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## Cardinal Purple for Maximilian of Pernstein. A Contribution to Aristocratic Women's Political Communication<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *The aim of the study is to show what means and methods served noblewomen in the early modern period when communicating with the papal court. The studied issue will be analysed through the example of Maria Manrique de Lara, who at the beginning of the 1590s attempted to help her second-born son Maximilian of Pernstein work his way up to the College of Cardinals.*

**Keywords:** *political communication – Maximilian of Pernstein – gender history – cardinal's elevation – Holy See – Habsburg dynasty – family network – client relations*

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The communication of the Bohemian nobility with the Papal Curia in the early modern period has thus far been studied mainly with examples of prominent religious leaders.<sup>2</sup> Most of the attention has been concentrated on Cardinal Franz von Dietrichstein, whose relations with the Roman court were recently analysed by Tomáš Parma.<sup>3</sup> There are also numerous studies describing the contacts established by papal nuncios at the imperial court in Prague or Vienna.<sup>4</sup> Even though the very instructions given to these diplomats clearly showed that in promoting curial policies in the Habsburg

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1 The present study is a partially modified and slightly supplemented version of the text published in the book *Pernštejnské ženy. Marie Manrique de Lara a její dcery ve službách habsburské dynastie* (Women of Pernstein. Maria Manrique de Lara and her daughter in the service of the Habsburg dynasty), published by Lidové Noviny Publishing House in Prague 2018.

2 E.g. Alessandro CATALANO, *La Boemia e la riconquista delle coscienze. Ernst Adalbert von Harrach e la Controriforma in Europa centrale (1620–1667)*, Roma 2005; Pavel BALCÁREK, *Kardinál František Ditrichštejn 1570–1636. Gubernátor Moravy, České Budějovice* 2007; Jiří HAVLÍK, *Jan Fridrich z Valdštejna: Arcibiskup a mecenáš doby baroka*, Praha 2016.

3 Tomáš PARMA, *František kardinál Dietrichstein a jeho vztahy k římské kurii: prostředky a metody politické komunikace ve službách moravské církve*, Brno 2011.

4 Cf. e.g. Alexander KOLLER, *La facción española y los nuncios en la corte de Maximiliano II y de Rodolfo II. María de Austria y la confesionalización católica del Imperio*, in: J. Martínez Millán – R. González Cuerva (coords.), *La Dinastía de los Austria. Las relaciones entre la Monarquía Católica y el Imperio*, I–III, Madrid 2011, Vol. I, pp. 109–124; Tomáš ČERNUŠÁK – Pavel MAREK, *Vztahové*

monarchy they were not only assisted by prominent court dignitaries and other male clients, but also by their no less influential wives, mothers and daughters, the ties that Central European noblewomen maintained to the papal court in Rome have so far been rather neglected by researchers.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the aim of the present work is to highlight that the political horizons of some women belonging to the elite court far exceeded the boundaries of the Habsburg monarchy. These noblewomen used a network of foreign correspondents or agents; their high social status even allowed them to be in direct correspondence with important representatives of foreign courts, including the pope himself.

Although the knowledge we have about documents deposited in the Vatican Secret Archives (*Archivio Segreto Vaticano*) and the Vatican Apostolic Library (*Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*) does not allow any quantification, it seems beyond doubt that communication with the pope was generally an exception. It concerned only a top level of noblewomen belonging to prominent and politically influential families whose services to the Catholic Church were not unknown in Rome.<sup>6</sup> The House of Pernstein, in the late 1500s and early 1600s, were a powerful family of the nobility and thus, a great example to examine in this study.

In the sixteenth century, the Lords of Pernstein were members of the wealthiest and most politically influential noble families in the Kingdom of Bohemia.<sup>7</sup> They owed their wealth primarily to Vilém II of Pernstein (1438–1521), who was remarkable for his political skills and extraordinary economic capabilities. Using them, he managed to create an extensive family dominium, which was located in both parts of Moravia and in southern and eastern Bohemia. It was the largest noble estate in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown. The value

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*sítě španělských a papežských diplomatů u císařského dvora na pozadí krize z let 1608–1609*, ČČH 115, 2017, pp. 1075–1095.

- 5 Courtesy of Klaus Jaitner and Silvan Giordan there are several volumes of editions of instructions for papal nuncios: Klaus JAITNER (ed.), *Die Hauptinstruktionen Clemens' VIII. für die Nuntien und Legaten an den europäischen Fürstenhöfen 1592–1605 I–II*, Tübingen 1984; IDEM (ed.), *Die Hauptinstruktionen Gregors XV. für die Nuntien und Gesandten an den europäischen Fürstenhofen 1621–1623 I–II*, Tübingen 1997; Silvano GIORDANO (ed.), *Le istruzioni generali di Paolo V ai diplomatici pontifici, 1606–1621 I–IV*, Tübingen 2003.
- 6 This is confirmed from the research by Vanessa de Cruz, who focused her dissertation on the correspondence of Spanish noblewomen in the two mentioned institutions. To the best of our knowledge, her treatise is the only work that provides a detailed analysis of the written communication of noblewomen with important representatives of the Holy See in the early modern period: María Vanessa DE CRUZ MEDINA, *Cartas, mujeres y corte en el siglo de oro*, Madrid 2010 (= dissertation thesis Universidad Complutense de Madrid), cf. particularly the chapter *Cartas cortesanas femeninas al Vaticano*.
- 7 For more information on the history of the family, see Petr VOREL, *Páni z Pernštejna. Vzestup a pád rodu zubří hlavy v dějinách Čech a Moravy*, Praha 2012<sup>2</sup>; IDEM (ed.), *Pernštejnové v českých dějinách: sborník příspěvků z konference konané 8. – 9. 9. 1993 v Pardubicích*, Pardubice 1992; Charlotte FRITZ-BECHER GAMBER, *Die Herren von Pernstein*, in: SOKA Svitavy, based in Litomyšl, R/269 (typescript).

of the estate was increased by high yields that went to the Pernstein treasury – owing to the developed system of manorial management.<sup>8</sup> Although Vilém's successors did not manage to sustain this wealth, the dynasty of the lords with a wisent's head in their coat of arms continued to enjoy a significant power status in the Kingdom of Bohemia and in the newly emerging Habsburg monarchy.

