

*Clearing Dynastic Debts:
Archduke Albert and the Logic Behind the Oñate Treaty*

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For almost a century and a half the Habsburgs managed to maintain two branches and have them work together in relative harmony¹. In the diplomatic parlance of the day the expression “House of Austria” summed up that bicephalous reality. The Spanish branch was the senior of the two, both in terms of birthright and in terms of the extent of its possessions. It was only towards the end of the seventeenth century that the decline of the Spanish Monarchy and the spectacular ascent of its Austrian counterpart brought them more or less on a par. Until then the relative modesty of the Austrian branch had been somewhat compensated by its virtual monopoly over the imperial dignity. The formula of their generally harmonious relations consisted of a number of ingredients that have often been summed up by historians. The most striking of them all was the frequency of intermarriage and the genetic toll it would eventually levy. No less apparent was the importance of a shared ideology that was based on the assumption that the dynasty’s right to rule and cherish ambitions of universal monarchy was based on its unwavering support of Roman Catholicism. The Order of the Golden Fleece served as an instrument to reward loyal services to either branch. Imperial prerogatives could be used to meet dynastic needs. American silver served to maintain a network of pensioners. The overall picture is one of a tightly knit and quite efficient family enterprise.

The Oñate Treaty that was concluded by King Philip III and Archduke Ferdinand of Styria on 6 June 1617 is traditionally cited as the glaring exception that confirms the rule. In brief the treaty stipulated that Philip renounced his

¹ This article was written during the semester that I spent as a visiting scholar at the History Department of Columbia University. I want to thank the Department and in particular Prof. Martha C. Howell for their generous hospitality.

claims on the kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia in exchange for a number of territorial concessions. Once elected Emperor, Ferdinand would invest Philip with the Italian fiefs of Finale and Piombino. At the opportune moment, he would also cede the strategically important Landgraviate of Alsace. In the view of Otto Gliss, whose doctoral thesis traced the negotiations concerning the treaty, the proceedings came close to legalized extortion. Basing his claim to succeed to the elective thrones of Hungary and Bohemia on the rights of his mother, Archduchess Anna of Austria, Philip demanded to be compensated for his renunciation. Gliss considered these rights highly dubious and therefore took a dim view on Philip's deportment². More recently, Magdalena S. Sánchez has reconsidered the King's motives. Maintaining the label of a divided house, she has analysed the process as one in which Philip had to make a rational choice between the conflicting priorities of the various parts of the Spanish Monarchy. The outcome was flawed and would soon be swept aside by the revolt in Bohemia³. This contribution develops a radically different argument. It relocates the Oñate Treaty to the context of the inheritance disputes that soured relations among the members of the Austrian branch in the first decades of the seventeenth century and wants to demonstrate that Philip III was merely acting as the proxy and heir apparent of his uncle and brother-in-law, Archduke Albert, when he claimed Alsace and the Italian fiefs as his rightful part. In order to make that point it will have to descend to the not always glamorous way in which great families clear their internal debts.

In its third generation the Austrian branch of the House of Habsburg suffered from an abundance of archdukes. Emperor Ferdinand I had three surviving sons. The crowns of the Holy Roman Empire, Hungary and Bohemia were elective and primogeniture was at that stage unknown in the Hereditary Lands. Division therefore imposed itself. The eldest son, Maximilian II, succeeded as emperor, king of Hungary and Bohemia and archduke of Lower and Upper Austria. Archduke Ferdinand, the second son, was given Tyrol and the scattered territories of Further Austria. Archduke Charles, the youngest of the three, became the ruler of Inner Austria that comprised Styria, Carinthia and

² O. GLISS: *Der Oñate Vertrag*, Limburg an der Lahn 1934, pp. 15-26.

³ M. S. SÁNCHEZ: "A House Divided: Spain, Austria, and the Bohemian and Hungarian Succession", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 25 (1994), pp. 887-903.

Carniola, as well as a number of smaller provinces to the south. Things got truly complex when the next generation produced a multitude of grandsons. Archduke Ferdinand of Tyrol died in 1595, leaving no legitimate male heirs. He did however sire two morganatic sons, who were given some minor territories. The fate of the county of Tyrol and of the rest of Further Austria was left to be decided. Archduke Charles, on the other hand, introduced primogeniture in Inner Austria by means of his will. Younger sons would henceforth have to content themselves with a yearly allowance ⁴. As a result, his eldest son Ferdinand became his universal heir in 1590. Ferdinand took care however to secure suitable ecclesiastical incomes for his younger brothers ⁵.

