

Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies

Journal of the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies

Volume 45

Issue 1

Article 1

2020

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Recommended Citation

Martínez López, Rocío (2020) “‘For Her Special Consideration:’ Cultural and Diplomatic Demonstrations of Archduchess Maria Antonia of Austria’s Position as the Heiress of the Spanish Monarchy (1673-1692),” *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*: Vol. 45 : Iss. 1, Article 1.

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“For Her Special Consideration:” Cultural and Diplomatic Demonstrations of Archduchess Maria Antonia of Austria’s Position as the Heiress of the Spanish Monarchy (1673-1692)

Rocío Martínez López

“Because of her special consideration,” was a formula frequently used by the Spanish government during the last decades of the seventeenth century in connection with Archduchess Maria Antonia of Austria (1669-1692).¹ Her “special consideration” was her position as the legitimate heiress of the Spanish Monarchy, first in the line of succession to her uncle, Charles II of Spain (1661-1700) from the death of her mother on March 12, 1673, until her own demise on December 24, 1692. We conserve numerous testimonies of the consideration of Maria Antonia as Charles II’s rightful successor through countless documents, ranging from *consultas* to the Council of State to political dispatches to the Spanish ambassadors in other courts, family letters, marriage contracts, testaments and official declarations of different natures. Thus, the consideration of Archduchess Maria Antonia as the legal heiress of Charles II was never contested by the King or the Spanish government during the Archduchess’s life, despite the claims of other European sovereigns.²

¹ The first results of this article were presented at the congress titled “Addressing the Public Abroad. Strategies of Cultural and Public Diplomacy in the Early Modern Habsburg World (1550-1750)”, that took place in Brussels, at the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts, in December 2018. Its research was finished and redacted under the sponsorship of the Juan de la Cierva-Formación program (2020-2022), with the reference number FJC2018-036328-I, which the author obtained in connection with the department of Early Modern History of the Autonomía University of Madrid. I would like to thank Luis Antonio Ribot García and Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño for their unwavering support, as well as Laura Oliván Santaliestra and Klaas Van Gelder for giving me the opportunity to present the first results of this research at the aforementioned congress at Brussels. Lastly, I would also like to thank Andrea Davis and all the team of the BSPHS for their kindness and support. The translation of the original documents, when present, have been done by the author.

² For more information on the position of Maria Antonia and her son, Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria, as the legitimate heirs of the Spanish Monarchy, see Rocío Martínez López, “El Imperio y Baviera frente a la sucesión de Carlos II. Relaciones diplomáticas con la Monarquía de España (1665-1699)” (Ph. D. diss., Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), 2018). Regarding the claims to the Spanish succession made by Louis XIV, see Luis Ribot, *Orígenes políticos del testamento de Carlos II. La gestación del cambio dinástico en España* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2010). There is an extensive bibliography focused on Charles II of Spain’s succession, as well as the circumstances that surrounded the subsequent War of Spanish Succession; but in most of them, the position of Maria Antonia of Austria is not discussed, and she appears almost like a ghost, only mentioned in passing in association with her son, Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria, her husband, Elector Maximilian II Emanuel of Bavaria, or her father, Emperor Leopold I. A number of works discuss the general situation regarding the succession to Charles II of Spain at an international level. See, amongst others, Lucien Bély, “La diplomatie européenne et les partages de l’empire espagnol”, in *La pérdida de Europa. La guerra de Sucesión por la Monarquía de España*, ed. Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño; Bernardo García García, and Virginia León Sanz (Madrid: Fundación Carlos de Amberes, 2007), 631-52; Klaus Malettke, “La

But, what happened in cases like this, when it was politically inconvenient for a king or a regnant queen to openly express who their rightful successor was, but, at the same time, they wanted to make their position clear to the world? In these cases, the usual tools of promotion and recognition used by early modern monarchs could not be used in a straightforward and obvious manner. As there were other European powers invested in the Spanish succession that would react negatively to an official proclamation regarding Charles II's inheritance, the Spanish government was careful to avoid public declarations, hoping that the birth of a legitimate child of the monarch would eventually resolve the succession problem. The succession was openly talked about in very specific circumstances like, for example, the publication of the last will and testament of Philip IV, when it was paramount to give an answer to claims presented by foreign delegates in this regard, or in the context of the frequent wars of the time, where dynastic interests were present. But the line of succession defended by the Spanish government was very clear and appeared in a great number of documents linked to the internal administration of the Monarchy, like the *Consultas* of the Council of State. This vision of the succession, in favour of Empress Margarita of Austria and her descendants never changed until 1699, when its last representative died without issue. There were no changes or discussions with other territorial powers, despite the claims to the succession that they might defend for themselves and/or their descendants.³

Regardless Charles II and his government had to walk the fine line between avoiding official declarations that could cause a diplomatic confrontation with the other pretenders to the throne, and the need to show subtly, but undeniably, who the King's heiress was. With traditional and usual ways like pamphlets, public ceremonies and great spectacles out of the question, the monarch had to resort to less obvious ways to show the world who he considered as his legitimate heiress, using political, cultural and symbolic gestures and codes that would be easily recognizable and understood by any contemporary member of the court or the diplomatic body that would see them.

The Problem of Charles II's Succession: Three Possibilities for One Inheritance

signification de la Succession d'Espagne pour les relations internationales jusqu'à l'époque de Ryswick (1697)", in *La présence des Bourbons en Europe (XVIIe-XXIe siècles)*, dir. Lucien Bély (Paris: PUF, 2003), 93-100; Jean Berenger, "La question de la Succession d'Espagne au XVIIIe siècle", also in *La présence des Bourbons en Europe (XVIIe-XXIe siècles)*, dir. Lucien Bély (Paris: PUF, 2003), 75-91; Laura Oliván Santaliestra, "El fin de los Habsburgo: crisis dinástica y conflicto sucesorio en la Monarquía Hispánica (1615-1700)", in *Gobernar en tiempos de crisis. Las quiebras dinásticas en el ámbito hispánico (1250-1808)*, dir. Juan Manuel Nieto Soria and María Victoria López-Cordón (Madrid: Sílex, 2008), 45-64; Luis Ribot García, *El arte de gobernar. Estudios sobre la España de los Austrias* (Madrid: Alianza, 2006), 199-277, and Luis Ribot, and José María Iñurritegui, *Europa y los tratados de reparto de la Monarquía de España, 1668-1700* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2016).

