

Bourbon Ceremony in the Former Habsburg Territory

Maria Amalia and Ferdinand's Wedding in Parma (1769)

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Abstract

This article examines descriptions of the wedding ceremony of Habsburg Archduchess Maria Amalia and Duke Ferdinand of Parma in 1769 and specifically analyzes the decision-making behind her marriage and the symbolism replete in her wedding ceremony. While scholarship on this Habsburg archduchess is extremely scarce and predominantly focuses on her later life as a ruling duchess in Parma, this article sheds light on an important moment in her life and one that had widespread political implications. Situating the marriage in the historical and political context of the eighteenth century, this article contends that Maria Amalia and Ferdinand's alliance was made by Habsburgs as a part of mid-eighteenth-century "Diplomatic Revolution," which aimed at repairing the relationship with Bourbons after the War of Austrian Succession. Hosted in the Duchy of Parma, a region which had been ceded to Bourbons from the Habsburgs in 1748, the wedding ceremony was marked by the high-profile and laudatory celebrations of the Bourbons, which contrasted with the humble and censored presence of the Habsburgs. This contrast reflected the larger political situation: Defeated by Bourbons in the War of Austrian Succession, Habsburgs' prestige had plummeted dramatically since the mid-eighteenth century. They were not allowed to present themselves politically in their former territory. Hence what welcomed the Habsburg bride in Parma was a ceremony with strong militaristic features and full of Bourbon propaganda.

Article

Introduction

Among the various children of Empress Maria Theresa and Emperor Francis Stephen, Archduchess Maria Amalia had the worst relationship with her mother. Historians commonly believe that this antagonism stemmed from Maria Amalia's marriage to Ferdinand of Parma, a Bourbon-Parman duke, in 1769. The empress made this decision against Maria Amalia's will.¹ With perfect beauty and talents, Maria Amalia was raised as an ideal partner for suitable royalty and a precious asset for the Habsburg dynasty. While

¹ Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa: The Habsburg Empress in Her Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 579.

Maria Amalia expected to marry Prince Charles II of Zweibrücken, a distant cousin whom she had fallen in love with, her mother mapped out a different course.

Why did the empress insist on Maria Amalia marrying Ferdinand, despite her daughter's wishes to the contrary? What significance did the marriage have? This article investigates these questions by analyzing the surviving descriptions of the marriage ceremony between Maria Amalia and Ferdinand. I argue that Maria Amalia's marriage was a dynastic sacrifice, a theme that emerges repeatedly in the history of Habsburg women. I also contend that this wedding, with its strong Bourbon influence and modest Habsburg presence, was a reflection of the broader political situations: Bourbons seized this wedding as a great opportunity to demonstrate their powers and dominance; Habsburgs' influence had plummeted dramatically during the mid-eighteenth century and their position and prestige was intentionally minimized from this wedding held in Parma, a duchy which had been occupied by them just over two decades before the wedding.

Dynastic Sacrifice

The 1740s was a period of crisis for the Habsburgs. When Charles VI died in 1740, he left no son, and despite his efforts to secure the succession of his daughter, Maria Theresa, before his death, her status as heir was frequently challenged, leading to prolonged disputes over the inheritance of the Habsburg imperial title. The Habsburgs held the title of Holy Roman Empire for hundreds of years, but this came to an end in 1742, when Charles Albert, from the Wittelsbach family, was elected as the new Holy Roman Emperor.² The Habsburgs' neighbors seized upon this instability and used the occasion to encroach upon Habsburg territories. Most notably, the Hohenzollerns occupied Silesia in 1740.³ Facing all these issues, young matriarch Maria Theresa and her Habsburg family were pushed into the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) to defend the family's territories and status.

It was amid this intense situation that a daughter arrived. On February 26, 1746, Maria Amalia was born in Vienna, the eighth child of Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa and Emperor Francis Stephen.⁴ The War of Austrian Succession ended two years after Maria Amalia's birth, with the Habsburgs losing Silesia, part of the Netherlands, and almost its entire holdings in the Apennine Peninsula.⁵ Stumbling through this crisis with huge losses of influence in Western and Southern Europe, the dynasty started a long path to regrouping and a new understanding of their place on the European stage. This context determined the fates of Maria Amalia and many of her sisters: Born amid the crisis, they were destined to fix the crisis.

In the wake of these struggles following Charles VI's death, the mid-eighteenth-century Habsburg dynasty readjusted its foreign policy, a shift coined the "Diplomatic Revolution" by historians. Habsburgs abandoned their traditional alliance with Britain and instead

² Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *The Holy Roman Empire: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 123.

³ Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Habsburgs* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 219.