This was proven by the career of Vratislav of Pernstein (1530–1582), who was one of the closest confidants of the King of Bohemia (and future emperor) Maximilian II, and his wife Maria of Habsburg. Faithful service to the ruling dynasty elevated Vratislav to the prestigious office of the Supreme Chancellor of the Kingdom of Bohemia and secured him the highest Habsburg honour: the Order of the Golden Fleece. Finally, his loyalty to the House of Habsburg was also reflected in terms of religion. While his father, Jan, belonged to the Bohemian neo-Utraquists who professed the Lutheran-type reformation, Vratislav converted to the Roman faith in his youth and was an ardent Catholic.<sup>9</sup>

Although Vratislav's diversion from his father's faith may well be attributed to his upbringing alongside Maximilian of Habsburg and the long months spent in the western Mediterranean, no less important role in his religious belief was undoubtedly played by his marriage to Maria Manrique de Lara y Mendoza in September 1555, a Castilian noblewoman and lady-in-waiting of Maria of Habsburg.<sup>10</sup> Even though Vratislav of Pernstein had been a dedicated supporter of the Habsburg dynasty, his blood kinship with the Hispanic and Italian noble families made him even more attached to serving the ruling house. Vratislav fully adopted an idea that was already disseminated by Maria of Habsburg in the imperial court, based on the belief that it was necessary to preserve the unity of the Habsburg policy. Faithful to the idea, Vratislav did not hesitate to put his service to the Spanish Habsburgs on an equal footing with the service to his own king. He was convinced that what was beneficial to one branch of the Habsburg family also naturally benefited the other branch. With similar tenaciousness, he pursued a papal anti-reform policy in Central Europe.<sup>11</sup>

8 P. VOREL, *Páni z Pernštejna*, pp. 93–140; IDEM, *Vývoj pozemkové držby pánů z Pernštejna v 15. – 17. století*, in: Idem (ed.), *Pernštejnové*, pp. 9–76.

9 The personality of Vratislav of Pernstein was also dealt with by Zdeněk KALISTA, *Čechové, kteří tvořili dějiny světa*, Praha 1999<sup>2</sup>, pp. 27–37. His research was later substantially expanded by P. VOREL, *Páni z Pernštejna*, pp. 237–258.

10 For more information on this marriage, see Charlotte FRITZ – Jindřich RŮŽIČKA, *El Matrimonio Español de Wratislao de Pernestán de 1555*, IAP 8, 1974, pp. 163–171. Most recently, Pavel MAREK, *Pernštejnské ženy. Marie Manrique de Lara a její dcery ve službách habsburské dynastie*, Praha 2018, pp. 13–60.

11 In more detail: Rubén GONZÁLEZ CUERVA – Pavel MAREK, *The Dynastic Network between the Imperial and the Spanish Courts (1556–1619)*, in: Rubén González Cuerva – Alexander Koller (edd.), *A Europe of Courts, a Europe of Factions (Rulers & Elites)*, Leiden–Boston 2017, pp. 130–155. For the interconnection of this dynastic policy with the policies promoted in Central Europe by the representatives of the Holy See, see: A. KOLLER, *La facción*.

Vratislav surpassed most of his contemporaries (Czech land officials) with his ability to perceive local problems in a much wider European context. His correspondence, stored in the Lobkowicz Archives (*Lobkowický archiv Nelahozeves*), demonstrates that he used a wide network of people (besides his relatives, also his own agents) who informed him about events in South and Western Europe.<sup>12</sup> He also used the same channels to strengthen contacts with members of the Spanish branch of the Habsburg dynasty, including King Philip II, representatives of the satellite courts in Milan and Naples, as well as the pontifical court dignitaries in Rome.<sup>13</sup> His scope of political knowledge and influence was also strengthened by his wife, Maria Manrique de Lara, who even after her marriage remained a confidant of the Queen of Bohemia, Empress Maria of Habsburg.<sup>14</sup>

When Vratislav died in 1582, it was left to his widow to take care of their children and defend the prestige of the family with a wisent's head in its coat of arms. In reality, this meant finding potential suitors for her daughters and securing proper careers for her sons, Jan and Maximilian. In the first circumstance, Maria's efforts were successful and soon after Elizabeth, who married Imperial Count Albrecht von Fürstenberg before her father's death, it was Jane who entered into marriage in 1585 with Fernando de Gurrea y Aragón, Duke of Villahermosa, and Polyxena, who in 1587 married the most powerful man of the Bohemian nobility, Vilém of Rosenberg, Supreme Burgrave of the Kingdom of Bohemia.<sup>15</sup>

She was much less successful in supporting the career of her eldest son, Jan of Pernstein. Even the intercessions of Empress Maria and Habsburg archdukes and archduchesses failed to secure him employment at the court in Prague. It was likely due to the rising debts that brought the House of Pernstein to the brink of bankruptcy at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>16</sup> This also may have been why Jan eventually chose a military career;

12 LA Nelahozeves, LRR, sign. B/175 and B/127.

13 R. GONZÁLEZ CUERVA – P. MAREK, *The Dynastic Network*, pp. 146–149.

14 P. MAREK, *Pernštejnské ženy*. About the Empress Maria: Rafael CEÑAL LORENTE (S. J.), *La emperatriz María de Austria. Su personalidad política y religiosa*, vol. I–II, Madrid 1990 (= dissertation thesis Universidad Complutense de Madrid); Alexander KOLLER, *Maria von Spanien, die katholische Kaiserin*, in: B. Braun – K. Keller – M. Schnettger (edd.), *Nur die Frau des Kaisers? Kaiserinnen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Wien 2016, pp. 85–97. Her activities in Central Europe were dealt with by: Magdalena S. SÁNCHEZ, *Los vínculos de sangre: La Emperatriz María, Felipe II y las relaciones entre España y Europa Central*, in: José Martínez Millán (ed.), *Felipe II (1527–1598). Europa y la Monarquía Católica* I–II, Madrid 1998, pp. 777–793. More information can also be found in Joseph F. PATROUCH, *Queen's Apprentice. Archduchess Elizabeth, Empress Maria, the Habsburgs, and the Holy Roman Empire, 1554–1569*, Leiden 2010.

