. Copy of the letter from the Count of Harrach to Cardinal Portocarrero and the Admiral of Castile, 27 May 1698, Bayern and Maura Gamazo, eds., 2:777–78; AHN, Various notes and copies, 13 February 1698, Estado, legajo 3253, n.p.

48. The possible ministers were Íñigo de la Cruz Manrique Lara and Ramírez of Arellano, 11th Count of Aguilar, Antonio Sebastián Álvarez of Toledo, Molina, and Salazar, 2nd Marquis of Mancera, and Fadrique of Toledo Osorio and Ponce León, 7th Marquis of Villafranca. See Gaedecke, *Das Tagebuch*, 20, 33.

to guarantee that Louis Fernández Portocarrero, archbishop of Toledo and cardinal of Cordoba, would side with him.⁴⁹ Cardinal Portocarreo agreed to support the nomination of Archduke Carlos if the king was also in agreement and if his relative, the Count of Palma del Río, was given the title of Spanish grandee.⁵⁰ Once both conditions were met, Portocarrero declared himself an affiliate of Harrach, although this did not guarantee that he would remain so.

The imperial envoy met with the most influential members almost daily, keeping informed about the political and diplomatic decisions taken at court. Through Pontifesser's and Berlepsch's networks, he collaborated not only with Spanish noblemen but also with German residents such as the administrators of dowry income, Adam Selder and Dominik Selder, his brother, and with other Spanish courtiers who were part of the German Chamber.⁵¹ Most importantly, Harrach made use of the influence of the queen's faction as well as the Chamber's patron-client ties and networks to gain access to the queen and, by extension, the king. Since Pontifesser assisted the imperial faction at the Madrid court, he gained the emperor's favour and recognition, allowing him to reinforce some of his pre-existing ties with high-ranking courtiers in Vienna. Additionally, the queen's confessor extended his networks by ensuring his correspondents' continuous collaboration. During the last years of Carlos II's reign, the German Chamber was at the centre of imperial diplomatic activity at the Spanish court.⁵² Harrach wished to establish a unique imperial faction that would solidify his status, but the unfavourable political situation at the Madrid court toward the Habsburg dynasty, especially after the publication of Carlos II's first testament, complicated his diplomatic mission.

While imperial diplomacy depended on the exchange of information between the ambassador and the German Chamber—and while the queen and her courtly entourage supported the imperial mission—their networks were

49. The Count of Harrach intended collaboration with "affiliates of the queen" who were, among others, Count San Esteban, Duke Giovenazo, the cardinal of Salazar, the Duke of Uceda, the Count of Benavente, the Count of Aguilar, and the 11th Admiral of Castile; and through the 13th Count of Cifuentes, with the 8th Count of Oropesa. Most of them were also part of Gabriel Pontifesser's network. See Gaedecke, *Das Tagebuch*, 19–23, 65.

50. Gaedecke, *Das Tagebuch*, 35.

51. Gaedecke, *Das Tagebuch*, 36–37, 59, 65, 76, 80, 104.

52. AHN, letter from the baron Bertier to the Bavarian elector Max. Emmanuel, 14 January 1699, Estado, legajo 2907, n.p.

not solely at the service of the imperial envoy.⁵³ The Bavarian palace faction, which favoured the election of Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria as rightful heir to the Spanish throne, had begun to collaborate with members of the German Chamber around 1696. The Bavarian envoy, Bernardo Bravo, Baron of Bertier, managed to establish a strong patronage network at the Madrid court that included some of the most important Spanish ministers and courtiers. Among others, he collaborated with Jan van Brouchoven, 2nd Count of Bergeick, with Juan Domingo of Haro, 8th Count of Monterrey, with Rodrigo Manuel Manrique Lara, 2nd Count of Frigiliana, and with Pablo Vicenzo Spínola Doria, 3rd Marquis of Balbases. From 1698 on, he also joined forces with the queen through Pontifeso, the Countess of Berlepsch, and the Admiral of Castile.⁵⁴ Moreover, the arrival at Madrid of the French ambassador, the marquis Henri d'Harcourt, and the possibility of a French prince as heir to the Spanish throne complicated matters in that the German Chamber now had to deal with yet another palace faction.⁵⁵

