CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

ANNUAL ROBERT A. KANN MEMORIAL LECTURE

Gendering Late Medieval Habsburg Dynastic Politics: Maximilian I and His Social Networks

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Abstract

While gender history has developed into a powerful branch of premodern history, we still know little about gender relations around Maximilian I. One reason is that research concentrated for a long time on the individual personality of the emperor without paying much attention to the manifold relations among men and women that in fact contributed to establishing his rule. Another reason is the specific constellations of Maximilian's relationships with his wives Mary of Burgundy and Bianca Maria Sforza, with his daughter Margaret of Austria and grand-daughter Mary of Hungary, which have been mostly discussed in the framework of their personal courts and regional politics and less in a wider comparative perspective. Against the backdrop of recent approaches to dynastic politics, role models, and agency, I will, first, discuss the gendered dimensions of Maximilian's dynastic politics in their wider geo-political and socio-cultural context. I will, second, move beyond a focus on key dynastic actors to take into account personal networks as fundamental for any type of premodern rule. Following court ladies and female servants and the social networks they were part of I will outline the interrelations between social ascent, office, and the politics of kinship and gender at court.

Keywords: Maximilian I; gender; kinship; court; dynasty; premodern; Habsburg; networks

Introduction

In 2019, the 500th anniversary of Emperor Maximilian's death was commemorated by more than twenty exhibitions—one of the most prominent at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York titled *The Last Knight: The Art, Armor, and Ambition of Maximilian I*. The largest one in Austria was located in Maximilian's favorite castle in Innsbruck and has now turned into a permanent exhibition.[1] An abundance of other events took place in and around the commemoration year, many of them in places where the emperor dwelled at least temporarily, such as the castles of Ambras and Runkelstein or the cities of Vienna and Wels.[2] Some events resulted in weighty publications, among them an almost 600-page collection that covers the current state of historical research on Maximilian I in the context of his life and times.[3]

It may seem that by now we know almost everything that can be known about one of late medieval Europe's most dazzling yet enigmatic rulers. However, upon closer inspection, there are several drawbacks to this statement: first, although so many different disciplines—history, archaeology, art history, Latin and vernacular philologies, as well as musicology—have long devoted their attention to Maximilian I, dialogue between them about their findings is scarcer than one might expect.

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[1] Pierre Terjanian, ed., *The Last Knight: The Art, Armor, and Ambition of Maximilian I* (New Haven, 2019); Monika Frenzel, Christian Gepp and Markus Wimmer, eds., *Maximilian I. Aufbruch in die Neuzeit* (Innsbruck, 2019).

[2] For instance, Katharina Kaska, *Kaiser Maximilian I. Ein großer Habsburger* (Salzburg, 2019); Helmut Rizzoli, *Maximilian I. und seine Bilderburg Runkelstein* (Bolzano, 2019).

[3] Markus Debertol, Markus Gneiß, Julia Hörmann-Thurn und Taxis, Heinz Noflatscher, Manfred Hollegger and Andreas Zajic (together with Sonja Dünnebeil), eds., *Per Tot Discrimina Rerum. Maximilian I. (1459–1519)* (Vienna, 2022).

The same can, secondly, be said about the classic challenge of translation and reception between the English-speaking academy and work published in other languages. To name just one example of a recent prominent exception: Howard Louthan and Jonathan Green were the first to provide an English translation of the *Theuerdank*, the famous fictional account of Maximilian's adventurous journey to his wedding with the heiress Mary of Burgundy, which the editors presented at the University of Minnesota's Center for Austrian Studies in 2022.[4]

Third, and perhaps most importantly, against the background of decades-long efforts in social and cultural history to open up perspectives on social networks by using prosopographical methods, research on Maximilian I concentrated for a particularly long time on the individual personality of the emperor without systematic attention to the manifold relations among men and women who operated in various overlapping circles around him and contributed to establishing and sustaining his rule. To put it simply: what, or rather who makes the ruler? Recent approaches from a "new institutional history" to a "new cultural history of politics" have convincingly shown that premodern rule as well as the political *personae* of ruling men and women were complex products of cultural representations and social practices. Hence, making decisions and putting them into practice was obviously always shared in expanding late medieval and early modern polities.

Maximilian I was king (from 1486/93) and emperor (from 1508) of the Holy Roman Empire and at the same time lord of the Austrian hereditary lands that were reunited under his rule after having been divided for many decades.[5] Both his marriages with Mary of Burgundy and Bianca Maria Sforza of Milan established new territorial claims, which in both cases were followed by military actions: the happily marrying Austria—*tu felix Austria nube*[6]—was in fact accompanied by more than two dozen wars in Maximilian's lifetime alone. While his aspirations turned out to be successful in Burgundy, they were not in Milan. His marriage projects for his children and grandchildren opened up further perspectives in Spain, Bohemia, and Hungary, but they also resulted in new century-long confrontations with France and the Ottoman Empire.

These territorial dimensions alone made it necessary to share rule, both among members of the dynasty and with representatives of those very polities. Hence, after his first wife's early death (1482) and a long series of struggles for succession in Burgundy, Maximilian delegated the government of the Low Countries to family members. After the equally early death of his son Philip in 1506, he shared this part of the rule for many years to come with his daughter Margaret, who was later followed by her niece Mary, Maximilian's granddaughter. To state the obvious, dynastic politics was in fact a family business; kinship thus played a key role in the distribution of power.[7] Family members of both genders and in different parts of the empire communicated regularly with each other and with their advisors, as is documented by numerous letters, pictures, and material objects exchanged between

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[4]Howard Louthan and Jonathan Green, *Theuerdank. The Illustrated Epic of a Renaissance Knight* (London, 2022).

[5]The classic study is Hermann Wiesflecker, *Maximilian I, das Reich, Österreich und Europa an der Wende zur Neuzeit*, 5 vols. (Vienna, 1971–86). For a recent overview in German, see Manfred Hollegger and Markus Gneiß, *Maximilian I. (1459–1519). Herrscher und Mensch einer Zeitenwende*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart, 2023); for a recent English introduction, see Louthan and Green, *Theuerdank*, 1–25.

[6]Pioneering is Paula Sutter Fichtner, "Dynastic Marriage in Sixteenth-Century Habsburg Diplomacy and Statecraft: An Interdisciplinary Approach," *The American Historical Review* 81, no. 2 (1976): 243–65; for a detailed analysis, see Cyrille Debris, *'Tu, Felix Austria, Nube': La dynastie de Habsbourg et sa politique matrimoniale à la fin du moyen âge* (Turnhout, 2005); for a broad comparison, see Joseph F. Patrouch, "'Bella Gerant Alii.' Laodamia's Sisters/Habsburg Brides: Leaving Home for the Sake of the House," in *Early Modern Habsburg Women. Transnational Contexts, Cultural Conflicts, Dynastic Continuities*, eds. Anne J. Cruz and Maria Galli Stampino (Burlington, 2013), 25–40; on the topos, see Alexander Kagerer, *Macht und Medien um 1500. Selbstinszenierungen und Legitimationsstrategien von Habsburgern und Fuggern* (Berlin, 2017), 46–49.