⁴ Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 240.

⁵ M.S. Anderson, *The War of Austrian Succession 1740-1748* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013), 96.

turned toward the Bourbons, and in doing so, they aimed to regain lost territories and deter the Hohenzollerns from further invasions.⁶ To make peace with the Bourbons, whom the Habsburgs had rivaled against for most of the eighteenth century, a series of marriages were sealed between the young generation of Habsburgs and their Bourbon counterparts. Leopold II married Bourbon Princess Maria Luisa in 1764. His younger sister Archduchess Maria Josepha had been set to marry Ferdinand of Two Sicilies, a descendant of Spanish Bourbons, but it failed when she died of smallpox in 1767; Maria Josepha was swiftly substituted by Maria Carolina, who married Ferdinand in 1768.⁷ When Maria Amalia expressed the inclination of marrying Charles of Zweibrücken, Empress Maria Theresa firmly turned down the idea. Maria Amalia was instead arranged to marry Ferdinand of Parma, a descendant of Spanish and French Bourbons with more status and prestige.⁸

In his essay, historian Joseph Patrouch compared Habsburg women to the Greek hero Protesilaus, who departed from home and loved ones to fight against the Trojans, arguing that the Austrian daughters' faraway departures from their parents and siblings, sometimes forcible, had contributed tremendously to the prosperity of the house and those who remained at home.⁹ From Giovanna of Austria, who despite the failure in relationship, consistently demonstrated the pious image of Austria in the Duchy of Tuscany till her death, to Empress Maria Leopoldina of Brazil, who was shipped across the ocean to hold office in a different continent, Habsburg women's marriages were constantly marked by personal sacrifices.¹⁰ When we observe the destiny of Maria Theresa's daughters, particularly those who were born in the War of Austrian Succession, it is clear that they were shouldering the responsibility of repairing the diplomatic damages caused by that warfare. Given that Maria Amalia was coerced into a marriage when she desired someone else, her wedlock was a sacrifice of no less tragic proportion.

The Martial Demonstration

Maria Amalia's carriage entered the city of Parma in July 1769, accompanied by her older brother Joseph, the future emperor of the Habsburg Empire. A grand wedding was held in the ducal palace of Parma on July 19th, where the marriage between twenty-three-year-old Maria Amalia and eighteen-year-old Duke Ferdinand of Parma, was celebrated. The surviving sources indicate that Amalia and Ferdinand's wedding celebrations consisted of several gatherings and performances. The details of Parman-organized events were written in *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma* (Description of the festivals celebrated in Parma, abbreviated as *Descrizione*), a pamphlet printed in Italian and French with rich texts

⁶ Jeremy Black, "Essay and Reflection: On the 'Old System' and the 'Diplomatic Revolution' of the Eighteenth Century," in *The International History Review* 12, no. 2 (1990): 302, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40106181>.

⁷ Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 370.

⁸ Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 579.

⁹ Joseph Patrouch, "'Bella gerant alii.' Laodamia's Sisters, Habsburg Brides: Leaving Home for the Sake of the House," in *Early Modern Habsburg Women: Transnational Contexts, Cultural Conflicts, Dynastic Continuities*, eds. Anne J. Cruz and Maria Galli Stampino (New York: Routledge, 2013), 25.

¹⁰ Alice E. Sanger, *Art, Gender and Religious Devotion in Grand Ducal Tuscany* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 37; Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, "Portraits: Empress Maria Leopoldina of Brazil," in *The Brazil Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, eds. James N. Green, Victoria Langland, and Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 158-161.

and illustrations and issued by the Royal Printing House of Parma in 1769. According to this pamphlet, a series of gatherings and performances were hosted and celebrated in Duke Ferdinand's court. The pamphlet is composed of five parts: *Description* (Description), which narrates the performative contest and military parade which took place in the Ducal Palace; *Description Des Habits* (Description of Clothes), which exhibits the images of participants of the said contest and parade in their garments; *Noms Des Personnes Nobles* (Names of Noble People), which lists the nobles who participated in the contest and the parade; *Les Bergeres D'Arcadia* (The Shepherdesses of Arcadia), which narrates the Arcadia Party, the second event in Maria Amalia and Ferdinand's wedding ceremony; and lastly, *La Foire Chinoise* (The Chinese Fair), the last event of their wedding ceremony. Run by the Bourbon statesman Guillaume du Tillot, the Parman court had been infused with strong French influence since the mid-eighteenth century. This clue is key to help us understand the strong Bourbon narratives existing in these celebratory gatherings.¹¹