³ Martínez López, "El Imperio y Baviera".

To understand how the case of Archduchess Maria Antonia of Austria exemplifies the ways in which a monarch was able to defend the position of a prince or princess as his successor without an obvious political declaration, we first need to discuss the difficult question of the succession of Charles II of Spain. This complex problem influenced European affairs of the second half of the seventeenth century and, eventually, provoked the outbreak of the War of Spanish Succession, shortly after Charles II's death on November 1, 1700.

Charles II ascended to the throne in 1665, when he had yet to celebrate his fourth birthday, after the death of his father, King Philip IV (1605-1665), under the regency of his mother, Mariana of Austria.⁴ He did not have any children that could directly inherit his territories, and he did not have any surviving legitimate brothers either, so his throne had to pass necessarily to a female line of his family. Charles II had two sisters that reached adulthood: Maria Teresa (1638-1683) and Margarita María (1651-1673). The eldest married King Louis XIV of France in 1659 and Margarita became empress of the Holy Roman Empire after her nuptials to her uncle Leopold I in 1666. The Spanish line of the Habsburgs allowed women to inherit the different territories that composed the Spanish Monarchy in the absence of any male heirs of the same line and degree of kinship with the last monarch, always following the order of primogeniture.⁵ But Maria Teresa renounced all her rights to the succession of the Spanish Monarchy, for herself and her descendants, before she married Louis XIV.⁶ Even though the French king negated the validity of said renunciation in the following decades, the Spanish government considered it binding and effective until 1700.⁷ Thus, with Maria Teresa's line unable to inherit from the Spanish government's point of

⁴ About the regency of Mariana of Austria, see Silvia, Z. Mitchell, *Queen, Mother & Stateswoman. Mariana of Austria and the Government of Spain* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019).

⁵ To see the differences between the place given to women in the order of succession to the throne by the Spanish and Austrian lines of the Habsburg dynasty in more detail, see Rocío Martínez López, "Los derechos sucesorios femeninos en la dinastía Habsburgo: diferencias y enfrentamientos (1500-1740), in *Mulheres da realeza ibérica: mediadoras políticas e culturais*, ed. Gonzalo del Puerto; Mercedes Llorente, and Renato Epifânio (Lisboa: Instituto Cervantes da Lisboa-Movimiento Internacional Lusófono, 2019), 67-94.

⁶ There are many copies of Maria Teresa's renunciation in several archives of Europe, like the Archivo Histórico Nacional of Madrid, Archivo General de Simancas of Valladolid, the Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv of Vienna or the Archives Nationales of Paris. Also, there are numerous printed copies of it as well, like the one present in the *Colección de los Tratados de paz, alianza, neutralidad, garantía, protección, tregua, mediación, accession, reglamento de límites, comercio, navegación, etc., hechos por los pueblos, reyes y príncipes de España [...]. Reynado del Señor Rey D. Phelipe IV*, by Joseph Antonio de Abreu y Bertodano (Madrid: Imprenta de Antonio Marín, Juan de Zuñiga y la viuda de Peralta, 1751), Part VII, 391-401.

⁷ For a detailed overview of this situation from the legal point of view, see Jaime del Burgo, *La sucesión de Carlos II: La pugna entre Baviera, Austria y Francia, un cambio fundamental en la continuidad de la monarquía española* (Pamplona: Gómez, 1967). For an early view of Louis XIV's claims in Maria Teresa's name and how they conflicted with the position of Madrid and Vienna's governments, see Charles-Édouard Levillain, *Le procès de Louis XIV. Une guerre psychologique. François-Paul de Lisola (1613-1674), citoyen du monde, ennemi de la France* (Paris: Tallandier, 2015).

view, the youngest sister, Margarita, was considered the legal heiress to her brother's throne, as it was declared in Philip IV's last will and testament, as well as in Margarita's marriage contract, amongst other legal documents. Margarita died very young, in 1673, and of her four children, only Archduchess Maria Antonia survived infancy. Consequently, Maria Antonia inherited her mother's place as the rightful heiress of the Spanish Monarchy, a position that she would conserve until her death on December 24, 1692.⁸ We have several examples of Maria Antonia's position as heiress being affirmed during this period. When the Council of State debated if Charles II should marry his niece to strengthen the political alliance between the Spanish Monarchy and the Emperor, for example, the counselors repeatedly noted that Maria Antonia was the legitimate heiress of the Spanish Monarchy, and several of them even argued that, regardless of the outcome of the marriage negotiations, she should be brought to Madrid to be raised alongside her grandmother and uncle, and educated in the traditions, language and even climate of the territories she might rule one day.⁹ Also, when the marriage contract between them was drafted, it was specified that, if King Charles II of Spain were to die before his bride and they had no children, Maria Antonia would be his universal and legal heiress.¹⁰

This projected marriage between Charles II and Maria Antonia was never realized, despite the fact that it was publicly announced and the marriage contract

⁸ Clauses 12-17 of Philip IV's testament. Antonio Domínguez Ortiz ed., *Testamento de Felipe IV* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1982), 21-39. Also, regarding the marriage contract of Emperor Leopold I and Margarita of Austria, there are several copies both in Austrian, French, German and Spanish archives. See, for example Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), Estado, legajo (leg.) 3933, and Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), Estado, legajo (leg.) 2805.

⁹ These *Consultas* were made successively in the years 1674, 1675 and 1676, and the matter was discussed again when it was considered that Charles II should marry the French princess Maria Louisa of Orleans and not his niece Maria Antonia. In numerous testimonies and votes, the position of the Archduchess as Charles II's direct successor was explicitly recognized, even in those votes that were against the marriage or were not convinced of it. For example, the duke of Medinaceli, who considered that the King should marry his and Maria Antonia's aunt, archduchess Mariana, also said the following: "[...] being of no less importance that everyone should consider this princess [Archduchess Maria Antonia] as the first woman of the whole Christendom, as she is the most immediate successor to this Monarchy, that is the reason why said Monarchy is as interested as Germany in the marriage that would be negotiated for her [...]". April 24, 1676. AGS, Estado-K, leg. 1636. The complete *Consultas* of 1674, 1675 and 1676 related to this issue can be seen at AHN, Estado, leg. 2799. I also recommend the essay written by Silvia Mitchell titled "Marriage plots: Royal women, marriage diplomacy and international politics at the Spanish, French and Imperial Courts, 1665-1679", in *Women, diplomacy and international politics since 1500*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (London: Routledge, 2015), 86-106, where she analyses these negotiations from the point of view of the Queen Mother's international and dynastical point of view.