[7]As dynastic politics was a key factor of princely politics, contemporary semantics of gender related to genealogy, too. Key categories are family, kinship, and friendship, all of them seminal in negotiations of territorial, economic, and symbolic claims; on the former aspect, see Heide Wunder, ed., *Dynastie und Herrschaftssicherung in der Frühen Neuzeit. Geschlechter und Geschlecht* (Zeitschrift für historische Forschung, Beiheft 28, 2002) and Katrin Keller, ed., *Gynäkokratie. Frauen und Politik in der Höfischen Gesellschaft der Frühen Neuzeit* (zeitenblicke 8, no. 2, 2009, https://www.zeitenblicke.de/2009/2/wunder/index_html); on family, kinship and friendship, see the seminal volume by David W. Sabean, Simon Teuscher and Jon Mathieu, eds., *Kinship in Europe. Approaches to Long-term Development (1300–1900)* (Oxford, 2007).

them. And while Maximilian never left a doubt that he saw himself as the *pater familias* both in the *domus Austriae* and throughout the empire, letters addressing major treaties as well as minor assignments of posts to servants show his daughter countering him at eye level, as her niece Mary later did vis-à-vis her princely brothers, the kings and emperors Charles V and Ferdinand I[8] (Figure 1).

Yet, for quite some time, Maximilian was seen as the singular mastermind of both his practical politics and his ideological representation in different media—the latter discussed pointedly by Larry Silver in his book *Marketing Maximilian*.[9] To be sure, for all that we know, the mastermind image was certainly one the king and later emperor intentionally cultivated—and we may thus safely say that he achieved his goal. However, this outstanding marketing operation required whole teams of more or less connected individuals and "think tanks"—of advisors, artists, artisans, and many other helpers—to establish the brand and keep it alive for centuries to come.

Likewise, an uncountable number of people of both genders put Maximilian's many ideas and instructions into practice in various political, cultural, administrative, and military fields. Yet, the complex interplay of their interactions with Maximilian and among each other has so far only been analyzed systematically for specific fields such as key courtly offices or diplomatic discourse.[10] This is not least due to the enormous increase and yet fragmented nature of the written source material around 1500 that makes any systematic comparative analysis a major challenge.

What We Still Need To Know

Against this background, we may better understand a surprising bias related to gender in the work of Maximilian I. Therefore, while gender history has developed into a powerful branch of premodern history, we still lack (1) *systematic* knowledge about gender roles and relations for the emperor's courtly environment; and (2) a *comparative cross-cultural* and *cross-generational* assessment of gendered traditions, role models, and possibilities of agency between Maximilian's own court and those of female and male family members. While the latter have thoroughly been discussed, this has—with important exceptions such as Joseph Patrouch's short but rich study on the marriages of sixty-six Habsburg brides from the 1270s to the 1770s—mostly happened within the framework of their personal courts, regional and patronage politics, and less in a wider comparative perspective.[11]

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[8] André-Joseph-Ghislain Le Glay, ed., *Correspondance de l'empereur Maximilien Ier et de Marguerite d'Autriche, sa fille, gouvernante des Pays-Bas, de 1507 à 1519* (Paris, 1839, rev. ed., 1966); cf. also below, note 31. Christopher F. Laferl and Christina Lutter, "'Innere' und 'Äußere' Autonomie einer Fürstin der Frühen Neuzeit: Maria von Ungarn am Beginn ihrer Niederländischen Statthalterschaft (1531–1534)," *Frühneuzeit-Info* 8, no. 2 (1997): 170–77.

[9] Larry Silver, *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (Princeton, 2008). From the large body of research literature, see for instance, the references in note 47 and the contributions by Thomas Schauerte, Joseph F. Patrouch, and Howard Louthan to Heinz Noflatscher, Michael A. Chisholm and Bertrand Schnerb, eds., *Maximilian I. (1459–1519). Wahrnehmung – Übersetzung – Gender* (Innsbruck, 2011).

[10] On courtly offices, see Manfred Hollegger, "Maximilian I. und die Entwicklung der Zentralverwaltung am Hof und in den österreichischen Erbländern von 1510 bis 1519" (Ph.D. diss., University of Graz, 1983) and Heinz Noflatscher, *Räte und Herrscher. Politische Eliten an den Habsburgerhöfen der Österreichischen Länder 1480–1530* (Mainz, 1999); on diplomatic communication, see Christina Lutter, *Politische Kommunikation an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit. Die Beziehungen zwischen der Republik Venedig und Maximilian I. (1495–1508)* (Vienna, 1998); Nicole Petzi, *Polit-Kommunikation am Hof Kaiser Maximilians I. Der Zusammenbruch der Pentarchie in Italien im Spiegel der Diplomatie (1494–1500)* (Marburg, 2011); Gregor Metzig, *Kommunikation und Konfrontation. Diplomatie und Gesandtschaftswesen Kaiser Maximilians I. (1486–1519)* (Berlin, 2016). For a recent comparative perspective, see Maike Van Berkel and Jeroen Duindam, eds., *Prince, Pen, and Sword* (Leiden, 2018).

[11] This is due partly to the broad "international" nature of Maximilian's dynastic projects and the resulting thematic and linguistic plurality of research endeavors, which have not always taken sufficient notice of each other. But see, for instance, Dagmar Eichberger, ed., *Women of Distinction. Margaret of York, Margaret of Austria (Exhibition Mechelen, Lamot, 17.9.–18.12.2005)* (Leuven, 2005); Dagmar Eichberger, *Women at the Burgundian Court: Presence and Influence* (Turnhout, 2010); and Dagmar Eichberger, "Women on Top. New Research on the Most Interesting 16th-century Habsburg Women," Paper given at the international conference "Beiträge zur Repräsentation der Casa de Austria," 22–24 June 2023, Vienna; William Monter, "An Experiment in Female Governance. The Habsburg Netherlands 1507–1567," *History Research* 3, no. 6 (2013): 441–52; Patrouch, "Bella Gerant Alii"; Christina Lutter, "Zur Repräsentation von Geschlechterverhältnissen im Höfischen Umfeld

Figure 1. Bernhard Strigel, Familie des Kaisers Maximilian I, 1515, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 832. © KHM-Museumverband.

Hence, the backdrop of this contribution is a large-scale collaborative project recently funded by the Austrian Science Funds and titled *Managing Maximilian (ManMax) (1493–1519). Persona, Politics, and Personnel Through the Lens of Digital Prosopography.*[12] Over the next four years (at least), eight teams from various disciplines will work together to assess the emperor's rule in its shared

collaborative dimensions as well as "from below." The whole endeavor will substantially rely on a collaborative effort across the involved disciplines to systematically collect prosopographical data and analyze them not just for numbers, but in terms of the interplay between cultural representations and social practices, a task for which we will use the whole set of tools at our hands.