While the wedding primarily featured events presented by the groom's family, the one exception was an opera festival named *Le Feste d'Apollo* (The Festival of Apollo), which was composed by Bohemian playwright Christoph Willibald Gluck. A playwright who spent his career in multiple European states, Gluck had a close relationship with Habsburgs throughout lifetime.¹² Before composing *Le Feste d'Apollo*, he had participated in the production of various works for the Habsburgs, including a serenata for Archduke Joseph and Isabella of Parma's wedding in 1760.¹³ In the year 1769, Gluck traveled to Parma to supervise his opera's performance in Maria Amalia and Ferdinand's wedding.¹⁴ Given Gluck's close relationship with the Habsburgs, the *Le Feste d'Apollo* might be considered the only Habsburg presence, and as I shall discuss later, it was a modest and muted one in this Habsburg-Bourbon wedding.

The first noteworthy element in this wedding is the heavy military features. Among three performances which were recorded in the wedding pamphlet *Descrizione*, the military tournament has the most detailed description. Local Parman noblemen participated in the event and were divided into nine quadrilles. Each quadrille was composed of a knight and his pages and assigned a color. A coliseum was constructed in the ducal palace for the performance and viewing of this event (figure 1).¹⁵ According to *Descrizione*, Maria Amalia

¹¹ On the cultural transition of Parma under Bourbon occupation, see Gregory Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 350-352. Halon argues that the Bourbon reform had been taking place in Parma since the 1750s under Guillaume du Tillot's guidance, and it had deeply changed the cultural sphere of Parman court.

¹² Gluck was living in Vienna from 1752 to 1760, but his relationship with the Habsburgs lasted much longer. Not only did he produce the opera for Maria Amalia's wedding in 1769, he was also patronized by Maria Antoinette during his later years in Paris. See Bruce Alan Brown and Julian Rushton, "Gluck, Christoph Willibald, Ritter von," *Oxford Music Online* (January 2001): 39.

¹³ It is noteworthy that Joseph is Maria Amalia's older brother, and Isabella of Parma is a sister of Ferdinand. Predating Maria Amalia and Ferdinand's wedding, their marriage was also sealed to repair the relationship between Habsburgs and Bourbons. See Brown and Rushton, "Gluck, Christoph Willibald," 12.

¹⁴ Brown and Rushton, "Gluck, Christoph Willibald," 21.

¹⁵ *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma l'anno MDCCLXIX. Per le auguste nozze di sua altezza reale l'infante Don Ferdinando colla reale arciduchessa Maria Amalia.* (Parma: Nella Stamperia Reale, 1769), 5.

and her husband were sitting in the most visible place in the coliseum. The judges of the tournament sat one floor below the royal couple.

