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Surviving Dynastic Change: The High Nobility during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–15)

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Article abstract

The accession of the House of Bourbon to the Spanish throne after the death of the last Habsburg king, Carlos II, in 1700 brought important changes for the court high nobility. Historians have seen Philip V's reign as the beginning of the titled nobility's withdrawal from the front line of politics. The process, encouraged by the Bourbon's reformism during the War of the Spanish Succession, was carried out by the nobility in several ways. This article will analyze the careers of aristocrats such as Pedro Manuel Colón de Portugal and José Solís y Valderrábano, dukes of Veragua and Montellano, and Rodrigo Fernández Manrique de Lara, Count of Frigiliana, who adapted their actions to the new regime's politics in order to enjoy the patronage of new political actors. They took part in royal court circles to achieve important political positions without renouncing their right to oppose change through strategies linked to the political culture of the previous dynasty: for example, their involvement in political gatherings and their absence in important court celebrations. My article posits that, although the relations between the House of Bourbon and these nobles were undoubtedly complex and ambivalent, as their career at court shows, they were far more nuanced and fluid than has previously been revealed.

Surviving Dynastic Change: The High Nobility during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–15)

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The accession of the House of Bourbon to the Spanish throne after the death of the last Habsburg king, Carlos II, in 1700 brought important changes for the court high nobility. Historians have seen Philip V's reign as the beginning of the titled nobility's withdrawal from the front line of politics. The process, encouraged by the Bourbon's reformism during the War of the Spanish Succession, was carried out by the nobility in several ways. This article will analyze the careers of aristocrats such as Pedro Manuel Colón de Portugal and José Solís y Valderrábano, dukes of Veragua and Montellano, and Rodrigo Fernández Manrique de Lara, Count of Frigiliana, who adapted their actions to the new regime's politics in order to enjoy the patronage of new political actors. They took part in royal court circles to achieve important political positions without renouncing their right to oppose change through strategies linked to the political culture of the previous dynasty: for example, their involvement in political gatherings and their absence in important court celebrations. My article posits that, although the relations between the House of Bourbon and these nobles were undoubtedly complex and ambivalent, as their career at court shows, they were far more nuanced and fluid than has previously been revealed.

L'accès de la maison de Bourbon au trône espagnol en 1700, suite à la mort de Charles II, dernier roi des Habsbourg, entraîna des changements importants pour la haute noblesse à la cour d'Espagne. Les historiens ont associé le règne de Philippe V au début de la perte de l'influence politique de la noblesse titrée. Ce processus, encouragé par les réformes bourboniennes pendant la Guerre de Succession d'Espagne, s'accomplit de différentes manières. Cet article analyse le parcours d'aristocrates tels que Pedro Manuel Colón de Portugal, duc de Veragua, José Solís y Valderrábano, duc de Montellano, et Rodrigo Fernández Manrique de Lara, comte de Frigiliana, qui surent adapter leurs activités aux usages des Bourbon, bénéficiant ainsi de la protection de ces nouveaux acteurs politiques. Ils s'intégrèrent dans les cercles rapprochés du pouvoir royal afin de jouir de positions politiques importantes, sans renoncer à leur droit de s'opposer aux changements à travers des stratégies liées à la culture politique du régime précédent. Cet article montre que les relations complexes et ambivalentes entre la famille royale et la haute noblesse courtisane furent plus nuancées et harmonieuses que ce que l'on a pensé jusqu'à présent.

The War of the Spanish Succession modified the political and territorial characteristics of the Spanish Monarchy that the first Bourbon king, Philip V, had inherited from Carlos II, the last Spanish Habsburg, in November

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1700. During the war, the new dynasty imposed several reforms that changed the political role of the high nobility. The grandees, who held the highest rank among the Spanish aristocracy, had occupied the most important administrative positions at court since the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, in 1700 they were perceived not only as an elite unable to rule, but also as the main obstacle to the monarchy's political and institutional renovation.[1] According to traditional historiography, the House of Bourbon deprived the grandees of their influence in state matters and replaced them with members of the regular and low nobility, together with experienced officials, to lead the new political institutions organized during the war.[2]

Recent historical studies, however, have revised this perception, calling into question the image of the high nobility as a group opposed to all change. As Carmen Sanz Ayán has pointed out, the main financial reforms of Carlos II were carried out at the time when two grandees, the Duke of Medinaceli and the Count of Oropesa, held the position of prime minister to the king. Another commonplace that has been reconsidered is the French origin of Philip V's reform. Anne Dubet and Guillaume Hanotin suggest instead that some of the new political institutions established by the Bourbons were not modelled after the French but followed Spanish governmental tradition. Their research reveals not only that the pace of political change during the first decade of the eighteenth century was less radical than previous studies have averred, but that there was a marked degree of cooperation between the Spanish bureaucracy

1. Henry Kamen, *Spain in the Later Seventeenth Century, 1665–1700* (London and New York: Longman, 1980), 253–54; Françoise Macquart, *L'Espagne de Charles II et la France 1665–1700* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2000), 90–92.

2. William Coxe, *Memoirs of the Kings of Spain of the House of Bourbon from the accession of Philip the Fifth to the death of Charles the Third* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1815), vols. 1 and 2; Alfred Baudrillart, *Philippe V et la cour de France* (Paris: Librairie de Firmin-Didot, 1890), vol. 1; Marquis of San Felipe, *Comentarios de la Guerra de España e Historia de su rey Felipe V, el Animoso,* ed. Carlos Seco Serrano (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, Editorial Atlas, 1957); Henry Kamen, *The War of Succession in Spain 1700–1715* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969); Teófanes Egido, *Opinión pública y oposición al poder en la España del siglo XVIII, 1713–1759* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1971). For a similar approach, see José Manuel de Bernardo Ares, "Aristocracia nobiliaria y burguesía ennoblecida. Desaparición o marginación del sistema polisinodial de la monarquía hispánica (1701–1709)," in *Modernitas. Estudios en homenaje al profesor Baudilio Barreiro Mallón*, ed. Manuel R. García Hurtado (Coruña: Universidade da Coruña, 2008), 191–213.

and Philip V's French advisers.[3] As John Lynch cautions, the War of the Spanish Succession must be understood as a transitional stage between the Spanish Habsburgs and the French Bourbons:[4] a stage in which the new government institutions were compelled to live with those that had dominated the Spanish political scene for centuries, and whose main positions were held by grandees. The high nobility did not disappear altogether from the political scene after the new king's accession to the Spanish throne.