In what follows, I will first discuss the gendered dimensions of Maximilian's dynastic politics in a comparative manner. I will lay out the conceptual framework of my previous research and our future work within the *ManMax* project. My key question is: How did seemingly "individual" princely qualities, behavior, and actions relate to representations of gender roles, political motives, and cultural traditions?

I will then move beyond a focus on dynastic actors to take into account formal and informal ties, personal relations, and interactions as fundamental for any type of premodern rule. Women played important roles at all levels of the court, not just as "ladies-in-waiting," but also in terms of provision and supply, of intellectual and religious education, of social and political patronage, as well as for pious foundations and other charitable activities. Likewise, women's courts were obviously not just staffed with female, but also male members who were connected to each other by marriage, kinship, and acquaintance. All their activities served as resources for courtly politics; yet, as many women's tasks were less often framed as formal offices, they were also less visible to previous research.

Gender and Rulership

Studies on outstanding or "exceptional" women in premodern Europe—queens, empresses, and representatives of the nobility—have a remarkably long tradition in historiography. However, only the past few decades have seen a significant increase in studies that deploy a *systematic* approach to the interrelations of power, politics, and gender on various societal levels. This is partly due to a general tendency of classic political history to concentrate on individual eminent figures including "powerful women" and to disregard the various factors and contexts that shaped gender roles in the first place. The idea of "exceptionality" has thus long faced criticism for reaffirming men's lives as standard and women's achievements as the exception to the rule.[13] More importantly, the focus on outstanding *persons* (men and women alike) makes it difficult to systematically look into structures of empowerment and exclusion that underlie all types of societal interaction.

Groundbreaking for a change of perspective was the approach formulated by Joan Scott, who addressed gender *both* as a constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences between men and women *and* as a key factor in power relations.[14] How do fundamental categories of social perception which account for differentiation and classification, such as gender, interact with categories such as social background and status, age, or generation? To answer this question for various historical contexts, recent research has underlined the necessity of a *relational* approach to all kinds of social categories and highlighted the need to examine the processes of social construction that make these categories effective. An impressive number of studies on premodern gender roles and relations have thus identified gender as *one*, albeit a key aspect among several other dimensions that constitute power relations and hierarchies, social inclusion, and exclusion.[15]

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projects is *Gendering Maximilian – Gendered Dimensions of Court Organisation and Representation* (Principal Investigator Christina Lutter), details at https://manmax.hypotheses.org/the-team.

[13]For instance, Natalie Zemon Davis, *Gesellschaft und Geschlechter. Studien über Familie, Religion und die Wandlungsfähigkeit des Sozialen Körpers* (Berlin, 1976, rev. ed., 1986); Gianna Pomata, "Partikulargeschichte und Universalgeschichte – Bemerkungen zu einigen Handbüchern der Frauengeschichte," *L'Homme. Zeitschrift für Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft* 2, no. 1 (1991): 5–44; Heather J. Tanner, ed., *Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100–1400, Moving Beyond the Exceptionalist Debate* (Cambridge, 2019).

[14]Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053–75.

[15]Pioneering is Davis, *Gesellschaft und Geschlechter*; for recent overviews, see Allyson M. Poska et al., eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham, 2013); Claudia Opitz-Belakhal, *Geschlechtergeschichte*, rev. ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 2018). For the approach developed here see also Christina Lutter, "Herrschaft und Geschlecht. Relationale Kategorien zur Erforschung fürstlicher Handlungsspielräume," in *Vormoderne*

These conceptual developments in gender history have also had an impact on thinking about gender and premodern rulership, moving beyond *both* a narrow notion of "exceptional women" *and* an equally narrow traditional notion of the political field.[16] Importantly, as premodern societies were characterized by structures of inequality, all individual actors irrespective of their sex were subject to a variety of social constraints, which may or may not have been caused by gender issues. Gender as a *relational category* helps connect aspects of kinship, dynasty, and further political and legal factors of legitimate rule to practical dimensions in the "making of" politics that was shared by various actors.[17] In consequence, recent studies have started to scrutinize gendered norms and political agency of both prominent and "forgotten" queens within networks of kin and court connections and as agents of cultural communication,[18] flanked by more general approaches to gender and status competition.[19] And they have looked into the social function of transregional kinship structures, thus integrating regional and global perspectives into an increasingly systematic comparative framework that helped to move gender issues center stage in studies of power and politics.[20]

Gendering Maximilian's Dynastic Politics

Maximilian's notorious dynastic politics included his own marriages with Mary of Burgundy and Bianca Maria Sforza of Milan and numerous marriage projects for his relatives and friends. Prominent among these were the unions between his children Philip and Margaret and the Spanish

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Herrschaft. Geschlechterdimensionen und Spannungsfelder, eds. Matthias Becker, Achim Fischelmanns, and Katharina Gabler (Göttingen, 2021), 199–231.

[16]Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, ed., *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?* (Berlin, 2005) for a cultural history of politics; Anna Becker, "Gender in the History of Early Modern Political Thought," *The History Journal* 60, no. 4 (2017): 843–63, on gender and representation. The recent development is documented by a number of overviews and collections: Letizia Arcangeli and Susanna Peyronel, eds., *Donne di Potere nel Rinascimento* (Roma, 2008); Amalie Fössel, "Gender and Rulership in the Medieval German Empire," *History Compass* 7 (2009): 55–65; Éric Bousmar et al., eds., *Femmes de pouvoir, femmes politiques durant les derniers siècles du moyen âge et au cours de la première renaissance* (Brussels, 2012); Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (New York, 2013); Claudia Zey, ed., *Mächtige Frauen. Königinnen und Fürstinnen im Europäischen Mittelalter (11.–14. Jahrhundert)* (Ostfildern, 2015); Bettina Braun, Katrin Keller, and Matthias Schnettger, eds., *Nur die Frau des Kaisers? Kaiserinnen in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Vienna, 2016); Katrin Keller, *Die Kaiserin. Reich, Ritual und Dynastie* (Vienna, 2021); Elena Woodacre, *Queens and Queenship* (Amsterdam, 2021).

[17]On structural inequality see Claudia Ulbrich, *Verflochtene Geschichte(n): Ausgewählte Aufsätze zu Geschlecht, Macht und Religion in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Vienna, 2014); on shared rule see Bernd Schneidmüller, "Rule by Consensus. Forms and Concepts of Political Order in the European Middle Ages," *The Medieval History Journal* 16, no. 2 (2013): 449–71, and Julia Burkhardt, "Frictions and Fictions of Community, Structures and Representations of Power in Central Europe, c. 1350–1500," *The Medieval History Journal* 19, no. 2 (2016): 191–228; with a focus on gender e.g., Helen Matheson-Pollock et al., eds., *Queenship and Counsel in Early Modern Europe* (Cham, 2018); Claudia Zey and Gabriela Signori, eds., *Regentinnen und andere Stellvertreterfiguren vom 10. bis zum 15. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2023).