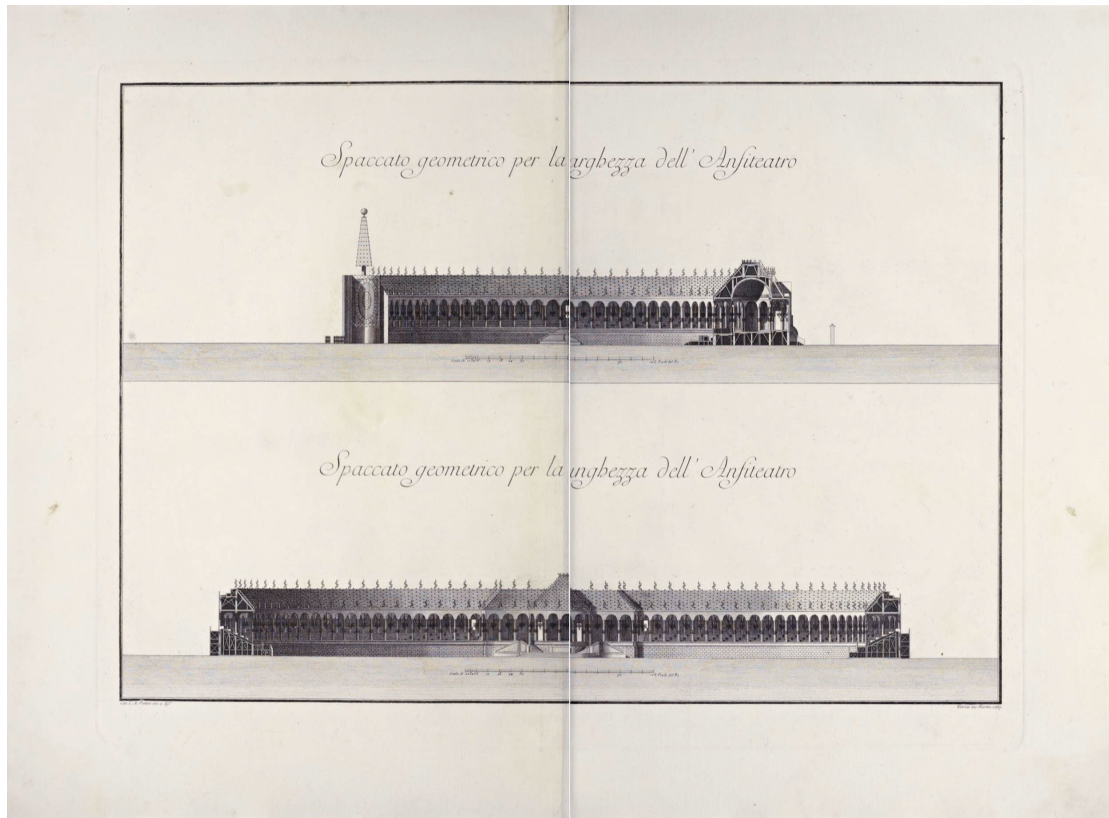


Figure 1: An illustration of the coliseum from *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma*.

The military tournament itself was composed of duels, races, and parades, which all took place inside the coliseum. The participants entered the coliseum, bowing deeply in front of the grand box, where Maria Amalia and her husband were seated, and started dueling against each other with different weapons. Although these duels were performed as a sort of entertainment, their seriousness was not reduced, as several knights did not quit fighting until they broke several spears.¹⁶ These fights were followed by foot racing and horse racing. Eventually, all the participants were assembled in quadrilles, marching inside the coliseum in a martial parade fashion. As *Descrizione* recorded, the military tournament was ended with the public pledge of allegiance: “The judges of arms asked the knights for the names of the ladies whom they had fought for. They responded that the names were written on their handlebars; the pages advanced forward towards the grand box, displaying the handlebars before the eyes of the Princes. All had fought for the same lady: the handlebars showed the same name, that one of Marie Amalia. The lady of the tournament, so worthy to boost their courage, honored them with her praise, and took them all as her knights.”¹⁷

¹⁶ *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma*, 13.

¹⁷ *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma*, 14. This translation and all the following ones are by the author from the original French.



Figure 2: An illustration from the *Descrizione*, showing cherubs holding different weapons.

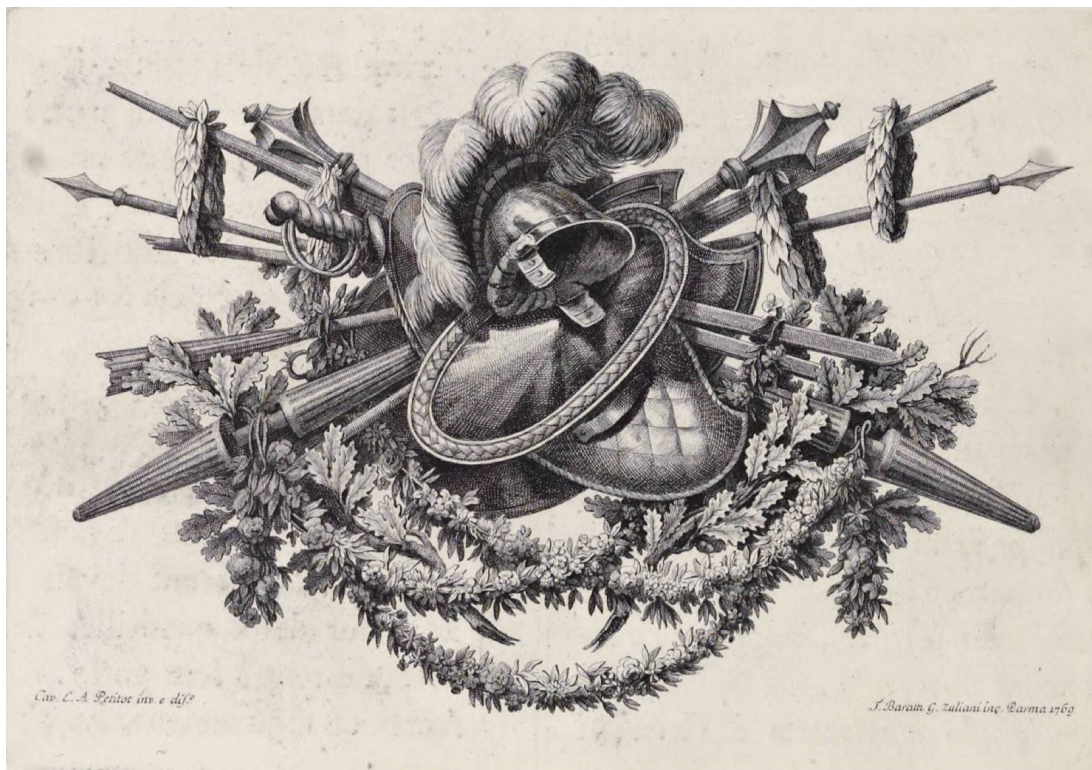


Figure 3: The illustration of military items found in the *Descrizione*.

