

The Female Consort as Intercessor in Sixteenth-Century Saxony

by

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During the past ten to fifteen years the research interest in queens, female regents and consorts has grown rapidly. Continuing the approach advocated by gender and court historians alike, the analyses of women at the early modern courts have generally focused on informal forms of power. Although the increased emphasis on informal power has proved immensely productive in many respects, it has also resulted in oversimplifications and misleading analogies; for example, in one study the agency of the female consort is reduced to a function of her marital relation and another historian concludes that the position of the female consort resembled that of the *maîtresse* or the court favorite.¹ These conclusions also represent a conceptual – and highly political – problem because power is defined as access to the ruler. This implies that the ruler and other decision-makers are viewed as the “real” authorities. Unwittingly, the narrow view of politics and authority that gender historians persistently have striven to challenge is thereby reconfirmed.

In this paper I will argue that the consort’s position differed fundamentally from that of the *maîtresse* and the favorite. An analysis of the consort’s role as intercessor or “appeal institution” in the early modern society will demonstrate that, in theory as well as in practice, the consort’s position was characterized by defined obligations and safeguarded rights.

The consort’s role as intercessor is well known but too often it is viewed simply as a result of her proximity to the ruler.² The goal is here to bring attention to some of the other

¹ Regarding the consort’s agency as a function of her marital relation see Katrin Keller, “Kurfürstin Anna von Sachsen (1532-1585): Von Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer ‘Landesmutter’”, in *Das Frauenzimmer. Die Frau bei Hofe in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, eds. Jan Hirschbiegel, Werner Paravicini. Residenzenforschung, 11, Stuttgart, Thorbecke Verlag, 2000, 263-285, here p. 279. For comparisons between the consort and the *maîtresse*/court favorite see Ute Daniel, “Zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie der Hofgesellschaft: Zur biographischen Struktur eines Fürstinnenlebens der Frühen Neuzeit am Beispiel der Kurfürstin Sophie von Hannover”, *L’Homme. Zeitschrift für feministische Geschichtswissenschaft* 8:2, 1997, 208-217. The best available study of the position of a *maîtresse* is Sybille Obwald-Bargende, *Die Mätresse, der Fürst und die Macht. Christina Wilhelmina von Grävenitz und die höfische Gesellschaft*, Geschichte und Geschlechter, 32, Frankfurt a. M., Campus Verlag, 2000. The court favorite is discussed in the contributions to John H. Elliot, L. W. B. Brockliss, eds., *The World of the Favourite*, New Haven CT, Yale University Press, 1999. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to consult the recent German anthology on the court favorite: Jan Hirschbiegel, Werner Paravicini, eds., *Der Fall des Günstlings - Hofparteien in Europa vom 13. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*, Residenzenforschung, 17, Stuttgart, Thorbecke Verlag, 2004.

² One of the best analyses of the consort as intercessor in sixteenth-century Germany is Rita Scheller, *Die Frau am preussischen Herzogshof (1550-1625)*. Studien zur Geschichte Preussens, 13, Cologne, Grote Verlag, 1966. In her work on medieval queenship, Pauline Stafford discusses some of the structural aspects of the consort’s role as intercessor with highly sophisticated and differentiated conceptions of power see Pauline Stafford, “Emma: The

resources that constituted the foundation of the consort's position. In doing so an effort has been made to move beyond the familiar distinction of power and authority (or informal and formal power) that has proved problematic when applied in studies of the pre-modern and early modern periods. While this dichotomy that has been highly productive in most areas of gender studies its application in a study of the female consort is accompanied by a risk of reducing the consort's office to a derivation of her husband's position. Hence, when "authority" and "power" occasionally are used below they should not be read as references to the Weberian definitions of the same terms.³

Approach and Sources

The analysis consists of two parts. In the first part, I will examine how the consort's position was defined in the 1537 coronation of Christian III and Dorothea of Denmark-Norway. Already in this initial part of the analysis, particular attention is paid to the consort's role as intercessor. Four features make the official account of the coronation an ideal source for an analysis of the consort's position: (1) it was a joint-coronation of king and queen, which means that the gendered distribution of duties and rights appears with great clarity;⁴ (2) the ceremony contained the legally binding coronation oath, in which both king and queen had to pledge their loyalty to God, the Council of the Realm and their subjects; (3) the coronation was performed by the renowned reformer Johann Bugenhagen and reflects a distinctly Lutheran understanding of authority, marriage and the social order,⁵ and this constituted an influential ideology throughout the Protestant territories of Europe for at least two centuries; and, finally, (4) the text circulated

Powers of the Queen in the Eleventh Century" in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe. Proceedings of a conference held at King's College London, April 1995*, ed. Anne J. Duggan, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 1997, 3-26, here 17-18.

³ Max Weber *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriß der verstehenden Soziologie*. Part 1: *Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte*, Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr (P. Siebeck) 1922 (http://www.textlog.de/weber_wirtschaft.html), I. Soziologische Grundbegriffe, § 16. Macht und Herrschaft. For a discussion of the difficulties associated with an English translation of the sixteenth-century terms related to authority, power, justice and government see the introduction to and glossary Harro Höpfl, *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, xiv-xvi & xxxii-xliii.