The six sons of Maximilian II failed to reach such a neat arrangement. Their father having died intestate at the Imperial Diet of 1576, Emperor Rudolf II and the Archdukes Ernst, Matthias, Maximilian, Albert and Wenzel had to sort out the inheritance among themselves. Matthias was in the Netherlands at the time; Albert and Wenzel were living in Spain. Rudolf insisted that the settlement only concerned the two Austrias. He had been elected King of Hungary (1572) and Bohemia (1575) in his father's lifetime and therefore considered the two kingdoms his private property. A compromise was reached in April 1578, confirming Rudolf as the ruler of all the territories left by his father. He promised to compensate his brothers by paying them a yearly allowance of 45.000 German guilders (slightly less than 33.000 ducats) each. 25.000 would be paid out of domanial revenues in Austria, the remainder would come from Rudolf's private means, meaning Hungary and Bohemia. Within three years each brother was to receive a suitable residence in Austria. It ought to produce at least 5.000 guilders in revenue and that amount would thereafter be deduced from their allowance. The residence and the allowance would be hereditary and free from feudal levies ⁶.

⁴ G. TURBA: *Geschichte des Thronfolgerechtes in allen habsburgischen Ländern bis zur pragmatischen Sanktion Kaiser Karls VI., 1156 bis 1732*, Vienna and Leipzig 1903, pp. 199-200.

⁵ R. REINHARDT: "Kontinuität und Diskontinuität: Zum Problem der Koadjutorie mit dem Recht der Nachfolge in der neuzeitlichen Germania Sacra", in H. NEUHAUS and J. KUNISCH (eds.): *Der dynastische Fürstenstaat: Zur Bedeutung von Sukzessionsordnungen für die Entstehung des frühmodernen Staates*, Historische Forschungen 21, Berlin 1982, pp. 134, 154-155.

⁶ J. FISCHER: "Die Erbteilung Kaiser Rudolfs II. mit seinen fünf Brüdern vom 10. April 1578 mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Antheiles des Erzherzoges Ferdinand II. von Tirol an der vorhergehenden Verhandlungen: Nach bisher unbekanntem Archivalien", *Zeitschrift des Ferdinandeums für Tirol und Voralberg* 3. Folge, 41 (1897) pp. 5-14.

Far from safeguarding concord among the brothers, the settlement proved a constant source of tensions. Rudolf failed to keep his obligations. He took no efforts to ensure that the allowances were paid regularly, let alone to the full. Contrary to the agreement, he did not assign them to specific sources of revenue. Nor did he make haste in handing over the residences that had been singled out. All the while Rudolf's brothers were more or less left to fend for themselves. Some coped better than others. Albert and Wenzel were suitably provided for by Philip II. Before he left for the Netherlands, Ernst acted as governor of the two Austrias and commander in chief of the Habsburg armies in Hungary. He also became regent of Inner Austria during part of the minority of Archduke Ferdinand. Maximilian competed unsuccessfully for a number of prince bishoprics before becoming Grandmaster of the Teutonic Order in 1585⁷. The dignity brought him a small state in Southern Germany and an income that allowed him to live independently according to his station. His means increased further when he took over from Ernst as regent in Inner Austria and became commander of part of the Habsburg army in the war against the Turks⁸. In many ways Matthias fared worst. His ill-conceived adventure in the Netherlands earned him the enduring wrath of Philip II, who made it a point of blocking Matthias' designs on the neighbouring electorate of Cologne and the prince bishoprics of Munster or Liege⁹. Similar plans to obtain an ecclesiastical principality in Salzburg or Speyer failed as well. The situation ameliorated somewhat when Matthias succeeded Ernst as governor of the two Austrias and commander in chief in 1593¹⁰. By that stage however, Rudolf's reluctance to support Matthias in his quest for a suitable station and the constant wrangling about the allowances had done much to alienate the brothers.

⁷ G. VON LOJEWSKI: *Bayerns Weg nach Köln: Geschichte der bayerischen Bistumspolitik in der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Bonner historische Forschungen 21, Bonn 1962, pp. 204-205, 317-318, 335, 388 and 427-429.

⁸ H. NOFLATSCHER: *Glaube, Reich und Dynastie: Maximilian der Deutsche Meister, 1558-1618*, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens 11, Marburg 1987, pp. 80-135 and 173-184.

⁹ G. VON LOJEWSKI: *Bayerns Weg nach Köln...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-205 and 317-318.

¹⁰ H. STURMBERGER: "Die Anfänge des Bruderkonfliktes in Habsburg: Das Problem einer österreichischen Länderteilung nach dem Tode Maximilians II. und die Residenz des Erzherzogs Matthias in Linz", *Mitteilungen des Oberösterreichischen Landesarchivs* 5 (1957) pp. 173-183.

