

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



“Tutti gli occhi del mondo”: Court Networks between Turin and Madrid, 1640–1700

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Volume 43, Number 4, Fall 2020

Spaces of Power of the Spanish Nobility (1480–1715)
Les espaces de pouvoir de la noblesse espagnole (1480–1715)

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1076832ar>
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i4.36388>

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Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)
2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Raviola, B. (2020). “Tutti gli occhi del mondo”: Court Networks between Turin and Madrid, 1640–1700. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 43(4), 199–218. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i4.36388>

Article abstract

Although the court of Turin’s role in the new balance of power in Europe during the War of the Spanish Succession is well known, far less is known about the strategic function of its collateral courts, such as the court of the princes of Savoy-Carignano. Based on the correspondence of the Savoy ambassador to Madrid, Costanzo Operti (1690–95), this article focuses on these courts to demonstrate the formal and informal diplomatic interplay among male and female aristocrats from 1640 to the end of the seventeenth century. One such noblewoman, Olimpia Mancini of Carignano-Soissons, was an Italian who grew up in the French court and maintained a close relationship with Louis XIV. As the wife of a prince of the Savoy-Carignano branch, she held important positions in Turin, Paris, and Madrid. Mother to the famous prince and military warrior Eugene of Savoy, after she lost her powerful status in France, she sought to find a place in the Madrid court as lady-in-waiting to Queen Marie Louise de Orléans. Her mother-in-law, Marie de Bourbon-Soissons, played an outstanding role in maintaining the honour and prestige of the court of Carignano.

“Tutti gli occhi del mondo”: Court Networks between Turin and Madrid, 1640–1700

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Although the court of Turin's role in the new balance of power in Europe during the War of the Spanish Succession is well known, far less is known about the strategic function of its collateral courts, such as the court of the princes of Savoy-Carignano. Based on the correspondence of the Savoy ambassador to Madrid, Costanzo Operti (1690–95), this article focuses on these courts to demonstrate the formal and informal diplomatic interplay among male and female aristocrats from 1640 to the end of the seventeenth century. One such noblewoman, Olimpia Mancini of Carignano-Soissons, was an Italian who grew up in the French court and maintained a close relationship with Louis XIV. As the wife of a prince of the Savoy-Carignano branch, she held important positions in Turin, Paris, and Madrid. Mother to the famous prince and military warrior Eugene of Savoy, after she lost her powerful status in France, she sought to find a place in the Madrid court as lady-in-waiting to Queen Marie Louise de Orléans. Her mother-in-law, Marie de Bourbon-Soissons, played an outstanding role in maintaining the honour and prestige of the court of Carignano.

Si le rôle de la cour de Turin dans le nouvel équilibre des puissances européennes pendant la Guerre de Succession d'Espagne est bien connu, on en sait moins sur la fonction stratégique d'autres cours, telle que celle des princes de Savoie-Carignan. S'appuyant sur la correspondance de l'ambassadeur de Savoie à Madrid Costanzo Operti (1690–1695), cet article s'intéresse à ces cours, afin d'explorer le jeu diplomatique, formel et informel, auquel s'adonnèrent les nobles – hommes et femmes – de 1640 à la fin du XVII^e siècle. Une de ces femmes nobles, Olympe Mancini de Carignan-Soissons, était une Italienne élevée à la cour de France et proche du roi Louis XIV. Épouse du prince Eugène Maurice de Savoie-Carignan, elle exerça une influence importante à Turin, Paris et Madrid. Mère du célèbre prince et militaire Eugène de Savoie, elle obtint une place de dame d'honneur de la reine Marie-Louise d'Orléans à la cour de Madrid, après sa disgrâce en France. Sa belle-mère, Marie de Bourbon-Soissons, joua un rôle de premier plan dans le maintien de l'honneur et du prestige de la cour de Savoie-Carignan.

Introduction

The history of the duchy of Savoy has recently received much attention, especially within an international context. Many English and American scholars, such as Geoffrey Symcox, Robert Oresko, Michael Broers, Christopher Storrs, Toby Osborne, and Matthew Vester, have concentrated their work on

the dynasty from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries.¹ Renewed interest in the House of Savoy stems from its rise in the early modern period through its participation in international conflicts, its long search for a royal crown, and its strategies in displaying the duchy's cultural role in Europe.² Far from being a mere place of leisure, the Turin court became one of early modern Europe's most important political spaces, and it is rightly perceived as a site where crucial diplomatic and political strategies took place.³ The move of the duchy's capital from Chambéry to Turin in 1563, moreover, encouraged a series of construction projects that expanded the city and experimented with different architectural styles.⁴

The House of Savoy—which now includes collateral branches like the Savoy-Racconigi and other cadet branches—comprised different courts in the early modern period, some formal (i.e., the houses of the infanta and of the

1. See Geoffrey Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II: Absolutism in the Savoyard State, 1675–1730* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983); Robert Oresko, “The House of Savoy in Search for a Royal Crown in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton*, ed. Robert Oresko, G. C. Gibbs, and H.M. Scott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 272–381; Michael Broers, *Napoleonic Imperialism and the Savoyard Monarchy 1773–1821: State Building in Piedmont* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997); Christopher Storrs, *War, Diplomacy and the Rise of Savoy, 1690–1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Toby Osborne, *Dynasty and Diplomacy in the Court of Savoy: Political Culture and the Thirty Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Matthew Vester, ed., *Sabaudian Studies: Political Culture, Dynasty & Territory (1400–1700)* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012).

2. One example of Savoy cultural diffusion was the famous *Theatrum Sabaudiae* published by Regent Giovanna Battista of Savoy-Nemours in 1682.

3. See Paola Bianchi and Luisa Clotilde Gentile, eds., *L'affermarsi della corte sabauda. Dinastie, poteri, élites in Piemonte e Savoia fra tardo Medioevo e prima età moderna* (Turin: Zamorani 2006); Paola Bianchi and Andrea Merlotti, eds., *Le strategie dell'apparenza: cerimoniali, politica e società alla corte dei Savoia in età moderna* (Turin: Zamorani, 2010); Paola Bianchi and Andrea Merlotti, *Storia degli Stati sabaudi (1416–1848)* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2017); Blythe Alice Raviola, Claudio Rosso, and Franca Varallo, eds., *Gli spazi sabaudi. Percorsi e prospettive della storiografia* (Rome: Carocci, 2017).