⁴ This point has been stressed by Martin Kintzinger, "Die zwei Frauen des Königs. Zum politischen Handlungsspielraum von Fürstinnen im europäischen Spätmittelalter" in *Das Frauenzimmer. Die Frau bei Hofe in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, eds. Jan Hirschbiegel, Werner Paravicini, Residenzenforschung, 11, Stuttgart, Thorbecke Verlag, 2000, 377-398. For an alternative interpretation of the coronations of various medieval queens see Amalie Föbel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich. Herrschaftsausübung Herrschaftsrechte, Handlungsspielräume*, Stuttgart, Thorbecke Verlag, 2000, particularly 17-49. Although the 1537 Coronation has been the subject of extensive research, none of the contributors have employed gender as a category of analysis. The most recent contributions are Erich Hoffmann, "Die Krönung Christians III. von Dänemark am 12. August 1537. Die erste Protestantische Königskrönung in Europa" in *Herrscherweihe und Königskrönung im Frühneuzeitlichen Europa*, ed. Heinz Duchhardt, Schriften der Mainzer Philosophischen Fakultätsgesellschaft, 8, Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1983, 57-68; Martin Schwarz Lausten, *Christian d. 3. og kirken (1537-1559)*, Studier i den danske reformationskirke, 1, Copenhagen, Akademisk Forlag, 1987; Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, "Historien om et ritual. De danske kongekroninger fra Christian III (1537) til Christian IV (1596)", *Transfiguration*, 3:2, 2001, 83-99.

⁵ Schwarz Lausten, *Christian d. 3.* (note 4) and Olden-Jørgensen, "Historien om et ritual" (note 4).

in an unusually high number of prints because it was included in Georg Lauterbeck's frequently reprinted handbook on government, the *Regentenbuch*.⁶

The second part of the paper is an analysis of the ways in which the daughter of Christian and Dorothea, Anna of Saxony, managed the role as intercessor in practice. The correspondence of the Saxon Electress contains thousands of cases in which the consort's role as mediator becomes visible. The decision to combine the 1537 Coronation with Anna's management of her office has been made because the Saxon Electress is likely to have known the prescriptions presented to her parents in the coronation. A copy of Lauterbeck's *Regentenbuch* could be found both in Anna's personal library and in the larger electoral library in Dresden.⁷

The confrontation between theory and practice serves a two-fold purpose: it brings to light the divergences between the two dimensions and it facilitates an awareness of how the consort's formally defined office influenced its practical management.

The Office of the Female Consort according to Johann Bugenhagen

In the 1537 coronation, king- and queenship were defined by the relative distribution of the regalia and the accompanying explanations of the royal insignia. Dorothea and Christian both received crown and scepter, but only the King was given the orb and the sword.

When Christian received his crown, he was admonished to rule as a stern, just and Christian king. Dorothea's crown, on the other hand, should remind her of the virtues embodied by canonized and biblical queens. Just as these women, Dorothea should be a loyal supporter of the poor and she should strive to prevent the wars which men could be prone to embark upon. She was also admonished to manage her household in a way that made it attractive for the noblemen of the kingdom to marry the women who had served the Queen.⁸ Similarly gendered directives accompanied the two scepters. Christian's scepter was explicitly linked to the law and its enforcement, while Dorothea's should remind her to serve God and her subjects in the broadest sense.⁹

⁶ For an in-depth analysis of Lauterbeck's *Regentenbuch* and its numerous editions see Michael Philipp, *Das "Regentenbuch" des Mansfelder Kanzlers Georg Lauterbeck: Ein Beitrag zur politischen Ideengeschichte im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, Augsburg, Wießner-Verlag, 1996. The following references to Lauterbeck's work refer to the 1572 edition and to the volume in The Royal Library, Copenhagen, call no. Sfv.:1, 1185 fol.: Georg Lauterbeck, *Regentenbuch. [...] Allen Regenten vnd Oberkeit zu anrichtung vnd besserung erbarer vnd guter Policey [...]*, Wittenberg, 1572.

⁷ The published account of the 1537 Coronation (i.e. Lauterbeck's *Regentenbuch*) is listed in the inventories of both the large Electoral library in Dresden (1574) and Anna's personal library (inventory from c. 1585), Sächsische Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek (SLUB), msc. Bibl.-Arch. I Ba Vol. 20 (1574) Nr. 19 and Bibl.-Arch. I B, Vol. 24 a Nr. 62.

⁸ Lauterbeck, *Regentenbuch* (note 6), fol. Fiiij(2)-(4).

⁹ Lauterbeck, *Regentenbuch* (note 6), fol. Fiiij(5). At the subsequent coronation of a Danish queen (Queen Sophie, crowned 1572) the female consort was no longer given a scepter, see Rasmus Hansen Reravius, *Stormæctige Kong Frederik II's Kronings- oc Brøllupshistorie*, Copenhagen, 1574, fol. Nij(1).

The orb and the sword made the gendered differences between Christian and Dorothea's offices more conspicuous.¹⁰ Having placed the Sword of the Realm in Christian's hand,¹¹ Bugenhagen explained to Dorothea why she did not receive a sword,

“Your Grace is not given the sword because Your Grace shall help to conduct the government of grace[. But] this cannot be a hindrance to justice [.] Women are overcome by friendship and [they] can do much by begging, scolding, crying and other means[,] at times they can even wheedle the sword from their Lord's hand. It is one thing to intercede, this we permit because it belongs to the government of Grace ... but Your Grace shall let such grace shine not only on the noble and great lords but also on the poor people[.]”¹²

As a woman, Dorothea was inevitably considered susceptible to manipulation and thereby unfit to administrate the sword. However, through gender-specific means (scolding and crying), she could and should serve a *Gnadenregiment*, a government of grace. The consort's willingness to intercede on behalf of rich and poor was an integral part of this ideal – as long as it did not infringe upon true justice.