Perhaps this outcome was inevitable. It had taken a lot of pressure to make Rudolf agree to the 45.000 guilders a year in the first place¹¹. His original offer had been 30.000 guilders, which was still a lot more generous than the 20.000 that Archduke Charles would prudently apportion to each of his younger sons. Wenzel having died before he could enter into the agreement, the total outlay due in allowances stood at 180.000 guilders (above 130.000 ducats) a year, a sum that may well have exceeded what Rudolf could actually afford to pay¹². Habsburg finances were invariably strained. Considerable parts of the Austrian domains had been pawned for ready cash, rendering them useless to provide a fixed income. Resources were depleted even further during the Long Turkish War (1593-1606). The death of Ernst in 1595 brought little relief. Since his allowance was hereditary, the four remaining brothers were entitled to a quarter each. It saved Rudolf 11.250 guilders (about 8.200 ducats) a year, while raising the standard allowance to 56.250 guilders (above 41.000 ducats). In practice, only Maximilian stood to receive that sum. Albert, who knew he would find ample compensation in the dowry of the Infanta Isabella, passed the rise on to the impecunious Matthias; thereby increasing the latter's allowance to 67.500 guilders¹³. Matthias' gratitude was such that he needed almost eight years to write a letter of thanks and even then it was filled with complaints about arrears¹⁴.

Yet if anyone had reason to complain, it was Albert. Matthias and Maximilian may have received their allowances partially and haphazardly, but at least they got something¹⁵. Albert never saw a single kreuzer in thirty years. When he finally took up the matter with Rudolf in the fall of 1608, the emperor owed him at least 1.2 million guilders (over 875.000 ducats)¹⁶. While Rudolf

¹¹ J. FISCHER: "Die Erbteilung Kaiser Rudolfs II...", *op. cit.*, pp. 10-12.

¹² G. TURBA: *Geschichte des Thronfolgerechtes...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 200 and 202.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 180.

¹⁴ HHStA, *Belgien Belgische Korrespondenz* 27: Archduke Matthias to Archduke Albert, 12 February 1605. Albert's renunciation was dated 1 August 1597.

¹⁵ HHStA, *Belgien Belgische Korrespondenz* 29: 1/29: Archduke Maximilian to Archduke Albert, 20 April 1609. See also: ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 441, fol. 198: Peter de Visscher to Archduke Albert, 4 November 1609; and G. TURBA: *Geschichte des Thronfolgerechtes...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 180.

¹⁶ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 39, fol. 116: Instructions for Peter de Visscher, 16 October 1608; 331: Drafts of instructions, 16 October 1608; *Idem*, 424: Instructions for Jacques de Zeelandre, 26 February 1614.

avidly accepted the exotic presents brought by Albert's envoy, he studiously avoided giving a clear reply to the diplomatic memoranda¹⁷. When the answer finally came, it proved to be most disappointing. Rudolf freely admitted that he had never paid Albert the allowance, but then Albert had never really needed the money anyway. He had always been amply provided for by his ecclesiastical revenues or his wife's dowry. Meanwhile Rudolf had spent the money "for the common good of Christianity and the wellbeing of the august House of Austria" in the war against the Turks. Therefore, instead of making demands, Albert ought to be grateful and prove his gratitude by remitting whatever Rudolf might still owe him¹⁸. Such arguments could not sway Albert however. It was quite obvious that benefiting from ecclesiastical revenue or not residing in the Hereditary Lands had no bearing whatsoever on the stipulations of the 1578 agreement. He likewise rejected suggestions to cancel out the arrears in his allowance against the taxes that the Habsburg Netherlands still had to pay the Imperial treasury¹⁹. Albert felt that it would have been inappropriate to pay the so called *Römermonate* in the first place, since he had been fighting a lengthy war without receiving any of the aid the Empire ought to have sent him under the Transaction of Augsburg²⁰.

The suggestion to trade off allowances for taxes demonstrated how little the public and the private spheres had been separated in the House of Habsburg. The interplay of these two spheres complicated the search for compromise.

¹⁷ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 331: Memorandum of Peter de Visscher to Emperor Rudolf II, 17 December 1608; 439, fol. 254: Peter de Visscher to Archduke Albert, 20 December 1608; 440, fol. 29, 54, 118 and 252: Peter de Visscher to Archduke Albert, 17 January, 7 February, 14 March and 6 June 1609; 441, fol. 1, 11 and 24: Peter de Visscher to Archduke Albert, 6 June, 13 June and 27 June 1609.

¹⁸ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 333: Emperor Rudolf II to Archduke Albert, 21 July 1609.

¹⁹ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 331: Drafts of instructions for Peter de Visscher, 16 October 1608.

²⁰ E. DE BORCHGRAVE: *Histoire des rapports de droit public qui existèrent entre les provinces belges et l'Empire d'Allemagne depuis le démembrement de la monarchie carolingienne jusqu'à l'incorporation de la Belgique à la République française*, Mémoires couronnés et mémoires des savants étrangers publiés par l'Académie royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-arts de Belgique 36, Brussels 1871, pp. 178-184, 208 and 254-256; ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 325: Matthias Welsler to Archduke Albert, 3 June 1605; 466, fol. 1: Archduke Albert to Matthias Welsler, 1 June 1605.