15 P. MAREK, *Pernštejnské ženy*, pp. 131–279; IDEM, *Las damas de la emperatriz María y su papel en el sistema clientelar de los reyes españoles. El caso de María Manrique de Lara y sus hijas*, in: José Martínez Millán – María Paula Marçal Lourenço (edd.), *Las Relaciones Discretas entre las Monarquías Hispana y Portuguesa: Las Casas de las Reinas (siglos XV–XIX)* I–III, Madrid 2008, here II, pp. 1003–1037.

16 Marek VAŘEKA, *Jan z Pernštejna. Hospodářský úpadek Pernštejnů*, České Budějovice 2008.

in 1592, he joined the Spanish troops operating in the Netherlands. Around this time, his younger brother Maximilian was about to achieve success that would support the House of Pernstein in going forward from all the adversity they had endured after the death of Vratislav of Pernstein.<sup>17</sup>

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As a second-born son destined for a spiritual career, Maximilian of Pernstein lived at the court of Olomouc Bishop Stanislav Pavlovský from the time he was a child.<sup>18</sup> It was also likely where he met Cardinal Ippolito Aldobrandini in the summer of 1588 when he was passing through as Papal Nuncio Extraordinary on his way to Krakow and Prague to negotiate a reconciliation between Sigismund III Vasa, King of Poland, and the Habsburgs.<sup>19</sup> It was not until the end of 1588 that the Pontifical Legate visited Prague while returning from Krakow. Although he did not bring good news, his two week stay in the capital of Bohemia was a spectacular manifestation of the power of the Catholic Church and Aldobrandini was bestowed with all possible honours. Even the characteristically withdrawn Emperor Rudolf II went to meet the nuncio at the head of the parade, behind the city walls. Other honours were given to the Cardinal by the Bohemian Catholic noblemen, who showered him with attention during magnificent banquets they held in their palaces in his honour.

<sup>20</sup> Aside from Jiří Popel of Lobkowicz and Vilém of Rosenberg, he very likely came into contact with Maria Manrique de Lara, who used the Cardinal's presence in Prague to entrust her younger son to his care and sent him along with Aldobrandini to Rome. Maximilian arrived there as the cardinal's client and was his protégé in mid-July 1589.<sup>21</sup>

17 On the personality of Maximilian of Pernstein: Jiří KOTYK, *Maxmilián z Pernštejna 1575–1593*, VSH 5, 1996, pp. 89–98; IDEM, *Maxmilián z Pernštejna (1575–1593)*, *Heraldika a genealogie* 30, 1997, pp. 189–199; a lot of interesting information can also be found in T. PARMA, *František kardinál Dietrichstein*, pp. 63–70.

18 The Pernsteins' relations to Stanislav Pavlovský, the Bishop of Olomouc, were introduced in: Jaroslav PÁNEK, *Biskup a kancléř: (Stanislav Pavlovský a Vratislav z Pernštejna 1579–1582 a jejich úloha v počátcích rekatolizace Moravy)*, ČMM 113, 1994, pp. 35–47.

19 For more information on Aldobrandini's mission, see Karel STLOUKAL, *Papežská politika a císařský dvůr pražský na přelomu XVI. a XVII. věku*, Praha 1925, pp. 8–14.

20 Ibidem, p. 12.

21 According to Tomáš Parma, Maximilian of Pernstein travelled alongside a former nuncio at the imperial court, Antonio Puteo. Cf. T. PARMA, *František kardinál Dietrichstein*, p. 65. The verification that Maria Manrique de Lara entrusted her son directly to the care of Ippolito Aldobrandini is from a letter by Elizabeth of Pernstein to her sister Polyxena, a copy of which is deposited in FFA, Donaueschingen, OB19, Vol. XXVI/4. Abschriften von Urkunden aus dem Raudnitzer Archiv, fol. 1–18 ([Praha], February 1592).

When Aldobrandini was elected pope on January 30, 1592, it seemed reasonable to expect that Maximilian would also have a more prominent career.<sup>22</sup> Maria Manrique and soon after the inauguration of Clement VIII they developed an intense “campaign” intended to help Maximilian, who was only seventeen years old at the time, get the cardinal purple. Although Maximilian was not ever named Cardinal, the entire account is a convincing proof of the great self-confidence of Pernstein women and testimony to how skilfully they could intervene in the careers of their male relatives. It was the family’s reputation and accomplishments for the benefit of the Catholic Church, their personal ties to the Habsburg dynasty representatives, and ultimately the extensive Pernstein network of clients and allies that helped them to realise their ambitions in this way.<sup>23</sup> Most importantly, they were well acquainted with the rules of court etiquette and the complicated political climate in Papal Rome, which at the time was considered to be one of the most powerful but least transparent power centres in Europe.<sup>24</sup>

Maria Manrique de Lara and her daughters were sent up-to-date information from Lorenzo Maggio in Rome, whom they met during his time as the head of the Austrian province of the Society of Jesus (1566–1578).<sup>25</sup> After his departure from Vienna, Maggio systematically built his position in Rome, where he belonged to the main confidants of Claudio Acquaviva d’Aragona, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus.<sup>26</sup> Maria Manrique was very fortunate to have him guide her through the tangled labyrinth of the scheming papal court. Shortly after Ippolito Aldobrandini ascended to the pope’s throne, Maria Manrique received a letter from Rome in which her father, Lorenzo Maggio, informed

22 On the personality of Pope Clement VIII: Cf. Agostino BORRAMEO, *Clemente VIII papa*, in: DBI, vol. 26, Roma 1982, available at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/papa-clemente-viii\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/papa-clemente-viii_(Dizionario-Biografico)), (checked 15th November, 2017); Maria Teresa FATTORI, *Clemente VIII e il Sacro Collegio 1592–1605: meccanismi istituzionali ed accentramento di governo*, Stuttgart 2004.