4. For Turin's expansion or *Citta Nuova*, see Martha D. Pollack, *Turin 1564–1680: Urban Design, Military Culture and the Creation of the Absolutist Capital* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991). The residences built around the city and its ducal palace, called *corona di delizie* (crown of delights) for their grandeur, included the castles of Rivoli, Racconigi, and Valentino, as well as the Reggia di Venaria and the Stupinigi hunting reserve. There is a large literature on all these sites, most of which have been recently restored and now form part of Turin's cultural heritage. See Andrea Merlotti, *Andare per reggie e residenze* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2018).

princes and princesses of Savoy)⁵ and others less formal, such as the courts composed of the elite, diplomats, and collateral branches, such as that of Savoy-Nemours.⁶ The plurality of those courts and spaces not only generated sociability and leisure but also increased rivalry, factions, and conflicts. The period of the two regencies during the seventeenth century, from 1638 to 1682, has drawn particular attention, not due to any instability or weakness, as nineteenth-century historiography claimed, but because of its novel political experimentation.⁷ Space does not allow us to fully discuss Christine of France’s regency, the civil war regency, and the civil war against her brothers-in-law, princes Tommaso and Maurizio (1638–42), or Giovanna Battista of Savoy-Nemours’s second regency.⁸

This article focuses on Savoy in the mid-seventeenth century, giving special importance to the role played by women in power, at times in parallel contexts very close to the ducal court, such as the case of the *Compagnia dell’Umiltà* (Company of Humility), which originated in Turin at the end of the sixteenth century and lasted until the beginning of the twentieth century. This important philanthropical foundation, led by the principal women at court and of the Piedmont aristocracy, was linked to Christine and her entourage. We also discuss Piedmont’s military strength during the duchy of Victor Amadeus II (1666–1732), who became king of Sicily in 1713, which followed Giovanna

5. See Blythe Alice Raviola and Franca Varallo, eds., *L’Infanta. Caterina d’Austria, duchessa di Savoia (1567–1597)* (Rome: Carocci, 2013).

6. Matthew Vester, *Jacques de Savoie-Nemours: L’apanage du Genevois au coeur de la puissance dynastique savoyarde au XVI^e siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 2009).

7. For this period, see Franca Varallo, ed., *In assenza del re. Le reggenti dal XIV al XVII secolo (Piemonte ed Europa)* (Florence: Olschki, 2008).

8. Christine’s troubled regency began after the death of Victor Amadeus I in October 1637. During the years 1638–42, she was involved in a civil war against her pro-Spanish brothers-in-law Tommaso and Maurizio of Savoy. After the conflict, the duchess, protected by France, remained regent of the duchy for her son Carlo Emanuele II until her death in December 1663. There is a large bibliography regarding her important regency: see especially Giuliano Ferretti, ed., *L’État, la cour et la ville. Le duché de Savoie au temps de Christine de France (1619–1663)* (Paris: Garnier, 2017). She took the title of the first Madame Royale (in Italian, Madama Reale), while her daughter-in-law Giovanna Battista of Savoy-Nemours was known as the second Madama Reale. For the latter’s reign, see Robert Oresko, “Maria Giovanna Battista of Savoy-Nemours (1644–1724): Daughter, Consort and Regent of Savoy,” in *Queenship in Europe 1660–1815: The Role of the Consort*, ed. Clarissa Campbell Orr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 16–55.

Battista di Savoia Nemours's reign.⁹ In particular, this article intends to contribute to the historiography of Savoy during the last years of the sixteenth century, when European diplomacy took a heightened interest in Piedmont. We start with a letter.

On 19 May 1691, the Savoy ambassador to Spain, Costanzo Operti, wrote to the Marquis of Leganés, the Spanish governor of the duchy of Milan, that since the War of the Spanish Succession had interfered as much as possible with the Spanish king, Carlos II's interests and therefore with those of Victor Amadeus II, Duke of Savoy (1666–1732), “all the eyes of the world are now focused with similar hopes on Your Excellency [...] and I, in the meantime, will do all I can at this court to obtain the necessary assistance.”¹⁰ The expression “all the eyes of the world” was typical of the hyperbolic language of early modern courts, but it effectively evokes the attention paid to this active and generally trusted political player in nearby Milan, who in Turin was also viewed with suspicion given the almost never peaceful relations between their two borders. The marquis was thus the linchpin in Turin's diplomatic manoeuvres against Paris, acting as the catalyst for the hopes of those who trusted in both a rapid solution to the Nine Years War and an active part by Duke Victor Amadeus II at the heart of Spanish politics.¹¹ They were distant hopes, in light of the fact that relations between the duchy of Savoy and the Habsburg monarchy had, for decades, lost the closeness of the previous century and had become colder, more formal, and powerfully conditioned by Christine's pro-French policy.

9. See Paola Bianchi, *Onore e mestiere. Le riforme militari nel Piemonte del Settecento* (Turin: Zamorani, 2012). See also the classic biography by Geoffrey Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II, Absolutism in the Savoyard State 1675–1730* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

10. “[H]a rovinato per quanto ha poputo tutti gli interessi di Sua Maestà et in conseguenza quelli di S.A.R. mio signore, essendo dunque rivolti tutti gli occhi del mondo con le comuni speranze nella persona di V.E. [...] intanto ch'io m'adoprarò in questa corte per l'assistenze necessarie.” Archivio di Stato di Torino (ASTo), Corte, Lettere ministri Spagna, m. 36, Register of letters by Commendator Operti, S.A.R. ambassador to the Spanish court to kings, bishops, sent from this court, sent abroad and to specific people, 1690 to 1694, 17, Madrid, 19 May 1691. On Operti, see also Christopher Storrs, *War, Diplomacy, and the Rise of Savoy, 1690–1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). All translations into English are mine, unless otherwise stated.

11. The Nine Years War, or War of the League of Augsburg (1688–97), involved the French king, Louis XIV, against a large European coalition formed by England, Spain, the Dutch Republic, and Savoy. For the war's effect on the Piedmont border, see Paola Bianchi, *Sotto diverse bandiere. L'internazionale militare nello Stato sabaudo di Antico Regime* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2012).

The dispute with its trans-Alpine neighbour back on the horizon, after Giovanna Battista of Savoy-Nemours's regency (wife of Carlo Emanuele II, Duke of Savoy), the Spanish monarchy once again became a firm focal point—relations having been kept up between Piedmont's pro-Spanish elite and Madrid. Were memories of the historic dynastic bond with Philip II, and the strategies, choices, and tastes of Infanta Catalina Micaela, Philip II's daughter, and her Spanish-educated sons and daughters, also still alive?¹² It should be remembered that, in Turin, the two pro-French and pro-Spanish parties—full-blown rival factions—conditioned the court's internal balance of power, as well as the aristocracy's, from the mid-sixteenth century to at least the mid-seventeenth.¹³ These parties determined the preferences, tastes, and interpersonal relationships of some members of the dynasty, of entire families of the aristocracy, and even of the patriarchates of some Piedmontese families, as was the case during the years of the civil war (1638–42) when the regency of Christine of France, who was also called Madame Royale, was taken hostage by her pro-Spanish brothers-in-law Maurizio of Savoy and Tommaso of Savoy, Prince of Carignano.