The detailed narration of this military tournament is quite conspicuous in this official description of the wedding. Over a hundred pages of the *Descrizione* is related to the military tournament, and only thirty pages were left to describe the other two events: the Arcadia Party and the Chinese Fair. In addition to its disproportionate focus on the military tournament, strong martial features are found almost everywhere in this pamphlet, including on the title page where the coat of arms of Bourbon Parma was decorated with cannon, spears, and arrows. The majority of other illustrations in the pamphlet also feature different military items. Some images depict cherubs holding a large spear, others simply put random military items together (see figures 2 and 3). This evidence indicates that militancy was a major theme of the wedding celebration. Moreover, since the events narrated in this pamphlet were prepared by Parman Court, which had been tightly controlled by Bourbons since the 1750s, we can also understand Maria Amalia's wedding ceremony as a martial demonstration designed by Bourbons.

While the strong militaristic presence may seem unfitting in a wedding, the intention behind this antique-fashion military performance must be appreciated in the historical context. Eighteenth-century Europe had witnessed several large-scale wars, including the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714), War of Polish Succession (1733-1735), and War of Austrian Succession. Such a highly hostile context made a demonstration of military might necessary, and Maria Amalia's wedding provided a great opportunity for such a demonstration. While the strong militaristic features did not necessarily relate to Maria Amalia and Ferdinand's alliance, the chivalric, heroic tournament was designed to echo the contemporary environment on the continent. Moreover, given that the control of Parma had switched between several families during the early and mid-eighteenth century, a topic which I will go into detail in the next section, it is reasonable for Bourbons to present a tournament performed by local Parman nobilities as a demonstration of harmony between them and their Parman subjects. The attention generated by royal weddings provides great occasions for the hosts to advertise their political images. From the public spectacle of Giovanna of Austria's entry in 1565 to Maria Louise and Napoleon's grand wedding procession in 1810, several Habsburg women's weddings had been utilized by the groom's families to disseminate their ideologies, and it seems like in the year 1769, the Bourbon-Parman court had similar arrangement for Amalia and Ferdinand's wedding, as they hosted a militaristic one to propagandize the Bourbon hegemony.¹⁸

The Unequal Presence

It is pivotal to our understanding of this wedding that, although Parma was occupied by Bourbons in 1769, it had been part of the Habsburg's holdings not that long ago. Situated at the northern tip of the Apennine Peninsula, the Duchy of Parma had been ruled by the Farnese family from 1545 to 1731.¹⁹ While nominally independent, Parma was inevitably swept into the vortex of enormous polities' rivalries, specifically between Habsburgs and Bourbons. The lack of male heirs within the House of Farnese provided an ample opportunity for both powers to exert influence, and the Bourbons seized it, when Philip V

¹⁸ Sanger, *Art, Gender and Religious Devotion*, 37; Imbert de Saint-Amand, *The memoirs of the Empress Marie Louise* (London: Remington & Co, 1886), 208-216.

¹⁹ Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy*, 351.

of Spain married Elizabeth Farnese, the female heir of Parma in 1714. When the duke, Antonio Farnese, died in 1731, his status was inherited by Charles, the son of Philip V and Elizabeth Farnese.²⁰

This inheritance soon affected the rivalry between Habsburgs and Bourbons, as the two houses were pitted against each other in the War of Polish Succession. When the conflict ceased in 1738, Bourbons handed over the Duchy of Parma to the Habsburgs in exchange for Naples and Sicily.²¹ This led to a ten-year Habsburg occupation of Parma until their defeat against Bourbons in the War of Austrian Succession. The Habsburg Empire lost a huge amount of its holdings, including the Duchy of Parma and various other regions in the Apennine Peninsula.

When we look into the sources related to this wedding, it is evident that the Habsburgs were politically censored and even implicitly blamed for the previous conflicts between the two houses. The Parman-issued wedding pamphlet started with the narration of Bourbon-Habsburg relationships. It referred to the bride's mother, Maria Theresa, as "a virtuous princess," who "has reunited the dispersed parts of the heritage of her ancestors with effort ... designed the project to devote her power to the happiness of mankind."²² However it referred to the groom's grandfather Louis XV with even more complimentary terms, glamorizing him as a prince who "had been conquering only to be a peacemaker... whose equity and moderation had been tested by the fortune."²³ The introduction of this pamphlet was highly complementary to both families, their leaders, and their members. While nobody was directly blamed in this section, it is noteworthy that these lines referred to Habsburg ancestors' heritage as "dispersed." It foreshadows the following contents, and as we shall see, the Habsburgs would be criticized and disdained for the "dispersed heritage," which they had tough time bringing together after their loss in the Habsburg-Bourbon conflict.