To recognize fully the implications of Bugenhagen's explanation, the significance of the sword within the Lutheran teachings must be emphasized. In 1523 Luther published the treatise *On Secular Authority* in which almost all paragraphs contain references to the sword. It appears as synonym of law and justice, of physical force and of secular authority in general. In the words of Harro Höpfl, the sword is “the symbol, emblem and substance of secular authority”.¹³ While the King was given this ultimate symbol of authority, the female consort was instructed

¹⁰ Regarding the orb see Lauterbeck, *Regentenbuch* (note 6), fol. Fiiij(2).

¹¹ Lauterbeck, *Regentenbuch* (note 6), fol. Fij(2)-Fij(2). The sword reappeared at the end of the ceremony when Christian proclaimed that it was his duty to serve the Gospel, the sword, and his subjects, fol. Gij(1).

¹² “E.G. [wird] das Schwerdt nicht gegeben / darumb / das E.G. das Gnadenregiment helffe füren / das doch dadurch das Gerichte nicht werde verhindert / denn Frawen werden durch Freundschaft vberlauffen / vnd können durch bitten / vermanen / weinen / vnd ander vntersetzen viel außrichten / Vnd zu zeiten / damit das Schwerd jrem Herrn aus der hand nemen. Ist eine sache das man für bitten mag / das lassen wir geschehen / vnd kan wol gehören ins Gnadenregiment ... so lasse E.G. solche Gnade scheinen / nicht allein Edlen vnd grossen Herren / sondern auch armen Leuten.” Lauterbeck, *Regentenbuch* (note 6), fol. Fiiij(4). Bugenhagen's emphasis on compassion/mercy corresponds to the instructions throughout the early modern didactic literature addressed to noble and princely women, see for example Joachim Magdeburgius, *Die ware und in Gottes wort gegründte Lere (1) Vom rechten Adel der Fürstinnen, und aller erbarn Matronen, und tugetsamen Ehefrawen. ...*, Eisleben, 1563 (Herzog August Bibliothek (HAB), call. no. A: 1003.6 Theol. (4)), fol. B3(1) and C4(1). Magdeburgius specifies the consort's willingness to intercede on behalf of her subjects on fol. C4(1). A similar emphasis on compassion can be found in Conrad Porta *Jungfrawenspiegel. Faksimiliedruck der Ausgabe von 1580*, ed. and intro. by Cornelia Niekus Moore, Nachdrucke deutscher Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts, 76, Bern, Peter Lang Verlag, 1990, particularly 64.

¹³ Martin Luther, *Von weltlicher Obrigkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig ist* in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, “Weimarer Ausgabe”, 11, Weimar, Verlag Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1900, 229-281. English translation by Harro Höpfl, *Luther and Calvin* (note 3), the quote is from Höpfl's introduction p. xvi.

to represent grace and compassion and this should above all be done through her willingness to intercede.

In parts of the ceremony, Dorothea appears as little more than an attachment to her husband. This hierarchy is most unequivocally expressed in Bugenhagen's explanation of why Dorothea was crowned,

“[I]t is God-given and appropriate that when Your Lord [the King] is crowned, his Grace's wedded spouse shall also receive such honor [or rank] and have it confirmed in front of God[.] This is the order of God that man and wife shall be one body and [that] their honor [or rank] and name shall remain inseparable. Even if the offices shall not and cannot be alike.”¹⁴

In this passage, Dorothea's coronation and anointment are explained by reference to her marriage: the Queen's status was derived from her husband. As husband and wife they constituted one body and should of course share the same rank. Their offices, however, differed from each other as those of husband and wife. The roles of Dorothea and Christian as husband and wife were echoed when they later in the ceremony emerged as parents of their subjects.¹⁵ The familiar analogies between kings and queens as (foster) parents of their subjects situated both ruler and consort in clearly gendered roles: father and mother, and it evoked the theologically and legally defined hierarchy in which a woman by definition was the subject of a man.¹⁶

Given the inequality between the King's and the Queen's office as they appear in the ceremony, it may be tempting to disregard the authority of the female consort. However, the account of 1537 coronation reveals also that the Queen indeed held authority and was expected to fulfill certain, relatively defined functions. The simple fact that Dorothea was both crowned and anointed, i.e. her status was legitimized reveals that she was viewed as an actual author-

¹⁴ “[V]nd ist Göttlich vnd billich / weil jr ewern Herrn sehet krönen / das auch seiner gnaden Ehelichem Gemahl / solche Ehre gegeben / vnd hie für Gott werde bestettigt / Vnd das ist Gottes Ordnunge / Mann vnd Weib / das ist ein Leib / so soll auch Ehre vnd Namen vngeschei=den sein. Wiewol die Ampte nicht sollen oder können alle eins sein”, Lauterbeck, *Regentebuch* (note 6), fol. Eiiij(4). Regarding husband and wife as one flesh, see 1 Cor. 6, 16-17.