While it is outside the scope of this article to provide a broader analysis of the princes and princesses of the House of Savoy as heads of independent courts, the following intends to briefly outline their biographies as a means of reconstructing the dynasty.

Infanta Margherita of Savoy and Prince Tommaso of Savoy-Carignano

The precedent for the bond between Madrid and Turin began with the Spanish experiences of the three oldest children of Carlo Emanuele I, Duke of Savoy and Infanta Catalina Micaela, Philip II's younger daughter. The children not only had the chance to live for three years in Valladolid and the various seats of the Spanish monarchy, but also had their own well-organized house equipped with Spanish and Italian staff.¹⁴ In particular, the third-born son, Emanuele

12. See Raviola and Varallo, eds., *L'Infanta*.

13. Pierpaolo Merlin, *Tra guerre e tornei. La corte sabauda nell'età di Carlo Emanuele I* (Turin: SEI, 1991).

14. See Maria José del Río Barredo, "El viaje de los príncipes de Saboya a la corte de Felipe III (1603–1606)," in *L'affermarsi della corte sabauda. Dinastie, poteri, élites in Piemonte tra tardo medioevo e prima età moderna*, ed. P. Bianchi and L. C. Gentile (Turin: Zamorani, 2006), 407–34; and José Martínez

Filiberto (1588–1624), great prior of the Order of Malta in Castile and León, enjoyed the favour of his uncle, Philip III, who later appointed his nephew great admiral of Spain in 1610. Emanuele Filiberto also received favours from his cousin, Philip IV, who named him viceroy of Sicily in 1622. On the occasion of his mandate on the island, an independent court was set up—a sign of the fact that, for all intents and purposes, he was effectively now on a par with all the heirs to the Habsburg dynasty.¹⁵

Emanuele Filiberto was not the only one favoured. His sister Margherita, who married Prince Francesco Gonzaga of Mantua in 1608 in an opulent wedding, was also a steady presence at the Madrid court from 1640 onwards. I have reconstructed the biography of this widowed duchess of Mantua and Monferrato elsewhere, highlighting her political role and insistent loyalty to Spain.¹⁶ It is, however, of interest here to point out that, after the Portuguese *Restauração* that saw her as the main scapegoat for bad government in Spain, she was acquitted of all charges of political ineptness at the time when the Count-Duke of Olivares, along with the Portuguese Diogo Soares, secretary of the Council of Portugal, and his brother-in-law, Miguel de Vasconcelos, secretary of the Council of State in Lisbon, fell into disgrace under accusations of high treason.

After two years of semi-imprisonment in Ocaña, Spain, Margherita was rehabilitated and brought back to Madrid with all the honours of a viceregent. She chose to live at the convent of the Descalzas Reales, following in her mother's footsteps, since Catalina Micaela had been educated there in childhood with her sister Isabel Clara Eugenia. The convent was a royal favourite and, with

Millán, "La Casa y los servidores de la Infanta Catalina Micaela," in Raviola and Varallo, eds., *L'Infanta*, 391–479. Martínez Millán's article transcribes *Planta de la Casa de sus altezas en Valladolid el 19 de abril de 1605* (421–25), Archivo General de Palacio Real di Madrid, Histórica, caja 113, exp. 6.

15. Manuel Rivero Rodríguez, "La Casa del príncipe Filiberto de Saboya en Madrid," in Raviola and Varallo, eds., *L'Infanta*, 499–518, in particular 500–02.

16. See Blythe Alice Raviola, "'Hija de tal madre'. La dote di Margherita," in Raviola and Varallo, eds., *L'Infanta*, 519–40; "The Three Lives of Margherita of Savoy-Gonzaga, Duchess of Mantua and Vicereine of Portugal," in *Early Modern Habsburg Women: Transnational Contexts, Cultural Conflicts, Dynastic Continuities*, ed. Anne J. Cruz and Maria Galli Stampino (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 59–78; and "'A fatal máquina'. Margherita di Savoia (1589–1656), duchessa di Mantova e viceregina di Portogallo," in *Portogallo e Piemonte. Nove secoli (XII–XX) di relazioni dinastiche e politiche*, ed. M. A. Lopes and Blythe Alice Raviola (Rome: Carocci, 2014; I Portuguese edition: Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 2012), 103–26.

a small personal court, Margherita became intimate friends with Philip IV, Queen Isabel of Borbón (Christine of France's sister), and their children, Prince Baltasar Carlos and Infanta Maria Teresa.¹⁷ When the queen died in 1644, Margherita was one of the ladies dressed in mourning in Franciscan tertiary habit,¹⁸ following the custom then common in many European Catholic courts. The princess, always designated as “the Duchess of Mantua,” was returning to her Turin past; in 1624, she had become part of the *Compagnia dell'Umiltà* in Turin, sponsored by her unmarried sisters Maria Apollonia and Francesca Caterina, who were Franciscan tertiaries.¹⁹ Margherita died in 1655 and maintained her bonds with Turin to the end through her first confessor and secretary, Monsignor Giulio Bergera, future archbishop of Turin, and Bernardino Foglia, her last confessor.

Margherita's youngest brother, Tommaso of Savoy-Carignano (1596–1656), commanded the Spanish army in 1634 and was welcomed to Madrid as a member of the royal family.²⁰ In 1636 he launched the Flanders campaign which lasted until 1638 and was lauded in Emanuele Tesauro's *Campeggiamenti*.²¹ That same year, his consort Marie de Borbone-Soissons settled in Madrid, with her young children acting initially as diplomatic pawns to the benefit of Piedmontese-Spanish relations. Then, when Tommaso chose to transfer his loyalties to France, right in the midst of the dramatic civil war against Christine, Marie remained in Madrid as a quasi-hostage and was not able to return to Piedmont until 1644, at the age of thirty-eight.

17. See Joana Bouza Serrano, *A Duquesa de Mântua. A princesa italiana que foi vice-rainha de Portugal* (Lisboa: A Esfera dos Livros, 2016), 200–18.

18. Bouza Serrano, 209.

19. The society's Spanish origin has recently been traced in *L'umiltà e le rose. Storia di una compagnia femminile a Torino fra età moderna e contemporanea*, ed. Anna Cataluppi and Blythe Alice Raviola (Florence: Olschki, 2017).

20. Paola Bianchi, “Savoia Carignano, Tommaso Francesco,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 91 (Rome: Institute of the Italian Encyclopedia, 2018), treccani.it/enciclopedia/savoia-carignano-tommaso-francesco_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/.

21. See Luca Bianco and Blythe Alice Raviola, “Non solo Roma. Torino, i Savoia e le Fiandre nei Campeggiamenti di Emanuele Tesauro (1639),” *Incontri. Rivista europea di studi italiani*, 30.2 (2015): 56–69.