The German faction, therefore, was no longer the imperial ambassador's exclusive intermediary. This fact was heavily criticized by Aloys Harrach when he became successor to his father, Ferdinand Bonaventura von Harrach, and the permanent diplomatic envoy at the Spanish court in 1698. On his arrival in Madrid, Aloys Harrach realized that his father had not managed to unify the imperial palace faction in order to exclusively represent the emperor's interests. The imperial ambassador also repeatedly criticized the activities of the members of the German Chamber and accused them of disloyalty towards the emperor. The queen consort did not approve of these accusations and

53. AHN, letter from the baron Bertier to the Bavarian elector Max. Emmanuel, 28 August 1698, Estado, legajo 2907, n.p.

54. AHN, various notes and copies, 13 February 1698, Estado, legajo 3253, n.p.; See "Diferentes papeles desde el año 1698 al año 1701 relativos todo a la sucesión de la corona," in AHN: Estado, legajo 2907, 28 August 1698, n.p.; Estado, legajo 2907, 12 September 1698, n.p.; Estado, legajo 2907, 16 January 1699, n.p.

55. The members of the German Chamber were accused of collaborating with the French faction. See Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv [hereinafter BHStA], letter from the Countess of Berlepsch to the elector of the Palatinate, 10 July 1698, Kasten blau 59/14, p. 149–51v; BHStA, letter from the Countess of Berlepsch to the elector of the Palatinate, Madrid, 29 August 1698, Kasten blau 59/14, p. 171–75r; AHN, letter from Pedro González to Prielmayer, Estado, legajo 2554, p. 24; Gaedecke, *Die Mission des Grafen*, 74; letter from Aloys Thomas of Harrach to the emperor, 27 August 1699, Bayern and Maura Gamazo, eds., 2:1069–70.

consequently isolated Ferdinand Harrach from courtly activities from 1698 onward. Additionally, the parallel assignment of several diplomats, which was due to the hierarchy governing diplomatic rank in the Holy Roman Empire, complicated the mission considerably, but what made the situation even more difficult for the new ambassador was the fact that his father had lost the favour of the queen and her entourage.⁵⁶

The new ambassador's mission, therefore, consisted of convincing the pro-imperial members of the Spanish court to support Archduke Carlos as the rightful heir to the Spanish throne. However, his complicated relationship with Maria Anna and her German Chamber challenged the success of his diplomacy. Aloys Harrach was faced with the need to renew collaboration with the queen's entourage as part of his embassy. The ambassador had to persuade the queen to co-operate with the imperial faction by favouring the monarch's siblings and her entourage, with negotiations of appointment and honours again becoming part of the strategy of co-operation. In 1699, the year Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria died, the imperial faction and the German Chamber began to fraternize.⁵⁷ And although Aloys Harrach's court practices were similar to his father's, his inexperience led to the failure of his diplomatic mission.

Pontifesser's court network: the Spanish courtiers

Pontifesser's collaboration with diplomatic envoys allowed him to gain considerable influence at the Spanish court. During the last decade of Carlos II's reign, he was consulted regularly by ministers, counselors, and diplomatic envoys at his cell in the Capuchin monastery of San Antonio del Prado, where he established new connections and strengthened his relationship with the queen's entourage. Pontifesser's ecclesiastic and diplomatic networks had bolstered the German Chamber, as the queen's confessor made use of already existing networks of other members of the German Chamber to connect with Spanish courtiers and ensure a continuous affiliation with the queen's faction. This in turn contributed to the creation of a third network with Spanish courtiers that would reinforce his and the German Chamber's positions at court.

56. Gaedecke, *Das Tagebuch*, 119.

57. AHN, letter from the Bishop of Lerida to the queen's confessor, 2 November 1699, Estado, legajo 2907, n.p.; AHN, letter from unknown to unknown, 10 September 1699, Estado, legajo 8670, n.p.