¹⁰ "But, God forbid, if this marriage [between Charles II and Maria Antonia] ends up being dissolved surviving the Most Serene Archduchess without any children, in which case she would inherit these kingdoms as their immediate successor because of the rights of her Imperial Highness Empress Margarita, her mother, as her only daughter, she would not be able to leave [these territories] but she would be obligated to live in them". *Capitulaciones matrimoniales del rey Nuestro Señor con la señora Archiduquesa doña María Antonia en San Lorenzo a 15 de octubre de 1676*. AHN, Estado, leg. 2799.

had already been negotiated, drafted and signed by both Charles II and Leopold I. Instead, the King ended up marrying princess Maria Louisa of Orleans in 1679, and after her death ten years later, the Palatine princess Mariana of Neuburg, the Emperor's sister-in-law. For her part, in 1685, Maria Antonia was married off to the prince-elect of Bavaria Maximilian II Emanuel (1662-1726). Before her nuptials, Emperor Leopold I made her sign two separate renunciations of her rights of succession to her father's territories and the possible inheritance of the Spanish Monarchy in favour of her male relatives, as it was usual for archduchesses in the event of their nuptials.¹¹ In addition, Leopold I also signed a secret treaty with his son-in-law in which he promised that he would give the Spanish Netherlands to the newlyweds if he or any of his sons inherited Charles II's domains. But the Spanish government never accepted the Archduchess' renunciation, saying it was done without the approval and authorization of the King or the *Cortes* of the Monarchy's different territories. Thus, Charles II continued to consider his niece as his legitimate heiress and defended her position as such not only until her death, but also afterwards, in the figure of her only surviving son and heir, Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria (1692-1699). During the following years, Leopold I unsuccessfully pressured Charles II to officially accept his daughter's renunciation.¹² To understand the clash between the Spanish and Austrian branches of the House of Habsburg in regard to Maria Antonia's claims, it is necessary to comprehend the different positions given by them to women in the line of succession. In the Spanish Monarchy, women could inherit the throne in the absence of males (and their possible descendants) of their same line and degree of kinship to the last monarch. That means that, if a King was to die without having any male children, but leaving daughters, they would be his rightful successors in order of primogeniture, as I have mentioned before. But for the Austrian line of the Habsburg dynasty, all the male representatives of the family, descendants of a male line, should have priority in the order of succession to the throne to any woman, regardless of the existence of female descendants of the last Emperor or archduke with a closer degree of kingship. That is why, for Leopold I, he and his sons Joseph and Charles should be the rightful heirs of the Spanish Monarchy ahead of Maria Antonia, as they were Charles II's closest male relatives of the same lineage. In fact, Charles II was considered by Leopold I as his own legitimate heir if he was to die without any surviving male descendants,

¹¹ Maria Antonia ratified said renunciations in her testament, that was considered void and illegal by both Maximilian II Emanuel and Charles II. See Bayerische Hauptstaatsarchiv, Geheimes Hausarchiv, Korrespondenz-Akten, 698.

¹² Nevertheless, as it was also customary for archduchesses, in her renunciations, Maria Antonia reserved herself the possibility of inheriting all the territories of the Habsburg dynasty if all male lines became extinct. *Renuntiationsakt ausgestellt von Erzherzogin Maria Antonia, Tochter Kaiser Leopolds I., gegen das Haus Österreich spanischer Linie aus Veranlassung ihrer Vermählung mit Kurfürst Maximilian Emanuel von Bayern*, May 5, 1685. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), UR FUK 1775/ 1, 2. See also *Resumen de lo que se ha ofrecido sobre el casamiento y renuncia de la archiduquesa María Antonia*, AHN, Estado, leg. 2805.

ahead of all his daughters.¹³ But, for Charles II, his sister, niece and great nephew should have priority in the line of succession. In fact, when the question of the succession was debated in the Council of State in the last years of the King's life, the options of France and the Emperor's sons would be presented in terms of convenience and of the help each candidate could offer to the King in the war and the security for the integrity of the Monarchy after Charles II's death, not in terms of legitimacy, that was always considered in the hands of the descendants of the *infanta* Margarita without any doubt.¹⁴ Charles II expressed this point himself at different moments, the most important of them being the two testaments in which he appointed Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria as his universal heir, as the only descendant of Margarita and Maria Antonia, signed respectively in 1696 and 1698.¹⁵ To present another example in which he expressed this point strongly, in a letter of his own hand, we have a copy of a reply he sent to the Emperor, written in Italian and dated in March, 1687. Leopold I had urged his nephew to approve Maria Antonia's renunciation, as it was, in his opinion, in the best interests of the Spanish Monarchy to leave the throne to his male relatives instead of to Archduchess Maria Antonia, already married to the Bavarian elector, who would not be able to defend it from its enemies. In his letter, Charles II said that Maria Antonia was undoubtedly his legitimate heiress, he listed the many reasons that supported her position as such and how he would never approve of her renunciation.¹⁶

¹³ There is a minute of an early testament of Leopold I, redacted when both Charles II and Maria Antonia were still alive, in which it is remarked that, if Joseph, Charles and any other legitimate sons that the Emperor could have were to die without any legitimate male issue, his nephew, the King of Spain, would be his universal heir. Only after Charles II's death would his daughters have a possibility to inherit their father's territories. HHStA, UR FUK 1817/1-3. Regarding this issue, see Christoph Kampmann, "Leopoldo I: 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 Ribot and José María Iñurritegui (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2016), 173-94. Also, to see with more detail how the rights of the second son of the Emperor, Archduke Charles, were defended during Charles II's life, to no avail, as Maria Antonia and Joseph Ferdinand were considered the rightful heirs until their deaths and, afterwards, Charles II chose Philip of Anjou as his universal heir, see Roberto Quirós Rosado, "«Hault et puissant prince, mon très cher et très aymé bon cousin et nepveu». El archiduque Carlos y la Monarquía de España (1685-1700)", *Mediterranea: ricerche storiche*, 33 (2015): 47-78.