Yet, although historians have focused on the grandees loyal to Archduke Carlos, the Habsburg claimant to the Spanish crown, far less attention has been paid to the members of the high nobility who bound their careers, and their lineage's destiny, to Philip V's cause.[5] Why, and under what conditions, did these grandees agree to enter the new king's service? Why did they remain loyal to the Bourbon dynasty, thus limiting their own influence on Spanish politics? This article analyzes the careers of three grandees: Pedro Manuel Colón of Portugal, Duke of Veragua; José Solís y Valderrábano, Count and later Duke of

3. Adolfo Carrasco, "Los Grandes, el poder y la cultura política de la nobleza en el reinado de Carlos," *Studia histórica. Historia Moderna* 20 (1999): 77–136; Christopher Storrs, *The Resilience of the Spanish Monarchy, 1665–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199246373.001.0001; Anne Dubet, *Un estadista francés en la España de los Borbones. Juan Orry y las primeras reformas de Felipe V (1701–1706)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2008); Guillaume Hanotin, *Jean Orry. Un homme des finances royales entre France et Espagne (1701–1705)* (Córdoba: Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad de Córdoba, 2009); Christopher Storrs, *The Spanish Resurgence, 1713–1748* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), dx.doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300216899.001.0001; Guillaume Hanotin, *Ambassadeur de Deux Couronnes. Amelot et les Bourbons. Entre commerce et diplomatie* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2018); Carmen Sanz Ayán, "Los estímulos reformistas y sus límites: Fiscalidad, moneda y deuda en el reinado de Carlos II," *E-Spania: Révue interdisciplinaire d'études hispaniques médiévales et modernes* 29 (2018), journals.openedition.org/e-spania/.

4. John Lynch, *Bourbon Spain 1700–1808* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 1.

5. Henry Kamen, *The War of Succession*, 94–99; Virginia León, "La nobleza austracista. Entre Austrias y Borbones," in *Nobleza y sociedad en la España Moderna*, ed. Carmen Iglesias (Madrid: Ediciones Nobel, Fundación Central Hispano, 1997), 49–77; Mari Luz González Mezquita, *Oposición y disidencia en la Guerra de Sucesión Española. El almirante de Castilla* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2007); Marcelo Luzzi, "Entre la prudencia del rey y la fidelidad a su persona y dinastía: los grupos de poder en la corte de Felipe V durante la Guerra de Sucesión," *Cuadernos Dieciochistas* 15 (2014): 135–63; J. Antonio López Anguita, "Lealtad, oposición y servicio al rey: la Grandeza ante el advenimiento de los Borbones al trono español," in *Élites e reti di potere. Strategie d'integrazione nell'Europa di età moderna,* ed. Marcella Aglietti, Alejandra Franganillo Álvarez, and J. Antonio López Anguita (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2016), 215–30.

Montellano; and Rodrigo Manuel Manrique de Lara, Count of Frigiliana. Their political course of action was representative of the possibilities of promotion offered to some grandees by the dynastic change. It also demonstrated their ability to survive, during a time of great political instability, thanks to the favour and patronage of two influential women, Queen Marie-Louise of Savoy, Philip V's first wife, and her first lady of the bedchamber, the Princess of Ursins. The article reveals that, although relations between the House of Bourbon and the Spanish grandees were undoubtedly complex and ambivalent, they were in some cases far more nuanced and fluid than has been previously noted by court historians.

A time of change

Philip V's accession to the Spanish throne in 1700 brought about an important change in the relations between the French and the Spanish monarchies. The event united the kings of Spain and France, who were closely related and shared the same political, diplomatic, and dynastic interests, and the consequences of this new situation were soon evident. The European powers, led by Great Britain and the Netherlands, distrusting the dominance of the House of Bourbon over international relations and global commerce, established the Grand Alliance of The Hague, and refused to recognize Philip as king.[6] Instead, during what was called the War of the Spanish Succession, from 1701 to 1714, they supported the rights of an alternative claimant to the throne, Archduke Carlos of Austria, the second son of Emperor Leopold I.

The beginning of the new reign, along with the evolution of the war, also had an impact on the Spanish court and government. Louis XIV, the new king's grandfather, believed that Philip V could restore the former splendour of the Spanish Monarchy. This aspiration implied not only the realization of institutional and financial reforms but also the restoration of royal authority, which had weakened during Carlos II's reign. To Louis XIV, the grandees were mainly to blame for the monarchy's decline. The first advice that he gave his grandson was to undermine the political structures that ensured the high

6. Kamen, *The War of Succession,* 9–24.

nobility's influence over the whole of the state, which involved the Spanish court etiquette and the traditional conciliar government.[7]

Spanish etiquette ruled the king's daily life and granted the grandees a privileged closeness to the monarch that allowed them to influence his political decisions and the distribution of royal favour. As for the government councils, they were perceived by Louis XIV as institutions whose ordinary procedures slowed down the management of the affairs of state. In addition, the State Council, composed entirely of grandees, had gained relevance during Carlos II's reign, as their members deliberated on the most important political issues. By order of the king of France in 1701, Spanish etiquette had to be abolished, and the management of the main political issues transferred to a new unofficial council known as the Cabinet Council. Philip V would head the meetings of the Cabinet, where he would seek advice from some councilors, carefully chosen and led by the French ambassador.[8] Finally, the arrangement of Spanish finances would fall on Jean Orry, whom Kamen describes as an "obscure official of no previous distinction."[9] Recent studies have shown that Orry had not only important contacts with the French administration, such as Michel Chamillart, the secretary of state for war, but also solid experience in financial and military matters.[10]

The new dynasty's reform was initially encouraged by some of Philip V's Spanish ministers. When the king arrived in Madrid, Spanish politics were dominated by Cardinal Portocarrero, archbishop of Toledo and state councilor since 1677. The scion of a noble family, Portocarrero has been considered the main driving force behind Carlos II's last testament, in which the king appointed Philip V as his future successor.[11] In the first months of the new reign, the cardinal became, with Louis XIV's endorsement, a leading figure within the

7. For a brief description of the conciliar government see Kamen, *Spain in the Later Seventeenth Century*, 22–26, and Storrs, *The Resilience*, 182–90.

8. *Recueil des instructions données aux ambassadeurs et ministres de France. Tome XII–II. Espagne (1701–1722),* ed. Alfred Morel-Fatio and Henri Leonardon (Paris: Felix Alcan Éditeur, 1898), 8–12, 22–24, 60.