Olimpia Mancini and Marie de Bourbon Soissons, “Princesa de Cariñano”

As an indication of the delicate balance in the relations between the Savoy world and late seventeenth-century Spain, the case of one of Cardinal Mazarin’s nieces, known as the Mazarinettes, is illustrative. Olimpia Mancini would marry Eugenio Maurizio of Savoy Soissons, the last-born son of Prince Tommaso de Savoy-Carignano, Infanta Catalina Micaela’s grandson. Olimpia was born on 11 July 1637.²² According to Stefano Tabacchi, Olimpia was central to Mazarino’s plans from her childhood on.²³ She was part of the family nucleus summoned to France from Italy by the cardinal, who staggered the arrival of his relatives for personal and opportunist reasons. This led to an unstable situation for Olimpia from the youngest age. In 1650, during the Fronde, led by the Prince of Condé against Mazarin, she had to take shelter at Val-de-Grâce convent under the queen’s protection, leaving a year later for Brühl, near Cologne, with her uncle. Although to some historians Mazarin’s favourite niece was Ortensia, Olimpia was the first to be introduced into French court life, as “Mazarin dreamt for the moment that he would make Olympia a queen.”²⁴ However, he did not dare to aim at the French throne but had some lesser realm in mind for her. She herself showed ambition and aspired to some form of royalty. When Queen Christine of Sweden stayed in Paris in 1656–1657, Olimpia began to dress like her after a great court ball, at the age of eighteen, generating much admiration and inspiring many of the dances so beloved of Louis XIV.²⁵

22. This section is partially taken, with certain changes, from Blythe Alice Raviola, “Per il profilo di una Mazarinette: Olimpia Mancini di Savoia-Soissons (1637–ca. 1708),” in *La politica charmante. Società di corte e figure femminili nell’età di transizione*, ed. Elena Riva, monographic issue of *Cheiron. Materiali e strumenti di aggiornamento storiografico* 1 (2017–2018): 100–27, dx.doi.org/10.3280/CHE2017-001004.

23. Stefano Tabacchi, “Mancini, Olimpia,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 68 (2007), treccani.it/enciclopedia/olimpia-mancini_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/. For a brief, initial profile, see Blythe Alice Raviola, “‘Confesserò ben liberamente’: Maria Apollonia di Savoia e Olimpia Mancini di Savoia-Carignano Soissons fra Piemonte ed Europa,” in *Percorsi di libertà fra tardo Medioevo ed età contemporanea*, ed. P. Merlin and F. Panero (Cherasco: Centro Internazionale di Studi sugli Insediamenti Medievali, 2017), 93–105.

24. “Mazarin rêve un moment de faire d’Olympe une reine.” Y. Singer Lecocq, *La tribu Mazarin. Un tourbillon dans le Grand Siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 1989), 94.

25. “The nymphe Mancini / so well dressed à la Christine / has the traits of an Amazon” (“la nymphe Mancini / fort bien vêtue à la Christine, / d’une Amazone avoit les traits.”) See *La Muze historique*,

Both in historical and in fictional accounts, Olimpia is well known as the mother of the famous prince Eugenio of Savoy and for her life of scandals and troubles at the French court.²⁶ However, she also became involved in foreign affairs; her importance to the Savoy dynasty was her role in the interplay of alliances between France and the duchy of Savoy, along with the Spanish and pro-Spanish interests of other nobles at court. Her marriage to Eugenio Maurizio of Savoy introduced another shrewd personality besides Cardinal Mazarin: that of Olimpia's mother-in-law, Marie de Bourbon Soissons (1606–92). The “Princesa de Cariñano,” as she is referred to in Spanish sources, stands out as having brilliantly orchestrated the careful diplomatic manoeuvring that took place between Turin, Madrid, and Paris.

French by birth and a relative of Christine of France, Marie was sent very young to the Turin court,²⁷ where in 1625 she married Prince Tommaso of Savoy, who made no effort to hide his early sympathy for the Spanish Habsburgs—he remained, after all, an infanta's son—or his predisposition for military command. Having lived in Madrid for months during the years 1638–42, Marie knew the inner dynamics of the court and made use of these to influence her husband and children toward a pro-French alliance. Her letters, which are housed at Turin's Archivio di Stato, reveal her to be one of

April 1657, cited in Jacques Hillairet, *Les Mazarinettes* (Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1976), 76. See also Benedetta Craveri, *Amanti e regine. Il potere delle donne* (Milano: Adelphi, 2005), 159.

26. For Olimpia's scandalous life at the French court as mistress to Louis XIV and her role in the “Affair of the Poisons,” see Antonia Fraser, *Love and Louis XIV: The Women in the Life of the Sun King* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006), 36 ff. Fraser's prejudicial opinion was that “Olympe had an Italian taste for intrigue” (96). On the scandal, which broke out in 1680, and the political and diplomatic role played by Louis XIV's favourite, Mme de Maintenon, see Elena Riva, “Un'educatrice alla corte del re Sole. Il caso della marchesa di Maintenon e della delfina di Francia Maria Adelaide di Savoia,” in *Testi e contesti. Per Amedeo Quondam*, ed. Chiara Continisio and Marcello Fantoni (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 2015), 371–91.

27. Marie de Bourbon, daughter of Charles of Bourbon Soissons and the Piedmontese noblewoman Anna di Montafia, married Tommaso in 1625, at the age of nineteen. Like Christine of France, the future Madame Royale, she was not well received by his family because of her French sympathies and habits, in particular by her sisters-in-law Margherita and the two Franciscan tertiaryaries, Maria Apollonia and Francesca Caterina. See Blythe Alice Raviola, “Venerabili figlie: Maria Apollonia e Francesca Caterina di Savoia, monache francescane, fra la corte di Torino e gli interessi di Madrid (1594–1656),” in *La corte en Europa: Política y religión (Siglos XVI–XVIII)*, ed. José Martínez Millán, Manuel Rivero Rodríguez, and Gijss Versteegen, 3 vols. (Madrid: Editorial Polifemo, 2012), 2:887–910.

the most important players of what might be called discreet, albeit decisive and pragmatic, politics, alongside her husband and long afterwards during her lengthy widowhood. It was a politics made up, as was customary, of alliances, loyalty, and mostly-female, private correspondence that has received limited attention in Savoy historiography.

Marie de Bourbon was as hated by the Count-Duke of Olivares as Margherita of Savoy, then viceregent of Portugal, had been; ironically, she was also hated by this same sister-in-law, Margherita, in the context of the subtle, factional games of allegiances and visibility.²⁸ She lived in Madrid for long periods from 1636 to 1641 towards the end of Tommaso's generalship in Flanders, frequently travelling between Spain and Savoy, as her correspondence shows. In an interesting letter written from Madrid, she asks her brother-in-law Maurizio and Diego Gomes, then *podestà* of Domodossola, to assist her "on her departure from Savoy and her entrance into the State of Milan [...] following my journey to Vares" and "don Emanuel Gomes, his son, who had inherited his father's affection," hoping that they might be favoured at the Turin court.²⁹ The letter offers a insight into the significant Spanish presence at the border between the Savoy duchy and the State of Milan, with Spaniards not only occupying certain political roles and integrated into the fabric of the local elites but also generating loyalty networks and forms of partly economic interaction between Piedmont and Spain.

