

**Heide Wunder: 'Gynocracy' – In search of a lost term in early modern political language, in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 2.**

The term gynocracy, coming from the Greek 'Gynaikokratia' (matriarchy), is the focus of this article. Although this term has been as good as unknown for a long time it is a politico-linguistic term with a history reaching back two thousand years. In the early modern period it was demonstrably part of the political rhetoric in its Greek and Latin form, as well as in the German translations "Weiberregiment" and "Weiberherrschaft" (both matriarchy). Starting with Aristoteles' "Politeia" in the 4th century B.C. through to the matriarchy in the late 18th and early 19th centuries this multi-faceted conceptual history (Begriffsgeschichte) is elucidated in several examples. Here the significance of the participation of women in political authority can be seen, as for instance in the question as to the qualification of the female gender for the assumption of leadership.

**Matthias Schnettger: Female dominance in the early modern period. Observations from a constitutional and political-historical perspective, in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 2.**

The article outlines some important findings from gender research and recognises their significance for the general political and constitutional history. Over and above the problem complex of criticism of female rulers which, on the basis of examples by John Knox and Jean Bodin, classifies female dominance as a real threat, it deals with female regimes by virtue of their own dynastic rights, female regencies, clerical princess electors in the Holy Roman Empire, the role of women in 'major' politics, as well as the significance of female patronage as a stabilising element for the state in the early modern period. The article accentuates to what extent the findings of gender research in the fields mentioned has modified the image of the state in the early modern period and its structure and methods. Therefore, neither should female regencies be regarded nor treated as a fringe phenomenon by general political and constitutional history. At the same time gender research should bear the limitations of female regency in mind. Despite initial, sometimes promising attempts in this direction, European syntheses, including the German and Italian state world, still remain an important research desideratum.

**Katrin Keller: Women and politics in the court society of the Holy Roman Empire between 1550 and 1750, in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 2.**

Based on only a few examples, the article refers initially to the problematic position of princesses and the court society ladies in respect of their option scope for political activities. There was indeed constitutionally legitimate manoeuvring scope for women, but the legal fundamentals of such activities were never without controversy, and they always depended on the marital status, family and in particular the support of male family members. Two conditions for action constitute the key prerequisites for any manoeuvring options of a woman: on the one hand the relationship to her husband or (as a widow) to her son; on the other hand the ability to act astutely in social networks. Women were more dependent on such construed informal contacts than their politically active male counterparts, precisely because the possibility of holding an office remained more or less barred to them. The limitations of such scope of action and the shift of the same in the course of early modern history require further examination.

**Sabine Meine: Court music as a scope of dominance. The case of Isabella d'Este Gonzaga, in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 2.**

On the basis of "Canzoniere di Isabella d'Este", a precious collection of secular French chansons, which Duke Ercole I. d'Este gave his daughter as an engagement present when she joined the court of Mantua, the article illustrates why and how the Este daughter as the wedded Margravine of Mantua came to develop music as her special instrument of power. On the one hand this was achieved by setting up a musical-iconographical 'studio' and a 'grotto' in her own personal chambers in the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua, on the other hand by championing the musical-literary Frottola genre which she in 1500, as an early Petrarchist, endeavoured to ennoble by systematically commissioning lyrical settings. The setting of the last chant from Petrarch's Canzoniere "Vergine bella, che di sol vestita" was bequeathed by her own personal court musician, Bartolomeo Tromboncino, which complies ideally with the image of a female sovereign of virtue. With Isabella's musical self-portrayal at the marriage between her brother, Alfonso d'Este and her sister-in-law and rival, Lucrezia Borgia in Ferrara in 1502 she demonstrated a fine example of a superimposition of musical and politico-cultural deeds.

**Elisabeth Oy-Marra: Representation as self-assertion: The dynastisc self-concept of Maria de' Medici using the example of her audience chamber in the Palais du Luxembourg, in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 2.**

Instead of concentrating on the well-known Rubens' cycle in honour of Maria de' Medici, this article is an analysis of the ten paintings in her audience chamber, the 'Cabinet doré' in the Palais du Luxembourg, which to date have been left somewhat aside by research work. The analysis looks at their significance for the self-concept of the princess. The paintings pose questions as to how the Queen Mother dealt with means of representation. The subject of this cycle is events which deal with the marriages of various members of the House of Medici, as well as the significant historical episodes of the renowned dynasty. With this unique example for the recourse of a princess to the history of her family of origin, with which she obviously endeavours to consolidate her position at the court of her spouse, Maria did justice to her reputation, mastering medial representation unlike any Prince in her time. It is also clear that she certainly knew how to skilfully stage-manage an affirmation of her position and her peace policy.