¹⁵ Lauterbeck, *Regentebuch* (note 6), fol. F(1)-(2). Again, a parallel can be found in the 1572 Coronation when Frederik II and Sophie were ascribed the roles as foster parents for their subjects, see Reravius, *Stormæctige Kong Frederik II's* (note 9), fol. Mij(2)-Mv(1) and Isaiah 49, 23. This reference should not be mistaken with the earlier verse (Isaiah 49, 15) in which God is portrayed as the mother of all Christians, a passage that was used later in the 1537 Coronation, see Lauterbeck, *Regentebuch* (note 6), fol. Fiiij(2)

¹⁶ Elisabeth Koch, “Die Frau im Recht der Frühen Neuzeit. Juristische Lehren und Begründungen” in *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, ed. Ute Gerhard, Munich, Verlag C. H. Beck, 1997, 73-93; Heide Wunder, “Normen und Institutionen der Geschlechterordnung am Beginn der Frühen Neuzeit” in *Geschlechterperspektiven. Forschungen zur Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Heide Wunder, Gisela Engel, Aktuelle Frauenforschung, Königsstein/Taunus, Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 1998, 57-78; Ian W. Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman. A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, particularly 82-92.

ity.¹⁷ And most importantly, even if Christian's coronation oath was longer than Dorothea's, both contained the same four points: (1) the acknowledgement of God as the source of all secular authorities; (2) a promise to protect and promote the true teaching of the Gospel; (3) an assurance to respect the Council of the Realm; and (4) a promise to govern peacefully and in consideration of all subjects as well as the almighty God.¹⁸

The tension that can be detected between Bugenhagen's attempt to curb the office of the consort and her simultaneous investment with God-given authority reflects the tension between gender and rank as socially structuring forces that inevitably emerged when a woman was invested with authority.¹⁹ The gender of the consort excluded her from participation in certain domains of government but her rank obliged her to perform specific roles; these respectively negative and positive prescriptions were not always easily reconcilable.

The specifications of the consort's office can best be summarized in relation to the three domains in which Luther and his followers conceptualized society:²⁰ she was a *Kirchenmutter*, a *Hausmutter*, and a *Landesmutter* (a mother of the church, a mistress of the house, and a mother of the territory and its population). In relation to the Church (*ecclesia*) she should provide support for the worship of God and to the clergy and their families; in her household (*oeconomia*) she should ensure the maintenance of a true Christian moral and embody the ideal of an industrious mistress of the house; and in relation to the government of the territory (*politia*) she should work for peace and promote grace. The ways in which the practice of intercession was specified as a central part of the consort's duties within the *politia* suggest that her role as appeal institution was viewed as an integral part of the early modern legal system.

Anna of Saxony as Intercessor

¹⁷ Drawing on Rom. 13, Luther and his followers taught that all authorities should be viewed as appointed by God. For several excellent discussions of the Lutheran understanding of authority, see the articles in Wolfgang Sommer, *Politik, Theologie und Frömmigkeit im Luthertum der Frühen Neuzeit*. Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, 74, Göttingen, Verlag Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1999.

¹⁸ Lauterbeck, *Regentenbuch* (note 6), fol. Eiiij(2)-(3) and Eiiij(5).

¹⁹ The theologians who were forced to specify the office of the consort had various means, with which they attempted to resolve this tension, these will be discussed at length in my dissertation (note *). For a "meta-discussion" of the same friction see Anja Victorine Hartmann, "Zwischen Geschlechterordnung und politischer Ordnung. Herrscherinnen und Regentinnen in der Frühen Neuzeit" in *Die frühneuzeitliche Monarchie und ihr Erbe. Festschrift für Heinz Duchhardt zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds. Ronald G. Asch, Johannes Arndt, Matthias Schnettger, Münster, Waxmann Verlag, 2003, 135-152.

²⁰ For a discussion of the three domains of life (*politia*, *ecclesia* and *oeconomia*) as a model of interpretation in the Protestant teachings see Luise Schorn-Schütte, "Die Drei-Stände-Lehre im reformatorischen Umbruch" in *Die frühe Reformation in Deutschland als Umbruch. Wissenschaftliches Symposium des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 1996*, eds. Bernd Moeller, Stephen E. Buckwalter, Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte, 199, Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlag-Haus, 1998, 435-461 and Thomas Brady, "Luther and Society. Two Kingdoms or Three Estates? Tradition and Experience in Luther's Social Teaching", *Lutherjahrbuch* 52, 1985, 197-212.

Did Anna of Saxony abide by the instructions Bugenhagen presented to her mother in 1537? Was she willing to intercede by her husband and other authorities on behalf of all members of the society? Not surprisingly, the Electress of Saxony has left no explicit reflections upon her role as mediator and an answer can only be approached through an analysis of how she managed this responsibility.

Thousands of letters of supplications addressed to the Saxon Electress have been preserved. A single volume of incoming letters contains more than 200 letters in which neighboring colleagues, nobles, burghers and former employees of the princely household turned to Anna for financial or legal assistance. Some people turned to the Electress on their own behalf, others served as middle(wo-)men for their own “clients”.²¹

When the cases presented in this paper are examined, a distinction must be made between the pleas presented by people Anna already knew and those sent by “common women/men”. Anna’s role as intercessor will be analyzed through four examples of intercessions: two examples of requests presented by people Anna knew and two presented by people she had no previous contact with.

The first example does not center on an individual case but on a series of requests presented to the Electress by her long time friend Anna, Countess of Hohenlohe.²² The two women became acquainted shortly after Anna’s arrival in Saxony (1548) and they remained in frequent contact until Anna’s death in 1585. During the first decade of their correspondence, the communications concerned mostly the exchange of goods (ingredients for health remedies, semi-precious stones, Venetian glass, etc.). Gradually the nature of the relationship changed and when the Countess lost her husband in 1568, Anna assured the widow protection, “ [W]e are and remain at all times with grace and good will well-inclined towards You and Yours[,] on this you can rely without any doubts[.]”²³

This was not an empty promise. During the subsequent years the Countess presented numerous requests for help and received various favors from Anna. Her sons were accepted in the Elector’s (August’s) service although, “His Beloved [August] at the present is served almost excessively with esquires and adequately with other servants[.]”²⁴ More significant help was

²¹ “Allerley gemeine Briefe welche an die Churfürstin zu Sachsen meine gnädigste Fraw geschrieben worden 1562-1569”, Sächsische Hauptstaatsarchiv (SächsHstA) Loc. 8529/1.