9. Kamen, *The War of Succession*, 46.

10. Dubet, 37–59.

11. See Luis Ribot, *Orígenes políticos del testamento de Carlos II: la gestación del cambio dinástico en España* (Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 2010); Antonio Ramón Peña Izquierdo, *De Austrias a Borbones. España entre los siglos XVII y XVIII* (Astorga: Akrón, 2008); and Adolfo Hamer Flores, "Versalles sobre Madrid: las frustradas reformas del cardenal Portocarrero en la monarquuía hispánica,"

king's circle. However, his influence over Philip V would be undermined not only by the French ambassadors to Spain but also by the move to Madrid of a group of French servants who formed Philip V's French household, as it came to be known.[12] The presence of the French household in the king's entourage reveals Louis XIV's mistrust of the grandees who surrounded his grandson at the Spanish court. Their head, the Marquis of Louville, enjoyed Philip V's favour, as well as that of important contacts at the court of Versailles. Between 1701 and 1703, Louville exerted strong control over the king. He was also one of France's most important sources of information on the French Cabinet in Madrid. His letters to the Marquis of Torcy, Louis XIV's secretary of state of foreign affairs, transmitted to Versailles a deeply negative image of the grandees, whom Louville described as poorly equipped for the king's service, and whose loyalty to the new dynasty he put frequently into question.[13]

The political circumstances of the new reign soured the relations between Philip V and the Spanish high nobility. The grandees viewed the changes introduced at court and in the government as a clear threat to their political position. The Cabinet Council's establishment and the French household's presence so close to the king diminished the grandee's possibilities of influencing the monarch's decisions. Another cause of the tension among the high nobility was Cardinal Portocarrero's preeminence within the royal circle. Since 1701, the cardinal's patronage modified the balance of power at the Spanish court. Distinguished grandees who held authority during the last years of Carlos II's reign, such as the Admiral of Castile, the Marquis of Leganés, and the Count of Frigiliana, were ostracized due to their strained relations with the cardinal, and suspected of being disloyal to the new dynasty. Moreover, Portocarrero initiated the first reforms of the reign, and supported not only the French ambassadors' participation in the Cabinet Council meetings but also Jean Orry's role in Philip V's service.[14]

The third factor that caused tensions among the high nobility was the revolution of the reform. The grandees could accept some changes in political

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in *El Cardenal Portocarrero y su tiempo (1635–1709). Biografías estelares y procesos influyentes*, ed. José Manuel de Bernardo Ares (León: CSED Historia, 2013), 127–41.

12. Catherine Désos, *Les français de Philippe V. Un modèle nouveau pur gouverner l'Espagne (1700–1724)* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2009), 69–74, dx.doi.org/10.4000/books.pus.13470.

13. Désos, 95–103; López Anguita, "Lealtad, oposición," 220–21.

14. López Anguita, "Lealtad, oposición," 217–18.

practices in order to guarantee the recovery of the Spanish Monarchy's finances, along with a certain order in the royal revenues and expenditures. However, they refused to accept a complete reform of the Spanish administration as encouraged and overseen by Louis XIV's ambassadors and by the new king's French advisers. The presence of the French ambassadors at the Cabinet Council was considered then and for years after as both a sign of the control that the French government wished to exert over Spanish politics and an overt statement of its disbelief in the grandees' suitability to rule the monarchy's destiny.

In this context, characterized by internal tensions, the high nobility expressed their discontent through different actions that originated in the political culture of the Spanish court. For example, some grandees renounced their positions in the navy and the army because they refused to obey orders from French officers appointed at Versailles to command the Bourbon armies during the War of the Spanish Succession. Other grandees, on the contrary, kept their positions but stopped attending court ceremonies, and in some cases left Madrid for their country estates.[15] Throughout the summer of 1701, the frequent gatherings at these nobles' residences, which were attended by several grandees, were of concern to the king's French entourage, as they suspected the high nobility of plotting against the new dynasty. It was, however, the Duke of Arcos who most explicitly expressed the grandees' rejection of the decisions reached by the new government. In 1701, after Philip V endorsed a decree that equated the French high nobility with the Spanish grandees (*Grandeza*), the duke sent the king a statement defending their traditional privileges and the historical importance of their services to the crown. Although the duke's complaints had no final effect on Philip V's decisions, they revealed that the Spanish high nobility was unwilling to tolerate any actions that directly threatened their political status and social identity.[16]

15. Yves Bottineau, *El arte cortesano en la España de Felipe V (1700–1746)* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1986), 181–210; Kamen, *The War of Succession*, 88, 94; López Anguita, "Lealtad, oposición," 217–18, 224.

16. José Manuel de Bernardo Ares, "Franceses divididos y españoles desencantados. La lucha por el poder en los primeros años del reinado de Felipe V," in *Homenaje a Don Antonio Domínguez Ortiz,* ed. Juan Luis Castellanos, and Miguel Luis López-Guadalupe (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2008), 135–57, 147; Marcelo Luzzi, "Usos de la historia en los conflictos ceremoniales de la Grandeza de España: la equiparación con los duques y pares de Francia," *Magallánica. Revista de Historia Moderna* 3.6 (2017): 86–115.

Philip V faced a complex situation. While not all the grandees who were hostile to the new government swore loyalty to Archduke Carlos, the Habsburg claimant to the Spanish throne, the king's unpopularity was noticeable, as were the tensions between the new dynasty and the high nobility.[17] The arrival of a new queen, Marie-Louise of Savoy, along with an important companion, the Princess of Ursins, would definitely change the balance of powers at the Madrid court. A member of the French high nobility and dowager of a Spanish grandee of Italian origin, the princess was appointed as the queen's first lady of the bedchamber at Louis XIV's suggestion. Although in the beginning she had to limit the increasing influence of the new queen on Spanish politics, she became a privileged intermediary between the royal couple and the grandees, as well as one of the main political actors of the Spanish court.[18]

A new political actor: the Princess of Ursins

The Princess of Ursins arrived in Madrid in the summer of 1702 together with Marie-Louise of Savoy, who assumed the regency of the monarchy while Philip V was at war against the allied armies in Italy. The princess's influence on the Spanish court grew steadily during the queen's regency. Due to the absence of the French ambassador and the most important members of the French household, such as Louville, who were in Italy with the monarch, Ursins became not only the main source of information for Louis XIV in Madrid but also the

17. San Felipe, 21; Henry Kamen, *Philip V of Spain: The King Who Reigned Twice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 24–26.

18. Born into the powerful La Tremoille family, the Princess of Ursins enjoyed the protection of Madame de Maintenon, the second and secret wife of Louis XIV, whose acquaintance she had made during her youth in Paris and with whom Ursins mantained a regular correspondence. See the biographical study by Marianne Cermakian, *La Princesse des Ursins, sa vie et ses lettres* (Paris: Didier, 1969). Her political and diplomatic role at the Spanish court has been analyzed by Marcel Loyau in "La princesse des Ursins: son rôle en Espagne de 1701 à 1714," in *1700–2000, tricentenaire de l'avènement des Bourbons,* ed. Jean-François Labourdette (Paris: Sicre Éditions, 2002), 129–49. See also J. Antonio López Anguita, "'Por razón de sangre vasalla de las lisses clodoveas y por las del matrimonio y rentas de los leones y castillos de España': la princesa de los Ursinos, camarera mayor de la reina e intermediaria entre las cortes de Madrid y Versalles (1701–1705)," in *Le lion et le lys. Espagne et France au temps de Philippe V*, ed. Guillaume Hanotin and Dominique Picco (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2018), 49–81; and Corinna Bastian, "'Paper Negotiations': Women and Diplomacy in the Early Eighteenth Century," in *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500,* ed. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (New York: Routledge, 2016), 107–19.

regent's unofficial adviser.[19] The princess enjoyed the queen's favour, and as first lady of the bedchamber she held one of the most important positions at court. Both circumstances contributed to the reception given her by the grandees.