[18]Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*; Valerie Schutte and Estelle Paranque, eds., *Forgotten Queens in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Political Agency, Mythmaking, and Patronage* (London, 2018); Woodacre, *Queens and Queenship*; Aleksandra Skrzypietz, ed., *Queens Within Networks of Family and Court Connections* (Cologne, 2021); Karl-Heinz Spiess, "European Royal Marriages in the Late Middle Ages. Marriage Treaties, Questions of Income, Cultural Transfer," *Majestas* 13 (2005): 7–21, Christiane Coester, "Brautfahrten. Grenzüberschreitungen und Fremdheitserfahrungen adliger Frauen in der Frühen Neuzeit," *Francia. Forschungen zur Westeuropäischen Geschichte* 35 (2008): 149–68; Mara R. Wade, "Marrying Cultures: Queens Consort and European Identities, 1500–1800," *Early Modern Women* 11, no. 2 (2017): 155–61; Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly and Adam Morton, eds., *Queens Consort, Cultural Transfer and European Politics, c. 1500–1800* (London, 2017).

[19]Martha Bayless, Jonas Liliequist, and Lewis Webb, eds., *Gender and Status Competition in Premodern Societies* (Turnhout, 2022); cf. also Emma O. Bérat, Rebecca Hardie, and Irina Dumitrescu, eds., *Relations of Power. Women's Networks in the Middle Ages* (Göttingen, 2021).

[20]Sabean et al., *Kinship in Europe*, especially Michaela Hohkamp, "Sisters, Aunts, and Cousins. Familial Architectures and the Political Field in Early Modern Europe," ibid. 91–104; as well as the recent contribution by Joseph F. Patrouch, "Sisters, Cousins, Nieces, Nephews (and an Aunt): The Female Dynastic Contexts of Archduke Ferdinand in the Transitional Year of 1567," in *Archduke Ferdinand II of Austria: A Second-born Son in Renaissance Europe*, eds. Sylva Dobalová and Jaroslava Hausenblasová (Vienna 2021), 149–65; see also David W. Sabean et al., eds., *Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond: Experiences Since the Middle Ages* (New York, 2011); Jeroen Duindam, *Dynasties: A Global History of Power* (Cambridge, 2015); Jeroen Duindam, "Gender, Succession and Dynastic Rule," *History and Anthropology* 32, no. 2 (2021): 151–70; Elena Woodacre, ed., *A Companion to Global Queenship* (Leeds, 2018).

progeny, and those between his grandchildren Ferdinand and Mary and the Jagiellonian siblings Anna and Louis/Lajos.[21] As images and other representations of dynastic rule (including gender roles) fundamentally shaped social practices, all of these princes and princesses needed to live up to their status and image publicly to meet shared expectations of their roles and functions.[22] People at court (like elsewhere) created social space through these perceptions that were in turn constantly negotiated and adjusted in their (inter)actions. Hence, I understand courts as social spaces constructed within social relations. They were sites of negotiation and distribution of power, status, office, wealth—and gender roles.[23]

In terms of gender roles, Maximilian's first wife Mary of Burgundy represents a classic model of a successful consort due to her eminent status as heiress of Burgundy and mother of the couple's male heir, Philip the Fair. Because of her early death at the age of twenty-five (in 1482), her remembrance post-mortem as well as in later historiography tended to construct her into the ideal bride and spouse, albeit a passive one, at Maximilian's side. However, a recent joint research endeavor on Mary's imagery, government, court, and memory has yielded a much more nuanced assessment of her political *persona* and her political agency[24] (Figure 2).

In contrast, Bianca Maria Sforza, Maximilian's second wife, had long been neglected by traditional research because she did not correspond to the classic model of a successful consort. To oversimplify, she had no children, was not able to establish any networks of importance, and the Milan enterprise was a failure. However, exactly because she neither fit the image of a successful consort nor of an "exceptional woman"—images that were only partly shared by contemporaries anyway but shaped over centuries of historiographical tradition—an examination of Bianca Maria allows for a counter-intuitive approach. Thus, in the past few years, several studies have assessed the historical context and structural features of her personal and political background, the cultural traditions of the Milanese court compared to Maximilian's environment, and the possibilities of her political agency, such as her attempts at a politics of patronage and at political collaboration with Maximilian during his Milan enterprise[25] (Figure 3).

Maximilian's marriages with Mary of Burgundy and Bianca Maria Sforza were both complex strategic, political projects, motivated as any other dynastic alliance by territorial and economic aspirations.[26]

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[21]Bogusław Dybaś and István Tringli, eds., *Das Wiener Fürstentreffen von 1515. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Habsburgisch-Jagiellonischen Doppelvermählung* (Budapest, 2019).

[22]Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Rituale* (Frankfurt am Main, 2013); for Maximilian's imagery, see Silver, *Marketing Maximilian*.

[23]For the general concept, see Pierre Bourdieu, "Espace social et genèse des 'classes,'" *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 52/53 (1984): 3–14; cf. Philip S. Gorski, *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis* (London, 2013); for a comparative perspective on courts as social spaces, see Jeroen Duindam, "The Court as a Meeting Point: Cohesion, Competition, Control," in Van Berkel and Duindam, *Prince, Pen, and Sword*, 32–128; on what follows see also Lutter, "Zur Repräsentation von Geschlechterverhältnissen" and Lutter, "Herrschaft und Geschlecht."

[24]On the constructions of her post-mortem remembrance, see Ann M. Roberts, "The Horse and the Hawk: Representations of Mary of Burgundy as Sovereign," in *Excavating the Medieval Image*, eds. David S. Areford and Nina A. Rowe (Aldershot, 2004), 135–50 and Ann M. Roberts, "The Posthumous Image of Mary of Burgundy," in *Women and Portraits in Early Modern Europe. Gender, Agency, Identity*, ed. Andrea Pearson (Aldershot, 2008), 55–70; for a recent comprehensive assessment, see Michael Depreter et al., eds., *Marie de Bourgogne. Figure, principat et postérité d'une duchesse tardo-médiévale/Mary of Burgundy. "Persona," Reign, and Legacy of a Late Medieval Duchess* (Turnhout, 2021), on her reign cf. also Jelle Haemers, *For the Common Good. State Power and Urban Revolts in the Reign of Mary of Burgundy (1477–1482)* (Turnhout, 2009).

[25]See the contributions to the section on gender in Noflatscher et al., *Maximilian I.* as well as Nadia Maria Covini, *Donne, emozioni e potere alla corte degli Sforza. Da Bianca Maria a Cecilia Gallerani* (Milano, 2012); Sabine Weiss, *Die vergessene Kaiserin. Bianca Maria Sforza, Kaiser Maximilians zweite Gemahlin* (Innsbruck, 2010); Daniela Unterholzner, "Bianca Maria Sforza (1472–1510). Herrschaftliche Handlungsspielräume einer Königin vor dem Hintergrund von Hof, Familie und Dynastie" (Ph.D. diss., University of Innsbruck, 2015); Christina Lutter and Daniela Unterholzner, "Fürstin ohne Ort. Vom Scheitern der Bianca Maria Sforza," in Braun et al., *Nur die Frau des Kaisers?*, 65–83; Lutter, "Zur Repräsentation von Geschlechterverhältnissen"; Lutter, "Herrschaft und Geschlecht"; Christina Antenhofer, *Die Familienkiste. Mensch-Objekt-Beziehungen im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Ostfildern, 2022); Christina Antenhofer, "Maximilian und die Frauen. Bilder und Narrative," in Debertol et al., *Per Tot Discrimina Rerum*, 83–99.