23 It is worth mentioning that a few years later (similarly and more successfully), Margarita de Cardona also interceded for her son Franz of Dietrichstein. Maria Antonietta VISCEGLIA, *Roma papale e Spagna. Diplomatici, nobili e religiosi tra due corti*, Roma 2010, p. 145.

24 On the Papal Court in the period under review: Gianvittorio SIGNOROTTO – Maria Antonietta VISCEGLIA (edd.), *La corte di Roma tra Cinque e Seicento. “Teatro” della politica europea*, Roma 1998; Maria Antonietta VISCEGLIA, *La città rituale. Roma e le sue cerimonie in età moderna*, Roma 2002; EADEM, *International Politics, Factions and Parties in the Roman Curia During the Late 16th Century*, in: R. González Cuerva – A. Koller (edd.), *A Europe of Courts*, pp. 64–87.

25 On his visits to Maria Manrique: Bohdan CHUDOBA, *Španěle na Bílé hoře*, Praha 1945, p. 126. The information that he continued to correspond with the women of Pernstein after his departure to Rome is documented in a letter from Elizabeth of Pernstein to her sister Polyxena, a copy of which is deposited in FFA, Donaueschingen, OB19, Vol. XXVI/4. Abschriften von Urkunden aus dem Raudnitzer Archiv, fol. 1–18 ([Praha], February 1592).

26 On Lorenzo Maggio’s ties to Claudio Acquaviva, Silvia MOSTACCIO, *Early Modern Jesuits between Obedience and Conscience during the Generalate of Claudio Acquaviva (1581–1615)*, London–New York 2016, p. 123.

her that it was the best time to remind the new pope of his promise to name her son Cardinal after his accession. He based his assumptions on the outcome of a personal discussion with the pope, during which Clement VIII indicated that he was ready to keep his promise.<sup>27</sup>

It may seem surprising that the initiative leading to the appointment of the Pernstein cardinal was born directly from the papal court. Considering the context in which Aldobrandini's election took place, this step was rational. The conclave of 1592 had a thrilling atmosphere and Aldobrandini, who had quickly advanced in his career, was elected with the support of the pro-Spanish faction. Initially, they supported Giulio Antonio Santori, however after several unsuccessful attempts they changed their allegiance to Aldobrandini.<sup>28</sup> While Clement VIII longed for greater independence of the papal throne from the Hispanic monarchy, he was likewise very conscious of the importance of maintaining good relations with the Habsburgs for the Papal States. From this perspective, appointing a Pernstein cardinal may have been perceived as a responsive step by the new pope towards the imperial court and Madrid. In addition, by appointing a Pernstein he could make the representatives of the most powerful Catholic families in the Kingdom of Bohemia feel indebted to him, thereby strengthening his political influence in Central Europe. He was expecting not only the gratitude of Maria Manrique and her daughters, but also that from the Supreme Burgrave, Vilém of Rosenberg (Maximilian's brother-in-law) for selecting the young Pernstein.<sup>29</sup>

Vilém of Rosenberg was to play a central role in the matter. Father Lorenzo Maggio appealed to Maria Manrique to turn to Clement VIII not only directly, but also to arrange for letters of intercession from the Emperor as well as from the "Viceroy of Bohemia" as Vilém of Rosenberg was usually titled in diplomatic relations.<sup>30</sup> While Maria Manrique likely

27 FFA, Donaueschingen, OB19, Vol. XXVI/4. Abschriften von Urkunden aus dem Raudnitzer Archiv, fol. 1–18 ([Praha], February 1592), Elizabeth of Pernstein to her sister Polyxena.

28 On the conclave: Agostino BORROMEO, *España y el problema de la elección papal de 1592*, Cuadernos de Investigación Histórica 2, 1978, pp. 175–200. Due to the political influence that Empress Maria of Habsburg, with whom Maria Manrique de Lara and her family were in close contact, maintained in the Roman church circles, there is a hypothesis that the possible cardinal creation of Maximilian of Pernstein may have been previously arranged as an expression of the pope's gratitude for the support he had been given during the conclave by the cardinals belonging to the relationship network of Maximilian II's widow. On the influence of Maria Habsburg in the Roman circles: Cf. A. KOLLER, *La facción*; R. GONZÁLEZ CUERVA – P. MAREK, *The Dynastic Network*. More information can be found through detailed research of the documents stored in the Vatican Archives.

29 For more information on the influence that the Pernstein women maintained in both main Habsburg courts: P. MAREK, *Pernštejnské ženy*. More information on Vilém of Rosenberg: Jaroslav PÁNEK, *Vilém z Rožmberka, politik smíru*, Praha 2011. Vilém of Rosenberg's relations with the Holy See have been mapped by Pavel MAREK – Kateřina PRAŽÁKOVÁ, *Protireformační politika Svatého stolce*, in: V. Bůžek and others, *Světy posledních Rožmberků*, Praha 2011, pp. 46–58.