Ursins's arrival was received with great expectation in Madrid. The first lady of the bedchamber met various ministers and courtiers, which were important encounters for several reasons: they gave her an accurate idea about the situation of the Spanish court and government, and at the same time increased her contacts among the high nobility. By the the second half of 1702, she had established close relationships with the counts of Montellano and Frigiliana, as well as with the Duke of Veragua.[20]

The bonds between Ursins and the grandees were based on mutual interest. According to historian Pablo Vázquez Gestal, after her arrival in Madrid, the princess enjoyed the queen's favour but lacked family ties and relations among the court high nobility.[21] It was thus important for her to have a circle of loyal supporters who, together with the protection provided by Philip V, Marie-Louise of Savoy, and Louis XIV, would strengthen her position at the Spanish court. Aware of the prevailing tensions, the princess resolved to be conciliatory with the discontented grandees: "Does France consider them forever as enemies, or shall you allow me to listen to them and bring them back to the right party?" she wrote to Torcy.[22]

19. The princess maintained extensive correspondence with several members of the French court and government; two editions of her letters were published in the nineteenth century. See *Lettres inédites de la Princesse des Ursins*, ed. Auguste Geffroy (Paris: Didier et Cie, 1859), and *Lettres inédites de Mmes. des Ursins et de Maintenon, du Prince de Vaudemont, du Maréchal de Tessé et du Cardinal Janson*, ed. Célestin Hippeau (Caen: A. Hardel, 1862). On Ursins's correspondence with Madame de Maintenon, Louis XIV's morganatic wife, see the recent editions by Marcel Loyau: *Correspondance de Madame de Maintenon et de la princesse des Ursins 1709: une année tragique* (Paris: Mercure de France, 2002), and *Madame de Maintenon et la princesse des Ursins. Correspondance, 1707–1709* (Paris: Mercure de France, 2014).

20. López Anguita, "Por razón de sangre," 61–65.

21. Pablo Vázquez Gestal, *Una nueva majestad. Felipe V, Isabel de Farnesio y la identidad de la monarquía (1700–1729)* (Seville and Madrid: Fundación de Municipios Pablo de Olavide, Marcial Pons, 2013), 131.

22. "La France veut-elle les regarder par toujours comme ennemies, ou me permettez-vous de les écouter et de les ramener au bon parti?" Ursins to Torcy, Barcelona, 3 April 1703, quoted in *Madame des Ursins et la succession d'Espagne. Fragments de correspondane*, ed. Duke de la Tremoille (Nantes: Imprimerie Émile Grimaud, 1903), 2:29. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations into English are by the author.

Unlike the other members of Philip V's French household, the princess's first steps toward the grandees were characterized by prudence. Far from being authoritarian or haughty, Ursins was willing to listen to the complaints of the grandees who approached her, urging them to remain loyal to the king.[23] The high nobility perceived in Ursins an emerging leading figure within the royal circle: an alternative political actor to Portocarrero and the French ambassadors, whose protection and patronage they could exploit in order to promote their careers. Moreover, the princess was in direct contact with some of Louis XIV's most important ministers, such as Torcy and Chamillart, secretaries of state of foreign affairs and war, respectively. The benefits of her protection, therefore, covered the distance from Madrid to Versailles precisely when the choice of every new minister of Philip V necessitated the approval of the French Cabinet.

These circumstances affected the bonds that united the princess with Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana. Member of a noble family from Seville, José de Solís y Valderrábano, Count of Montellano since 1681, held different positions at the crown's service in Andalusia until 1695, when he was appointed viceroy of Sardinia. Following his return to court in 1699, at Portocarrero's suggestion, Montellano was appointed provisionary grand master of the household of Marie-Louise of Savoy in 1701. Due to his position in the queen's household, Montellano gained the trust of the princess, who informed Torcy of the count's discretion and good sense.[24]

Ursins's relationship with the Duke of Veragua began very differently. A grandee of Spain and a descendent of Christopher Columbus, Veragua had formerly been viceroy of Valencia and Sicily, and member of the State Council since 1699. Under Carlos II, the duke had enjoyed the patronage of Marianne of Neuburg, the king's second wife, who promoted his career. When he returned from Sicily in 1701, however, Marianne had lost her influence at court and the duke had to adapt to a new political context. At first, Veragua was a frequent visitor of Monsieur de Blécourt, a French diplomat stationed in Madrid, and in whose presence he supported the French influence on the Spanish Monarchy. However, it was the Duke of Medinaceli, former viceroy of Naples, who introduced Veragua to the princess's circle. Veragua kept a helpful and submissive attitude in her presence, and after the autumn of 1702 he became her main source of information among the grandees. In fact, it was thanks to

23. López Anguita, "Por razón de sangre," 56–60.

24. López Anguita, "Por razón de sangre," 61.

Veragua's revelations that Ursins could send Torcy a complete report about the gatherings that took place at some of the grandees' residences, which had so concerned the French Cabinet in the previous months.[25]

Of the three, however, Frigiliana received the princess's highest praise. The career of Rodrigo Manuel Manrique de Lara, Count of Frigiliana, count consort of Aguilar, and grandee of Spain, reveals some similarities with that of the Duke of Veragua: both were members of the State Council, had held the viceroyalty of Valencia, and had enjoyed the protection of Marianne of Neuburg. As we have seen, at the beginning of the new reign Frigiliana was ostracized by Portocarrero and the members of Philip V's French household, who doubted his loyalty to the new dynasty. His position at court changed, however, after the princess's arrival in Madrid. Frigiliana began to be mentioned in the letters that Ursins sent to Torcy during the winter of 1702. Although the princess was aware of the count's discreditable reputation at Versailles, she praised his intelligence and experience in political matters and thought that Frigiliana could be useful to the king's service. She wrote to Torcy that "He knows more than others. I think he will serve his Majesty well if we employ him."[26] The princess was ready to establish her own clientage network at the Spanish court. Philip V's arrival from Italy in January 1703 enabled her to put into practice a strategy of patronage that would boost the careers of Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana in the Spanish government.