[26]Sonja Dünnebeil, "Handelsobjekt Erbtochter – zu den Verhandlungen um die Verehelichung Marias von Burgund," in *Außenpolitisches Handeln im ausgehenden Mittelalter. Akteure und Ziele*, Regesta Imperii, Beiheft 27, eds. Sonja Dünnebeil and Christine Ottner (Vienna, 2007), 159–84.

Figure 2. Hans Burgkmair et al., Theuerdank, 1517. © Innsbruck, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Tirol, 42 B 2, f. 231v, Abb. 98. Photographer: Watzek Photografie, Hall in Tirol.

Generally, many dynastic projects failed, while the implementation of the successful ones took months, even years of negotiations, involving both family members and advisors from intellectual, political, and economic elites. While there are more comparable elements between the emperor's two marriages than supposed at first glance, some important differences account for Mary's and Bianca's divergent standing and historiographical perception.[27] Mary's early death together with the politically successful integration of the Duchy of Burgundy into the Habsburg lands contributed to her idealized image. Moreover, her stepmother, Margaret of York, was a powerful role model and a strong supporter of her marriage

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[27]Depreter et al., *Marie de Bourgogne*; Lutter, "Zur Repräsentation von Geschlechterverhältnissen"; Lutter and Unterholzner, "Fürstin ohne Ort."

Figure 3. Giovanni Ambrogio de Predis, Bianca Maria Sforza, 1493, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 1942.9.53. © National Gallery of Art, Widener Collection, 1942.

with Maximilian and later helped him keep his power in the Low Countries, not least because of her networks in the cities and among the nobles.[28] Bianca, however, lived on beyond the failure of Maximilian's Milan enterprise, which in turn deprived her of the agenda to establish a politically effective network of kin and patronage. Since she came from the upwardly mobile *condottieri* Sforza family, she also lacked the in-depth formation of French and Burgundian princesses like Mary who were trained to rule from early childhood onward.

By contrast, Mary's and Maximilian's daughter Margaret was able to develop a distinct political agenda after a failed first marriage project and the deaths of two husbands. She explicitly countered her father's wish and declined any further marriage. But when her brother Philip also died (1506), she took over a key area of political responsibility at the heart of Habsburg power politics, and was well prepared for it.[29] Her education at the Burgundian court, her role models (again most prominently Margaret of York), her growing political experience, and not least the geographical distance to Maximilian that effectively prevented daily interventions, helped her grow into one of her father's most trusted advisors and powerful actors in international politics, and to create spaces of agency as regent of the Habsburg Low Countries. She used this status, and the imagery of related role models, to fashion a new, active type of regent. Her splendid and well-organized court life has been aptly researched.[30] Her extensive correspondence with her father Maximilian—over 700 extant letters that are probably just the tip of a much larger iceberg of lost material—testifies to their shared dynastic understanding, her role as an advisor to the emperor, and the deep entanglement of family, patronage, and memorial politics[31] (Figure 4).

Later, Margaret's niece Mary built both on this paradigm and on the excellent education received at her aunt's court[32] when she arrived in the eastern parts of Maximilian's territories in 1515 as a young girl to marry Louis II, the Jagiellonian heir. Her household was merged with that of Anna Jagiello, Louis's sister and future spouse of Mary's brother Ferdinand of Habsburg, before she joined her young husband's court at Buda in 1521, where she remained until his death fighting against the Ottomans at Mohács in 1526.[33] Thereupon, the next

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[28]Harry Schnitker, *Margaret of York. Princess of England, Duchess of Burgundy* (Donington, 2016).

[29]Monter, "An Experiment in Female Governance."

[30]Eichberger, *Women of Distinction*; Eichberger, *Women at the Burgundian Court*; Eichberger, "Like Aunt Like Niece? Assessing the Value of Margaret of Austria's Collection for Mary of Hungary," in *Mary of Hungary, Renaissance Patron and Collector. Gender, Art and Culture*, ed. Noelia Garcia Pérez (Turnhout, 2020), 43–58; Laura D. Gelfand, "Regency, Power and Dynastic Visual Memory: Margaret of Austria as Patron and Propagandist," in *The Texture of Society. Medieval Women in the Southern Low Countries*, eds. Ellen E. Kittell and Mary A. Suydan (New York, 2004), 203–20; Lorraine Attreed, "Gender, Patronage, and Diplomacy in the Early Career of Margaret of Austria (1480–1530)," *Mediterranean Studies* 20, no. 1 (2012): 3–27.

[31]Her correspondence is edited by Le Glay, *Correspondance de l'Empereur Maximilien Ier*, discussed by Gisela Naegle, "Écrire au père, écrire au prince: relations diplomatiques et familiales dans la correspondance de Maximilien Ier et de Marguerite d'Autriche," in *Négociations, traités et diplomatie dans l'espace Bourguignon (XIVe–XVIe siècles)*, ed. Jean-Marie Cauchies (Neuchâtel, 2013), 219–34 and Gisela Naegle, "Kommunikation unter Abwesenden – Informationen, Vertrauen und Konflikte im Briefwechsel Maximilians I. mit Margarete von Österreich (1507–1519)," *Troja. Jahrbuch für Renaissancemusik* (2019): 63–91; Claudia Kruzik, "Margarete von Österreich: Statthalterin der Niederlande und Tochter Kaiser Maximilians I. aus dem Blickwinkel der Korrespondenz mit ihrem Vater" (Diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 2010).

[32]Eichberger, "Like Aunt Like Niece?"; cf. Hohkamp, "Sisters, Aunts, and Cousins." For a case study on the categories of age and generation related to education and courtly formation see also Joseph F. Patrouch, *Queen's Apprentice. Archduchess Elizabeth, Empress Maria, the Habsburgs, and the Holy Roman Empire, 1554–1569* (Leiden 2010).