²² Anna, Countess of Hohenlohe, born Countess of Solms-Laubach (1522-1594), married (in 1540) to Ludwig Casimir, Count of Hohenlohe (1517-1568). The counts of Hohenlohe were “Reichsgrafen”, i. e. members of the highest rank of the imperial nobility and subject only to the Emperor.

²³ “[Wir] seint vnnd bleiben ... euch [vnd den ewern] mit gnedigen vnd gunstigen willen alle Zeit gantz wohl genaigt ... dar zu Ir euch vnZweifelig verlassen möget ...”, Anna to the Countess of Hohenlohe, Dresden 11 Sep. 1568, SächsHstA Kop. 513, fol. 115-116.

²⁴ “S. L. [Kurfürst August] Itziger Zeitt, mit Jungen vhost vberflüssig vnd mit andern dienern zur notturfft vorsehenn [ist]”, Anna to the Countess of Hohenlohe, Torgau 26 Dec. 1572, SächsHstA Kop. 517, fol. 1-2.

provided when a serious conflict regarding territorial rights developed between the Countess' sons and Margrave George Friedrich of Brandenburg. During this eight-year-long dispute Anna persistently spoke the Countess' case both to August, the Margrave and other territorial rulers. The letters exchanged between the two women do not disclose the exact outcome of the dispute, but the gratitude expressed by the Countess reveal that she was satisfied.²⁵

The Countess of Hohenlohe sought the Electress' help both in her own affairs and on behalf of others. The effectiveness of her mediation is visible in Anna's answer to the Countess' request for help on behalf of the heavily indebted heirs of Albrecht von Rosenberg. Anna replied that although the late Rosenberg had not deserved that his heirs be met with willingness, she had "for the sake of Your intercession" managed to have their overdue payments postponed. But she also reminded the Countess that Rosenberg's heirs should know now and in the future to spare August and (implicitly) herself from such requests.²⁶ In order to appreciate fully the significance of Hohenlohe's mediation, it must be added that Albrecht von Rosenberg was an arch-enemy of August of Saxony. The hostility resulted from Rosenberg's service to Johann Friedrich "the Midler" during the 1560s, when Johann Friedrich sought to win back with force the electoral dignity that the Ernestine Wettins had lost to their Albertine cousins in 1547.²⁷

In return for the favors granted, the Electress continued to use the Countess as a supplier of various goods. In addition the Countess received increasingly frequent demands to visit Anna and her closest relatives: the Electress asked her to spend extended periods in Heidelberg and Kaiserslautern, where Anna's eldest daughter found herself in a difficult marriage. When the troubled marriage between Anna's sister-in-law Sidonia and Erich of Braunschweig-Calenberg resulted in a separation of their "table and bed", Hohenlohe was "encouraged" (i.e. ordered!) to visit Sidonia. Finally, Anna herself requested the Countess' presence.²⁸

²⁵ The conflict can be followed in the following letters from Anna to the Countess of Hohenlohe, Annaburg 2 March 1576, SächsHstA Kop. 519, fol. 166-167; Annaburg 29 April 1576, SächsHstA Kop. 519, fol. 197-198; Dresden 27 May 1579, SächsHstA Kop. 521, fol. 310-311; Plauen 16 June 1579, SächsHstA Kop. 521, fol. 315; Dresden 30 Nov. 1579, SächsHstA Kop. 521, fol. 365.

²⁶ "vmb Euer vorbit willen", Anna to the Countess of Hohenlohe, Torgau 29 April 1573, SächsHstA Kop. 517, fol. 34.

²⁷ Helmut Neumaier, "Albrecht von Rosenberg und die Krise des deutschen Adels in der Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts", *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte*, 64, 2001, 103-134. See also the older biographical study of Rosenberg: Karl Hofmann, "Albrecht von Rosenberg. Ein fränkischer Ritter und Reformator", *Neues Archiv für die Geschichte der Stadt Heidelberg*, part 1 in vol. 7, 1907, 207-244, and part 2 in vol. 8, 1910, 1-45. Re. the conflict between the Ernestine and Albertine Wettins between 1547 and late-1560s see Katrin Keller, *Landesgeschichte Sachsen*, Stuttgart, Verlag Eugen Ulmer, 2002, 128-135.

²⁸ Regarding visits to Elisabeth in the Palatinate see Anna to the Countess of Hohenlohe, Dresden 20 Dec. 1575, SächsHstA Kop. 519, fol. 116-117; Annaburg 22 Feb. 1576, SächsHstA Kop. 519, fol. 161; Annaburg 29 April 1576, SächsHstA Kop. 519, fol. 197-198; Torgau 5 Sep. 1576, SächsHstA Kop. 519, fol. 244-245; Dresden 22 May 1578, SächsHstA Kop. 521, fol. 234-235; Annaburg 8 March 1579, SächsHstA Kop. 521, fol. 284. Regarding the visit to Sidonia see Anna to Hohenlohe 16 July 1574, SächsHstA Kop. 517, fol. 207. And finally, regarding meetings between Anna herself and Hohenlohe, see Annaburg 10 July 1575, SächsHstA Kop. 518, fol. 74.

