

# The Court of the “Winter Kingdom” – Elizabeth Stuart’s Household in Prague<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Elizabeth Stuart has caught the attention of many historians. Relatively recently, interest in her culminated in the release of a new scholarly biography and two issues of correspondence, all by Nadine Akkerman.<sup>2</sup> There are also several studies on different aspects of her life, which had always centred around or, maybe more to Elizabeth’s own liking, was the centre of the court and its culture. This is especially true for her wedding to Frederick V of the Palatinate<sup>3</sup> and their life in the Netherlands. While recent studies focus on their rivalry with the emerging court culture of the Orange-Nassau family,<sup>4</sup> this study also values earlier research by Czech scholars such as Otakar Odložilík,<sup>5</sup> despite its age. As for the court in Heidelberg, its form and various elements have been described by Elizabeth’s biographers,<sup>6</sup> as well as in studies collected

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<sup>2</sup> Nadine Akkerman, ed., *The Correspondence of Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia. Volume I 1603–1631* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Nadine Akkerman, ed., *The Correspondence of Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia. Volume II 1632–1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Nadine Akkerman, *Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Hearts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Sara Smart, Mara R. Wade, ed., *The Palatine Wedding of 1613: Protestant Alliance and Court Festival* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz in Kommission, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Nadine Akkerman, *Courtly Rivals in the Hague: Elizabeth Stuart & Amalia von Solms* (Venlo: VanSpijk – Rekafa Publishers, 2014); Marika Keblusek, “Playing by the Rules: The Hague Courts and the Acteonisation du Grand Veneur d’Hollande (1643),” *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 32, no. 2 (2017): 235–50; Thomas Pert, “Pride and Precedence: The Rivalry of the House of Orange-Nassau and the Palatine Family at the Anglo-Dutch Wedding of 1641,” *The Seventeenth Century* 36, no. 4 (2020): 561–78.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance Otakar Odložilík, “Ze zápasů pobělohorské emigrace (I),” *Časopis Matice moravské* 56, no. 1–2 (1932): 1–58.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to Nadine Akkerman’s publications see also Margret Lemberg, *Eine Königin ohne Reich: Das Leben der Winterkönigin Elisabeth Stuart und ihre Briefe nach Hessen* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 1996).

in a catalogue issued for an exhibition *Der Winterkönig: Der letzte Kurfürst aus der Oberen Pfalz* that took place in 2003 in Amberg.<sup>7</sup>

Other areas are a bit less clear, one of them being her one year in Prague. The aim of this study is to at least partially fill this gap with help of various types of primary sources as focusing on only one would yield insufficient results. Not only did most of Elizabeth's letters get lost, but there is also a gap in many modern scholarly editions of ego-documents created by Bohemian and Moravian nobles. Furthermore, no list of Frederick's and Elizabeth's courtiers in Prague survived or has been found to this day. However, a copy of a list containing names of their retinue from Heidelberg can be found in the National Archives in Prague.<sup>8</sup> *The History of the Church* by Pavel Skála of Zhoř<sup>9</sup> is an invaluable source for anything connected with the Estates' Uprising, including some, though scarce, information on Elizabeth's court. In addition to these, a few English prints have been used, mostly those commenting on courtly ceremonies and festivals.

Despite its quite short length, their stay in Prague can be considered one of the crucial points in their lives, as it impacted everything that came afterwards. The acceptance of the Bohemian crown also influenced their further behaviour, for instance, both Frederick and Elizabeth insisted on being addressed as the king and the queen.<sup>10</sup> As with all princes, they had to have an adequately representative court. This was especially interesting in the case of Elizabeth, whose household was composed of three distinct groups based on their native country and language.

## Composition of the Household

Most princely brides brought to their new home a retinue of their native people, most of whom were expected to leave,<sup>11</sup> sometimes later and at other

<sup>7</sup> Peter Wolf et al. ed., *Der Winterkönig: Friedrich V. Der letzte Kurfürst aus der Oberen Pfalz* (Amberg: Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Národní archiv [henceforth NA], Prague, *Sbírka přepisů z domácích a zahraničních archivů – Státní archiv v Dráždanech*, karton č. 9, inv. č. 2186.

<sup>9</sup> Pavla Skály ze Zhoře *Historie česká od r. 1602 do r. 1623. III. díl 1619 – březen 1620*, ed. Karel Tiefrunk (Prague: I. L. Kober, 1867); *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká od r. 1602 do r. 1623. IV. díl od konce měsíce března 1620 – do konce roku 1620*, ed. Karel Tiefrunk (Prague: I. L. Kober, 1868).

<sup>10</sup> Akkerman, *Elizabeth Stuart*, 225.