Useful collaborators

When the king's return to Madrid provoked a crisis in the Spanish Cabinet, the Princess of Ursins immediately persuaded him to abolish the Cabinet Council

25. Rocío Martínez López, "Pedro Manuel Colón de Portugal, duque de Veragua. Un Consejero de Estado de Carlos II en un territorio en disputa," *Espacio, tiempo y forma. Serie IV. Historia Moderna* 31 (2018): 43–64; López Anguita, "Por razón de sangre," 63.

26. "Il sçait davantage que les autres. […] Je crois qu'il serviroit bien son maistre, si on l'employoit." Ursins to Torcy, Madrid 30 December 1702, quoted in *Madame des Ursins et la succession*, 159. Until Mariana of Austria, Carlos II's mother, died in 1696, Frigiliana had enjoyed her favour as well. See Silvia Z. Mitchell, *Queen, Mother and Stateswoman: Mariana of Austria and the Government of Spain* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019), 133, 183, 188–89, dx.doi.org/10.5325/j.ctv14gnzwc. See also Jodi M. Campbell, "Women and Factionalism in the Court of Charles II of Spain," in *Spanish Women in the Golden Age: Images and Realities,* ed. Magdalena S. Sánchez and Alain Saint-Saëns (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 109–24.

and to govern through the traditional government councils. This decision, encouraged by the princess without consulting Versailles, involved publicly excluding Louis XIV's new ambassador to Madrid, Cardinal d'Estrées, from any decision-making. Ursins hastened to assure the king of France that this exclusion would be more apparent than real, since, as she wrote to Versailles, Cardinal d'Estrées would advise Philip V by means of private meetings. What was most important, in her opinion, was for d'Estrées not to be seen by the grandees as Philip V's prime minister, a perception that would destroy the relations between the new dynasty and the high nobility.[27]

The deception devised by the princess did not convince the French Cabinet. Having learned what had happened in Madrid, Louis XIV ordered Philip V to restore the Cabinet Council. To the French monarch and his ministers, the exclusion of Cardinal d'Estrées from the Spanish Cabinet represented an intolerable humiliation to France, the Spanish Monarchy's main ally during the war. The orders from Versailles, obeyed by Philip V, went far in restoring normalcy at Madrid; however, the Cabinet crisis drove a deep wedge between the French ambassador and the first lady of the bedchamber. Henceforth, Ursins and d'Estrées became irreconcilable enemies in their struggle to assume the main role in Spanish politics.[28] During this struggle, some of the most influential members of Philip V's French household, such as Louville, took the side of d'Estrées. As for the princess, she enjoyed the unwavering protection of Queen Marie-Louise. The queen's favour allowed Ursins to finally prevail over Cardinal d'Estrées. His departure from Spain in the autumn of 1703 not only confirmed the princess's undeniable ascendancy, as she had been able to dismiss Louis XIV's ambassador, but it also altered the Spanish government's balance of power.[29]

Although the Cabinet crisis diminished the princess's image at Versailles, it served to reinforce her reputation among the grandees. Contemporary witnesses reveal that d'Estreés's exclusion from the Spanish government not only was applauded by grandees such as the Duke of Medinaceli, but it also made Ursins the most popular member of Philip V's French entourage in

27. López Anguita, "Por razón de sangre," 65–70.

28. Their enmity was pointed out by the ambassador of Tuscany. See Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato [hereafter ASF, MdP], Filza 4991, Giulio Pucci to the Tuscan government, Madrid 9 February 1703.

29. Bastian, "'Paper negotiations,'" 110–11.

Madrid.[30] Certainly, the princess's initiatives in January 1703 echoed the high nobility's grievances, from the beginning of the new reign, over the French ambassadors' involvement in Spanish politics and the public infringement of Spanish etiquette by the king's French entourage. It was therefore not surprising that numerous grandees supported Ursins in her clash with d'Estrées.[31]

Some of the grandees, in fact, fully benefited from the Cabinet crisis and its consequences. During the first half of 1703, the princess strengthened her ties with the three grandees, Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana, who, thanks to her favour, were included in the royal circle. After his arrival from Italy, Philip V's decision to move into the queen's chamber allowed the princess, as the first lady of the bedchamber, to manage the royal couple's contacts. Contemporary diplomatic sources reveal that Ursins was able not only to restrict her opponents' access to Philip V and Marie-Louise, but also to arrange private encounters between the royal couple and her supporters, among them Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana. The princess's protection became, therefore, a guarantee of proximity to the king and queen.[32]

Thanks to their admission to the royal circle, the three nobles expressed their willingness to serve the king during a time of institutional change. After Louis XIV obliged Philip V to reinstate the Cabinet Council in February 1703, its members, among them d'Estrées and Portocarrero, no longer enjoyed the king's confidence. Consequently, the control exerted by this institution over governmental decision-making was significantly limited. Philip V, bemoaned Louville, ruled from the queen's chamber, where he sought advice from the princess and Jean Orry.[33] Orry had been introduced to Ursins after her arrival in Madrid and became one of her main supporters at the Spanish court.

30. Archives Nationales Paris [hereafter, ANP], $B^7$227, fols. 41r.–43r. Ambrose Daubenton, agent of the French Navy and Commerce in Spain, to Chancellor Pontchartrain, Madrid, 25 January 1703.

31. Archivio di Stato di Torino, Lettere Ministri Spagna [hereafter AST, LMS], Mazzo 48, Constanzo Operti, Savoyard ambassador, to the duke of Savoy, Madrid, 8 February and 5 April 1703.

32. Vázquez Gestal, *Una nueva majestad,* 162–64; Ronald G. Asch, "Patronage, Friendship and the Politics of Access: The Role of the Early Favourite Revisited," in *The Key to Power? The Culture of Access in Princely Courts*, ed. Dries Raeymaekers and Sebastiaan Derk (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 194–96, dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004304246_009. For the access to the royal couple granted by the princess to some grandees, see also ASF, MdP, Filza 4991, Giulio Pucci to the Tuscan government, Madrid, 9 February 1703.