¹⁴ In this regard, for the case of France, see Ribot, *Origenes políticos*. For the case of Archduke Charles, see especially the correspondence interchanged between Leopold I and his extraordinary ambassador in Madrid, Count Ferdinand Bonaventura of Harrach. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv (AVA), Familienarchiv (FA), Harrach, 209 and 210. The most important debates regarding Charles II's inheritance took place after Maria Antonia's death and the defence of other candidates to the inheritance were linked to their possible "usefulness" and not an issue of legitimacy during Joseph Ferdinand's death.

¹⁵ As of now, there is no surviving copy of Charles II's 1696 testament, although we know of its content by the testimonies of ambassadors and counsellors of State. Regarding the one dated in 1698, there is a copy in the Archivo Histórico Nacional. See AHN, Estado, leg. 2451.

¹⁶ *Lettera del Re di Spagna all'Imperatore mio signore inviata per mae e traduta da me in Italiano*, dated on March 11, 1687, and the answer written by the Emperor Leopold I. AVA, FA, Harrach, 346.

But the pressure applied by Louis XIV and Leopold I regarding the succession made it difficult for the King to make overt public demonstrations of the Archduchess's prominent role in the succession line without provoking major diplomatic confrontations with the other two pretenders. Almost every time that Louis XIV considered that Maria Antonia was given any special honour or acknowledgement that could be interpreted as a recognition of her status as Charles II's heiress, he made important threats and strong protests that impacted the international diplomacy of the time. For example, when the marriage between Archduchess Maria Antonia and Maximilian II Emanuel of Bavaria was announced, Louis XIV sent a special envoy to Charles II, Isaac de Feuquières, to tell him that his King had heard rumours that the marriage agreement contained a secret clause to give the sovereignty or, at least, the permanent governorship of the Spanish Netherlands to the couple, in attention to Maria Antonia's position as the Catholic King's heiress in the moment of the nuptials. Feuquières indicated that, if those rumours were proven to be true, said event would be considered by the French King as an act of war and an unfair reduction of his son's legal inheritance, as the Dauphin, as the only surviving child of the late *infanta* Maria Teresa, was therefore seen by France as the legal successor of Charles II.¹⁷ He even told Charles II that Louis XIV had troops in the French frontier with Navarre ready to invade the Catholic monarch's peninsular territories, if there were changes in the government of the Spanish Netherlands that his master could interpret as a risk for his son's inheritance.¹⁸ Charles II denied these accusations, saying that he would never agree to such a thing and, even if it was true, he was within his rights to give the appointment of governor of the Spanish Netherlands to whomever he wanted, as they were his territories.¹⁹ Both Louis XIV and Feuquières were momentarily appeased, but just three years later the same threats were made again by the same envoy, when the French King announced that he had heard rumors that Leopold I was planning to send his second son, Archduke Charles, to Madrid to be educated as Charles II's successor. Feuquières announced that, if the rumours were proven to be true, his master would take all the necessary measures, including military ones, to avoid any alteration of the "succession order designated by God" that benefitted his own son.²⁰

¹⁷ Copy of a paper presented by Isaac de Feuquières to King Charles II on April 22, 1685. AVA, FA, Harrach, 339.

¹⁸ The French threat became so important that Charles II wrote to his viceroys in Aragon and Valencia in May 1685 ordering them to make the appropriate preparations in case French troops invaded the peninsula through Navarre. Antonio Espino, *Guerra, fisco y fueros. La defensa de la Corona de Aragón en tiempos de Carlos II, 1665-1700* (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2007), 61.

¹⁹ *Papel sobre la succession de los Estados de Flandes. Copia de un memorial que dio a S. M. Católica el embajador de Francia. Va la respuesta que se dio al dicho Memorial.* The document was not dated, but, by the content and the presence of similar documents in the same box, we can safely say that these documents are dated on May/June 1685. AVA, FA, Harrach, 336.

²⁰ Copy of a paper presented by Isaac de Feuquiers to king Charles II on January 11, 1688. AVA, FA, Harrach, 339.

The Emperor was not idle in this regard either, although his approach on the matter was not so much focused on military action, but on threatening the Spanish King with not helping him when his territories or interests were in danger, or with withdrawing his support in common political and diplomatic enterprises, if Charles did not recognize Maria Antonia's renunciation and the prevalent position that the Emperor thought his sons deserved in his line of succession. In these cases, Charles II usually took one of two possible courses of action. If the Spanish Monarchy was involved in a war or, if a military conflict was near and the government was trying to prepare for it by forging foreign alliances, Charles could not risk upsetting the Emperor, so he usually tried to stall the issue saying that it was not the time to discuss such things and that the King needed more time to adequately consider it because of the importance of the matter at hand, without giving him a direct answer. On the other hand, if the Emperor pressed the issue in a moment when his help was not of utmost importance for Charles II, or if they were in an international situation in which the Emperor had way too much to lose if both branches of the House of Habsburg did not present a united front, the answer given by Charles II was much more clear and direct, refusing upfront to ratify his niece's renunciation and telling Leopold I that she was the legal heiress to his territories.²¹ A good example of this strategy can be seen in the letters exchanged between the Emperor and his extraordinary ambassador in Madrid Ferdinand Bonaventura I, count of Harrach. When he arrived in Madrid, in the last months of the Nine Years War and with Barcelona under siege, Charles II desperately asked his uncle for help. Ferdinand Bonaventura was instructed by the Emperor to link any extra military help he could offer to his acceptance of Maria Antonia's renunciation and a formal declaration of the position of Archduke Charles as the Catholic Monarch's legitimate successor, as well as to the payment of a considerable amount of money. The matter was not resolved in time; Barcelona fell into French hands before the Emperor's help could be arranged and the Spanish Monarchy began to negotiate for neutrality and peace with Louis XIV. As a result, Charles II not only ratified once more the prevalent position of Maria Antonia's son regarding his own succession, but also reproached the Emperor for his lack of help in a time of need.²² In fact, after the death of Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria in 1699 and the extinction of the line of Margarita and Maria Antonia of Austria, the material and political incapability of the Emperor to protect and help the territories of the Spanish Monarchy in times of need was one of the main reasons why Charles II decided to appoint Philip of Anjou (1683-1746), grandson of the King of France, as his heir in his third and last testament, instead of any of his Habsburg relatives.²³

²¹ *Resumen de lo que se ha ofrecido sobre el casamiento y renuncia de la Archiduquesa María Antonia*, AHN, Estado, leg. 2805.