30 FFA, Donaueschingen, OB19, Vol. XXVI/4. Abschriften von Urkunden aus dem Raudnitzer Archiv, fol. 1–18 ([Praha], February 1592), Elizabeth of Pernstein to her sister Polyxena.

appealed to Rudolf II herself, she was also using her daughter Polyxena as an intermediary to Vilém.<sup>31</sup> This is evidenced in a letter sent by Elizabeth von Fürstenberg of Pernstein, on behalf of her mother Polyxena. She urged her to persuade her husband to support their cause hurriedly and to send his letter of intercession to Rome to the Pernstein's agent, Dr Francesco Paduani, who previously been in the service of the apostolic nuncio at the imperial court. She stressed that the letter must be delivered by March 13, by this time it was realistic to expect that Maximilian would be appointed to the College of Cardinals in the first promotion of cardinals.<sup>32</sup>

The importance of having Maximilian appointed to the College of Cardinals within the first promotion was primarily motivated by the social prestige associated with such a designation. In the sixteenth century, the method of appointing new cardinals at the consistories immediately after the papal election was established. According to the testimony of an anonymous author of a Parisian manuscript:

*"The first Promotion of Cardinals, usually performed by each of the high priests of Rome, consists of elevating his own nephew or closest relative to the purple. Sometimes he also elevates people from the families of great princes to please them and gain their gratitude... In the second promotion, they usually pardon and reward those who have earned appointment to this great dignity in the offices of nuncios, tesauriarate, those of Roman Rota auditors, in the clericate of the Apostolic Chamber or other most important ranks of the Roman court, the State of the Church, or in legations. In the third promotion, the popes usually elevate persons nominated or recommended by the Crowns."*<sup>33</sup>

In the same letter, Elizabeth also sent Vilém precise instructions on how to compose his intercession letter in terms of both form and content. Specifically, she urged the Supreme Burgrave to write the letter himself.<sup>34</sup> In similar cases, letters written by a scribe and signed by the person were acceptable. However, the women of Pernstein knew the rules set by

31 The most recent biography of this noblewoman: Marie RYANTOVÁ, *Polyxena z Lobkovic. Obdivovaná i nenáviděná první dáma království*, Praha 2016.

32 FFA, Donaueschingen, OB19, Vol. XXVI/4. Abschriften von Urkunden aus dem Raudnitzer Archiv, fol. 1–18 ([Praha], February 1592), Elizabeth of Pernstein to her sister Polyxena. On the Pernstein's ties to Francesco Paduani, cf. LA, Nelahozeves, LRR, B/164, fol. 24–25 (Praha, July 19, 1585), Francesco Paduani to Jan of Pernstein. Retrieved from the excerpts and comments made by Jindřich Růžička, Milan Skřivánek and Charlotte Fritz: SOKA Svitavy based in Litomyšl, Pernstein Files.

33 Bibliothèque Mazarin Paris, MS 1659, fol. 2–3 retrieved from T. PARMA, *Olomoucký biskup*, p. 42. Also, cf. Maria Antonietta VISCEGLIA, *La 'giusta Statera de' Porporati'. Sulla composizione e rappresentazione del Sacro Collegio nella prima metà del seicento*, Roma moderna e Contemporanea IV/1, 1996, pp. 167–211, here pp. 172–173.

34 FFA, Donaueschingen, OB19, Vol. XXVI/4. Abschriften von Urkunden aus dem Raudnitzer Archiv, fol. 1–18 ([Praha], February 1592), Elizabeth of Pernstein to her sister Polyxena.



period handbooks for writing correspondence, which considered it refined for a person to use letters written by their own hand.<sup>35</sup>

In his letter, Vilém wanted to express his most sincere congratulations to Aldobrandini for being elected pope. He also wanted to remind him of his promise to Maria Manrique de Lara and ask him to promote Maximilian to the College of Cardinals. To support his request, Vilém had to mention the support that Vratislav of Pernstein and his family had demonstrated to the Catholic Church and to assure the Holy Father that he and his family would continue to serve the pope faithfully. Finally, his text was to be supplemented with the usual courtesies.<sup>36</sup> While this combination of congratulations with a request or intercession on behalf of a third person may seem inappropriate by today's standards, it was very common in the early modern period. There are letters in the Vatican Secret Archives in which the authors congratulated the pope in a similar way two years after his election.<sup>37</sup>

It is surprising that Elizabeth wrote to Vilém and advised him on how to draft his letter for several reasons. The Supreme Burgrave of the Kingdom of Bohemia was undoubtedly a man of social skills, who was able to move with certainty in the cosmopolitan surroundings of the imperial court. Here he also came into regular contact with papal diplomats and other persons from the South of Europe. Unlike Maria Manrique and her daughters, he remained a Bohemian nobleman by nature. Having matured in the Central European cultural milieu, it was likely that some habits of the Romanesque world were foreign to him. By contrast, the Pernstein women were fluent in Italian and Spanish, their mother tongue, having been raised in accordance with the cultural rules adhered to in the Mediterranean.<sup>38</sup> It should also be noted that Maria Manrique had handbooks in her library which contained information on forms and phrases appropriate for the different epistolary genres in Spanish and Italian. It is likely that Vilém would have never had this type of education and had he relied only on his intuition, it is doubtful that his letter would have had any effect.<sup>39</sup>

Given the high position of Vilém of Rosenberg in Bohemian noble society, Elizabeth and her mother did not dare to address their instructions to the Supreme Burgrave directly, and instead communicated with him through his wife Polyxena. Through this line of communication, it allowed them to be as forthright as needed. Moreover, Polyxena could

35 M. V. DE CRUZ MEDINA, *Cartas*, p. 221.

36 FFA, Donaueschingen, OB19, Vol. XXVI/4. Abschriften von Urkunden aus dem Raudnitzer Archiv, fol. 1–18 ([Praha], February 1592), Elizabeth of Pernstein to her sister Polyxena.