Contrary to what could be expected, the dynamic of reciprocity, which here is so apparent, was not the exclusive privilege of Anna's high-ranking friends. This appears from the second example I wish to introduce. In 1566, "Catharina, Nickel Jungling's woman" from the mining town Marienberg, turned to the Electress for help. With a grieved heart, Catharina explained to Anna that her husband, having offended some members of the local town council, had been put in prison where he already had spent several days. She feared that he would not be released, "without a heavy fine or long-lasting imprisonment[.]"²⁹ At the time, Catharina and her sister were carrying out a commission for the Electress,³⁰ and Catharina employed what little bargaining power this granted her when she emphasized that she was so distressed and dismayed that the requested needlework could not be completed by the date Anna expected it.³¹ Having heard Catharina's case Anna addressed the judge and town council in Marienberg, "[We] graciously request that if the offence committed by the same Jungling is of a nature that allows mercy to be granted[,] You will – for the sake of our will – free him from imprisonment and fine[.]"³²

It remains unclear if Catharina's husband was released, but three weeks later Anna prepared a reminder: the date by which the completed work should be delivered had passed and Catharina was ordered to appear in Dresden with the ordered clothing by the next Tuesday.³³ Both Catharina's reference to a potential delay of the Electress' commission and Anna's drafted reminder indicate that the commissioned work was important to the Electress. However, before the reminder was sent, Anna had already received the completed work and her secretary added to the margin of the letter-book, "Has not been sent because [... Catharina ...] sent the work on the same day."³⁴ It seems that Catharina knew not only how to use her bargaining power but also the obligations she faced when employing it: in response to the Electress' goodwill she had to ensure the timely completion of Anna's work. This series of exchanges was apparently successful and the subsequent summer Catharina was again making clothing for the Electress.

²⁹ "ohne schwöre geldt straff od langwiriger gefencklicher"; the quoted passages are not from Catharina Jungling's hand but from the summary of her request in Anna's letter to the judge and council of Marienberg issued Crottendorf 17 Aug. 1566, SächsHstA Kop. 512, fol. 37

³⁰ The commission consisted of at least two "kittelchen" and several scarves. In Grimm's dictionary, a "kittelchen" is explained as either (1) a dress for children or (2) a short shirt/coat made of fine linen (Jacob Grimm, Wilhelm Grimm, *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch*, vol. 11, clm. 864, <http://www.dwb.uni-trier.de/index.html>)

³¹ "bekommet vnd besturtzt", Anna to the judge and council in Marienberg, Crottendorf 17 Aug. 1566, SächsHstA Kop. 512, fol. 37.

³² "[Wir] begeren ... gnedigst wo gedachts Junglichs vobbrechung dermassen geschafft das ime gnad bewiesen werden kan[,] ir wollet ... inem ... des gefencknus [vnd geltstraff] vmb vnserwillen erlassen[.]" Anna to the judge and council in Marienberg, Crottendorf 17 Aug. 1566, SächsHstA Kop. 512, fol. 37.

³³ Anna to "Catharinen Junglingin", Freiberg 7 Sep. 1566, SächsHstA Kop. 512, fol. 42.

³⁴ "Ist nit ausgang dan sie die arbeit desselbten tags vberschickt", note in the margin by the letter from Anna to "Catharinen Junglingin", Freiberg 7 Sep. 1565, SächsHstA Kop. 512, fol. 42.

The people who already had established a process of exchange with Anna are likely to have enjoyed an advantage when they sought her help. However, as the next two examples will show, this did not mean that the common man or woman without any ties to the *Landesmutter* had no chance to appeal to her G/grace.

The third example again takes us to Marienberg. In 1573 the widow of Christoffer Fischer turned to the Electress for help. The town council had threatened to expel her from the town and the distressed widow could think of no reason why this drastic measure had been taken against her. Reacting upon the plea, Anna addressed the council,

“We cannot imagine that you would expel her without sufficiently moving reasons. However, as she will know of no [such] motive, our gracious desire is that you will inform us of her circumstances and offence[.]”³⁵

The tone of the Electress’ demand is cautious: she does not demand a decision be overruled but asks merely that the reasoning behind be explicated. Similar prudence characterized her request for the conditional release of Jungling (he should only be released if his offence was of a nature that allowed for a pardon). Whether this constituted a strategy or was a sincere expression of Anna’s reluctance to interfere with the enforcement of law, it corresponds exactly to the instructions presented to her mother in 1537. As demonstrated above, Bugenhagen emphasized the consort’s duty to intercede but also stressed that it never could impede the execution of justice. Before the significance of this case is discussed further, the last of the four examples will be presented.

During the spring of 1560 a young Dane appeared in Dresden and, through unknown measures, he gained access to Anna. The unnamed man asked that the Electress please convince her brother the Danish King (Frederik II) to grant him the necessary help to attend the university in Copenhagen. As requested, Anna prepared a letter, which the young Dane could present to the king upon his return to Denmark,

“The present [and] poor student from Odense has walked to [Saxony] from the Kingdom of Denmark and has asked us to intercede by Your Royal Dignity that he may be supported to study in Copenhagen[.] Because he says that he will study the Holy Scripture and [because] he has run such a long way to us[,] we could not let

³⁵ “Nun wollen wir vns nicht versehen, das Ir sie ohne gnugsame bewegende vrsach vertreiben soltet. Weill sie aber von keiner vrsach wissen will So begeren wir gnedigst Ir wollet vnß Irer gelegenheit vnd verbrechung ... berichten ...”, Anna to the town council of Marienberg, Crottendorf 28 July 1573, SächsHstA Kop. 517, fol. 80. The deceased Christoffer Fischer who appears in this case should not be mistaken with the important theologian by the same name. This Fischer was a “Kunststeiger”, that is (presumably) a supervisor in the mines of Marienberg (Grimm, *Deutsche Wörterbuch*, vol. 11, clm. 2728 (note 30)).

him leave without solace[.] And is to Your Royal Dignity our sisterly plea that
You will grant the poor student gracious help and [a] scholarship[.]”³⁶