Emotions and perceptions tended to get in the way of impartiality. There was thinly veiled resentment if not jealousy on the part of Rudolf when mentioning Albert's marriage and dowry. No doubt he remembered how the Infanta had once been promised to him and how he had negotiated in vain to secure the Netherlands as her dowry. Rudolf moreover assumed that Albert had had more than his share already. No doubt Matthias and Maximilian felt the same. There was simply not enough to provide for everyone. Albert ruled prestigious and potentially wealthy provinces. That ought to suffice. Albert however, drew a clear distinction between his wife's possessions and his own entitlement to part of his father's patrimony. He defined the matter in legal terms and could summon the 1578 agreement in support of his case. His brothers took a pragmatic view. He claimed his rightful share in the possessions of the Austrian branch. They reckoned that he had been amply provided for by the dynasty as a whole. The Austrian Habsburgs were paying the price for their political culture. Their preference for piecemeal arrangements proved a source of increasing instability. Only a general family pact could have settled the succession beyond dispute. In the absence of it, fraternal squabbling was unavoidable. It was not so much a lack of understanding between the Spanish and the Austrian branches, but a lack of unity among the sons of Maximilian II that weakened the House of Habsburg in the early seventeenth century.

For years, negotiations about the succession in Tyrol and Further Austria led nowhere. When dividing the Hereditary Lands among his three sons, Emperor Ferdinand I had simply laid down that if one of them died without heirs his possessions would pass to the remaining archdukes. The wording was so vague that it allowed widely different interpretations. Upon the death of Ferdinand of Tyrol, Matthias, Maximilian and the archdukes of Inner Austria supposed that it meant the Tyrolean inheritance returned to the Austrian branch as a whole. Rudolf however invoked the *Privilegium maius* to demand that the principle of primogeniture should be applied. In this line of thinking, he was the only rightful heir. At first, neither side was prepared to yield. Since the territories could not be left ungoverned, it was agreed to empower Rudolf to receive the constitutional homage by the estates on behalf of the Austrian branch as a whole²¹. Albert pursued his own agenda. After taking ample information, he rallied to the

²¹ G. TURBA: *Geschichte des Thronfolgerechtes...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–176.

otherwise isolated emperor, by agreeing to cede his share of the inheritance to Rudolf²². Yet his consent was soon followed by demands that Rudolf tried to placate in vague and soothing terms. Albert, it now transpired, was prepared to accept Rudolf's succession to Tyrol and Further Austria if he would receive part of it in return²³. The move backfired. In February 1602 Rudolf abandoned Albert and struck a deal with his adversaries. Tyrol and Further Austria were not to be partitioned and would be governed in turn by the descendants of Maximilian II and Charles of Inner Austria. The ruling archduke became regent rather than prince. Four councillors would monitor his actions, with each branch appointing two. Archduke Maximilian, whose solemn vows prevented him from having legal offspring, became the first ruler²⁴. Having been shut out entirely, Albert simply refused to ratify the agreement. The president of the Aulic Council, the Landgrave of Leuchtenberg, was sent over as imperial ambassador to plead the cause²⁵. Maximilian, Rudolf and Ferdinand of Inner Austria wrote persuasive letters²⁶. It had little effect. Albert indicated that he was prepared to compromise, but stuck to his demand for compensation²⁷. Since "the emperor has given us absolutely nothing until now", he wrote Maximilian, "we have to reserve our hereditary rights on the Tyrolean portion"²⁸. For Albert, there could be no settlement over Tyrol without the execution of the 1578 agreement.

²² HHStA, *Belgien Belgische Korrespondenz* 7: 3/13: Archduke Albert to Emperor Rudolf II, 13 February 1598.

²³ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 348: Emperor Rudolf II to Archduke Albert, 14 March 1598.

²⁴ G. TURBA: *Geschiede des Thronfolgerechtes...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-179.

²⁵ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 36, fol. 160: Archduke Albert to Emperor Rudolf II, 26 August 1605.

²⁶ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 37, fol. 53 and 83: Archduke Albert to Emperor Rudolf II, 1 June 1606; and Archduke Albert to Archduke Maximilian, 8 September 1606; 475, fol. 131: Emperor Rudolf II to Archduke Albert, 20 July 1608; HHStA, *Belgien Belgische Korrespondenz* 28: 1/73: Archduke Maximilian to Archduke Albert, 18 January 1607; ARA, *Handschriften Verzameling*, 2835, fol. 44: Archduke Ferdinand to Archduke Albert, 14 February 1607 (modern copy).

²⁷ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 38, fol. 10: Archduke Albert to Archduke Maximilian, 10 November 1606; HHStA, *Belgien Belgische Korrespondenz*, 28: Archduke Maximilian to Archduke Albert, 10 December 1606.

²⁸ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 37, fol. 83: Archduke Albert to Archduke Maximilian, 8 September 1606.