33. Dubet, 58–59; López Anguita, "Por razón de sangre," 71.

Recommended by the princess, he assumed the role of an unofficial minister of Philip V in the autumn of 1703. According to Anne Dubet, Ursins also provided Orry with the support of some grandees disposed to collaborate with him on his program of reforms.[34] She was able to do so because of her contact in previous months with aristocrats such as Frigiliana, Veragua, and Montellano. Ursins had sounded out their attitude towards the reforms that the king could implement in order to restore the Spanish Monarchy's prestige and power. As she was relatively sure of their flexibility in introducing institutional changes, she hoped that the grandees would offer Orry their political expertise. It was no surprise, therefore, that Veragua and Frigiliana were chosen as members of the Junta of grandees, an unofficial committee parallel to the Cabinet Council, formed by Orry to discuss the most important political matters. Neither was it surprising that Veragua and Frigiliana, along with the less trustworthy Duke of Medinaceli, were among the grandees that reviewed the army's reform planned by Orry.[35]

Nonetheless, the grandees' impact on Spanish politics should not be overestimated. The princess and Orry were the main political actors in the royal couple's circle and held a key role that these aristocrats had to accept and respect. Yet, their pragmatism as regards their position also garnered benefits: in particular, their career's progress within the Spanish government. Their support of Orry's first reforms and the creation of the secretary of state for war and the war treasury were reciprocated by the princess's recommendation of Veragua as president of the Orders of Council, and of Montellano as president of the most important Council of Castile. The Princess of Ursins's patronage of Montellano and Veragua was also eloquent proof to other grandees that tolerance towards institutional change and a well-disposed attitude of cooperation with the king's French advisers would be rewarded by the new dynasty.[36]

The measure of the grandees' sincerity, however, was difficult to ascertain. As the case of Montellano reveals, cooperating with Orry and tolerating his influence on the Spanish government, as well as accepting the princess's role with regard to the royal couple, did not imply either absolute loyalty to both or complete acquiescence to the program of reforms. On the contrary, their

34. Dubet, 207.

35. Dubet, 207–08.

36. López Anguita, "Por razón de sangre," 74–76; Dubet, 181–213.

support could be understood by these aristocrats as the first step of a strategy meant to infiltrate the royal circle in order to gain a political position from which to promote their own influence.

At the core of the royal circle

In April 1704, Louis XIV ordered Philip V to dismiss the Princess of Ursins and exile her to Rome.[37] Shortly afterward, in August, Orry was also forced to leave Madrid. The decisions of the French king reflected his disagreement with the situation at the Spanish court. Since early 1703, Ursins and Orry had acted notoriously, freely disregarding the instructions of the French Cabinet. In addition, the unfavourable outcome of the Spanish military campaign in 1704 that ended with the loss of Gibraltar to the Allies of the Great League of The Hague called into question the suitability of the institutional reforms encouraged by the princess and her protégé during the previous months. Therefore, Louis XIV had judged unsuccessful Ursins and Orry's involvement in Spanish politics.[38] He determined that a new French ambassador, the Duke of Gramont, would restore order to the Spanish government and become Philip V's most important advisor on the Cabinet Council, overturning the reforms carried out previously by Orry.

Initially, the princess's fall from grace unsettled her supporters at court. Nevertheless, their fears were unfounded, as Louis XIV had no intention of pursuing the grandees who had been loyal to the former first lady of the bedchamber. The French king's stance was not a sign of benevolence, but of prudence and pragmatism. To Louis XIV, exiling Ursins, who was, after all, a French subject by birth, was an isolated occurrence that should not affect the delicate balance of power at the Spanish court. He therefore decided against forcing the removal of the princess's protégés among the high nobility and allowed them to remain in their positions:

> I order the Duke of Gramont to make known to those whom she [Ursins] has protected that they should not fear that their attachment to her will

37. For a detailed account of the princess's first exile, see Cermakian, 307–38.

38. Lynch, 33–34; Dubet, 220–26.

> harm them before me; you can also assure them that I only consider their merit and the zeal they show for the king [of Spain].[39]

His decision had, nevertheless, consequences that the French monarch could not foresee.

Ursins's protegés Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana kept their positions at the Spanish court, thanks not only to Louis XIV's prudence but also to the queen's protection. Marie-Louise of Savoy perceived the princess's removal as a personal affront. Although at the beginning she complied with Louis XIV's orders, the queen was determined to oblige the French king to return her former first lady of the bedchamber and her only confidant at the Madrid court. Marie-Louise's intent would deeply affect the Duke of Gramont's ambassadorship. Deploying her own dominance over Philip V, the queen worked to undermine Gramont's authority at court until Louis XIV accepted Ursins at Versailles.

Contemporary witnesses clearly noted not only the queen's hostility to the French ambassador, but also how this situation favoured Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana. In the absence of the princess and Orry, the nobles continued to enjoy privileged access to the royal couple, now guaranteed by the queen, and they became Philip V's main advisers. One source referred to the ineffectiveness of the Cabinet and to Gramont's difficulties in approaching the king in private:

> Talk continues in the Cabinet only about very few and the least important issues. […] One sees the king of Spain more than ever subjugated to the will of the queen and some of the grandees who have access to His Majesty because of their positions [at court or in the government].[40]

39. "J'ordonne au Duc de Gramont de faire connaître à ceux qu'Elle [Ursins] a protegés qu'ils ne doivent pas craindre que leur attachement pour Elle leur nuise auprès de moy; vous pouvez aussy les asseurer que je considère seulement leur mérite et le zèle qu'ils témoignent pour le Roy leur Maistre." Archive du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance Politique Espagne, tome 140, fols. 93r.–v. [hereafter, AMAEP, CPE, t.] Louis XIV to the Marquis of Chateauneuf, extraordinary ambassador to Madrid, 27 April 1704.

40. "On continue a parler dans le Despacho que de très peu d'affaires et des moindres importantes. […] Voilà le Roy d'Espagne enfermé plus que jamais aux volontez de la Reine et à celle de quelques Grands qui ont accèz auprès de S[a] M[ajes]té à cause de leur charge." ANP, $B^7$232, fol. 310r. Ambrose Daubenton to Chancellor Pontchartrain, Madrid, 6 August 1704.

As was the case before the princess's exile, the queen's bedchamber remained a political space. There continued to take place in her presence what the agent of the French navy and commerce in Spain, Ambrose Daubenton, named the "queen's secret cabinet," an unofficial council whose meetings were attended by Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana. Although contemporary sources are inconclusive when referring to what political matters were discussed in this "secret cabinet," Daubenton is clear that during the latter half of 1704, these same nobles were thought to be exploiting the queen's favour in order to undermine the power that France attempted to exert on Spanish politics through Gramont: "It is claimed that these two [Veraguas and Frigiliana] […] are our greatest enemies, that they encourage the queen to rule and to carry out nothing of what His Majesty [Louis XIV] desires in order to demonstrate that His Majesty has no part in the government of this kingdom."[41]

Louis XIV's decisions in early 1704 failed to ensure stability in the Spanish government; on the contrary, they seemed to have restored the grandees' influence on Spanish politics. This factor moved the French king to reconsider his position about the princess's destiny, resolving that Ursins be received at Versailles to justify her actions. In addition, the king was willing to accept Gramont's removal and the princess's return to Spain along with a new French ambassador; in an ironic twist, Ursins was now perceived as the necessary intermediary in the relations between the Spanish royal couple and the grandees.