As extraordinary as this case may seem, no further trace of the Dane can be found neither in Anna’s correspondence nor in the Danish archives. But even if we do not know the outcome of this or the previous case, they show that even the more vulnerable members of society could approach the Electress. The Danish student doubtlessly had an advantage simply by being from Anna’s land of birth, but Fischer’s widow does not seem to have had any particular advantages. So how did she get in touch with Anna? The letter in which Anna addressed the town council of Marienberg was prepared in Crottendorf, a village c. 25 kilometers from Marienberg. When Anna, seven years earlier, had addressed the same council on behalf of Nickel Jungling’s wife she was also in Crottendorf, and two weeks prior (both in 1566 and 1573) the Electress had passed through Marienberg.³⁷ This is an indication that Anna’s frequent travels through the territory facilitated the access to her for the “common (wo-)man”. And, as Helmut Neuhaus has shown, the regulations from sixteenth-century Hesse stipulates that supplications (addressed to the territorial ruler) could be presented either in writing or verbally. It seems likely that Anna too was presented with several both written and verbal pleas as she moved across Saxony.³⁸

Considered in relation to each other, the four examples show that both “high and low” could obtain access to Anna. The frequency with which Anna was asked for assistance reveals that her role as “appeal institution” was widely known and her continued willingness to mediate can be interpreted as an indication that her interventions were effective. Nevertheless, the subjects who already knew the Electress or could find a middle(wo-)man who did, are likely to have had an advantage. Throughout Anna’s life, she received a steady stream of gifts and favors from her subjects, colleagues, friends and relatives. When she acknowledges the receipt of a gift, her gratitude was expressed with the statement, “with good will we are indebted [to

³⁶ “Gegenwertiger armer Studentt von Odensee ist auß dem khonigreich Dennemarck anher gelauffen vnnd vnns vmb furschriften an E.K.W. gebeten, Das er von derselben zu Cophagen zum Studiren vorlegt werden möchtt ... Weil er ... furgibt Er wolle In d heiligen schriffte studiren vnd einen solchen weitten weck zu vnß herauß gelauffen[,] hab wir Imen nit trostloß ... weckkommen lassen ... Vnnd ist ... an E.K.W. vnser F schwesterlich bitt Sie wolle sich gegen dem Armen schüler mitt gnedigster hulf vnnd vorlagk ... erZeigen ...”, Anna to Frederik II, Dresden 27 April 1560, SächsHstA Kop. 509, fol. 129.

³⁷ Re. 1566: SächsHstA Kop. 512, fol. 36, letter dated “Marienberg den 30 Julij”. Re. 1573: SächsHstA Kop. 517, fol. 72-77, where the letters sent between 11 and 14 July 1573 all were issued in Marienberg.

³⁸ Helmut Neuhaus, “Supplikationen als landesgeschichtliche Quellen. Das Beispiel der Landgrafschaft Hessen im 16. Jahrhundert” (Part 1), *Hessisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte*, 28, 1978, 110-190, here p. 135 (Part 2 of Neuhaus’ analysis appears in the subsequent volume (29) of the *Jahrbuch*, 63-97). Re. the travels as facilitator of access see Pernille Arenfeldt, “Frederik II’s hof. Husholdning og centraladministration” in *Svøbt i mår. Dansk Folkevisekultur 1550-1700*, vol. 1: *Adelskultur og visebøger*, eds. Hane Ruus, Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen, Copenhagen, C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1999, 327-386, here p. 343, in which it is demonstrated that Anna’s brother Frederik II of Denmark frequently was presented with questions related to the local administration and law enforcement during his travels across the territory.

You] and [we] will graciously repay [it].”³⁹ In spite of the sentence’s formulaic character and its frequent recurrence, it should not be dismissed as meaningless. Naturally, it does not imply that Anna took action and performed an act of kindness every time the formula was used, but it can be read as a summary of one of the driving forces in the early modern society. When Anna accepted gifts and favors, she incurred debts and had to give some reassurance of her willingness to remunerate the efforts. The continual exchanges and their in-built mechanism of reciprocity help explain why so many petitions addressed to the Electress were sent through middle(wo-)men who already had the necessary “credit” to draw upon.⁴⁰ Although this principle privileged those who were born of higher rank and thereby enjoyed easier access to the consort, the example of Nickel Jungling’s wife suggests that only little was needed to initiate a process of exchange and that once it was in place, rank may have mattered less than the continual efforts to reciprocate. Finally, it must be stressed that this same pattern privileged women over men, simply because Anna lived in closer contact with women than men.⁴¹

Foundations of the Consort’s Power

In closing, I would like to return to the comparisons between the consort and the *maîtresse* or court favorite. One could argue that the described mechanism of reciprocity indeed indicates that the position of the consort may resemble that of the favorite or the *maîtresse*. However, as Natalie Zemon Davis has shown, the same patterns of exchange can be detected in relation to territorial rulers⁴² – and few would dare to compare a king to his favorite. As the ruler, the female consort represented a known and recognized appeal institution. Although God’s selected authorities were expected to abide by the Christian ideals of just government, the early modern societies were tied together not only by ideals but also by the circulation of

³⁹ “Das wollen wir gegen Euch mit gunstigenn willen beschulden vnd gnedigst vorgeleichen.” The quoted example is from Anna’s letter to the Court Mistress in Vienna (Sophia of Toledo), Dresden 9 Jan. 1577, SächsHstA Kop. 520, fol. 1. However, the formula recurs with small variations throughout the correspondence. For examples: Anna to her grandmother (Catharina of Saxe-Lauenburg (c. 1488-1563)), Weidenhain 26 Nov. 1556, SächsHstA Kop. 509, fol. 22; Anna to Emilia, Markgravine of Brandenburg (1516-91), Dresden 22 Dec. 1556, SächsHstA Kop. 509, fol. 24; Anna to Dorothea, Countess of Mansfelt (1493-1578), Dresden 15 Jan. 1558, SächsHstA Kop. 509, fol. 47; Anna to her mother, Dorothea of Denmark-Norway (1511-71), Dresden 28 July 1559, SächsHstA Kop. 509, fol. 104 and Anna to the Countess of Schwarzburg (probably Anna, the wife of Hans Günther, Count of Schwarzburg), Celle 12 Oct. 1561, SächsHstA Kop. 509, fol. 192.