The pejorative narrative against Habsburgs gradually comes to the surface in the following part of this pamphlet. Following the military tournament, *Descrizione* recounts the second part of the wedding celebration: the Arcadia Party, the theme of which was derived from Virgil's classic literature. This party was held in the royal garden, where noble men and women dressed up in costumes, played music, sang poems, and danced in a classic fashion. In *Descrizione*, the narration of this event implicitly attacks the Habsburgs: "The ladies thought that no law prevents the pastoral land (of Arcadia) from being established in our countryside, to convene themselves an assembly in such a happy occasion; and that they must revenge on the rigid leaders who never called them to their sessions."²⁴ Given that the Habsburgs were ruling Parma until the end of the War of Austrian Succession and the Farnese family's occupation was quite distant from 1769, these lines were clearly poking fun at the period of Habsburg occupation of Parma from 1738 to 1748. In general, this

²⁰ Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy*, 351.

²¹ Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy*, 351.

²² *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma*, 2.

²³ *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma*, 2.

²⁴ *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma*, 66.

section depicted a peaceful and harmonious gathering between Parman nobilities and their Bourbon sovereign. The mention of Parman nobilities' participation in the party and their complaints against Habsburgs portrayed Bourbons as well-loved in Parma and the previous Habsburg occupation of Parma as fatuous.²⁵

According to *Descrizione*, Maria Amalia and Ferdinand's wedding celebration ended with the Chinese Fair, a festival organized by local Parman merchants. The narration of this event once again derogatorily referred to the previous Habsburg occupation: "The merchants of Parma were also eager to report their joy and their deep gratitude. Imbued with what the august father of the infante has done in their favor, everyday they reap new fruits from the kindness and wisdom of the prince. Protection, encouragement and aid multiplied."²⁶ These lines could be considered as the most explicit attack, for they mentioned "the august father of the infante." This refers to the groom's father, Philip, duke of Parma, to whom the bride's father, Francis Stephen, ceded Parma in 1748. The "aid multiplied" referred to the ten-year Habsburg occupation of Parma as austere and uncaring.