As the negotiations dragged on, Rudolf sensed the opportunity of gaining control over Tyrol after all. In January 1609 he appeared ready to change sides once more, asking Albert's ambassador "what part of Further Austria Albert desired most" and suggesting it might be the county of Ferrette (Pfirt in German), since it was closest to the Franche-Comté²⁹. It seems likely though that Albert's ambitions were not limited to Ferrette alone. The county had long merged with the Sundgau, the core of Habsburg possessions in Alsace. The aspiration to acquire the whole of Habsburg Alsace, thereby extending the Franche-Comté to the banks of the Rhine, was already cherished by the Dukes of Burgundy. The strategic importance of the region increased further still when it became part of the Spanish Road between Milan and the Netherlands³⁰. Albert and Isabella passed through the Sundgau in August 1599³¹. Apparently, the region caught Albert's attention and he sought means of extending his influence there. The sustained nature of Albert's interest in expanding his control into the region of Alsace should not be underestimated. Everything suggests that this was where he hoped to obtain his share in the patrimony of the Austrian Habsburgs.

While trying to divert this unwelcome attention, his brothers once mentioned Finale and Piombino³². Finale was a strategic port on the Ligurian coast. It constituted a small fief of the Holy Roman Empire and had become a Spanish protectorate in the 1570s. Early in 1598 the local margrave sold his remaining rights to Philip II, but Rudolf withheld the necessary imperial assent. His refusal only hardened when Spanish troops occupied Finale in 1602³³.

²⁹ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 440, fol. 22: Peter de Visscher to Archduke Albert, 22 January 1609.

³⁰ G. PARKER: *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659: The logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries' Wars*, Cambridge 1975, p. 55.

³¹ *Collection des voyages des souverains des Pays-Bas*, ed. L. P. Gachard and C. Piot, Brussels 1882, vol. 4, pp. 513-514. HHStA, *Belgien Belgische Korrespondenz*, 7: 4/76: Emperor Rudolf II to Archduke Albert, 31 October 1599.

³² ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 440, fol. 57: Peter de Visscher to Archduke Albert, 14 February 1609.

³³ B. CHUBODA: *Spain and the Empire, 1519-1643*, New York 1977, p. 146; M. S. SÁNCHEZ: *The Empress, the Queen and the Nun: Women and Power at the Court of Philip III of Spain*, The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science 116th series, 2, Baltimore and London 1998, pp. 128-130.

Piombino was in a comparable situation. The principality and its port on the northern reaches of the Tyrrhenian Sea lay within reach of the Spanish held *Stato dei Presidi*. This proved decisive when a succession crisis erupted at the death of the local prince in 1603. On the pretext of defending the rights of one of the claimants, Spanish troops were quick to occupy the principality and had every intention of staying there³⁴. Under these circumstances a nominal transfer of both these territories to Albert probably looked like an elegant solution. Albert did not rise to the bait however, at least not for the time being. If he had accepted Finale or Piombino at that stage, he would merely have stood in as Spain's proxy. His own designs were on the banks of the Rhine, not on the coasts of the Mediterranean. Even then, it is truly significant to see the cession of Alsace, Finale and Piombino being discussed as early as 1609. Within a decade these three possessions were to be the prize of the Oñate Treaty.

Matters still stood there after the death of Rudolf II and the succession of his brother Matthias. Not without reason, Matthias' favourite Bishop Melchior Khlesl called the negotiations "a great labyrinth"³⁵. Distinguishing between the succession as pertaining to the public sphere and the others as merely private matters would be a gross anachronism. To Albert and the other members of the House of Habsburg these issues were inextricably intertwined and had to be resolved by means of a package deal. The outcome of the negotiations of the years 1613-1617 can only be understood if all dimensions of the settlement are taken into account. Any treatment that focuses on the political aspects and ignores the financial and the material is therefore bound to draw wrong or at any rate one sided conclusions.

In February 1614 Albert summed up his views on the state of affairs in the set of instructions he gave to Jacques de Zeelandre, who was to become his envoy at the Imperial Court. The brief itemized his outstanding claims, beginning with the yearly allowance of 45.000 German guilders (around 33.000

³⁴ E. ROMERO GARCÍA: "El señorío de Piombino: Un ejemplo de influencia institucional hispánica en la Italia del siglo XVI", *Hispania: Revista española de historia* 164 (1986) pp. 517-518; M. S. SÁNCHEZ: "A House Divided...", *op. cit.*, pp. 895-896; D. BÜCHEL and A. KARSTEN: "Die 'Borgia-Krise' des Jahres 1632: Rom, das Reichslehen Piombino und Europa", *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 30 (2003), pp. 391-392.