One such example of the Spanish courtiers' networks was the Admiral of Castile, Juan Enríquez de Cabrera, who had been approached earlier by von Harrach, as the imperial envoy had hoped to gain his favour.⁵⁸ The admiral, however, had formed his own circle of Spanish courtiers, among whom were such important aristocrats as the Duke of Medina Sidonia and the Duke of Veragua. He also collaborated with important ecclesiastics, among whom were Baltasar de Mendoza, bishop of Segovia and others. Extending his contacts, the admiral corresponded regularly with Francisco de Moles, 2nd Duke of Pareto or Pareti, who became the Spanish ambassador at the Viennese court in 1699.⁵⁹ Most importantly, the admiral's network included such key figures as Charles Henry of Lorraine, Prince of Vaudémont. The connection with the French prince was intended to maintain an alliance through Pontifesser's network, since the queen and the Admiral of Castile wanted the prince to serve as the queen's mediator with the monarchs of northern Europe.⁶⁰ Also, through the admiral's influence, in 1698 the queen's cousin and imperial field marshal, George of Hessen-Darmstadt, was named viceroy of Catalonia and formed part of the admiral's networks. The queen's cousin supported the candidature of Archduke Carlos as rightful heir to the Spanish throne and became the head of the imperial army in Catalonia during the Spanish War of Succession (1701–14).⁶¹

The closeness among the members of the queen's palace faction allowed Pontifesser to make use of the networks of the German Chamber. Spanish courtiers, such as the Admiral of Castile, facilitated access to other Spanish noblemen. Thus, Pontifesser's networks helped reinforce the pre-existing ties of Spanish courtiers to members of the palace faction. The Capuchin friar's exhaustive correspondence maintained a continuous alliance with Spanish courtiers, ministers, and statesmen. Pontifesser's letters were addressed to Spanish diplomats and statesmen across Europe: to Juan Francisco Téllez-Girón, consort Duke of Uceda and Spanish ambassador in Rome, and to Pedro Manuel Colón of Portugal, Duke of Veragua and viceroy of Sicily, an

58. The Admiral of Castile married Ana Catalina de la Cerda, daughter of Juan Francisco de la Cerda Enríquez de Cabrera, 8th Duke of Medinaceli; eight of his daughters married Spanish courtiers.

59. Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvaríño, "Prevenir la sucesión. El príncipe de Vaudémont y la red del almirante en Lombardía," *Estudis: Revista de Historia Moderna* 33 (2007): 61–91, 66.

60. Álvarez-Ossorio Alvaríño, 71.

61. Álvarez-Ossorio Alvaríño, 66.

appointment granted by the queen.⁶² Pontifesar addressed various letters to the viceroy of Naples, Luis Francisco of Cerda and Aragón, 9th Duke of Medinaceli. In this correspondence, he would submit and receive petitions and represent the queen's and her affiliate's interests.⁶³ Nonetheless, his courtiers' network was not exclusively limited to Spanish noblemen. He regularly corresponded with Leopold, Duke of Lorraine, as well as with the 2nd Count of Bergeick and the Duke of Pareti, the Spanish ambassador in Vienna.

Because Pontifesar did not reside at court, he could receive Spanish courtiers and intervene in governmental matters without being publicly criticized, as were other members of the German Chamber.⁶⁴ However, like various other members of the queen's faction, during Carlos II's last decade, Pontifesar was accused of corruption and illicit activities. As an influential person in the queen's entourage, he was rumoured to have fought with a key member of the German Chamber for more influence at court, and for attempting to sell his appointment to the bishop of Solsona in order to become inquisitor general, rumours that were addressed by the imperial ambassador in 1699.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, Pontifesar's education and discretion were undoubtedly valued by his contemporaries, and given the overall positive influence of his court practices, he became a respected and valued adviser of the German Chamber and a counselor for state matters.⁶⁶ On several occasions, he represented the emperor's interests at the Spanish court.⁶⁷ Together with the Countess of Berlepsch, Pontifesar held the closest position as part of Maria

62. Álvarez-Ossorio Alvarino, 72.

63. HHStA, letter from Gabriel Pontifesar to Antonio Ubilla and Medina, Familienkorrespondenz A, 50-4-7, n.p.

64. For the satires from 1695 directed against the German Chamber, see Teófanés Egido López, *Sátiras políticas de la España moderna, Introducción, selección y notas de Teófanés Egido* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1973); Mercedes Etreros, *La sátira política en el siglo XVII* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1983); Carlos Gómez-Centurión Jiménez, "La sátira política durante el reinado de Carlos II," *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea* 4 (1983): 11–34.