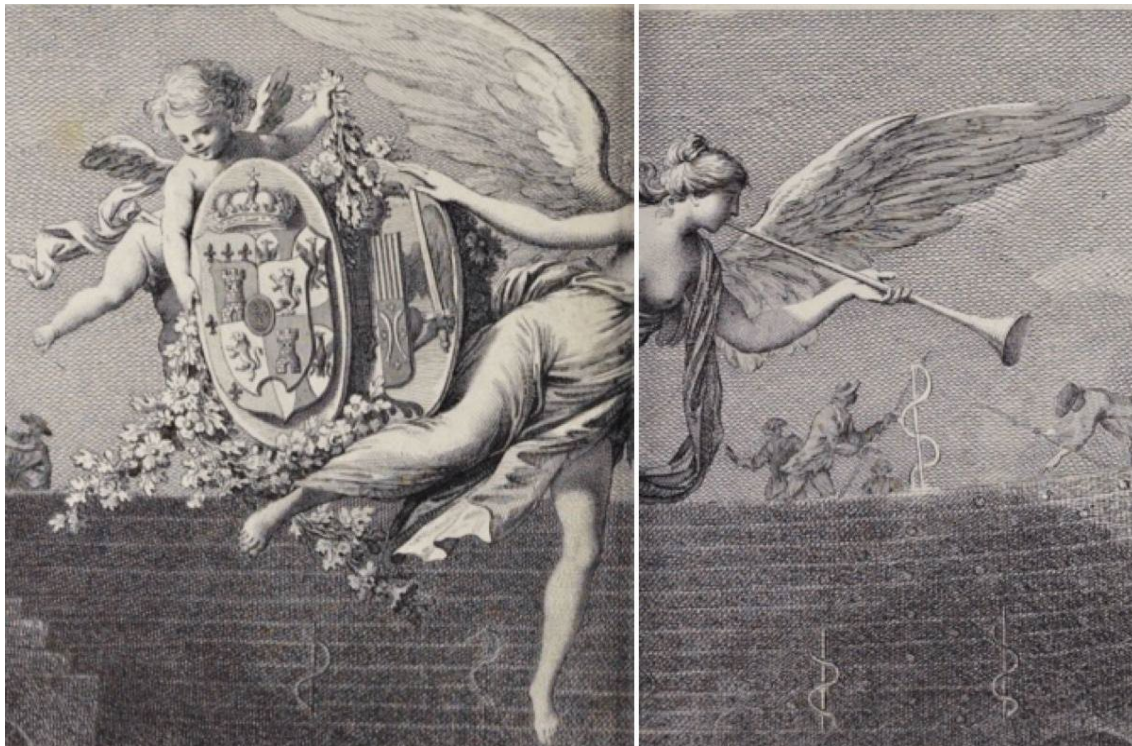


Figure 4: The illustration that presents wedding families' coats of arms in *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma*.

Not only were Habsburgs defamed by Bourbons multiple times in this pamphlet, their dynastic symbols were also suppressed and erased during the wedding. Among the various illustrations portrayed in the *Descrizione*, the Habsburg symbol only vaguely appears once.

²⁵ *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma*, 66.

²⁶ *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma*, 73.

It is in an illustration of angels holding two coats of arms, the Habsburg Emperor Francis Stephen's coat of arms is relegated to the back, overshadowed by the Bourbon-Parman coat of arms, which takes center stage (figure 4).²⁷ Francis's coat of arms is supposed to include a double-headed eagle with the sword, the orb, and the scepter in its claws, but it appears to be intentionally altered—neither the orb nor the scepter appears in the eagle's claw. Both items are strong symbols of power and sovereignty, and the alteration of this Habsburg coat of arms was clearly done to erase any symbols that could potentially evoke the memory of previously Habsburg sovereignty on this Bourbon-controlled territory.

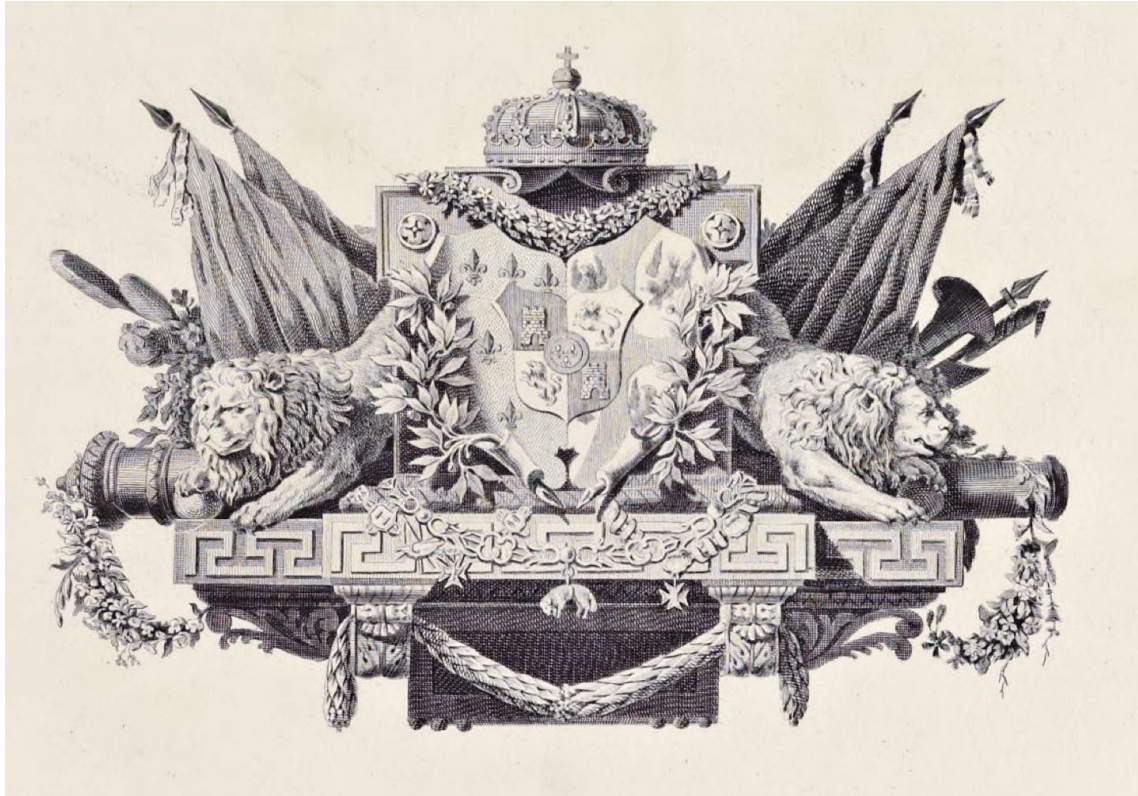


Figure 5: The title page illustration of a Bourbon coat of arms, with a Golden Fleece necklace hanging down at the bottom, from *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma*.