²² In this regard, see Martínez López, "El Imperio y Baviera", especially chapter 5, "La embajada sucesoria", 271-329.

²³ The works of Luis Antonio Ribot García are the best studies published regarding this decision to this day. See especially Luis Ribot, *Orígenes políticos*.

Given this complicated situation, the Spanish government was understandably reluctant to make public declarations in this regard to avoid unnecessary political and diplomatic problems. But the King still wanted to make public his intentions. How did he do it? Using symbolic and cultural manifestations of the “special consideration” of the Archduchess, often disguised as honours given to her for her close blood ties to the Spanish King. These honours were never given to other women of the family with the same degree of kinship to the King, especially if they were not *infantas*, and were easily identifiable by contemporaries as signs of Maria Antonia’s position in the line of succession to the Spanish throne. To prove this point, we are going to present in the next sections several instances of how María Antonia was especially honoured by the King and symbolically presented as his heiress during the almost twenty years she was the legitimate successor of King Charles II of Spain.

Public Displays of Affection: From the Celebration of her Birthday to the Diplomatic Demonstrations given at her Nuptials

The first instance we are going to present here is how the Spanish government and the royal family celebrated and acted regarding two special milestones of Maria Antonia’s life. In a court so heavily influenced by a rigid ceremonial, the fact that the most important dates related to Maria Antonia’s life were celebrated as if she was a Spanish *infanta*, sister or daughter of a monarch or his/her official heir, was extremely telling, in a way that could not be missed by any courtier, government official or foreign ambassador that would hear of them.

The Archduchess was born on January 18, 1669 and her birthday was declared a national holiday in the Spanish Monarchy by the Queen Regent Mariana of Austria soon after. Her birthday was celebrated with great pomp and ceremony each year until she died in 1692. This was extremely unusual; whereas it was normal for the birth of new members of the King’s close and extended family (like archdukes and archduchesses, for example) to be celebrated with public shows of affection, the list of people whose birthday was publicly honoured each year was quite short. If we take a look at the lists of birthdays that were celebrated with huge theatrical representations each year during the reigns of Philip IV and Charles II, we immediately see how the Archduchess’s case was exceptional. For example, the birthdays celebrated with lavish theatrical plays from the late 1640s onwards were only those of the kings, their daughters/sisters, their wives, the Emperor and Archduchess María Antonia, with the additional celebrations related to other members of the king’s extended family during certain periods of time. Thus, during the last decades of Philip IV’s reign, the birthdays celebrated each year were those of the king, queen Mariana of Austria, the *infantas* Margarita María and María Teresa, and the prince of Asturias. During Charles II’s reign, the additional birthdays that were always celebrated as long as the honorees were alive were the ones of the Emperor, Archduchess María Antonia and the King’s two wives, María Luisa of Orleans (who died in 1689)

and María Anna of Neuburg.²⁴ Additionally, other birthdays were celebrated with theatrical diversions for a limited time or attending to different circumstances, like the birthdays of the Dukes of Orleans and the electors of the Palatinate while they were the parents-in-law of the King, or the Empress Eleonora Magdalena of Neuburg, after she married the Emperor.²⁵ Thus, the only Archduchess whose birthday was a fixed holiday celebrated at the Spanish court by birthright who was not a mother, wife or political family of the King, was Maria Antonia.²⁶ This kind of political, symbolic and cultural relevance given to the Archduchess from the moment of her birth did not go unnoticed, especially when its practice was extended over the years, including those times in which the diplomatic relationship between the Spanish Habsburgs and the Austrian Habsburgs was very strained.

María Antonia's wedding presents us with another very good example of how she was treated in a different way than the other archduchesses. I have mentioned before that the Archduchess was married off to the elector Maximilian II Emanuel of Bavaria in 1685. Although Charles II was not directly involved in the marriage negotiations, he was indeed informed and did not oppose the match, although he did not recognize the renunciation made by his niece, as indicated above. As the *consulta* made to the Council of State on May 17, 1685 indicates, it was important for the Spanish ambassador to be present in the wedding celebrations, especially given the King's close blood ties with the bride.²⁷ But this goal was not as easy to obtain as we may think, as the Spanish envoys were not usually present at the wedding celebrations of archduchesses who did not marry into the Spanish line of the Habsburg dynasty. Despite the assurances given to the Spanish ambassador by the Imperial Chancellor that there was an etiquette for the presence of a Spanish ambassador in the wedding celebrations of a marriage between an archduchess and a prince-elect, and that he knew that the envoy of the Catholic King in Vienna attended the nuptials of Elector Maximilian I and Archduchess Maria Anna of Austria in 1635, the truth was that neither the ambassador nor the imperial courtiers were able to find any documents that could tell them which etiquette was followed in that instance and there was almost no