⁴⁰ Unfortunately this paper does not permit an in-depth examination of this practice. Among the numerous cases in which middlemen and -women appear see SächsHstA Loc. 8528/1, pp. 5-6 & 31; Loc. 8528/1, p. 31; Loc. 8529/1, p. 283; Loc. 8532/3, pp. 16-17, 32-34, 75, 121, 203-204, 213-214, 215, 220-222, 254-255, and of course the examples related to the Countess of Hohenlohe mentioned above (note 26)

⁴¹ A simple count of Anna’s outgoing letters shows that approximately 70% of her letters were addressed to women (figures developed on the basis of the 5,515 letters in SächsHstA Kop. 509-514 & 516-527).

⁴² Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, Madison WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 2000, particularly 85-99

material and symbolic goods, and because the power of ruler and consort were the most widely recognized, this “economy” affected them more than anyone else.⁴³

The analysis of the consort’s role as intercessor or “appeal institution” also brings to light two aspects, which emphasize that her position differed fundamentally from the position of both the *maîtresse* and the favorite. First, the consort not only provided service for “friends”. Access to the *Landesmutter* was doubtlessly easier if a contact already existed, but the examples presented above show that the common subjects also could gain access. This suggests that the consort’s role as “appeal institution” was characterized by a degree of institutionalization and that it was viewed as an integral part of the greater legal system.

Secondly, the consort had access not only to her husband but also to a whole range of authorities (town councils, judges, neighboring princes and relatives in powerful position). Contrary to the *maîtresse* and the favorite, the consort’s access was not obtained only through the ruler’s grace. Her rank (by birth as well as by marriage) and her status as God’s selected authority secured her these rights and obliged her to use them in the service of her subjects. Although Bugenhagen construed the consort’s status as derived from her husband’s position, this is only partially correct. Her elevated position was a reality from the moment she was born as a member of a princely dynasty. Hence, the foundation of a consort’s position was much broader than that of a *maîtresse* or a favorite: next to her husband, the consort could draw upon a dynastic network and her defined position as one of the highest-ranking members of society. Moreover, the Lutheran teachings on authority considered all secular authorities to be appointed by God and this meant that her office – with its defined privileges and duties – was sanctioned by the highest of all authorities.

⁴³ This point has (without considerations of potential differences between ruler and consort) been emphasized by Gunner Lind, “Great Friends and Small Friends: Clientelism and the Power Elite” in *Power Elites and State Building*, eds. Wolfgang Reinhard, *The Origins of the Modern State in Europe 13th to 18th Centuries*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, 123-147.

Zusammenfassung

In neueren historischen Studien zum fürstlichen Hof der Frühen Neuzeit wird häufig die Stellung der Gemahlin mit der einer Maitresse oder eines Günstlings gleichgesetzt. Diese Schlussfolgerung beruht u.a. auf der Tatsache, dass der Gemahlin in der Regel ausschließlich „informelle“ Macht zuerkannt wird. In diesem Aufsatz soll nun durch eine Untersuchung der Rolle der Gemahlin als Fürsprecherin gezeigt werden, dass ihre Aufgaben - sowohl theoretisch als auch praktisch - durch bestimmte Pflichten und Rechte festgelegt waren.

Dass die fürstliche Gemahlin als Fürsprecherin für ihre Untertanen wirkte, ist allgemein bekannt, aber häufig wird dies nur als unmittelbare Folge ihrer Nähe zum Regenten angesehen. Hier soll nun auf weitere Elemente, auf denen die spezifische Rolle der Gemahlin beruhte, hingewiesen werden. Dabei soll die allgemein übliche, aber - für die frühe Neuzeit – problematische Unterscheidung zwischen Macht und Herrschaft (bzw. informeller und formeller Macht) umgangen werden. Obwohl diese Dichotomie sich als sehr ergiebig für die Geschlechtergeschichte erwiesen hat, so scheint sie in diesem Fall die Gefahr in sich zu bergen, die Rolle der Gemahlin auf ihre Abhängigkeit vom Amt des Fürsten zu reduzieren.

Im ersten Teil dieser Untersuchung wird nachverfolgt, wie die Rolle der Gemahlin als Fürsprecherin in der offiziellen Beschreibung der Krönungszeremonie von Christian III. und Dorothea von Dänemark-Norwegen (1537) definiert wurde. Im zweiten Teil wird dann untersucht, wie Kurfürstin Anna von Sachsen (Tochter von Christian III. und Dorothea) mit dieser Rolle umging und wie sie die Idealvorstellung in die Praxis umsetzte. Zuletzt wird die Stellung der Gemahlin derjenigen der Maitresse und des Günstlings gegenübergestellt, um zu zeigen, wie berechtigt es erscheint, zwischen den Positionen dieser Figuren am frühneuzeitlichen Hof eindeutig zu unterscheiden.