³⁵ ARA, *Secretarie van Staat en Oorlog* 494ter, fol. 121: Bishop Melchior Khlesl to Archduke Albert, 28 Aug. 1613.

ducats) that had been agreed upon at the partition of the inheritance of Maximilian II in 1578. In violation of the terms of the agreement, none of the allowance had ever been assigned on domanial income in Austria, Bohemia and Hungary. Rudolf had never paid a Kreutzer. Matthias had repeatedly promised to make amends, but had so far failed to do so. The situation was more or less the same with regards to the share that Albert had inherited of the allowance of his brother Ernst. Since the death of Rudolf, that now amounted to 15.000 guilders yearly. In the course of Rudolf's reign arrears on the allowances had accrued to 1,2 million guilders (875.000 ducats). Since then payments had fallen behind with another 200.000 guilders (above 145.000 ducats). The cession of three lordships in Austria had been proposed but never seen through. Nor had Albert ever been put in possession of the residence that ought to have been provided according to the agreement of 1578. The one area in which some progress had been made concerned the movables of Rudolf and there again a considerable balance remained to be settled³⁶.

Before de Zeelandre was put in charge, negotiations had been in the hands of Ottavio Visconti and Peter Peckius, two experienced diplomats in the archducal service. After much discussion an interim agreement had been reached on 13 February 1613. Regarding the yearly allowance it stipulated that Matthias would pay Albert 60.000 guilders (almost 44.000 ducats) a year, being the combined sum of the original allowance and the third that Albert was entitled to out of Ernst's portion. Payments were to be made in three instalments and would at last be assigned to proper sources of domanial revenue³⁷. Shortly after his first audience in Linz, De Zeelandre found out that Matthias' willingness to pay was not matched by his ability. The treasuries of Austria, Hungary and Bohemia were as good as empty³⁸. A sympathetic Maximilian told him that treasury officials would only work when one "promises them very nice gifts like chains and gilded

³⁶ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 424, fol. 13 and 25: Archduke Albert to Jacques de Zeelandre, 26 Feb. 1614.

³⁷ HHStA, *Belgische Korrespondenz* 9, 1/211: Emperor Matthias to Archduke Albert, 28 Nov. 1613; BAV, *Barberini Latini* 6808, fol. 148: Archbishop Guido Bentivoglio to Cardinal Scipione Borghese, 6 Apr. 1613; ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 424, fol. 13 and 25: Archduke Albert to Jacques de Zeelandre, 26 Feb. 1614.

³⁸ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 424, fol. 45: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 17 May 1614.

cups”³⁹. Albert seems to have anticipated as much. When the Spanish ambassador at the Imperial Court, don Baltasar de Zúñiga, was finally allowed to marry one of Isabella’s ladies-in-waiting in December 1612, he promised the groom a gift of 24.000 guilders (about 17.500 ducats) to be “drawn from his hereditary portion”, thereby ensuring himself of a powerful advocate⁴⁰. The first 7.700 guilders that De Zeelandre managed to scrape together were entirely spent on presents. Zúñiga was given a first 3.000. Khlesl received 1.200. Sums ranging from 900 to 60 guilders were given to high ranking courtiers of the Emperor and Empress and to various officials of the *Hofkammer*⁴¹. Gradually and hardly ever without an effort on the part of de Zeelandre, sums came trickling in⁴². His tenacity paid off. In the space of five years the arrears fell from 200.000 guilders (above 145.000 ducats) in February 1614 to 62.000 (or 45.000 ducats) by November 1619⁴³.

On the other hand the problem of the arrears incurred during the reign of Rudolf II, remained as intractable as ever. Given that Matthias was already struggling to pay the current allowance, it was inconceivable that he would ever be able to redeem the outstanding debt of 1.2 million guilders. A substantial transfer of property seemed the only option to wipe the slate clean. Five years after Albert had chosen to ignore the suggestion of Finale, he relented and allowed his envoy to inquire into the matter⁴⁴. The moot question of course was at what level the transfer of Finale –and possibly even Piombino– would be taxed. While the estimates for the two together were initially put at around

³⁹ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 424, fol. 76: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 3 July 1614.

⁴⁰ Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, *Barberini Latini* 6806, fol. 231: Archbishop Guido Bentivoglio to Cardinal Scipione Borghese, 19 May 1612; 6807, fol. 292: Archbishop Guido Bentivoglio to Cardinal Scipione Borghese, 11 Dec. 1612.

⁴¹ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 424, fol. 104 and 108: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 16 Aug. and 23 Aug. 1614; *Secretarie van Staat en Oorlog* 518/3, fol. 6: Accounts of Jacques de Zeelandre, 1614.

⁴² ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 424, fol. 136, 143, 169 and 183: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 27 Sep., 15 Oct., 26 Nov. and 24 Dec. 1614.

⁴³ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 428, fol. 332: Jacques Bruneau to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 20 May 1620.

⁴⁴ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 424, fol. 128: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 20 Sep. 1614.

200.000 guilders (close to 146.000 ducats), Khlesl then intervened and pushed the price for Finale alone up to 3 million (almost 2.2 million ducats)⁴⁵. Even though there was some reason to believe that Matthias was actually prepared to transfer the fief for a sixth of that amount, he stuck to his minister as usual and wrote Albert a letter explaining that in view of the town's valuable harbour and fortifications this was really the lowest he could possibly go⁴⁶. Zúñiga qualified the offer as nonsense, while De Zeelandre pointed out that it would turn Albert from a creditor into a debtor overnight⁴⁷. The proposition effectively ended the negotiations. Hoping to revive the talks, De Zeelandre tried one stratagem after another⁴⁸. None of it had any effect however, until the matter was again taken up in the direct negotiations between the Spanish and the Austrian branches of the dynasty in view of arranging the succession of Hungary and Bohemia.