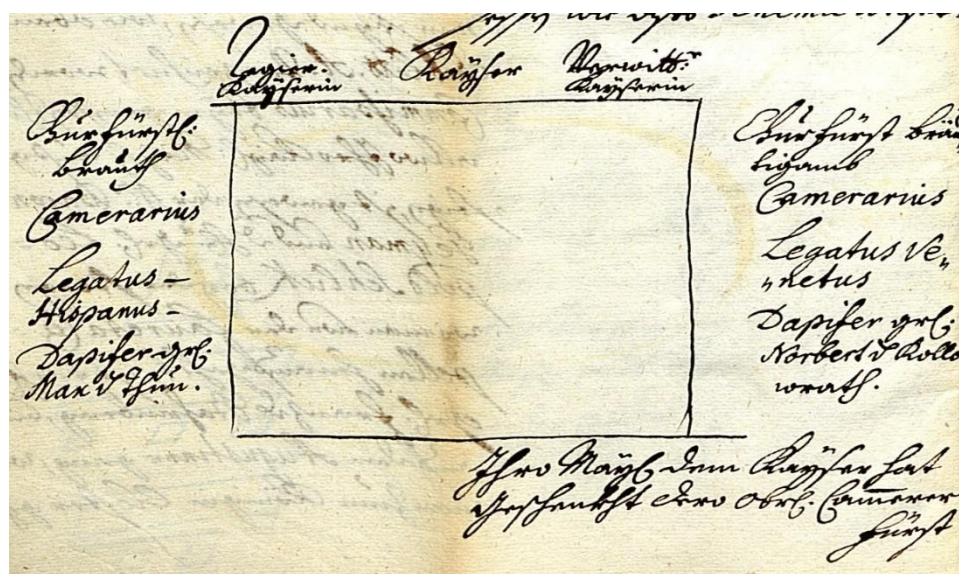
²⁴ N. D. Shergold and J. E. Varey, *Representaciones palaciegas, 1603-1699. Estudio y documentos* (London: Tamesis Books Limited, 1982), 16-9.

²⁵ Carmen Sanz Ayán presented a list of the fixed festivities that were always celebrated at the palace, as well as the years they were introduced in the case of the political family of the king. See Carmen Sanz Ayán, *Pedagogía de Reyes: El teatro palaciego en el reinado de Carlos II* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2006), 197.

²⁶ To prove this point, we can see how María Antonia's first birthday was already celebrated on January 18, 1670, with the representation of the play of Pedro Calderón de la Barca titled *Fieras afemina Amor*, which had been originally prepared for Queen Mariana's birthday. In fact, it was the first theatrical representation made in the Spanish court after the death of Philip IV in September 1665, which inaugurated a period of mourning that included the cancellation of all theatrical entertainments until then, which also highlights the great importance that María Antonia had for the Spanish royal family. Kurt and Roswitha Reichenberger, *La púrpura de la Rosa, de Pedro Calderón de la Barca y Tomás de Torrejón y Velasco. Edición del texto de Calderón y de la música de Torrejón* (Kassel: Reichenberger, 1990), 525.

²⁷ *Consulta* to the Council of State of May 17, 1685. AGS, Estado, leg. 3927.

recollection of any other formal wedding celebration in which an elector and a Spanish ambassador were present at the same time.²⁸ Thus the ceremonial problems followed soon thereafter. The confrontations regarding the ambassador's precedence and his position on the wedding table, where the Papal Nuncio and the Venetian ambassador would also be present, were extremely vicious. Furthermore, it was customary that everyone would give precedence to the bride and the groom on their special day, regardless of the ceremonial position they usually enjoyed. This custom sparked a great controversy, as it was disputed that the prince-electors did not have a rank high enough to compare themselves to the representatives of the Pope and the Catholic King, and they could use this special occasion as a precedent to demand the same treatment later on.²⁹ Despite the fact that the marquis of Burgomayne expressly told the Emperor that he would follow his demands in this regard, and Leopold I answered in turn that he trusted the ambassador's good sense, the confrontations regarding etiquette became so brutal that the Papal Nuncio threatened not to officiate the ceremony and the marquis wrote to the King saying that he should excuse himself from attending the wedding to preserve his honour.³⁰



One of the proposals for the placement order of the wedding table at the nuptials of Maria Antonia of Austria and Maximilian II Emanuel of Bavaria, where we can see the Spanish ambassador at the left with the Archduchess and the Camerarius. HHStA, Ält. Zerem. A 14.

²⁸ Letter written by the marquis of Burgomayne to Charles II, dated on April 5, 1685. AGS, Estado, leg. 3927.

²⁹ The marquis of Burgomayne accepted the necessity to give the Elector a preferent position on the day of his wedding, but he assured himself that this exception would not become the rule and redacted a document for it to be conserved at the Spanish court that said that this case could never be used as a valid precedent to dispute the rightful position of the Spanish ambassadors before the prince-electors in all the Imperial functions. Letter of the marquis of Burgomayne to King Charles II, dated on July 26, 1685. AGS, Estado, leg. 3928.

³⁰ Letter written by the marquis of Burgomayne on July 12, 1685. See also the copy of the papers the marquis sent to the prince of Dietrichstein, Leopold I's Obersthofmeister, that accompanied this letter in AGS, Estado, leg. 3928.

At the end of the day, the ambassador went to the wedding celebrations, although he was advised against giving any demonstrations that could be interpreted by anyone as the King approving the Archduchess's renunciations or the donation of the Spanish Netherlands to the new couple, especially taking into account that the Emperor had not sent his nephew the complete text of the marriage contract yet and the Spanish government cannot be sure of its exact content and wording.³¹ Afterwards, when the wedding was over, the Council of State discussed which expressions of joy the court should put into practice when the official news of the marriage arrived in Madrid. It was agreed that the marriage would be celebrated with two days of *luminarias* (lights reserved for the most important celebrations of the court) and the marquis of Velez explicitly said that, in addition to the aforementioned days of *luminarias*, if the King agreed, they should make another special demonstration of happiness, because of "the special reasons" that were linked to the Archduchess.³²

The Letters Addressed to the Archduchess: A Very Special Recognition

Another way we can see the "special consideration" given to the Archduchess's status as heiress to the Spanish Monarchy is by examining the letters sent to her by King Charles II. Correspondence had a fundamental importance in the early modern political and diplomatic world; they were so relevant that the specialist Fernando Bouza has even pointed out that this period should be considered as an "epistolary culture."³³ Most certainly, in the diplomatic sphere, the way a letter was worded, addressed and constructed in an official epistolary exchange was of utmost importance. The way in which a monarch wrote to another royal was perfectly coded and very often discussed with the respective councils and highest-ranking government officials to see which was the best and most correct way to proceed. The formula that a king used to address another ruler could grant him higher honours, improve his international status and give him an additional prestige that could help him and his family achieve a better position in the diplomatic arena. On the other hand, if one of the involved parties

³¹In the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv of Vienna we can find a whole box dedicated only to the etiquette dispositions that were put into practice for the wedding of Archduchess Maria Antonia and Elector Maximilian II Emanuel of Bavaria, which includes the frequent confrontations with the Spanish ambassador and different diagrams with the possible placement for the guest invited to the wedding celebrations. HHStA, Ält. Zerem. A. 14. For example, in the *consulta* to the Council of State, the counsellor Pedro of Aragon explicitly said that Burgomayne should only attend to the wedding celebrations if the question of the separation of the Spanish Netherlands was completely avoided. Other counsellors, like the prince of Astillano, agreed with him. *Consulta* to the Council of State, May 17, 1685. AGS, Estado, leg. 3927.