**Pauline Puppel: A mother-in-law's 'dream' – Countess Elisabeth Charlotte of Nassau-Dillenburg-Schaumburg and Prince Lebrecht of Anhalt-Bernburg, in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 2.**

This essay focuses on a dispute on the rule and governmental power in Nassau-Schaumburg. On the basis of court records the latent conflict between Countess Elisabeth Charlotte (1640–1707) and her son-in-law, new light is shed on the aspect of the exercise of power by women. Despite the lack of legitimation under constitutional law – in the early modern period a woman was considered neither qualified nor entitled to rule – Elisabeth Charlotte, widow of Adolf of Nassau-Dillenburg and daughter-heir of Peter Melander of Holzappel, was able to assert herself against the young spouse of her daughter, her own declared heiress. Her instance is that of an aristocratic woman who consciously perceived her position as a daughter-heir and the rights of exercise of power connected with the same, and established these rights in the face of claims on the part of men. On 12 April 1692, as the wedding bells in Schaumburg tolled, none of the many guests could sense that this would be the beginning of a long and more than unpleasant dispute. The bridegroom, as the younger brother of an heir to the throne, was not in a position to assume his paternal inheritance. However, as the future husband of an heiress, he had the prospect of his own territorial lordship. On the other hand his widowed mother-in-law was in the best of health

and did not even consider relinquishing the regime to the young Prince and Princess and retiring to the dowager's estate.

**Corina Bastian: 'Diplomacy knows no gender' – Correspondence between Madame de Maintenon and the Princesse des Ursins in the War of the Spanish Succession (1705-1715), in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 2.**

The diplomatic relations among the courts of the early modern period were characterised by a co-existence of various channels – between legitimate office bearers and 'informal' protagonists, both men and women alike. With their correspondence Madame de Maintenon and Princesse des Ursins ensured a bond between the French and the Spanish courts. Since both women had exclusive access to the respective sovereign, their correspondence was an instrument of power that expanded their own scope for manoeuvre and that of their sovereigns. In the course of the ever diverging interests of the two courts the letters themselves became a venue of negotiation. The view from outside and the self-manifestation of the women in the historical sources reveal that their gender played only a limited role in their practical exertion of influence. However, in stereotype discourses they discredited female and 'non-official' influence – a strategy, that was to serve as an abdication from their responsibility. In this respect the discourses anticipated the developments in the 18th century. The correspondence of the two women reflects the concurrence of common customs and the conception of standards that was being increasingly asserted.

**Britta Kägler: Female regency in times of crisis. The provisional sovereignty of the Bavarian Electoral Princess Therese Kunigunde (1704/05), in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 2.**

At the early modern courts of the Holy Roman Empire female regency was mostly bound by the assumption of a guardianship regime. One exception was the provisional sovereignty of the Electoral Princess Therese Kunigunde of Bavaria. In 1704/05, in the midst of the War of the Spanish Succession, she was assigned the difficult task of administering the electorate after the defeat of the Franco-Bavarian troops, although Therese Kunigunde, as a young princess, seemed no way predestined to command the affairs of state. The reason for this was not so much political disinterest, more her retreat from the Munich court society. During the first years of her marriage Therese Kunigunde systematically withdrew from the court networks, resulting in her being pushed into an outsider position, even though as Electoral Princess she was entitled to fulfil the role of the Court 'First Lady'. It was the external crisis of the Electorate that, for Therese Kunigunde as the Regent, first opened up political fields of operation beyond the well established networks. However, despite the mostly positive appraisal, the one and only episode of female regency in the Electorate of Bavaria, which was not based on a guardianship regime, cannot be regarded as a success.

**Eva K. Dade: Marquise de Pompadour and the foreign diplomats at the Court of Versailles, in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 2.**

Madame de Pompadour, the mistress of Louis XV, was able to exercise influence on the international relations of the French Crown through her contacts to the diplomatic representatives of foreign courts. She was a figure of enormous interest for the foreign consorts at Court: she afforded access to the sovereign, relayed their concerns and facilitated rendezvous in her chambers, which for the diplomats were by far more advantageous than the strictly official, ceremonious audiences with the King. At the behest of Louis XV, all diplomats were introduced to his mistress at the beginning of their assignment.

Subsequently they sought her presence, regularly attending her make-up and dressing ceremonies. Opinions differ as to just how much influence Madame de Pompadour actually had on the sovereign: however, all the diplomats agreed that contact to la Maitresse could be of political advantage, and this was therefore cultivated. The practical conditions of this contact and gender-specific manoeuvring scope of the mistress is the matter of study in the article at hand.