The finality of the debate had shifted however. At the onset, the transfer of Finale and Piombino had been put on the table as an alternative solution for Albert's demand to share in the territories that had formally belonged to Archduke Ferdinand of Tyrol. Henceforth it was considered a means of liquidating the arrears on the yearly allowance. By consequence, his territorial claims were once again on the agenda. The shift certainly suited Albert's ambitions. Upon learning the news of Rudolf's death, he had almost immediately notified Khlesl that the renunciation of his rights on Tyrol and Further Austria had been made to Rudolf personally and had therefore now come to cease⁴⁹. Reviving his claims not only benefited Albert, but also his

⁴⁵ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 424, fol. 145: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 22 Oct. 1614; 425, fol. 62 and 70: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 15 and 29 Apr. 1615.

⁴⁶ HHSStA, *Belgische Korrespondenz* 9, 3/41: Emperor Matthias to Archduke Albert, 6 May 1615; ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 425, fol. 75: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 6 May 1615.

⁴⁷ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 425, fol. 70 and 79: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 29 Apr. and 13 May 1615.

⁴⁸ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 425, fol. 129 and 137: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 8 and 22 Aug. 1615; *Idem*, 426, fol. 86: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 17 Dec. 1616.

⁴⁹ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 42, fol. 16: Archduke Albert to Bishop Melchior Khlesl, 4 Feb. 1612.

nephew and eventual heir, Philip III. Out of the 16 children of Maximilian II, only two had produced any grandchildren. Only one of these, Philip III of Spain, had survived to adulthood. The fact that he was not an agnatic descendant did not shut him out of the inheritance altogether. After all, Hungary and Bohemia had come to the Austrian branch through the female line. Philip had asserted his rights in December 1609 by declaring his willingness to be elected King of the Romans. His formal recognition as heir to the Habsburg Netherlands in the spring of 1616 strengthened his hand ever further. Albert even suggested the strategy that Philip would have to pursue in order to obtain a portion of the inheritance during a candid conversation with Spínola in June 1613. In Albert's opinion, Philip should renounce his rights on Hungary and Bohemia in exchange for Tyrol and Alsace, two territories that would be of far greater strategic importance to him⁵⁰. Spínola concurred, reiterating the point in several of his dispatches. When it became clear that the Austrian archdukes were not at all prepared to cede the entire inheritance of Ferdinand of Tyrol to their Spanish cousins, he advocated scaling down Philip's demands to the transfer of Alsace⁵¹.

The proposal stemmed from a logic that gave priority to the Habsburg presence in the Low Countries. Astride some of the routes linking the Franche-Comté to Luxembourg, Alsace was of considerable importance for the logistics of the Army of Flanders. Yet in the far flung interests of the Spanish Monarchy, other logics produced other priorities. As ambassador at the Imperial Court, Zúñiga sought to extend the Monarchy's influence in Central Europe and therefore believed that the King –or one of his younger sons– ought to accede to the thrones of Hungary, Bohemia and ultimately of the Empire too. Among the leading members of the Spanish Council of State however, the Duke of Infantado held that Spain would be best served by strengthening her grip on the Mediterranean basin and should consequently pursue territorial expansion in Italy⁵². Confronted with three sets of logic and priorities, it was for the King to decide which of these –or any combination of these– would prevail.

When considering his options, Philip could not limit himself to pondering conflicting priorities. As head of the House of Habsburg, he also had to bear the interests of the dynasty as a whole in mind. The situation had changed

⁵⁰ AGS, *Estado* 2298: Marquess Ambrogio Spínola to King Philip III, 30 June 1613.

⁵¹ M. S. SÁNCHEZ: "A House Divided...", *op. cit.*, pp. 892-894.

⁵² *Ibidem*, pp. 889-892 and 894-898.

considerably over the last quarter of the century. In 1590 there had been four reigning branches. The line of Ferdinand of Tyrol had failed in 1595. The recent miscarriage of Empress Anna had made it clear that sooner or later the line of Maximilian II would end too. Only the line of the Kings of Spain and that of the Archdukes of Inner Austria would continue into the next generation. Philip III had three sons that had survived infancy. So did Ferdinand of Inner Austria, although his eldest son, John Charles, was to die in 1619 at the age of 14. Ferdinand moreover had three brothers, albeit that they had been given suitable positions in the *Germania sacra*. If nothing else, Habsburg marital strategies made the two branches dependent upon each other. Ferdinand was not only Philip's second cousin. Until the death of Queen Margaret, he had also been his brother-in-law. In keeping with family traditions, he might –and eventually would– become the father-in-law to one of Philip's children. It was in the overriding interest of the dynasty to work out some sort of an accommodation.