³² "[...] El Marqués de los Vélez va con el Consejo y añade que, después de llegado el Gentilhombre, si pareciere a V. M., se podría hazer alguna otra demostración, por los motivos tan particulares que asisten a la señora Archiduquesa". *Consulta* to the Council of State, dated on August 24, 1685. AGS, Estado, 3927.

³³ Fernando Bouza, "Introducción. Escritura en cartas", *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna. Anejos*, IV (2005): 11.

was not pleased with the way the other addressed them in their letters, it could provoke important diplomatic conflicts or even the complete interruption of the direct epistolary relationship between two princes for years, or even decades.³⁴ That is why, if we examine the discussion regarding the way the Spanish King should address Maria Antonia of Austria, we will discover that she was granted special honours that were not given to other archduchesses or members of his extended family.

We have several pieces of evidence of the way that “special consideration” of the Archduchess was shown in official letters before her nuptials. One of the clearest proofs of this can be seen in a letter that the marquis of Burgomayne, the aforementioned Spanish ambassador in Vienna, sent to Charles II on April 8, 1683 regarding a conversation that he had had with the Emperor about what had occurred to the count of Mansfeldt, who was in Paris at that time, several days before. Leopold I told him that the marquis of Croissy complained to the count that Maria Antonia had not shown enough deference to the French Queen Maria Teresa when she wrote her a letter, as she has only presented herself in it as the Queen’s “most affectionate niece” (*muy afectada sobrina*). Mansfeldt answered that she had done it that way following the suit of the Dauphin, who had written to the Emperor in the same terms. In turn, Croissy answered saying that there was a huge difference in status between the heir of the French throne and the mere daughter of an elective emperor, implying that they were not at the same level, so she should have used a more formal way to address the Queen, regardless of their blood relation. Mansfeldt replied that as long as Charles II remained childless, the Archduchess was Princess of Spain and heiress of the territories of the King’s Monarchy, so her rank was in no way inferior to the Dauphin’s, to which Croissy answered angrily negating the legitimacy of Maria Antonia’s position as heiress to the Spanish crown in very strong terms. After Leopold I presented to Burgomayne the full account of this episode, they both expressed their disbelief about the French’s “arrogance, insolence and bad faith” and the marquis took advantage of the Emperor’s anger to try to remind him of the necessity of fighting against Louis XIV’s ambitions, which could endanger the interests of the whole House of Habsburg.³⁵ This example is extremely telling, as it not only shows how the way a letter was worded could subtly represent the special position that Maria Antonia enjoyed and was crafted to give that impression, but that her father’s

³⁴ For example, when Louis XIV gave his first-born grandson the title of “duke of Burgundy” in 1682, the Spanish government refused to use it to address him in writing, as it would be an admission that France owned a title (and the rights over the territories it referred to) that the Spanish king considered as his own. Knowing that refusing outright would provoke a major diplomatic incident, the Spanish king tiptoed around the issue for decades and, when the marriage of the Duke to Marie Adelaide of Savoy was announced in 1697, the King, in agreement to the Council of State, revisited the issue of the way he should address his letter of congratulation and they decided to use only the family term of “nephew” or his given name of “Louis” to avoid both any problems and the tacit recognition of the validity of his title. *Consulta* to the Council of State dated on January 25, 1698. AGS, Estado-K, leg. 1660.

³⁵ Letter written by the marquis of Burgomayne to Charles II, dated on April 8, 1683. AGS, Estado, leg. 3924.

envoy did not hesitate to assert her position as heiress to the Spanish Monarchy in front of the marquis of Croissy when he questioned it, invoking not her status as the eldest daughter of the Emperor and King of Hungary and Bohemia, but her enormously important position as the heiress of the Spanish Monarchy.

After her marriage to the prince-electoral in 1685, the question arose of how the King should write to his niece from this point on. Given that she had married a prince whose title was considered below her rank of birth, she was not given the position reserved for an electress of Bavaria, but conserved at least the honours given to an archduchess. In the official papers, it was never contemplated that she would be given only the consideration that was reserved for the consorts of the electors of Bavaria and most of the time, she was addressed as archduchess, sometimes (but not always) adding the appendix “electress of Bavaria” afterwards.³⁶ When this issue was discussed in Spain, the King and the Council of State agreed not only that she should be addressed differently than the other archduchesses, but that her uncle should model her letters to his niece following the example of the way in which Philip III and Philip IV wrote to *infanta* Isabella Clara Eugenia (1566-1633). Isabella Clara Eugenia was theoretically an archduchess after her marriage to Archduke Albert, but in practice, she was addressed as *infanta* and had a very special consideration, not only while she was sovereign of the Spanish Netherlands after her father Philip II’s death, but also during her whole life as the eldest daughter, sister and aunt of successive kings of Spain and as a person who had had a very prominent place in the line of succession.³⁷ The Council of State did not mention any other *infantas* in these *consultas*; they only refer to Isabella Clara Eugenia. It was finally decided not only that the King would always write to the Archduchess following the example of the letters addressed to *infanta* Isabella Clara Eugenia several decades before but also that he would write to her personally, by his own hand (*de mano propia*).³⁸ Charles II also ordered that this practice should be appropriately registered, to make sure that all the members of Madrid’s court would comply with this course of action in the future.³⁹ The fact that the King would write to her himself was of huge importance, as it was an honour that few people enjoyed, and even less as a regular privilege.

³⁶ It is worth remarking that almost the only times in which she was referred only as Electress of Bavaria by both the Imperial and Spanish governments were in those dispatches directed at or closely linked to the circle of Maximilian II Emanuel of Bavaria, to avoid offending him. But even in those cases, she was usually always called “archduchess”, as it was considered that her title of birth has a higher rank than the one she obtained by marriage.