[33]On Mary's court in Buda, see Orsolya Réthelyi, "Die Anfänge der Ofener Hofhaltung Königin Marias von Ungarn," in *Maria von Ungarn (1505–1558). Eine Renaissancefürstin*, eds. Martina Fuchs and Orsolya Réthelyi (Münster, 2007), 221–43; Orsolya Réthelyi, "'Muess Hindurch Maister oder Knecht zu Warden': Mary of Hungary (1505–1558) and the Reinvention of the Queen's Court in Late Medieval Buda," in *Frictions and Failures. Cultural Encounters in Crisis*, ed. Almut Bues (Wiesbaden, 2017), 37–48; Orsolya Réthelyi, "Jagiellonian-Habsburg Marriage Policy and Cultural Transfer. The Question of Household and Court Ordinances," in Dybaś and Tringli, *Fürstentreffen*, 349–68; on Mary's households in Innsbruck, cf. Gernot Heiss, "Königin Maria von Ungarn und Böhmen (1505–1558). Ihr Leben und ihre wirtschaftlichen Interessen in Österreich, Ungarn und Böhmen" (Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna, 1971) and Paul-Joachim Heinig, "Umb Merer Zucht und Ordnung Willen. Ein Ordnungsentwurf für das Frauenzimmer des Innsbrucker Hofs aus den Ersten Tagen Kaiser Karls V (1519)," in *Das Frauenzimmer. Die Frau bei Hofe in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, eds. Jan Hirschbiegel and Werner Paravicini (Sigmaringen, 2000), 311–23.

Figure 4. Jean Hey, Margaret of Austria, 1490, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1975.1.130. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975.

generation unfolded a new portfolio of resources and activities. These were again framed by specific dynastic conjunctures, political and religious reforms, and socio-cultural dynamics that eventually led the two princesses in different directions: Mary following her aunt in 1530 as an

equally powerful regent of the Habsburg Low Countries, Anna as an esteemed partner of her husband Ferdinand.[34]

Even this brief overview unfolds some patterns that make visible factors that contributed to these women's political agency, as in Margret's and Mary's case, or—on account of their absence—foreclosed them, like for the most part in Bianca's case. A comparative in-depth assessment of the gendered dimensions of the three generations in the center of Maximilian's marriage politics thus needs to operate on several levels of analysis: it must look into (1) ideals and perceptions of the *personae* of Maximilian and his family members in relation to their effective tasks and interactions; (2) dynastic traditions, expectations, and obligations, including their political, legal, and social framing; (3) cultural norms and social practice at court including formation and education in their spatial contexts (residences, journeys); and (4) strategies of power and representation in a wider territorial framework.

Princes' Managers, People in Their Back Office, and Their Social Networks

And yet, brief overviews, like the one just given, again reduce complexity, which in turn puts just a few actors into the spotlight, making many others invisible. Who were the people who negotiated successful marriage arrangements, contributed with their knowledge, skills, and often also their financial resources to a splendid (or not so splendid) court life, fostered its social integration, or took on the burden of the economic and emotional costs of warfare?

Take for instance Johannes Cuspinianus, a top humanist and diplomatic "shooting star" at court and a key strategic figure in the negotiations that led to the "double-marriage" of Maximilian's grandchildren with the Jagiellonian heirs in 1515, a cornerstone for the territorial expansion of the Habsburgs only a decade later. Originally from Schweinfurt, he was first married to Anna Putsch (1502), the daughter of Ulrich Putsch from Vorarlberg, a barber and valet at the imperial court. Cuspinianus was then already a professor of medicine and rector of the University of Vienna. The famous portrait of the couple by Lucas Cranach (Figure 5) testifies to representations of spouses as partners and associates.[35]

This understanding is also found in letters and treatises written to and about erudite women or dedicated to them, which display humanist ideals of marriage as companionship, albeit rarely on an equal footing.[36]

Therefore, moving beyond the exceptional and looking more systematically into humanists' networks of kin, which included mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters alongside male peer circles, serves to shed light on the role of male and female members as brokers in the emperor's intellectual environment. Social ties were forged against the background of transregional socio-economic and humanist networks around 1500 and the changing ideals of marriage and companionship among male scholars in courtly and urban environments.[37] "Newcomers" from learned backgrounds were in fact able to

[34]Jacqueline Kerkhoff, *Maria van Hungarije en haar Hof (1505–1558): Tot plichtsbetrachting uitverkoren* (Hilversum, 2008); Orsolya Réthelyi, *Mary of Hungary: The Queen and Her Court 1521–1531*. Budapest History Museum, 30 September 2005 – 9 January 2006, Slovenská Národna Galéria, 2 February – 30 April 2006 (Budapest, 2005); Fuchs and Réthelyi, *Maria von Ungarn*; Bertrand Federinov and Gilles Docquier, eds., *Marie des Hongrie. Politique et culture sous la Renaissance aux Pays-Bas* (Morlanwelz, 2008); Pérez, *Mary of Hungary, Renaissance Patron and Collector*.

[35]On 1515 see Dybaś and Tringli, *Das Wiener Fürstentreffen*; on Cuspinianus as a humanist and diplomat see Christian Gastgeber and Elisabeth Klecker, eds., *Iohannes Cuspinianus (1473–1529). Ein Wiener Humanist und sein Werk im Kontext* (Vienna, 2012); the portrait is discussed by Hans Ankwicz von Kleehoven, "Cranachs Bildnisse des Dr. Cuspinian und seiner Frau," *Jahrbuch der Preuszischen Kunstsammlungen* 48 (1927): 230–34.

[36]Gadi Algazi, "'Habitus', 'Familia' und 'Forma Vitae'. Die Lebensweisen mittelalterlicher Gelehrter in muslimischen, jüdischen und christlichen Gemeinden vergleichend betrachtet," in *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Gelehrten im späten Mittelalter*, ed. Frank Rexroth (Ostfildern, 2010), 185–217; cf. Gabriele Jancke, "Selbstzeugnisse von Gelehrten und soziale Praktiken des Wortes – Personale Identität, Personkonzepte, Zugehörigkeit und Vergangenheitskonstruktionen," in *Geschichtsentwürfe und Identitätsbildung am Übergang zur Neuzeit*, eds. Ludger Grenzmann et al. (Berlin, 2016), 234–65.

[37]Esp. in Southern Germany and the Western and Upper Hungarian mining regions, cf. Elisabeth Klecker, Thomas Maisel, Meta Niederkorn-Bruck, and Christian Gastgeber, eds. *Artes – Artisten – Wissenschaft. Die Universität Wien in Spätmittelalter*

Figure 5. Lucas Cranach the Elder, Portraits of Johannes and Anna Cuspinian, 1502, Sammlung Oskar Reinhart, Winterthur.

craft their upward mobility in Maximilian's service and later at Mary's humanist court in Buda by various tools: formal education, individual skills, and personal adaptability (*Geschicklichkeit*) on the one hand, but equally their bilateral kin connections that tied them to established noble and urban elite families, on the other hand.