The scepter and the orb are not the only things that got erased; the Golden Fleece necklace was also stripped from the Habsburg eagle's neck. It instead appears in the title page illustration, hanging down from the Bourbon coat of arms (figure 5). This leads to a very interesting issue: the disputable claim regarding the Order of Golden Fleece. Founded by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, in 1430, the Order of Golden Fleece was one of the most renowned Christian chevalier orders in early modern Europe. After Maximilian I married Philip's granddaughter, Mary of Burgundy, Maximilian claimed the ownership of the Order. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Order was headed by Charles II of Spain, a Habsburg descendant who held power in Iberia. Following his death in 1700, as the head of the Habsburg family, Charles VI claimed to be the legitimate heir of the Order, but his claim

²⁷ *Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma*, 14.

was countered by Philip V, the Bourbon King of Spain. The Order then split into two branches.²⁸ It is noteworthy that Charles VI and Philip V are respectively the bride's and groom's maternal grandfathers. By placing the necklace under their coat of arms, the narrative once again favored Bourbons and diminished Habsburgs' prestige. The placement of the necklace reflects the wide rift between the two houses, which had been created since the early eighteenth century.

Finally, the two houses' unequal presence in the wedding ceremony is conspicuous when we compare the Bourbon repertoire to that of the Habsburg one. Organized by Bohemian playwright Christoph Willibald Gluck, *Le Feste d'Apollo* might be the only section of Amalia's wedding celebration that was prepared by the Habsburgs. Performed in Parma Court Theater under Gluck's supervision, this opera is composed of four scenes, each adapted from Virgil or Ovid's classic writings. What reflects the Bourbon censorship this time is not any alteration or deletion but instead the opera itself. Composed of classic love stories, this Habsburg-directed opera's apolitical nature contrasted dramatically with the Bourbon parts of the wedding, which—as discussed above—was highly militaristic and political. The Habsburgs' more muted presence must be understood in its broader context. Having lost the war against Bourbons twenty years ago, it would be illogical for Bourbons to allow Habsburgs to have a strong political presence in the territory that they had ruled from 1738 to 1748. Together with the derogatory reference and altered coat of arms, these clues strongly suggest that the two houses were not equally presented in the wedding ceremony. While Bourbon hegemony was advertised and praised, Habsburg symbols were filtered and removed.

Conclusion

From the arrangement of marriage to the wedding ceremony itself, there are various conclusions we can make about Maria Amalia's marriage. In the dynastic context, the almost-coerced wedlock between Maria Amalia and Ferdinand was sealed as part of Habsburgs' Diplomatic Revolution in the mid-eighteenth century, which aimed at securing the Bourbons as an ally in the precarious postwar environment of the continental Europe. Like many of her female predecessors and peers in the history of the Habsburg dynasty, Maria Amalia's marriage was sacrificed for a dynastic cause. Celebrated in Parma, a Bourbon-controlled duchy that had been previously occupied by the Habsburgs, the wedding celebration was by large a martial demonstration and a propaganda event, which intended to demonstrate Bourbons' military might and the harmony between them and their Parma subjects. Furthermore, it is not a wedding with an equal presence from both families. The imbalance is indicated by the predominant Bourbon narratives and the censored Habsburg culture in the ceremonies can be explained by two factors: First, the Bourbons were the ones who triumphed in the previous conflicts, most significantly in the War of Austrian Succession. Second, the political presence of Habsburgs in Parma was a very sensitive issue. Given that the Habsburgs ceded this duchy to Bourbons in 1748, any form of Habsburg presence would evoke the local Parmans' memories of their previous occupiers, which simply could not be tolerated by Bourbons. Thus during this Habsburg-

²⁸ J. Balfour Paul, "The Order of the Golden Fleece," *The Scottish Historical Review* 5, no. 20 (July 1908): 410.

Bourbon marriage ceremony, the House of Habsburg was subtly defamed and marginalized.

In general, Maria Amalia's wedding ceremony epitomizes the Habsburg dynasty in the eighteenth-century political context. Stumbling out of the crisis of inheritance, the Austrian royal house's prestige plummeted. They no longer held absolute advantages against multiple continental rivalries, and they sought to stabilize their already weakened sovereignty, particularly in the western flank of the empire, by repairing diplomatic relationships with Bourbons. Maria Amalia, along with many of her sisters who were married to Bourbons, were sacrificed for such a dynastic cause.