65. Letter from Aloys Thomas of Harrach to the emperor, 2 July 1699, Bayern and Maura Gamazo, eds., 2:1038. It was also rumoured that he wanted to change to another religious order. Letter of Christian Geleen to the elector of the Palatinate, Bayern and Maura Gamazo, eds., 2:783–84.

66. HHStA, Familienkorrespondenz A, 50-4-2, 34; 41; p. 48; 49; 51; 56; 57; HHStA, Familienkorrespondenz A, 50-4-7, n.p.

67. Hohenegger, 722.

Anna's entourage; both were the queen's intermediaries for any petition or favour at the Madrid court. Most of the correspondence addressed to the queen or her German affiliates passed through her confessor.⁶⁸ His residence outside the court permitted him to act as intermediary between the Holy Roman Empire and the queen.⁶⁹ When, in 1699, Pontifesser wished to return to the Holy Roman Empire, Emperor Leopold and Pope Innocence XII urged him to stay, as both needed him as an advocate for imperial interests at court.⁷⁰

New court practices

Because Carlos II's succession remained unresolved, the other palace factions needed to ensure the cooperation of the queen's entourage. The Spanish courtiers and the members of other palace factions were highly critical of the German Chamber for having isolated the queen from them, since in order to cooperate with the German Chamber and gain access to the queen, they had to accept their court practices. Consequently, the queen's wing started administering favours, gifts, and honours in exchange for their support, collaboration, and access to Maria Anna of Palatinate-Neuburg.⁷¹ Yet, according to Pontifesser's *socius* Tiburtius Stieler, all the gifts the queen's confessor received were utilized for religious purposes.⁷²

In exchange for Pontifesser's services at the Madrid court, the sovereign granted him ecclesiastic benefices and privileges which, however, he declined.⁷³ Although he did not accept any payment for his role as the queen's spiritual guide, he accumulated many artistic treasures over the years. In 1698, Pontifesser asked Maria Anna to grant him the resources to found a Capuchin monastery in his hometown of Chiusa, Tyrol. Not relying solely on his patroness's favour, he also turned to his networks for support: he received help from the bishop of Solsona, who was then Spanish ambassador to Vienna, and by extension, from

68. Kofler, 38.

69. Letters from Aloys Thomas count of Harrach to the emperor, in Bayern and Maura Gamazo, eds., 2:1059, 1078–79, 1306–07.

70. Pobladora, 144–48; Hohenegger, 723.

71. Stanhope, 86.

72. Hohenegger, 721.

73. Hohenegger 720; 483–84.

the emperor.⁷⁴ The marquis Cesare Pagani, an art lover from Milan who had been at the service of the elector of the Palatinate, was chosen to build and decorate the Capuchin convent,⁷⁵ while the queen appointed the merchant Dominikus Gummer from Brixen as the financial representative in Chiusa. Pontifesser's *socius* Stipler represented him at the convent church's consecration in 1699.⁷⁶ Most of the chapel, called Loreto, was furnished and equipped with gifts from Maria Anna and possibly art pieces sent from Madrid by Gummer, as well as art objects brought by Stipler. The paintings Pontifesser had been gifted by ministers, courtiers, and princes also became part of the treasure of Loreto in Chiusa.⁷⁷

Pontifesser received not only art pieces as gifts but also valuable books, such as those ordered by the Baron of Bertier from Brussels especially for him.⁷⁸ Unlike the art collection, the books were not inventoried, so it is not possible to determine how many books were part of the convent's collection. In the early twentieth century, the convent's library contained approximately six thousand volumes; of 3,310 inventoried, about 120 display Maria Anna of Palatinate-Neuburg's ex-libris.⁷⁹ Many others are dedicated to Pontifesser by the queen's brother, the bishop of Augsburg.⁸⁰ Although we do not know with certainty how many books Pontifesser possessed, in a letter, he listed 245 books located in the Capuchin convent of Saint Anthony, which he required to be sent to Chiusa.⁸¹ Pontifesser's interest in art collecting was possibly due to his court appointment as royal confessor, as he was aware of the administration of the queen's household and her artistic patronage.⁸² According to his correspondence with the elector of the Palatinate, he occasionally represented the queen's painters and ensured their payment.⁸³

74. Hohenegger, 485–86.

75. Kofler, 38.

76. Hohenegger, 486–90.

77. Hohenegger, 721. The treasures are currently housed in the Klausen Museum, Chiusa.

78. Adalbert von Bayern, *Mariana de Neoburgo: Reina de España* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1938), 129.