Thus, Cuspinianus's second wife Agnes Stainer (1514) connected him to the economic and political elite of Wiener Neustadt, the favorite residence of Maximilian's father, Emperor Frederick III. Agnes's sister Margaret was married to Alexius Funck, head of the Wiener Neustadt branch of the *Funck Gesellschaft*, one of the major Southern German trade associations. Other women in Agnes's wider kin also married upwardly mobile persons at court: Dorothea Gerolt became the spouse of Hans Glockengiesser from Nürnberg, a procurator at Frederick's III court of justice (*Kammergericht*). Dorothea's second husband, Stephan Geinperger from Passau, a professor of medicine in Vienna like Cuspinianus, became a member of the Wiener Neustadt elite by means of his affluent wife.[38]

Likewise, princely households were an important foundation of all sovereigns' agency. Social integration at court, or its failure, was by no means just a matter of princely skills but depended on a complex interplay of court traditions, formal organization, financial resources, and the interactions of individuals and court factions. In all of these aspects, gendered norms and perceptions affected personal agency. The well-researched courts of Margaret and Mary in the Low Countries show to what extent good organization, adequate financial provision, and competent partners on all levels made a difference in successful politics.[39] Bianca Maria's court, by contrast, demonstrates how political fault

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und Humanismus (Vienna 2015); Farkas Gábor Kiss and Christian Gastgeber, eds., *Companion to Central and Eastern European Humanism,* vol. 1*, Hungary* (Berlin, 2023).

[38]Sabean, Teuscher, and Mathieu, *Kinship in Europe* for the broader picture; Judit Majorossy and Emese Sarkadi Nagy, "Reconstructing Memory: Reconsidering the Origins of a Late Medieval Epitaph from Wiener Neustadt," *Acta Historiae Atrium Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 60 (2019): 71–122 on the specific case. Further examples include economically salient families and their functions as "companies" such as the Pirckheimer and Tucher in Nuremberg, the Thurzó in Upper Hungary, and the Pemfflinger in Buda.

[39]See notes 29–34.

lines and financial constraints mirrored internal household politics.[40] Roughly, it consisted of German and Italian-speaking personnel. Following the arrival of Maximilian's second wife at the Innsbruck court in 1493, members from prominent Lombard families in Bianca's entourage such as the Arco, Cavalli, Chiavenna, or Caymo joined with their equivalents from the Habsburg lands like the Wolkenstein, Lang, Thun, Firmian, and Serntein. Many of the newcomers remained connected to their regions and milieus of origin and thus also remained part of political factions.[41]

These constellations resulted in disputes over major and minor issues of all sorts. Language was only one of them; costly extravagance was another frequent allegation. This type of friction was embedded in complex relations of patronage and kin among courtiers and members of Bianca's *Frauenzimmer*. In a broader perspective, however, they can also be read as the micropolitical dimension of the political and military conflict over the duchy of Milan. What we know about these contentions mostly stems from different correspondences between the involved parties, but also other office-holders, envoys, and ambassadors. Daniela Unterholzner collected almost 250 letters from and to Bianca Maria plus seventy-two envoys' reports documenting the queen's regular contacts with her mother Bona of Savoy, her family in Milan, the Gonzaga in Mantua, and the Este in Ferrara.[42] For instance, the couple Pietro Caymo and Violanta Cayma—the latter one of Bianca's closest confidants—recurrently caused complaints both because of Violanta's political partisanship in Milan and her court-internal alliances with the *Hofmeister* and *Hofmeisterin* Niklas and Paula of Firmian.[43] When Milan's ambassador Hieronimo Brascha accused Violanta of secretly conspiring with the envoy of Naples, Maximilian forbade his wife to grant him further audiences. Pietro Caymo was notorious for recurrent quarrels over rank: Brascha—perhaps an interested party himself—reported that Caymo defied *Hofmeister* Firmian's orders and courtly seating arrangements. Eventually, on Brascha's and others' intervention, the couple was sent back to Milan in 1496.[44]

Contradicting Maximilian's personal efforts to introduce stricter discipline in his second wife's *Frauenzimmer* than he had himself experienced with Mary in Burgundy, various letters give the impression of a quite merry life at the Innsbruck court. Around 1500, Apollonia Lang, the sister of Maximilian's influential advisor and diplomat Matthäus Lang, archbishop of Salzburg, had a relationship with Duke George of Bavaria, that made him frequently visit Queen Bianca's court, while both Lang and Bianca's *Hofmeister* Firmian looked for a more appropriate husband for Apollonia. Yet, both Lang himself and Maximilian's later eminent chancellor Zyprian von Serntein are recurrently reported to have enjoyed social life in the *Frauenzimmer*.[45]

Correspondingly, in a letter from June 1498 Barbara Wolkenstein, whose parents had held important positions in the administration of Tirol and Bianca's Innsbruck court respectively, and herself a member of the *Frauenzimmer*, addressed Serntein and his appearance in a mocking manner: She hopes for him that upon his travels he should be pestered in his sleep by "black jumping bugs" (*die schwarzen hupfotten frantzosen*) to make him toss and turn in bed, and thus lose weight and fit better

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[40]The most recent and comprehensive study is Unterholzner, "Bianca Maria Sforza"; for synopses with conceptual perspectives see Lutter and Unterholzner, "Fürstin ohne Ort"; Lutter, "Herrschaft und Geschlecht"; for details see the contributions quoted in note 25 and in Frenzel et al., *Maximilian I. Aufbruch in die Neuzeit*.

[41]Unterholzner, "Bianca Maria Sforza," 71–108 and 167–81.

[42]Unterholzner, "Bianca Maria Sforza"; on the Gonzaga and Este families see Isabella Lazzarini, "News from Mantua. Diplomatic Networks and Political Conflict in the Age of the Italian Wars (1493–1499)," in Noflatscher et al., *Maximilian I.*, 111–30; Christina Antenhofer, "From Local Signori to European High Nobility: The Gonzaga Family Networks in the Fifteenth Century," in *Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond. Experiences Since the Middle Ages*, eds. Christopher H. Johnson, David W. Sabean, Simon Teuscher, and Francesca Trivellato (New York, 2011), 55–74.

[43]See Lutter and Unterholzner, "Fürstin ohne Ort," 76f with archival evidence. Paula originated herself from the Veronese Cavalli family, and in her first marriage was wed to Victor of Thun, see Melanie Niedermair, "Paula Cavalli – Hofmeisterin der Königin Bianca Maria Sforza" (Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna, 2010); Noflatscher, *Räte und Herrscher*, 254.

[44]Lutter, "Herrschaft und Geschlecht," 214f according to Felice Calvi, *Bianca Maria Sforza-Visconti: Regina dei Romani, Imperatrice Germanica e gli ambasciatori di Lodovico il Moro alla corte Cesarea secondo nuovi documenti* (Milano, 1888) with archival documentation.