37 Examples are given by M. V. DE CRUZ MEDINA, *Cartas*, pp. 206n.

38 P. MAREK, *Pernštejnské ženy*.

39 One example is found in the Pernstein Library, by Juan Vicent Peliger *Formulario y estilo curioso de escribir cartas missivas*. More: Jaroslava KAŠPAROVÁ, *Soupis jazykově španělských a portugalských tisků Roudnické lobkowiczské knihovny 1501–1800*, Praha 1999, p. 58; also, EADEM, *Roudnická lobkowická knihovna. Jazykově italské tisky 1501–1800*, I–X, Praha 1990–1995.

use her influence to make her husband write the reply without any delay and to arrange for it to be promptly sent to Rome, to Dr. Paduani, Pernstein's agent.<sup>40</sup>

It was expected that Vilém of Rosenberg should not only to compose his letter of intercession to Pope Clement VIII, but also write two similar ones for the pope's nephews (*nipoti*). This was common practice at the time but had also been requested by Maria Manrique. Even though neither she nor her daughters knew the names of the nephews, their actions demonstrate how familiar they were with the established practices at the Roman court.<sup>41</sup> It was often the letters to the nephews that opened the way to the Pope's graces. The writers would first turn their requests to the pope's nephews, and only later to the pope himself.<sup>42</sup> In order to carry out her intentions, Maria Manrique also planned to use her own contacts in Rome. Apart from Father Lorenzo Maggi, she had ties to Claudio Acquaviva d'Aragona, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus. Vilém of Rosenberg was to write both men and ask them to advocate the approval of Pernstein's request.<sup>43</sup>

The letters were to be sent by a messenger, Bixan, and accompanied by Rosenberg's agents and courtiers: Wendel Matter, Ladislav of Kytlice, and Václav Pětipeský of Chýše. The delegation was likely led by Humprecht Czernin of Chudenice, Captain of Prague Castle. Although Elizabeth von Fürstenberg of Pernstein had emphasized in her instructions that Vilém's letter of intercession had to reach Rome no later than March 13, due to numerous obstacles that Rosenberg's legation had to overcome, it was not until the Feast Day of St. Dominic (March 17) that they arrived in the Eternal City.<sup>44</sup>

Nonetheless, the delay did not seem to endanger the matter, as the next day Czernin and his companions were granted an audience with Pope Clement VIII. In addition to the mentioned delegation, Maximilian of Pernstein, Superior General Claudio Acquaviva and Lorenzo Maggi also attended. The pope read the letter in front of the legation and the group presented small gifts to the Holy Father. The key role in the negotiation fell upon Father Lorenzo, although the pope interrupted the hearing several times to talk to Maggi in private. In the end, the Pernstein delegation was not given any specific answers to their request. Clement VIII only assured the delegation that he immensely valued Pernstein's services and promised to send Maximilian on a prestigious diplomatic mission to the Royal Court of Poland. On the third day after the audience, the delegation visited the papal

40 FFA, Donaueschingen, OB19, Vol. XXVI/4. Abschriften von Urkunden aus dem Raudnitzer Archiv, fol. 1–18 ([Praha], February 1592), Elizabeth of Pernstein to her sister Polyxena.

41 On nepotism: Antonio MENNITI IPPOLITO, *Il tramonto della Curia nepotista: papi, nipoti e burocrazia curiale tra XVI e XVII secolo*, Roma 1999.

42 Examples are given by M. V. DE CRUZ MEDINA, *Cartas*, pp. 206n.

43 FFA, Donaueschingen, OB19, Vol. XXVI/4. Abschriften von Urkunden aus dem Raudnitzer Archiv, fol. 1–18 ([Praha], February 1592), Elizabeth of Pernstein to her sister Polyxena.

44 J. KOTYK, *Maxmilián z Pernštejna (1575–1593)*, *Heraldika a genealogie* 30, 1997, p. 196.

nephews, who promised their support to Maximilian. At the same time, they did not hide their disappointment that Rosenberg's servants had not brought Bohemian horses for them. After this, Czernin and his companions prepared to return home.<sup>45</sup>

It is difficult to know whether the outcome of the negotiations with the pope was successful for Maria Manrique de Lara and her daughters or not. The pope's vague answer had likely discouraged any expectations that Maximilian would be named cardinal in the first promotion. However, the vision of securing a seat as cardinal remained realistic. The Pernstein women perceived sending Czernin's mission with the letters of intercession only as a first step and should be followed with additional steps. Elizabeth of Pernstein specifically spoke of the need to send Vilém's agent to bring a consignment of gifts to the pope and other prominent figures of the Roman court. In the early modern age, gifts and bribes were among the most common ways of expressing and consolidating a client relationship between the giver and the recipient of the gift.<sup>46</sup>

Besides this unequal relationship of the patron, represented by Pope Clement VIII, and his clients, represented by the broad Pernstein dowager's family, another important aspect reflected in the affair – the relations between the Papal States at the time of the pontificate of Ippolito Aldobrandini and the two Habsburg empires. As previously stated, both Maria Manrique and Vilém of Rosenberg asked the Emperor for an intercession for her son. According to Elizabeth's letters, Rudolf II was happy and willing to oblige Maria Manrique, but he said nothing specific, which seemed to reduce any expectations for success in the entire matter.<sup>47</sup> If the emperor had shown genuine determination to aid Maximilian in acquiring a position as cardinal, the original family-based request would have come to the level of the Habsburg monarchy's claims to the Holy See. In that case, Clement VIII would probably have had no choice but to oblige Maria Manrique and name Maximilian cardinal at the first promotion.

45 The journey to Rome, the audience, and other extremely interesting information was captured by Wendel Matter in his letter addressed to Elizabeth of Pernstein. The letter is dated from Rome on March 21, 1592 and is deposited in the LA, Nelahozeves, LRR A, B/179, fol. 46–49. Its content is described in J. KOTYK, *Maxmilián z Pernštejna (1575–1593)*, *Heraldika a genealogie* 30, 1997, pp. 196–198.

46 For more information on the role played by gifts in the early modern period in the consolidation of mutual ties between two people, see: Sharon KETTERING, *Gift-giving and patronage in Early Modern France*, *French History* 2, 1988, pp. 131–151; Helmuth BERKING, *Schenken. Zur Anthropologie des Gebens*, Frankfurt am Main – New York 1996; Natalie ZEMON DAVIS, *The gift in sixteenth century France*, Oxford 2000.

47 “Lo que su majestad a hecho y con mucho calor aunque generalmente y lo ha hecho su majestad con tan buena gana y voluntad que es de agradecer mucho.” FFA, Donaueschingen, OB19, Vol. XXVI/4. Abschriften von Urkunden aus dem Raudnitzer Archiv, fol. 1–18 ([Prah], February 1592), Elizabeth of Pernstein to her sister Polyxena.