However, the nobles Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana had varying responses to the news. The three aristocrats had strengthened their presence within the royal circle during the princess's absence, and, thanks to the queen's protection, they had achieved one of the high nobility's main goals since the new reign's beginning, which was to neutralize the influence of the French ambassadors on Spanish politics. Undoubtedly, the Princess of Ursins's return to Madrid in September 1705 altered both situations and put an end to the brief stage of "aristocratic government." Under these circumstances, Montellano—unlike Veragua and Frigiliana—was the most affected, since he was president

41. "On prétend que ces deux [Veraguas and Frigiliana] […] sont nos plus grands ennemis, qu'ils fortifient la Reine dans la résolution de gouverner, qu'ils l'engagent à ne rien exécuter de ce que Sa M[ajes]té [Louis XIV] désire […] afin qu'il paroisse que Sa M[ajes]té [Louis XIV] n'a aucune pars au gouvernement de ce Royaume." ANP, B^{7}232, fol. 361v. Ambrose Daubenton to Chancellor Pontchartrain, Madrid, 18 August 1704.

of the Council of Castile, Spain's most important institution after the State Council. He had been a Cabinet member since 1704 and was considered the queen's favourite among the grandees. Aware that the princess's ascendancy would jeopardize his bonds with the royal couple, he openly voiced his opposition to her return to Spain. Veragua and Frigiliana were more discreet; if they harboured any reluctance for Ursins's return, they never expressed their sentiment in public. Indeed, in the summer of 1705, the Tuscan ambassador not only took the two nobles to be the princess's main supporters among the Spanish high nobility, but he also understood that her return would be to their benefit.[42] The diplomat was not mistaken.

The high nobility's pragmatism

Before the Princess of Ursins returned to Spain in May 1705, a new French ambassador, Michel-Jean Amelot de Gournay, arrived at the Madrid court, remaining until September 1709. According to Henry Kamen, "the years of his ambassadorship were […] the high point of French influence" in the Spanish government.[43] Amelot had extensive experience in diplomatic, financial, and commercial matters and was, along with Orry, one of the driving forces of the Bourbon reform during the War of Succession. Protected by the princess, who apparently had backed his appointment as ambassador to Madrid, Amelot's sway over Spanish politics elicited the grandees' opposition.[44]

Indeed, during Amelot's ambassadorship, there occurred a notable change in the new dynasty's attitude toward the Spanish aristocracy. The worsening of the war for the Bourbon armies, the drive of Spanish reform, and the renewed stability of diplomatic relations between Madrid and Versailles since 1705 convinced Louis XIV and Amelot to advance the grandees' definite exclusion from any decision-making. The French king wrote that "It is convenient to preserve all the external prerogatives of their rank, and at the same time exclude them from all matters […] which might increase their credit or give

42. Coxe, 1:331–32; ASF, MdP, Filza 4993, Marquis of Rinuccini to the Tuscan government, Madrid, 8 July 1705.

43. Kamen, *The War of Succession*, 45.

44. Hanotin, *Ambassadeur de Deux Couronnes*, 161.

them a part in the government."[45] Henceforth, the government councils—in particular the State Council, which was entirely composed by grandees—were sidelined by new institutions such as the secretary of state for war, restored in July 1705. The Cabinet Council, in which some grandees also took part, was reduced to approving only what Amelot had already discussed with the king in the queen's bedchamber. The government had thus devolved into one in which the French ambassador played a key role thanks to the royal couple's favour and the support of the princess, her protégés, and some loyal Spanish officials.[46]

In this new context, Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana all experienced important changes in their political careers. Montellano was the most aggrieved by the return of the princess to Madrid. His "ingratitude" toward Ursins, after she had promoted his career within the Spanish government, had cost him the presidency of the Council of Castile in 1705.[47] His fall from grace, however, was debatable, since Marie-Louise of Savoy valued Montellano and encouraged his elevation to the rank of duke, grandee of Spain, and member of the State Council. The newly named Duke of Montellano retained the queen's favour, and as late as 1713 he was considered "the man who most pleased the queen of Spain in this court." Yet, although the royal couple recognized Montellano's services to them, the duke never regained the influence he had enjoyed in Spanish politics between 1703 and the first half of 1705: "he was president of Castile, but as long as things remain as they are, he will be nothing," concluded the French ambassador.[48]

The paths of both Veragua and Frigiliana from 1705 onward were undoubtedly brighter, at least in comparison to Montellano. The Princess of Ursins supported Louis XIV and Amelot's decrees excluding the grandees from any decision-making, while at the same time she continued to patronize the aristocrats' careers. As the Tuscan ambassador foresaw, they became part of the Cabinet in the autumn of 1705; Frigiliana was also appointed president of the Council of Aragon after the Duke of Montalto, its previous president, resigned.

45. Quoted in Kamen, *The War of Succession*, 89.

46. Hanotin, *Ambassadeur de Deux Couronnes,* 139, 388–89.

47. In the princess's own words. Ursins to Gramont, Toulouse 7 December 1704, quoted in *Madame des Ursins*, 3:115.

48. "L'homme de cette Cour le plus agréable à la Reine d'Espagne. […] Il a été président de Castille, mais tandis que les choses seront dans l'état où elles sont, il ne sera plus rien," quoted in *Recueil des instructions*, 226.

Although both grandees were willing to cooperate with Amelot, they were never mere followers of the French ambassador's orders.[49] To a certain degree, they maintained their own judgment. For example, in the summer of 1707, against Amelot's views, Frigiliana voiced his opposition to the formal abolition of the kingdoms of Aragon and Valencia's chartered regimes.[50] He similarly opposed the commercial privileges granted to France in Spanish America, of which Veragua was also especially critical.[51] The grandees' alliance with Amelot and the princess did not imply their unquestioned identification with all French interests at the Spanish court. In fact, despite his ties with Ursins, Frigiliana was a frequent attendee at the gatherings that took place at the Duke of Montellano's residence, which represented one of the important oppositional venues to French influence on Spanish politics after 1705.[52]

This kind of attitude refers, first of all, to the possibilist behaviour that characterized the grandees during the first years of Philip V's reign.[53] Although Veragua and Frigiliana had on occasion recommended to the king that he respect Spanish etiquette and the traditional procedures of the Spanish government, they knew how to adapt their interests, ambition, and behaviour to what the political context required of them. Even if Philip V and Amelot ignored their opinion at the Cabinet or State Council, they never resigned their positions, unlike other grandees. Neither did they openly criticize the king's orders, even when encouraged by Louis XIV's ambassador.