A further unpublished letter written to Cardinal Maurizio by the Bourbon princess while she was in Madrid is worthy of attention. The princess said to her cousin-in-law that the Carmelite friar, Martín de los Angeles, son of the Count of Villanova and descendant of the Duchess of Savoy, Beatrice of Portugal, needed letters of recommendation for his trip to Italy. He already had the intercession of Marie de Bourbon's lady-in-waiting, Beatrice of Mendoza, who was as familiar and partial to the "illustrious House of Savoy"

28. Alejandra Franganillo Álvarez, "Servicio y deservicio a Felipe IV. Los Príncipes de Carignano, entre Francia y la Monarquía Hispánica (1634–1644)," in *Hispania* 77.255 (Madrid 2017): 91–115. On Margherita, see Raviola, "The Three Lives of Margherita of Savoy-Gonzaga."

29. ASTo, *Corte, Materie politiche per rapporto all'interno*, Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere principi diversi, Savoia-Carignano, m. 56, fasc. 1, 1617–45, Marie to Maurizio of Savoy from Madrid, 15 April 1639.

as the princess.³⁰ As we can see, Marie’s letter centres on the familiarity of her servants with the Madrid court, and the historic dynastic and court bonds that had united various Spanish and Portuguese subjects at the Savoy court since the early sixteenth century.³¹

When she was not in Spain, Marie de Bourbon lived at Moustiers, in Provence, where some of her children were born, including the earlier-mentioned Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy, Prince of Carignano, known as “il Muto” for his deafness. While civil war erupted and disputes about the succession to the duchy raged between Christine and her brothers-in-law, Marie sent many government dispatches from Provence that related to the management of the Tarentaise and troop lodgings; above all, though, she followed her children’s lives and careers. Her first-born and much-loved daughter, Luisa, became princess of Baden-Baden, marrying the hereditary prince, Ferdinand Maximilian. Her last-born son, Eugenio Maurizio, Count of Soissons, embarked on a military career as Swiss colonel general in 1657, the year before he married Olimpia Mancini.

Marie de Bourbon probably organized the marriage of her son to Mazarin’s niece, as Tommaso had died in 1656. Although the letters have little to tell us (the letters dating from 1655 to 1656 are missing), the dowry contract and certain papers on the management of the Paris assets inherited by Marie in 1641, together with the Soissons title, are extant. The marriage served to reinforce the bonds between the Carignano branch and France. By means of a contract personally approved by Mazarin, worth 600,000 lire, Eugenio Maurizio of Savoy-Soissons was made universal heir by his mother to all her moveable goods and estates in the French realm (“dans le royaume de France”) and Olimpia was made beneficiary of a yearly income of 50,000 “lire.” It was the start of a life of luxury for the couple in Paris, as rental documents for a town house and Eugenio Maurizio’s appointment as the king’s lieutenant general

30. ASTo, *Corte, Materie politiche per rapporto all’interno*, Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere principi diversi, Savoia-Carignano, m. 56, fasc. 1, 1617–45, Madrid, April 28, 1640. In the *post scriptum*, Marie de Bourbon added in her handwriting that she dearly appreciates the “recommendation of doña Beatriz de Mendoza,” (“raccomandasson de dogne Beatriz de Mendosse”) who was very fond of the House of Savoy.

31. On the marriage between Beatrice of Aviz, Charles V’s sister-in-law, and Duke Carlo II of Savoy, the future parents of Emanuele Filiberto, see Ana Isabel Buescu, “L’infanta Beatrice di Portogallo e il suo matrimonio con il duca di Savoia (1504–1521),” in Lopes and Raviola, eds., *Portogallo e Piemonte*, 45–78.

in Champagne show.³² In a letter dated 20 December 1657 from Paris, Marie joyfully announced to Christine of France the “birth of the first boy with whom it has pleased God to bless the marriage of my son, the Count of Soissons.”³³ There is no mention of her daughter-in-law, who is effectively absent from the extant letters. Her interest in controlling revenues, out of fear that Eugenio Maurizio might be deceived by a cunning counsellor, is patent, however. This appears to be the motive behind an appeal to Christine of France regarding her contract, while, as she states, “my son’s counsellors entertain him by means of various detours and artifices” as well as her need to make sure that “the son would not have a fight with his mother.”³⁴

In the meantime, despite the birth of these grandchildren, the Soissons couple had begun to be the object of malicious gossip circulating about Olimpia’s behaviour. Marie initially defended both, arguing that it was motivated by a desire to “instigate chaos in my house”³⁵ and denouncing “the invectives against my son and daughter-in-law.”³⁶ Then, on Eugenio Maurizio’s

32. ASTo, *Corte, Materie politiche per rapporto all’interno*, Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere principi diversi, Principi di Carignano-Soissons, m. 1, fasc. 2, 1660–72, *Scritture riguardanti l’affittamento di una casa posta in Parigi fatto dal conte e contessa di Soissons*. The fasc. 3 contains a copy of Mazarino’s will dated 3 March 1661, showing all the legacies to his nieces. On the cardinal’s immense patrimony, see O. Poncet, *Mazarin l’Italien*, (Paris: Tallandier, 2018) 133 ff. On relations with Savoy-Carignano, see Walter Barberis, Andrea Merlotti, and Tomaso Ricardi di Netro, “I Savoia: storia di una dinastia,” in *La Reggia di Venaria e i Savoia. Arte, magnificenza e storia di una corte europea*, ed. Enrico Castelnuevo et al., 2 vols. (Turin: Allemandi, 2008), 1:21–90, 68–70.

33. “[N]aissance du premier garçon dont il à pleut à Dieu de benir le mariage de mon fils le comte de Soissons.” ASTo, *Corte, Materie politiche per rapporto all’interno*, Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere principi diversi, Savoia-Carignano, m. 56, fasc. 2, 1650–63. The son, Luigi Tommaso (†1702), would adopt the Soissons title. On 11 April 1659, Marie announced the birth of her second grandson, Filippo (†1693).

34. “[L]es ministres de mon fils l’amusent toujours par diverses detours et artifices [...] sans que le fils use de chicanne avec la mère.” ASTo, *Corte, Materie politiche per rapporto all’interno*, Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere principi diversi, Savoia-Carignano, m. 56, fasc. 2, 1650–63. Marie to Christine, 17 May 1658.

35. “[M]ette desordre dans ma maison.” ASTo, *Corte, Materie politiche per rapporto all’interno*, Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere principi diversi, Savoia-Carignano, m. 56, fasc. 2, 1650–63, Marie to Christine, 28 April 1662.