[45]Apollonia Lang eventually married the count of Lodron in 1503; archival references for these examples in Lutter, "Herrschaft und Geschlecht," 217.

into his armor.[46] Both the tone and contents in their intimacy nicely confirm Maximilian's concerns about moral decency in the queen's environment, and likewise contradict the idealized gendered images of knightly masculinity forged at contemporary European courts, and more specifically in Maximilian's own environment, peaking in the "works of fame" on his triple alter ego *Freydal*, *Theuerdank*, and *Weisskunig*.[47]

These anecdotal glimpses reveal not only various overlaps but also contradictions between gendered norms and their representations on the one hand, and the exigencies of pragmatic politics and court life on the other hand that need to be assessed within a larger political framework. Continuous warfare around 1500 devoured substantial parts of Maximilian's financial resources, and both his own and Bianca Maria's households suffered from ever more rigid cost-saving measures executed by Maximilian's officials. Bianca's household, however, had to cope with much deeper cuts than the emperor's. From 1497 onward, her Italian ladies-in-waiting were continuously dismissed on *Hofmeister* Firmian's advice, which simultaneously contributed to cut the queen off from her social networks in Northern Italy; but even after the loss of Milan in 1500 the queen's household had to be pawned recurrently when her husband ran out of money on his many journeys.[48] After all, Maximilian, as head of the dynastic family, conceived of himself as being in charge of all parts of this family's households. However, structurally similar restrictions are also documented by court ordinances and financial accounts during Mary's and Anna's time in Innsbruck.[49] This patriarchal attitude was in fact deeply embedded in the medieval discourse on princely virtues and also led to disputes with Margaret when their interests clashed in matters of recruitment and patronage. However, she prevailed more often than not.[50]

All these measures show how different means of resource management interacted in their effects on gendered agency. It was not least Maximilian's double function as head of the Habsburg lands and the Holy Roman Empire that—together with warfare—caused the particularly high mobility and diversity of his court. Compared to the Burgundian tradition, this was after all—humanist aspirations notwithstanding—a rather martial environment, dominated by men and oriented almost exclusively toward the emperor. The situation, however, was similar in Hungary; when Mary and her court arrived at Buda in 1521, there was only male court staff available, and she had to actively reclaim physical space for her own household.[51]

Aside from letters, account books and personnel lists record different tasks of household members of both genders, modes of payment, as well as co-entrepreneurship among spouses.[52] Some of them were highly visible, like the *Hofmeister* and *Hofmeisterin*. Others held no official offices, but nevertheless played important roles, like wives of chapel members in the recruitment of their husbands: since the households of married couples often fed and housed other chapel singers, especially choirboys and organ students, they had a considerable potential for saving costs to the court.[53] Such economic

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[46]Barbara of Wolkenstein to Zyprian of Serntein (Tiroler Landesarchiv Innsbruck, Maximiliana 1.41-1498.6). I am grateful to Andreas Zajic for bringing this letter to my attention.

[47]Jan-Dirk Müller, *Gedechtnus. Literatur und Hofgesellschaft um Maximilian I*. Munich 1982; Kagerer, *Macht und Medien*; Louthan and Green, *Theuerdank*.

[48]On Firmian's complaints with archival documentation see Lutter, "Herrschaft und Geschlecht," 215f; on the household's pawning, see Lutter and Unterholzner, "Fürstin ohne Ort," 65f and 77–79; Lutter, "Herrschaft und Geschlecht," 220 with footnote 67 for a comparison with Mary's Burgundian court.

[49]For Mary's and Anna's Innsbruck court, see Heinig, "Umb Merer Zucht und Ordnung Willen"; Kerkhoff, "Die Hofhaltung Marias von Ungarn."

[50]Lutter, "Zur Repräsentation von Geschlechterverhältnissen."

[51]For the comparison see Lutter, "Zur Repräsentation von Geschlechterverhältnissen" and "Herrschaft und Geschlecht"; for Buda, see Réthelyi, "'Muess Hindurch Maister oder Knecht zu Warden,'" esp. at 38f.

[52]See also Michail A. Bojcov, "'Das Frauenzimmer' oder 'die Frau bei Hofe'?" in Hirschbiegel and Paravicini, *Das Frauenzimmer*, 327–37; Michail A. Bojcov, "Zum Frauenzimmer am Hof Erzherzog Sigmunds," in *Der Innsbrucker Hof. Residenz und Höfische Gesellschaft in Tirol vom 15. bis 19. Jahrhundert*, Archiv für österreichische Geschichte 138, ed. Heinz Noflatscher (Vienna, 2005), 197–211.

[53]Grantley McDonald, "Isaac as a Member of the Court Chapel of Maximilian I," *Musiktheorie: Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 35 (2020): 199–210, esp. at 201 and 204.

considerations provide a key reason for Maximilian's treasury to cut back on expenses for the courts of the young princesses Anna and Maria at Innsbruck.

Other employees of both genders become discernible via letters of supplication to Maximilian, for instance, when families suffered hardship on account of outstanding payment, illness, or warfare. In her doctoral dissertation, Nadja Krajicek analyzed 1,560 letters—of which roughly 10 percent were written by women—addressed to Maximilian I in his diverse political functions by secular and ecclesiastic, noble and urban elites, but also by common people, peasants, craftspeople, and soldiers. They address their tasks at court, in mining and warfare, and in various offices in all parts of the realm. Although most of these requests were answered by growing offices and thus again by people in the emperor's shadow, Maximilian bothered to be in charge, again following the imagery of the just, yet benevolent and gracious ruler and *pater familias*.[54] When filing through this huge corpus, we again encounter several of Bianca's court officials and ladies-in-waiting: *Hofmeister* Niklas Firmian desperately seeks funds to staff Bianca's household, Violanta Cayma comes forward with a request to support her husband and children upon retirement. In 1499, the former lady-in-waiting Barbara of Stamp asked to be paid the salary of her husband, who had been killed in war, to feed her five children.[55] Another widow who lost her husband, a wagoner, together with two of their horses in war, asks for compensation for her loss; the remaining horses are no longer usable. A pregnant widow begs for money for her baby and its siblings; her husband had been a loyal servant for thirty years.[56]

In short, supplicants of both genders document various aspects of heterogeneous duties and responsibilities in Maximilian's services that contributed to the emperor's rule. While glimpses of most of their individual lives remain few, together and through their social networks they testify to the complex interrelations between rule and office, the possibilities of individual ascent, and the politics of kinship and gender. They thus yield an impressive body of voices that contradict traditional views on the allegedly limited agency of all those who in fact contributed to what only later became conceived of as the grand design of one princely mastermind.

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[54]Most recently, Nadja Krajicek, "Suppliken als Ego-Dokumente am Beispiel von Bittschriften an Maximilian I. (1486–1519)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna, 2021), here at 89–91; see also Krajicek, *Frauen in Notlagen. Suppliken an Maximilian I. als Selbstzeugnisse* (Vienna, 2018).

[55]Krajicek, "Suppliken als Ego-Dokumente," 349: *Hofmeister* Firmian needs more money for Bianca's household: 2200 guilders for 16 weeks are by no means sufficient; 377f on Violanta Cayma and Pietro Caymo; 215 on Barbara Stamp and her family.

[56]Krajicek, "Suppliken als Ego-Dokumente," 262f for both examples of widows; see also 267 for a request of provision for Eleonora Chiavenna, former lady-in-waiting, in the abbey of Sonnenburg; and 428 for Ursula von Heudorf who after having fallen ill requests a life-long pension.