CHAPTER TWO

PATRONAGE AND PIETY: THE CONFESSIONALIZATION OF WITTELSBACH COURTS IN HEIDELBERG AND MUNICH

Generally the court was the foremost place for not just political but also high cultural and social interaction. The courts required the talents of musicians, artists and artisans to provide housing and entertainment. The Wittelsbachs’ educational experience reflects Bourdieu’s “inner” form of “cultural capital” that predisposed them to particular cultural tastes and in turn Wittelsbach patronage of the arts, education, and literature also corresponds with Bourdieu’s “outward” forms of “cultural capital.” Indeed, with the princes’ new roles as defenders of the faith came what John Adamson calls the “sanctification of the court” in which the court could also act as a “theater of piety.” Hugh Trevor-Roper once remarked that the confessional and dynastic competition between the Wittelsbach courts produced the finest example in the Empire of how the court culture of the Baroque developed from princely patronage in the confessional age.

Both the Protestant and Catholic Wittelsbachs, male and female, used their power of patronage to reach this new sacral court dynamic by blending faith, aesthetic tastes, and dynastic ambition. Their efforts resulted in confessionally distinct court cultures that reflected the confessionalization of Renaissance humanism and determined the ambience of court life in this age. Although both courts acted as “theaters of piety” in this age, they peaked as confessional showcases at different times according to the individual personalities of the rulers. Rigorous court piety reached its peak in the mid 1500s in the Palatinate with Frederick III and his wives Maria of Brandenburg and Amalia of Neunahr while the Bavarian court did not experience its puritanical

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climax until the mid 1600s under Maximilian I and his consorts Elisabeth Renata of Lorraine and Maria Anna of Austria. Furthermore, confessionalized humanism and dynastic competition also helped define the distinct contours of court life in this era. The Palatine Wittelsbachs’ courts revealed their Protestant emphasis on the written and spoken word by focusing their patronage predominately on libraries and literary culture in the confessional age. Literary interests were shared by many of the leading administrators in Heidelberg and there was a close association between legal and literary humanism in this age. On the other hand, the Bavarian Wittelsbachs placed at least equal attention to art, music, and theater because they shared the Jesuit embracement of all the arts. Although ritual scarcity set Protestant Palatine funeral commemorations apart from the Bavarian Catholic ones, they all recognized the power of funeral literature for both genders in sustaining their dynastic mystiques as defenders of the faith.

Finally, geographical placement of the courts also influenced court culture in terms of spheres of influence and types of patronage. The Palatine Wittelsbachs were able to take advantage of the dominant geographical and economic position of their court in Heidelberg. The city depended on both court and university structures for its own vitality. Likewise, the Palatine Wittelsbachs enjoyed the position of already possessing an electoral title, whereas the Bavarian Wittelsbachs, as the challengers, felt a greater need to demonstrate their potential through grandiose court patronage. Concomitantly, it required far greater efforts to establish Bavarian Wittelsbach dominance over Munich than it did for their Palatine cousins to do the same over Heidelberg. In contrast to Heidelberg, Munich had a long and proud history of patrician independence before its transformation into the court capital for the Wittelsbachs. The Bavarian Wittelsbachs used architectural expansion of the court and public processions as tools for subduing the city. Thus, the court cultures of the Wittelsbachs reveal the interactions between environment and ambition.

This chapter examines this phenomenon by first addressing the roles of the consorts of both houses and then treating the association between dynastic ambition and the dramatic increase in size of the Bavarian court. This work then demonstrates the connections between legal and literary patronage by the Palatine Wittelsbachs. Following that, it examines how Jesuit perspectives on art and the desire of the Bavarian Wittelsbachs to make Munich their court city shaped the nature of Bavarian court patronage. Finally, the chapter discusses the