Although this did not happen, Maria Manrique must have been content with her son's next career advancement. It was because Clement VIII had admitted Maximilian among his secret chamberlains by March 28, 1592, and in June of that year, Pernstein could have experience of the diplomatic service when he was sent to Krakow, on the basis of a previous pope's promise, to hand over a consecrated golden rose to Queen Anna of Habsburg.<sup>48</sup> But before he returned to Rome, the Pernstein family suffered a tragedy with the death of Vilém of Rosenberg. The Supreme Burgrave of the Kingdom of Bohemia had been suffering from various diseases for many years. In the beginning of the summer of 1592, his condition further deteriorated and he was confined to bed in his palace in Prague, where he died on August 31.<sup>49</sup>

It appears that Maximilian of Pernstein's chances of being admitted to the College of Cardinals were not affected by Vilém's death in any way. Soon after the demise of Vilém of Rosenberg, the Roman Curia began to take a serious interest in his younger brother (and new lord of the House of Rosenberg) Peter Vok. They attempted to influence, inter alia, using his sister-in-law Polyxena and the other Pernstein women.<sup>50</sup> In the autumn of 1592, Nuncio Cesare Speciano visited Peter Vok of Rosenberg at his Prague palace several times to discover the plans of this South Bohemian nobleman. Due to the fact that Peter Vok sympathised with, and eventually joined, the Unity of the Brethren, Rome rightly feared that he could take actions in the future in Vok's dominions that would jeopardize the results of his brother's long-standing Counter-Reformation activities. Peter Vok assured Nuncio Speciano during their meetings that he would not act against the Jesuits or other representatives of the Catholic Church operating on his dominions. Rosenberg's answer was so considerate and convincing that the papal diplomats wondered whether the lord of the red five-petal rose could be converted to the Catholic faith. Although Peter Vok was far from having as much authority in the community of the Bohemian estates as his late brother, the representatives of the Curia assumed that many other Bohemian brethren might follow his example, and the illegal Unity of the Brethren would suffer a heavy loss. Moreover, as it became obvious that Peter Vok would not have any heirs, a struggle for the extensive Rosenberg wealth was also among the reasons for the apostolic diplomats' actions.<sup>51</sup> The alleged Rosenberg family ties to the Italian Orsini family made the Curia optimistic that Peter Vok's Southern Bohemia estate would become Catholic property.<sup>52</sup>

48 T. PARMA, *František kardinál Dietrichstein*, p. 68.

49 Jaroslav PÁNEK, *Poslední Rožmberkové. Velmoži české renesance*, Praha 1989, pp. 235–236.

50 More on him, IDEM, *Petr Vok z Rožmberka: život renesančního kavalíra*, Praha 2010.

51 Cf. the statement of Cesare Speciano's letter to Pope Clement VIII of October 26, 1592. Alena PAZDEROVÁ (ed.), *Epistulae et acta nuntiorum apostolicorum apud imperatorem 1592–1628. Epistulae et acta Caesaris Speciani 1592–1598*, I–III., Praha 2016, here vol. I., pp. 300–301.

52 For more information on the alleged kinship of the Rosenbergs and the Orsinis, see Petr MAŤA, *The false Orsini from over the Alps: Negotiating aristocratic identity in late medieval and early modern Europe*. *Römische historische Mitteilungen* 55, 2013, pp. 155–218.

The expectations of the papal diplomats concerning the conversion of Peter Vok of Rosenberg were encouraged by Maria Manrique de Lara and her daughter Polyxena. Maria Manrique assured Nuncio Speciano that to be successful they must first convince Vok's wife, Catherine of Ludanice, to join the Catholic Church. She had previously been very close to converting to the faith when she was previously influenced by Polyxena.<sup>53</sup> We can only speculate whether Maria Manrique meant it, or whether it was just a thoughtful strategy to get a better position for managing her own business at the Roman court. If it was just a political move, it worked out extremely well for Maria Manrique. In the correspondence between Nuncio Speciano and Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini and other Roman diplomats throughout the autumn and winter of 1592, there is ample evidence of how the Pernstein women's reputation had grown in the Papal Court.<sup>54</sup> In the past, Maria Manrique and her daughters were rarely mentioned in nunciature reports. Following the death of Vilém of Rosenberg, their names began to appear regularly in the reports of the Prague legate and in the instructions and answers that came from the Papal Court. Maximilian of Pernstein reported on the personality of his brother-in-law and gave advice on how to persuade Peter Vok<sup>55</sup> after he returned from his Polish mission in Rome in the winter of 1592.

Though Maria Manrique did not miss an opportunity to remind Clement VIII of his commitment to her family, her efforts eventually came to naught. The ambitions she held on the career of Maximilian, were ended by his death on 2 September 1593, after a short illness.<sup>56</sup>

*"Hiersera parti di qua un 'huomo che era del S. Massimiliano Prenestaim per la posta a portare l' aviso della sua morte che è rincresciuta a N. S. in estremo, et a tutti noi altri, né se gli è mancato nell' infermità di quanti rimedii et quante medicine poteva dar l' arte. V. S. Rev.ma consola la S. Donna Maria anco per parte di N. S. perché non se li puoté scrivere hieri, sebene si diedero per lei brevi et le lettere di condoglienza. Quella Signora è prudente, et pia, nè sarà difficile conoscere quanta compensa sia di questa perdita la sicurezza di havere quell' anima in Paradiso, tuttavia che doverà far ella quando né N. S. né noi altri qui havemo potuto ritenere le lagrime,"*

Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini wrote to Cesare Speciano, the Pontifical Nuncio at the imperial court.<sup>57</sup> A few weeks later, the nuncio noticed how much the message had affected Maria Manrique:

53 A. PAZDEROVÁ (ed.), *Epistulae* I., pp. 300–301.

54 E.g. *ibidem*, pp. 329, 382 and 595.

55 *Ibidem*, p. 512.