36. “[L]es invectives contre mon fils et ma belle-fille.” ASTo, *Corte, Materie politiche per rapporto all’interno*, Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere principi diversi, Savoia-Carignano, fasc. 3, 1666–78, Marie to the minister of the Savoy court from Paris, 1 July 1666.

death in 1673, she resolutely took control of the house, coming into open conflict with Olimpia, who had asked to be given two million lire in fulfilment of the marriage contract.³⁷ As guardian of the Soissons children—eight in all including young Eugenio, born in 1663—it was actually Marie who once again followed her grandchildren devotedly and decisively, especially Eugenio, who was appointed to the Supreme Order of the Most Holy Annunciation in 1678 with a military career now underway.³⁸ She also watched over Luigi Tommaso, who had been sent away unsuccessfully from Paris to keep him from marrying Urania de Beauvais, whom she called “a bastard” (“une bastarde”).³⁹ Another event that darkened the last years of Marie’s life was the late marriage of first-born Emanuele Filiberto to Caterina d’Este in 1684—a marriage agreed upon by neither Marie nor Louis XIV, and which caused a great deal of scandal at court, as letters from another key player in the dynastic family matters, Philippe d’Orléans, show.⁴⁰

While Marie de Bourbon was working to strengthen the bonds with France and deny all possible suggestions of a preference for the Holy Roman Empire, since the source of hostility against relations with the duchy of Modena and Reggio was no longer exclusively bound up with the Bourbons, Olimpia’s presence in Paris had become increasingly inconvenient. Already in 1664,

37. ASTo, *Corte, Materie politiche per rapporto all’interno*, Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere principi diversi, Principi di Carignano–Soissons, m. 1, n. 11, *Scritture diverse concernenti le pretese della contessa di Soissons sull’eredità del di lei marito*.

38. ASTo, *Corte, Materie politiche per rapporto all’interno*, Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere principi diversi, Principi di Carignano–Soissons. Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere principi diversi, Savoia–Carignano, m. 56, fasc. 3, Paris, January 25, 1678, Marie de Bourbon to the second Madama Reale, Giovanna Battista of Savoy Nemours.

39. On this subject an interesting letter from Marie to the Prince of Carignano, Emanuele Filiberto “il Muto” has survived asking that he put up Tommaso “to distract him from troublesome thoughts [...] and sweeten the bitterness of his distance from his beloved” (ASTo, *Corte, Materie politiche per rapporto all’interno*, Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere principi diversi, Principi di Carignano–Soissons. Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere principi diversi, Savoia–Carignano, m. 56, fasc. 3, 19 June 1679). The epithet attributed to Caterina d’Este—daughter of Borso and Ippolita d’Este—is actually in a letter sent to Madame Royale on Christmas Day, 1682. The wedding took place all the same in 1684.

40. Elisabetta Lurgo has thrown light on the powerful bonds between Louis XIV’s brother and Savoy politics: E. Lurgo, *Une histoire oubliée. Philippe d’Orléans et la Maison de Savoie* (Chambéry: Société Savoisienne d’Histoire et d’Archéologie, 2018). I would like to thank the author for having brought to my attention two letters expressly devoted by Fil d’Orléans to the Carignano-Este wedding, one addressed to Anna-Maria d’Orléans, Vittorio Amedeo’s wife, and one to the Duke of Savoy himself (58–61).

when she was officially in the service of Maria Teresa of Spain, but still involved with the king and other lovers, she became embroiled in the sending of a letter falsely attributed to the king of Spain and addressed to the queen denouncing an affair between Louis XIV and Mademoiselle de La Vallière, who bore the king two sons.⁴¹

The affair of the Poisons erupted in 1680 during the disputes over Marie de Bourbon's inheritance and dowry.⁴² Upset and aggrieved, she imperiously wrote to Giovanna Battista of Savoy⁴³ seeking protection from "les affaires de ma Maison" and possibly benefices for her nephews and nieces.⁴⁴ Resentment against her daughter-in-law, who had taken refuge in Belgium, exploded in subsequent months more for reasons of estate,⁴⁵ once again prompting her to seek a safe haven in Turin, which she achieved by complimenting the queen, for example, over the potential marriage between Victor Amadeus and the Portuguese infanta,⁴⁶ effectively binding her favourite grandson, Eugenio, increasingly to the House of Savoy.

41. Singer Lecocq, 194 ff.

42. Craveri, 217–26.

43. ASTo, *Corte, Lettere diverse Real Casa*, Lettere principi diversi, Savoia-Carignano, m. 56, fasc. 4, 1680–90, Paris, 7 February 1680: "The unfortunate accident that befell my daughter-in-law, the Countess of Soissons, left me so sorrowful and beside myself that I have barely been able to tell the ambassador the resentment I felt for not being able to let your Royal Majesty know" ("Le malheureux accident arrivé en la personne de ma belle-fille la comtesse de Soissons m'a tellement acablé de douleur et mis hors de moy meme qu'à peine j'ay pû temoigner à messieur l'ambassadeur le ressentiment que j'avois de n'en pouvoir donner part a V.A.R").

44. ASTo, *Corte, Lettere diverse Real Casa*, Lettere principi diversi, Savoia-Carignano, m. 56, fasc. 4, 1680–90, Paris, 8 March 1680, Marie de Bourbon to Giovanna Battista. Marie writes that "at my age and with the little health I have left" ("avec mon age et le peu de santé qui me restent"), she requests a stipend for Prince Eugenio: "he strives always to be worthy of the favours your Royal Highness grants us, and to continue after my death with all the duties that his rank and great obligations demand of him" ("il estude toujours pour se rendre digne des graces que V.A.R. nous fait et pour lui continuer au deffaut de ma vie toutes les soumissions et obeissances a quoy le rang [...] et les grandes obbligations [...] l'engagent").

45. See the letters of 10 January 1681 in which Marie explains that she has written to her daughter-in-law about the resentment caused by the secret she had told her ("ecrire à ma belle-fille le ressentiment que m'avoit causé le secret qu'elle en avoit fait avec moi").

46. ASTo, *Corte, Lettere diverse Real Casa*, Lettere principi diversi, Savoia-Carignano, m. 56, fasc. 4, 1680–1690, Paris, 9 May 1681. On the marriage plan, see Toby Osborne, "'Nôtre grand dessein': il

Olimpia Mancini attempted the same Spanish political trajectory, at different times and on different terms, as other members of the Savoy dynasty, such as Margherita of Savoy, Marie de Bourbon Soissons, and her own sister Maria Mancini. Although her stay in Spain remains unexplored territory, it is well known that, because of her younger sister, with whom she competed for Louis XIV's attentions, Olimpia left for Madrid in 1688, where she served in the house of Marie Louise d'Orleans, Carlos II's first wife.