79. Kofler, 40.

80. Kofler, 42.

81. Kofler, 39–40, 42.

82. López Arandía, "El confesionario regio," 278.

83. See the letters from the elector of the Palatinate to Pontifesser, 14 October 1696, Bayern and Maura Gamazo, eds., 1: 581; 22 November 1696, 1:588; 24 November 1696, 1:590; 17 February 1697, 1:606; 3 March 1697, 1:608.

After Carlos II's death on 1 November 1700, Pontifesar accompanied the widowed queen to Toledo. Although he was called to Rome by the order's provincial and the pope in 1702, and from 1702 to 1706 resided in a Capuchin convent in Urbino, he maintained contact with Maria Anna through letters.⁸⁴ In that final year, Maria Anna's brother, Alexander Sigismund of Palatinate-Neuburg, bishop of Augsburg, paid for his travel to Augsburg.⁸⁵ On his return journey to Urbino, he suffered a stroke and died shortly afterward on 12 December 1706.

Conclusion

This study investigates the social activities of the German Chamber to more thoroughly understand court practices during the last decade of Carlos II's reign. Analyzing Gabriel Pontifesar's networks and his actions as a vital member of the queen's wing reveals how the queen's faction assumed importance at court by building diverse palace networks that complemented the queen's own network. Pontifesar's appointment as the confessor of Queen Maria Anna of Palatinate-Neuburg allowed him to establish three critical networks that cemented his influence at the Madrid court. Through his ecclesiastic network, he mediated the conferral of dignities and offices on ecclesiastics. Since some members were not only clergymen but also statesmen and diplomats, the Capuchin friar solicited petitions in the name of the queen and her affiliates. He also indirectly intervened in political matters by favouring the appointments of foreign religious. His activities within the queen's faction also facilitated the creation of a diplomatic network in which he interacted alongside other members of the queen's German Chamber with imperial diplomats and envoys. His agency and influence over the queen supported the imperial diplomatic mission that backed Archduke Carlos as heir to the Spanish throne.

For this reason, Pontifesar, together with the Countess of Berlepsch, was chosen to promote and protect the diplomatic envoys at the Madrid court.⁸⁶ Although he initially refused to intervene in political affairs, courtiers often

84. Pobladora, 160–61.

85. Hohenegger, 724.

86. Letter from the elector of the Palatinate to Gabriel Pontifesar, 10 May 1698, Bayern and Maura Gamazo, eds., 2:754.

requested his counsel during the last decade of Carlos II's reign. With the creation of both networks, from 1690 to 1700, Pontifeso became one of the most important intermediaries between the emperor and Maria Anna. His increasing influence at the Madrid court empowered him to initiate a new network of Spanish courtiers. He appropriated already existing networks in order to form a continuous affiliation between German and Spanish courtiers not limited solely to his activities within the German Chamber, whose agency depended on their networks. Pontifeso's relationships with ecclesiastics, diplomats, and courtiers allowed him to intervene directly and indirectly in the state affairs of the Spanish Monarchy.

Moreover, the kinship that existed between some members of his networks allowed him to amplify his agency, while his appointment as the queen's spiritual counselor made him the ideal intermediary to represent broad political interests of the emperor at the Spanish court. Thus, Pontifeso strengthened his connections with influential courtiers, intervening in both the male and female spheres of interest of the royal households. His appointment as royal confessor and his closeness to Maria Anna undoubtedly reinforced the strong affiliations he established between the Spanish courtiers and the German Chamber. Although his own connections divided into ecclesiastic, diplomatic, and court networks according to the members of each, it was their combined influence that granted him, despite being a foreigner, such an important role within the court. During the last decade of Carlos II's reign, Pontifeso made use of all three networks to represent the political and social interests of the queen's faction. Because he resided outside the court, however, he created new forms of social practices and a system of audiences that increased his influence at the Madrid court.⁸⁷

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