56 T. PARMA, *František kardinál Dietrichstein*, p. 69.

57 [Yesterday evening, one of Maximilian of Pernstein's courtiers left with the postal service, with a notice of Pernstein's death. Our Lord and all of us have been deeply affected by the news. They tried to treat him with all the drugs and remedies known, but without success. Though our Lord has sent a breve

*“Venne la settimana passata quel gentiluomo che portò la nuova della morte del S. Massimiliano de Pernstain (che sia in cielo), la quale si è intesa con universale dispiacere anche per rispetto della S.ra Dona Maria, sua madre, che si trovava indisposta già parecchi di sono, la quale se bene intese la nuova con quel sentimento che si può immaginare di buona madre nella morte d’un figlio tanto caro et di cui haveva tante speranze, nondimeno ha vinto sé stessa et si è mostrata signora veramente christiana et resegnata, perché quando io andai a vistarla et consolarla mi parlò in modo che poco mi lasciò che dirle et mostra tanta obligatione a N. S. et a V. S. Ill.ma et all’Ill.mo S. Pietro del breve et lettere scritte consolatorie che non si può satiare di predicarlo, et di dare gratie a S. B. et alle S. V. Ill.me di tanto favore, et certo che dopo la gratia del Signore le hanno giovato incredibilmente a consolarla in questa sua perdita.”*<sup>58</sup>

It was Maximilian’s tombstone which became the legacy of Maria Manrique’s magnificent power-politics strategy, which she developed to secure the influence of the Pernstein family at the papal court. At the end of September 1592, the widow of Vratislav of Pernstein sent a courtier back to Rome to take care of the technicalities. She intended to design the tombstone, which was to be erected in the parish church of the German nation in Rome, Santa Maria dell’Anima, at the direction of Pope Clement VIII. The work was to be paid for from the sale of the furniture and the clothes left behind by her late son. Maria Manrique wanted to also use this money to fund several chaplaincies in Rome or Prague where the chaplains would pray for the salvation of Maximilian’s soul, as of those of his parents.<sup>59</sup> However, Maximilian of Pernstein was not buried in Santa Maria dell’Anima. It was likely Pope Clement VIII who arranged to have the corpse of his secret chamberlain buried in one of the major Roman basilicas, the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. The promising career of Maximilian of Pernstein is memorialized by an impressive multicoloured marble tombstone. It is worth noting that the cost of its purchase was partly paid by Diego de

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and condolence to Maria, express condolences to her also on his behalf.] Retrieved from the edition: A. PAZDEROVÁ (ed.), *Epistulae* II., p. 910.

58 [Last week, a courtier arrived with news of the death of Lord Maximilian of Pernstein. It has caused great grief here, for his mother is held in high esteem at the court. She had previously been struggling with poor health. She responded to the news of her son’s death as you could imagine, for she loved Maximilian very much and pinned high hopes on him. Eventually, she made the effort and was a true Christian who came to terms with her fate. When I visited her to express my condolences and comfort her, she spoke with me in such a way that I had nothing more to say. She is much obliged to Our Lord, Your Excellency and His Excellency, Lord Pietro, for your breves and the letters you sent... along with the grace of God, it is the grace expressed by Our Lord and Your Excellencies, which has incredibly benefited her, and helped her cope with this heavy loss.] Retrieved from a letter by Cesare Speciano Cinzio to Aldobrandini, sent from Prague on 20 September 1593. Cf. *ibidem*, p. 940.

59 “L’ho che venne qua a portare la nuova ritornarà presto per la posta, et forse sarà portatore di questo spaccio. Viene con ordine di fare una memoria al figlio nella Chiesa dell’Anime, secondo che parerà meglio a S. B., et ha animo dei mobili che si venderanno di fondare alcune cappellanie, o costi o qui per l’anima et del figlio, et del padre et di lei stessa.” *Ibidem*, p. 955. Similarly, *ibidem*, p. 989.

Campo, the pope's private chamberlain.<sup>60</sup> Although another male representative was gone from the Pernstein family, it was well known in papal Rome that they could continue to count on the services and political influence of Maria Manrique de Lara and her daughters.

## Conclusion

After the death of Vratislav of Pernstein in 1582, Pernstein's widow Maria Manrique de Lara became the leading figure of the noble house. More than anyone else, it was she who would ensure her family's prestige in the coming years and determine the fate of her children. Although the Pernsteins faced considerable economic problems, Maria Manrique succeeded in finding her daughters wealthy husbands. A more challenging task was to aid her sons in finding employment, Jan and Maximilian. As Jan's attempts to find employment in the emperor's diplomatic service ended in failure, he eventually enrolled in the army. Paradoxically, more promising prospects were open to his younger brother Maximilian. He had been predestined for an ecclesiastic career since he was a child, and from 1589 he was a member of Cardinal Ippolito Aldobrandini's retinue.

The promising career of Maximilian was further bolstered after his patron ascended to the papal throne in 1592. Soon after Aldobrandini was elected Pope Clement VIII, Maximilian's mother launched an extensive campaign aimed at installing him in the College of Cardinals. She made use of her close contacts: representatives of the Habsburg dynasty, extensive family and client networks, as well as numerous agents and residents operating in Rome. Her main allies were her daughters Elizabeth and Polyxena, who always stood by their mother's side and helped her to create a variety of power strategies. Although Maximilian's death ended the promise of his career, the account is a remarkable corroboration of the Pernstein women's confidence and ability to succeed in the challenging environment of high diplomacy. It demonstrates how women in the early modern period managed to influence the careers of their male relatives.<sup>61</sup>

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60 The transcript of the text on the tombstone and its photographs were published in: J. KOTYK, *Maximilián z Pernštejna 1575–1593*, VSH 5, 1996, pp. 93 and 96–98; similarly, T. PARMA, *František kardinál Dietrichstein*, p. 69.

61 The present study is based on the GAČR research project (GA17–06049S) *Relational networks of Apostolic nuncios and Spanish envoys in the milieu of the imperial court at the turn of the 16th and 17th century*. I thank Radek Vantuch for the translation of the present article.