According to biographer Denis McKay, Prince Eugenio of Savoy visited his mother in Brussels in 1686 for their first meeting since she had fled Paris six years earlier. During this long meeting, he travelled to Spain, where it appeared that Olimpia tried to find her son a good match or a military commission, although there is no proof.⁴⁷ That it was a possibility is symptomatic of Olimpia's integration into the upper echelons of the Spanish monarchy and, perhaps to an even greater extent, of the legacy that from the infanta Catalina Micaela to her son, Tommaso, and to her great-grandson Eugenio, bound the Spanish Habsburgs to the House of Savoy.

In any event, it was a brief parenthesis. In the Netherlands, Olimpia had gathered around her a small court that included the governor Alessandro Farnese, and had called attention to herself once again for a series of failed correspondences with English ministers designed to win back Louis XIV's favour and effect her return to France. In Madrid, too, she was kept under observation. The queen's death in February 1689 reawakened suspicions about her familiarity with intrigue and potions, especially in the superstitious Carlos II. Olimpia was forced to return to the Netherlands and Flanders, where, apart from a few trips to Germany and England to visit her sister Ortensia, “she enlivened a narrow aristocratic circle and remained a reference point for French aristocrats visiting Flanders.”⁴⁸ She followed her son Eugenio's career at a distance, keeping within the framework of the family's women, while maintaining her loyalty to the Habsburgs.⁴⁹

progetto di nozze fra Vittorio Amedeo II e l'Infanta Isabella Luisa (1675–1682),” in Lopes and Raviola, eds., *Portogallo e Piemonte*, 159–79.

47. Denis McKay, *Eugenio di Savoia: ritratto di un condottiero (1663–1736)*, Prefazione di G. Ricuperati (Turin: SEI, 1989; 2nd ed., 2003), 20.

48. Tabacchi, “Mancini, Olimpia.”

49. See R. Oresko, “Princesses in Power and European Dynasticism: Marie-Christine of France and Navarre and Maria Giovanna Battista of Savoy-Genevois-Nemours, the Last Regents of the House of

Costantino Operti's ambassadorial mission

As this article states at the start, Ambassador Operti hoped to bring the Turin and Spanish courts closer. On 17 July 1690, Duke Victor Amadeus II thanked Operti for his skill in “serving and looking after the interests of his majesty Prince Eugenio at the Catholic court.”⁵⁰ The appointment took place at a very challenging time during the Nine Years War, when Piedmont was attacked by French troops led by General Catinat. On July 22, Operti was in Genoa with “certain Piedmontese merchants from Sommariva del Bosco who had to leave from Genoa.”⁵¹ From there he travelled by sea to the Savoy ports of Villafranca and Nice, and then to Barcelona. He reached his destination on August 1, after seven days of travel, and from there continued to Zaragoza, which impressed him with its beautiful church and its miraculous Virgin of the Pillar (Virgen del Pilar), the Seo cathedral, and other magnificent churches that he visited in the company of the Jesuit Ortensio Aranqui. On August 17 he reached Madrid and was welcomed by Don Francisco de la Plata, who was, like Operti, a knight of the Order of Malta.

Having made initial contact with the Count of Oropesa and the secretary of state, Manuel de Lira, Operti's immediate task was to strengthen geopolitical bonds with the Spanish crown on the basis of the “shared interest that was known to exist given Milan's attachment to Piedmont, similar to that of a town square and the ramparts that protect it.”⁵² In the space of a few days Operti sought to make friends with the main functionaries at the Madrid court, such as the Count of Fuensalida, the Marquis of Mansera, and the Milanese count Archinto, as well as the members of the Council of State, including the Admiral of Castile; the cardinal of Toledo, Don Vincenzo Gonzaga; the Count of

Savoy in Their International Context,” in *In assenza del re: le reggenti dal XIV al XVII secolo (Piemonte ed Europa)*, ed. Franca Varallo (Florence: Olschki, 2008), 393–434, 405.

50. ASTo, Corte, Lettere ministri Spagna, mazzo 35, Registro Copia lettere di fra Costanzo Operti, 1690–91, 9, Torino, 17 July 1690.

51. ASTo, Corte, Lettere ministri Spagna, mazzo 35, Registro Copia lettere di fra Costanzo Operti, 1690–91, 23, Zaragoza, 5 August 1690.

52. ASTo, Corte, Lettere ministri Spagna, mazzo 35, Registro Copia lettere di fra Costanzo Operti, 1690–91, 27–30, Zaragoza, 5 August 1690, “Discorso tenuto da me commendatore fra Costantino Operti a Sua Maestà Cattolica” (“Discourse I, commander friar Costantino Operti, pronounced to His Catholic Majesty” on occasion of his first private audience. Operti spoke in Italian because “he did not yet have the benefit of being able to express myself in this Catalan language”).

Chinchón; and the Duke of Osuna. Operti also made contact with the Marquis of Leganés, with whom, as I mentioned, he quickly formed a relationship of mutual respect and trust. His presence rekindled the memories of the Savoy monarchy’s kinship links with the Spanish Habsburgs.

The prevailing topic was war—a war that was costly, taking place on the borderland and anticipating the succession crisis—as well as the news of Eugenio of Savoy’s exploits, such as the conquest of Belgrade in July 1692. He was “the subject of praise from this most illustrious house [of Savoy],” an ideal intermediary between the interests of Turin and Madrid.⁵³ There are also letters addressed to Milanese dignitaries such as the counts Arconati and Trivulzio, and to the second Madame Royale, Giovanna Battista of Savoy-Nemours, no longer regent for her son, Victor Amadeus, but still a key player with notable domestic and international contacts.⁵⁴ The letters addressed to her on the subject of a dispute between the Milanese countesses of Porro and Arconati⁵⁵ should be read in this light, as should the letters sent to the by-then-elderly Marie de Bourbon, who was still held in great esteem.⁵⁶ They express the latent influence that the two women exercised far from Turin, in the city of Milan, which was still the capital of Spanish Lombardy.

The most interesting correspondence with regard to Turin-Spain relations is, however, an informal letter written by Operti in April 1694 to the Marquise of

53. ASTo, Corte, Lettere ministri Spagna, mazzo 35, Registro Copia lettere di fra Costanzo Operti, 1690–91, 27–30, 61, Madrid, 3 July 1692. Eugenio has recently been studied as the ideal illustrious soldier in Pietro Riga, *L’elogio del Principe. Ritratti letterari di Eugenio di Savoia-Soissons* (Turin: Fondazione 1563 per l’arte e la cultura della Compagnia di San Paolo, 2019).

54. See Elena Riva, “Una reggente di successo. La politica internazionale di Giovanna Battista di Savoia-Nemours,” in Riva, ed., *La politica charmante*, 47–99.