Philip V's new dynasty also displayed a possibilist attitude towards the Spanish aristocracy that gave proof of a certain pragmatism. Toward the end of the War of Succession, in particular between 1705 and 1711, some of the most important grandees of the court—among them the dukes of Medinaceli, Nájera, Infantado, and Uceda, as well as the Marquis of Leganes and the Count of Oropesa—either were imprisoned, abandoned Madrid, or swore allegiance to Archduke Carlos, the Habsburg claimant to the Spanish throne.[54] In the context of a war that would resolve Philip V's legitimacy as king of Spain, the

49. Hanotin, *Ambassadeur de Deux Couronnes*, 367–68.

50. Hanotin, *Ambassadeur de Deux Couronnes*, 372–73.

51. ANP, B^{7}252, fol. 358r. Ambrose Daubenton to Chancellor Pontchartrain, Madrid, 9 July 1708.

52. Egido, 272.

53. Luzzi, "Entre la prudencia," 155.

54. Kamen, *The War of Succession*, 94–99.

unwavering loyalty showed him by Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana also favoured their respective careers. The nobles, in other words, could be loyal to a Bourbon king and at the same time, oppose the influence by the French on the Spanish Monarchy. This was a difference recognized as well by both the princess and the royal couple.

Loyalty, pragmatism, flexibility, and willingness to serve the king were all traits that guaranteed the nobles Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana the protection of the royal couple and of Ursins as first lady of the bedchamber. According to the Marquis of San Felipe, in 1709, the queen refused to exile the Duke of Montellano, even though Ursins and Amelot considered that it was necessary punishment for the anti-French opinions that Montellano had expressed at the Cabinet.[55] Veragua and Frigiliana's opposition to French interests in Spanish America, however, did not harm their careers or their clientage with Ursins. As previously noted, the princess's ties with the grandees of their circle were characterized by mutual interest. Ursins's proximity to the king and queen determined the degree of political influence that Veragua and Frigiliana could exert on their own. Unlike Montellano, they never opposed the princess directly. By proceeding in this fashion, they retained the princess's favour and at the same time kept a marginal position in the royal circle whose benefits were evident after the end of Amelot's ambassadorship in September 1709.

In the context of political and diplomatic estrangement that dominated relations between the French and the Spanish monarchies during the last years of the war, Louis XIV's ambassadors did not take part in the meetings of the Spanish Cabinet, and the princess became the main agent from Versailles at the Madrid court. Under the circumstances, Ursins continued to place her trust in Veragua and Frigiliana, as Daubenton noted: "There should be no doubt that Madame, the Princess of Ursins, is uncertain of the loyalty of Monsieur, the Duke of Veragua or of Monsieur, the Duke of Frigiliana, since she continues to have great consideration for them and to encourage their Majesties' fondness for them."[56]

55. San Felipe, 169.

56. "On ne doit pas douter que Mad[am]e. la Princesse des Ursins ne soit seure de la fidelité de M[onsieur]. le Duc de Veragua et du M[onsieur] le comte de Frigiliana, car elle continue d'avoir pour eux une forte consideration et d'engager […] leurs M [ajes]tez […] a les afectionner." ANP, B^{7}257, fols. 18r.–20r. Ambrose Daubenton to Chancellor Pontchartrain, Madrid, 4 August 1709.

By the end of 1709, Veragua and Frigiliana were considered two of the most influential ministers of Philip V. In fact, both would remain members of the Cabinet after its reorganization that same year, and Frigiliana, along with Francisco Ronquillo, president of the Council of Castile, was among the closest advisers of the royal couple.[57] Soon afterward, the count would be appointed president of the Council of Indies.[58]

In short, their clientage relations with Ursins allowed Veragua and Frigiliana not only to maintain influence over Spanish politics in a time of change and instability, but also to retain their positions within the Spanish government until their death. Veragua died while president of the Council of Orders in the summer of 1710. Frigiliana died in September 1717, managing to survive Ursins's second and final fall from grace in January 1715, after Philip V's second marriage to Isabel Farnese, without losing the king's favour. Several months before his death, in January 1717, he retired as president of the Council of Indies because of his advanced age of 79. However, Philip V decreed that Frigiliana could keep his full salary, as well as the honours that corresponded to him as president of one of the Spanish Monarchy's most important councils.[59] The count's privileged destiny would probably not have surprised the marquis de Bonnac, French ambassador to Spain from 1711 to 1713. In a report sent to Versailles shortly before his ambassadorship ended, Bonnac stated that Frigiliana's main character trait was his versatility: "as long as his age permits him to act, he will likely keep the place he has in the Council of Indies and in the Cabinet."[60]

Conclusion

The careers of the dukes of Montellano and Veragua and the Count of Frigiliana are representative of the possibilities of political promotion that service to the House of Bourbon could offer to grandees. Undoubtedly, the reforms of the

57. ANP, B^{7}257, fols. 312v.-314v. Ambrose Daubenton to Chancellor Pontchartrain, Madrid, 9 October 1709.

58. Gildas Bernard, *Le Secrétariat d'État et le Conseil Espagnol des Indes (1700–1808)* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1972), appendix 2.

59. Bernard, *Le Secrétariat,* 78.

60. "Tandis qu'il sera en état d'agir, il conservera vraisemblablement la place qu'il a dans le Conseil des Indes et dans celui du Cabinet," quoted in *Recueil des instructions*, 222.

Spanish administration driven by Orry and Amelot changed the role of the high nobility on the political stage. However, the ways in which these grandees took on the challenges faced by the Spanish Monarchy at the beginning of the eighteenth century—the War of Succession, France's influence on the Spanish government, the implementation of political reforms—also reveal their ability to profit from a situation determined by dynastic uncertainty, political instability, and institutional change.

Moreover, the case studies of Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana confirm the relevance that women's patronage continued to have during Philip V's reign. The three grandees enjoyed the favour of both Queen Marie-Louise and the Princess of Ursins, thanks to which they held, although temporarily in regard to Montellano, important positions in the Spanish administration. In fact, the evolution of Veragua's and Frigiliana's careers cannot be understood without taking into account their relations with Ursins. The princess's protection granted to both grandees the freedom to express prudent opposition to some political decisions encouraged by the French ambassador, Amelot, as well as to remain in a strategic space at the royal circle's margins.

To conclude, the careers of Montellano, Veragua, and Frigiliana demonstrate that flexibility and pragmatism, together with loyalty and a willingness to serve the king, were traits demanded by the new dynasty from the grandees who aspired to the most important positions within the Spanish administration. Veragua and Frigiliana, as well as others, put their personal interests and ambition above the Spanish Monarchy's political traditions and the identitarian privileges of the social group to which they belonged, the Spanish *grandeza*. Unlike Montellano and other members of the high nobility, Veragua and Frigiliana understood that the influence they could exert on decision-making would not depend solely on their integration into the official government institutions of the Spanish Monarchy. Instead, they relied on their ability to gain access to spaces of unofficial power, as the queen's bedchamber certainly was, in order to remain in the favour of the new political actors, such as the Princess of Ursins, and to accept the inevitability of institutional reform.