Barely concealing his annoyance, Matthias responded to a joint appeal to conclude by Maximilian and Albert in the fall of 1616. He claimed that if it had been for him the succession would have been settled already, but that the indecision of the King of Spain was needlessly holding things up⁵³. There was a fair amount of truth in that assertion, but only up to a point. It did indeed take a while for Philip to make up his mind about the price for his renunciation. Albert sent several letters to stress the urgency of securing the succession and enlisted the services of Spínola and the Spanish ambassador to do the same⁵⁴. On 14 November Philip announced that he had reached a decision. He did not give any specifics, but assured Albert that he would be fully informed by Spínola⁵⁵. The news reached Brussels in the middle of December and was instantly relayed to the Imperial Court⁵⁶. Once stated, Philip's demands were clear enough. Without

⁵³ HHSStA, *Belgische Korrespondenz* 10, 1/27 and 1/60: Emperor Matthias to Archduke Albert, 30 Sep. and 19 Nov. 1616.

⁵⁴ AGS, Estado 2299: Archduke Albert to King Philip III, 30 Apr. and 28 May 1616; The Marquess of Guadalest to King Philip III, 29 May 1616; 2300: Ambrogio Spínola to King Philip III, 30 Oct. 1616.

⁵⁵ ARA, *Secretarie van Staat en Oorlog* 180, fol. 247: King Philip III to Archduke Albert, 14 Nov. 1616.

⁵⁶ ARA, *Secretarie van Staat en Oorlog* 180, fol. 307: Archduke Albert to King Philip III, 18 Dec. 1616; fol. 316: Archduke Albert to Emperor Matthias, 22 Dec. 1616.

saying as much, he acted as Albert's heir and sought to obtain what his uncle had been claiming for years. In exchange for the renunciation of his claims to Hungary and Bohemia, Philip wanted the cession of Alsace as well as the investiture with the fiefs of Finale and Piombino. It has been alleged that by making these demands Philip gave precedence to his own interests over those of the dynasty, thereby weakening the solidarity among its members⁵⁷. Attractive as such an interpretation might seem, the evidence at hand establishes that Alsace, Finale and Piombino had been on the negotiation table for many years and that the only novelty lay in the fact that they were now being claimed by Philip—quite literally—instead of Albert.

This time however there was no more room for ruse or delays. With Matthias' health faltering, Ferdinand had no other option but to accept Philip's conditions, albeit with the proviso that they would only be met after he had been crowned Emperor⁵⁸. Don Baltasar de Zúñiga had conducted most of the negotiations during the last months of his term as Spanish ambassador at the Imperial Court. His successor, Don Iñigo Vélez de Guevara, count of Oñate, finalized the treaty on 6 June 1617 and reaped the honour of seeing his name attached to it⁵⁹. Maximilian and Albert followed suit by formally renouncing their rights on the Hungarian and Bohemian successions two days later⁶⁰. A buoyant Maximilian was making plans to commemorate the success of his endeavours with the donation of a silver lamp to the Virgin of Halle⁶¹. Albert could warm to the thought that Ferdinand undertook to compensate him with an annuity of 100.000 German guilders (some 73.000 ducats) and the choice of a suitable residence in Austria⁶².

⁵⁷ M. S. SÁNCHEZ: "A House Divided...", *op. cit.*, pp. 898-899.

⁵⁸ M. RITTER: *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Gegenreformation und des Dreißigjährigen Krieges, 1555-1648*, Stuttgart 1889-1908, II, pp. 441-442.

⁵⁹ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 426, fol. 128 and 146: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 11 Feb. and 11 Mar. 1617.

⁶⁰ O. GLISS: *Der Oñate Vertrag...*, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁶¹ ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 426, fol. 163: Jacques de Zeelandre to Antonio Suárez de Arguello, 8 Apr. 1617.

⁶² ARA, *Duitse Staatssecretarie* 461: King Ferdinand II to Archduke Albert, 1 July 1617.

Clearing Dynastic Debts...

Historians are often tempted to judge the legality of a claim in relation to its outcome. Aided by the benefit of hindsight, we tend to side with the winners. The present contribution demonstrates that the territories singled out in the secret clauses of the Oñate Treaty were not randomly selected in an exercise to demonstrate the power of Spain and exploit the dependency of a beleaguered Archduke Ferdinand of Styria. Nor were they solely or even primarily the product of a rational choice by Philip III and his ministers. They were the outcome of a long and tortuous process of negotiations in which Archduke Albert sought to obtain a fair share of the possessions of the Austrian branch and a reasonable compensation for the yearly allowances that had never been paid. When Albert's health took a turn for the worse in the winter of 1613-1614, it was decided to proceed with the recognition of Philip III as heir to the Habsburg Netherlands. Acting in that capacity, he had every right in the dynastic political culture of the day to claim those territories that could be considered his uncle's due.