³⁷ We must remember that Isabella Clara Eugenia, as King Philip II’s eldest daughter, was the direct heiress of the Spanish Monarchy in two separate occasions: from the death of Prince Charles of Austria in 1568 to the birth of Prince Ferdinand in 1571, and as her brother’s successor from the death of Philip II in 1598 until the birth of Philip III’s eldest daughter, Ana Mauricia, in 1601.

³⁸ Paper sent to Don Manuel de Lira, following the King’s orders. March 10, 1687. AGS, Estado, leg. 3951.

³⁹ Paper written by Crispín Botello to Manuel Francisco de Lira, dated on March 1, 1687. AGS, Estado, leg. 3929.

All these considerations set Maria Antonia apart from the rest of the archduchesses that, without her special place in the Spanish line of succession, would have received an equal or at least similar treatment. We can see a great example of this difference in the instructions given to the marquis of Malpica in 1687. When the marquis was entrusted to present letters of condolence to the archduchesses Eleonora (queen dowager of Poland and duchess of Lorraine), Maria Anna Josepha (then duchess of Juliers and princess of the Palatinate) and Maria Antonia of Austria for the recent death of empress dowager Eleonora, it was explicitly said that the King would only write to his niece by hand, not to the other archduchesses, despite them being the daughters of the deceased and the eldest one a former queen. Also, that letter of condolence would be accompanied by another one of congratulations for her wedding, also written by King's own hand. In addition, the Council of State also said that the King should find a way to show even more the "special consideration" that Maria Antonia had for the Spanish Monarchy, setting her apart from her other female relatives with some unique detail.⁴⁰ This way, Maria Antonia was continuously set apart from the rest of the family for her "special consideration" and given the ceremonial privileges and considerations not only usually reserved for *infantas*, but to the first-born ones with a privileged position in the order of succession .

Epilogue: The Heiress is Dead. Long Live the Heir!

Maria Antonia died on December 24, 1692. She was in Vienna, where she decided to spend most of her third and last pregnancy, under the care of her father and stepmother, and against the wishes of her husband, who wanted her to give birth in Munich, in case the newborn was a prince who would hopefully inherit the Bavarian territories one day. Indeed, it was in the imperial city where Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria was born on October 28, 1692, as the third child of the electoral couple and the only one who survived the first years of infancy.⁴¹ The news of her death, mixed with the joyous ones of the birth of her son, were very deeply felt by all the Spanish court. In the *Consulta* to the Council of State of January 29, 1693, the counsellors conveyed to the King the "inconsolable pain that left such a huge loss," being it enormously increased by the fact that she was the "only thing left in this world from empress Margarita."⁴²

But Maria Antonia was already gone and that meant that Charles II had another heir to defend: her son, Joseph Ferdinand. That is why there was no point in taking the diplomatic risk to give Maria Antonia the extra attention in death that she had been awarded in life. For example, in the same *consulta* to the Council of State in which the counsellors exhibited their grief over her passing, it was also pointed out that the funeral arrangements and celebrations should be planned following the example of the cases of other princesses who were relatives

⁴⁰ *Consulta* to the Counsel of State, dated on February 13, 1687. AGS, Estado, leg. 3929.

⁴¹ Details of the birth of her son and her death can be seen, for example, in Ludwig Hüttl, *Max Emanuel. Der Blaue Kurfürst, 1679-1726. Eine politische Biographie* (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1979), 244-46.

⁴² *Consulta* to the Council of State, dated on January 29, 1693. AGS, Estado, leg. 3936.

of the monarch, “without exceeding it.”⁴³ Neither in her funeral celebrations nor in her tomb, at the imperial pantheon of the Kapuzinergruft of Vienna, was it explicitly stated that she was the heiress of the Spanish Monarchy for almost two decades. But her uncle had reserved a last honour for her. In the instructions he gave to the extraordinary ambassador to the Elector, dated almost an exact year after Maria Antonia’s death, to transmit him officially his grief over Maria Antonia’s death and his joy over Joseph Ferdinand’s birth, Charles II indicated that, given that the loss of the Archduchess was so important, he must give his condolences first and the congratulations for Joseph Ferdinand’s birth afterwards, even though the latter happened first and it was a modification of the usual protocol. Those acts should happen on two separate occasions, and with the highest expressions of sentiment that the ambassador could muster. Also, it was indicated that, when he congratulated the elector, he should tell him that all of them should thank God for the immediate consolation of this birth, which softened the blow of the Archduchess’s death, leaving them with a prince whom the King could focus the ties of blood and love that the monarch had always devoted to his mother before.⁴⁴

This transmission from the mother to the son can also be seen in the subtle, but very important cultural and symbolic recognitions that we have seen in this text. As had happened with his mother before, legal, diplomatic and governmental documents appointed Joseph Ferdinand, without any doubts, as the legitimate heir of the whole Spanish Monarchy. In fact, he was appointed as the successor of his great uncle in two different testaments, in 1696 and later in 1698, following the model established in Philip IV’s last will.⁴⁵ But Prince Joseph Ferdinand, like his mother, was never declared prince of Asturias, nor was he addressed or presented as such in official ceremonies. The political circumstances pushed the issue and it is more than probable that an official recognition would have come sooner rather than later, as Charles II was already devising strategies with his ambassadors in Vienna and other territories, as well as with the Council of State and of Castile to obtain international security for Joseph Ferdinand’s succession. But his early death, when he was only six years old, brought an end to these strategies. With his death, the rules of succession changed once again. The line of the empress Margarita disappeared forever, taking with it the diplomatic, symbolic and cultural demonstration by the Spanish Habsburgs of her descendants’ “special consideration.”

⁴³ *Consulta* to the Council of State, dated on January 29, 1693. AGS, Estado, leg. 3936.

⁴⁴ *Instrucciones de los embajadores a Baviera*. Instructions given to the Sargeant Antonio Francisco Manrique, dated on December 24, 1693. AHN, Estado, leg. 3457.

⁴⁵ Charles II’s first testament has not been preserved, but we have second hand testimonies of its dispositions in Joseph Ferdinand’s favour. The second one can be seen at AHN, Estado, leg. 2451.