55. ASTo, Corte, Lettere ministri Spagna, mazzo 36, Registro di lettere scritte dal commendator Operti, 179, Operti to Giovanna Battista of Savoy Nemours, Madrid, 29 October 1693: “As I will always recognize with great honour all the commands that your Royal Highness may ask of my loyalty and devotion, so with ardent zeal equal to the needs of the lady countesses Porro and Casati, I will undertake once again what has been asked of me for these same ladies [...] and will attempt to do everything I can to assist these ladies in recognition of the veneration I have to His Majesty’s royal orders.” A year later the matter was followed by Operti in Madrid and by Abbot Spinelli in Milan (244 ff.).

56. ASTo, Corte, Lettere ministri Spagna, mazzo 35, Copia lettere Operti, 132, Madrid, 12 October 1690: Operti commiserates with Marie on the “sufferings of Piedmont” but assures her that “His Majesty [Carlos II] is willing to support His Royal Highness [Victor Amadeus II] with all imaginable efforts.”

Sommariva, the duchess's lady-in-waiting, to whom the ambassador reported that, by means of Giacomo Peralta, he had sent the duchess a gift:

[Giacomo Peralta], my acquaintance, from Genoa I delivered to her a box for Your Excellency, directed for security purposes, to Spontorno, my house master, who will take care of delivering it to you. Inside it you will find certain *buccaro* and *chicare* pots for coffee with a few *Caravaca* crosses [...]. With this I also procured a few small fans from the Indies but all my efforts resulted in eight that I took the liberty of sending to Your Excellence to be sent on to Madame Royale and Madame Duchess Royale.⁵⁷

These contents are truly indicative of the times and of the commercial bonds that kept relations between Piedmont and Spain alive: the exotic elements such as the fans, just as in the time of Beatrice of Portugal, Duchess of Savoy, and Infanta Catalina Micaela,⁵⁸ the important relics (the crosses), and, first and foremost, the vessels for coffee, testifying to its early use in Turin via the Spanish connection.⁵⁹

Conclusion

In recent years, historians have cast light on networks and power relations in the various Spanish imperial contexts.⁶⁰ Many studies have concentrated on Italian

57. "Mio conoscente, per Genoa le ho consegnato una cassetta per Vostra Eccellenza, diretta per maggior sicurezza al Spontorno, mio mastro di casa, ch'avrà cura di fargliela capitare. Dentro d'essa vi troverà alcuni vasi di buccaro e chicare per il caffè con alcune poche croci di Caravaca [...]. Procurai con detta congiuntura qualche ventagline dell'Indie, ma tutte le mie diligenze a pena me ne fecero trovar otto quali mi son preso questa maggior confidenza d'indirizzar all'E.V. però per ripartirle tra Madama Reale e Madama la duchessa Reale." ASTo, Corte, Lettere ministri Spagna, mazzo 35, Copia lettere Operti, 207, Operti to the marquise of Sommariva del Bosco, Madrid, April 1694.

58. See Franca Varallo, "Exotica e oggetti preziosi: note sull'inventario dell'Infanta," in Raviola and Varallo, eds., *L'Infanta*, 371–88.

59. This has recently been demonstrated by Nicoletta Calapà in "La cioccolata alla corte di Carlo Emanuele III: storia, fortuna, ricette," in *Le vie del cibo. Italia settentrionale (secc. XVI–XX)*, ed. Marina Cavallera, Silvia Conca Messina, and Blythe Alice Raviola (Rome: Carocci, 2019), 359–80, 371.

60. See Carmen Sanz Ayán, "Percorso storiografico attraverso gli studi sulle élites e le reti di potere," in *Élites e reti di potere. Strategie d'integrazione nell'Europa di età moderna*, ed. Marcella Aglietti, Alejandra

and European states precisely from the starting point of diplomatic relations between courts; in this way, not only Spain but also France,⁶¹ Portugal after 1640,⁶² the Habsburg Empire,⁶³ and England⁶⁴ have recently been the subjects of methodical archival studies that have borne considerable fruit.

In the case of Savoy, the border state *par excellence*, these relations played a crucial part in the pursuit of royal dignity.⁶⁵ As Symcox, Oresko, and Storrs, among other scholars, have demonstrated, the search for a royal crown took shape at the end of the seventeenth century and the goal was reached at the end of the war of the Spanish Succession. Yet that search started earlier, at least toward the end of the sixteenth century, and it is important to remember that the Spanish legacy from the Infanta Catalina Micaela's marriage to Carlo Emanuele I, Duke of Savoy (1585) was a crucial diplomatic point. During the seventeenth century, the new pro-French politics of Christine of France changed the equilibrium. As we saw, collateral branches of the dynasty (the Savoy-Carignano and the Soissons), as well as Savoyard diplomacy, represented here by Costanzo Operti, and other crucial figures such as Olimpia Mancini and her son Eugenio, negotiated with both the Spanish and the French court because they needed to protect their own interests. Sometimes they played on the razor's edge, professing their loyalty to different political interlocutors at the same time.

However, throughout the sometimes ambiguous relationships with Spain and France, the duchy of Savoy assumed ever greater political weight in eighteenth-century Europe. Ancient memories and traditions harking back

Franganillo Álvarez, and José Antonio López Anguita (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2016), 15–28.

61. Ferretti, ed., *L'état, la cour et la ville*.

62. After Lopes and Raviola, *Portogallo e Piemonte*, see Isabel Ferreira da Mota and Carla Enrica Spantigati, eds., "*Tanto ella assume novitate al fianco*." *Lisboa, Turim e o intercâmbio cultural do século das luzes à Europa pós-napoleónica* (Coimbra: Coimbra University Press, 2019), dx.doi.org/10.14195/978-989-26-1739-8.

63. Marco Bellabarba and Andrea Merlotti, *Stato sabaudo e Sacro Romano Impero* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2014).

64. Alessandro Cont, *Corte britannica e Stati italiani. Rapporti politici, diplomatici e culturali (1685–1688)*, preface by C. Storrs (Rome: Società editrice Dante Alighieri, Biblioteca della Nuova Rivista Storica, 2019).

65. See the collected essays in Blythe Alice Raviola, ed., *Lo spazio sabaudo. Intersezioni, frontiere e confini* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2007).

to the Spanish bond were once again strengthened by the marriage in 1750 of Victor Amadeus III, king of Sardinia, and Infanta Maria Antonia Ferdinanda of Bourbon.⁶⁶ Research into this important marriage is underway and new insights for cultural as well as political analyses of the bond between the Spanish Monarchy and this Alpine state are emerging.

66. See Mirella Vera Mafrici, *Coniugare la politica, costruire alleanze. Elisabetta Farnese e la Spagna nell'Europa dei Lumi*, collana Mediterrane 5 (Rome-Canterano: Aracne, 2019), 178–91, and Mirella Mafrici, Mercedes Simal, eds., *Moda, politica, loisir. Attorno alla figura di Maria Antonia Ferdinanda di Borbone, regina di Sardegna (1729–1785)*, forthcoming.