<sup>11</sup> Jeroen Duindam, "The Politics of Female Households: Afterthoughts," in *The Politics of Female Households*, ed. Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2014), 369;

times relatively quickly and even forcibly,<sup>12</sup> which was not the case of Elizabeth Stuart. Elizabeth’s court during her early days in Heidelberg included 75 men and 15 women from the British Isles.<sup>13</sup> Few of those were originally members of her mother’s (Anna of Denmark) court.<sup>14</sup> Some of the original staff accompanied her to Prague. Those included Thomas Livingston (in the list from 1613 as treasurer, mentioned as “hoffmeister” in 1619), Alexander Chapman (chaplain, in German “Prediger”), John Gray (in 1613 listed as quarter-master, in 1619 as “Princessin Vorschneider”), and Christian Rumpf (“Medicus”).<sup>15</sup> Other male members of Elizabeth’s household joined her court somewhere between her arrival in the Palatinate and departure for Prague, among them Albertus Morton, Elizabeth’s secretary (who left Prague shortly after the coronation and was replaced by Francis Nethersole in 1620),<sup>16</sup> and Georg Launet (horse-master, or equerry).<sup>17</sup>

Female courtiers are listed separately. Again, some of them can be found among the retinue from London to Heidelberg, among them Elizabeth Dudley,<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Apsley (listed in 1613 as one of two little girls), and Elizabeth Deane (or Diane, keeper of the linen).<sup>19</sup> Other members of the “Englisch(e) Frauenzimmer” cannot be directly connected with women from the original staff from the British Isles (Miss Maierne, sisters Brigitta and

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Oliver Mallick, “Clients and Friends: The Ladies-in-Waiting at the Court of Anne of Austria (1615–66),” in *The Politics of Female Households*, ed. Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2014), 245.

<sup>12</sup> Sara J. Wolfson, “The Female Bedchamber of Queen Henrietta Marie: Politics, Familial Networks and Policy, 1626–40,” in *The Politics of Female Households*, ed. Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2014), 314.

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth O. Benger, *Memoirs of Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia, Daughter of King James the First*, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1825), 355.

<sup>14</sup> E. g., musicians and artisans. Jemma Field, “Anna of Denmark: Daughter, Wife, Sister, and Mother,” in *Tudor and Stuart Consorts. Power, Influence, and Dynasty*, ed. Aidan Norrie, Carolyn Harris, J. L. Laynesmith, Danna R. Messer, Elena Woodcare (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 223.

<sup>15</sup> Benger, *Memoirs*, 355.

<sup>16</sup> Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 209, 249.

<sup>17</sup> NA, Prague, *Sbírka*, karton č. 9, inv. č. 2186.

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth, or Elisa, Dudley was a long-term member of Elizabeth’s household. As one of a few members who fully learned and understood German, she helped Elizabeth with reading (and possibly writing) letters in this language. Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 321.

<sup>19</sup> Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 178; Benger, *Memoirs*, 354.

Margaretha Wordwortt, and other nameless staff).<sup>20</sup> Surprisingly absent is Mrs. Mercer, Elizabeth's midwife, who came to Heidelberg from England in 1613.<sup>21</sup>

Apart from staff from their homeland, courts of wives were also constituted from people from the new country, and Elizabeth's was no exception. Besides Amalia, an unmarried lady from the Rhinegrave family, all belonged to the Solms-Braunfels family, more specifically, to the family of Johann Albrecht I, Frederick's Grand Master of the Household. His wife, Juliana of Solms-Braunfels, held the office of Grand Mistress of the Household ("Großhofmeisterin"). Their daughters Ursula and Amalia (future Princess of Orange) were ladies-in-waiting.<sup>22</sup>

After her arrival in Prague, it was probably expected that Elizabeth would expand her now royal court with Bohemian nobles. Unfortunately, no explicit mentions or lists survived or were found. Surely, she was accompanied by Bohemian ladies during official ceremonies such as the coronation, but no specific names are given. In addition to that, it seems that some noblewomen, for instance the Heinrich Matthias von Thurn's wife Susanna Elisabeth and Magdaléna Trčka of Líba, avoided the new Protestant court on purpose.<sup>23</sup>

Only a few Bohemian noblewomen appear in the letters Frederick sent to Elizabeth during their brief reign (Elizabeth's letters, unfortunately, did not survive to this day). One of them is Markéta Saloména Slavata (née of Smiřice). Her role at Elizabeth's court is uncertain; some Czech historians deny her participation, others claim she was a lady-in-waiting.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, her family had ties with prominent imperial nobility;<sup>25</sup> hence, she would be an obvious choice for the new court. However, Frederick never mentions her as his wife's lady-in-waiting.<sup>26</sup> Allegedly, she helped the Palatine family arrange

<sup>20</sup> NA, Prague, *Sbírka*, karton č. 9, inv. č. 2186.

<sup>21</sup> Substituted by dr. Rumpf and Janneken van Karrebrouck, Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 151, 226; Lemberg, *Eine Königin*, 26.

<sup>22</sup> NA, Prague, *Sbírka*, karton č. 9, inv. č. 2186.

<sup>23</sup> Josef Janáček, *Ženy české renesance* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1987), 217, 220.

<sup>24</sup> Janáček, *Ženy*, 228; Pavel Juřík, *Dominia Smiřických a Liechtensteinů v Čechách* (Prague: Libri, 2012), 41.

<sup>25</sup> Her brother, Albrecht Jan Smiřický of Smiřice, was engaged to Amalia Elisabeth of Hanau-Münzenberg, Frederick's maternal cousin. He died before the actual wedding in 1618. Margret Lemberg, "Hanavské zasnuby Albrechta Jana Smiřického," *Dějiny a současnost* 16, no. 6 (1994): 15–17.

<sup>26</sup> The only reference is to the accident that happened in Jičín on 1 February 1620 (NS). During heated disputes over inheritance, the castle exploded and Markéta's husband Jindřich Michal Slavata died. Frederick was shocked and grieved both the loss of his supporter and

accommodation in Náchod during their departure from Bohemia,<sup>27</sup> and most probably died in the Netherlands,<sup>28</sup> which suggests that she was indeed tightly connected to Frederick’s and Elizabeth’s courts.

In later letters, Frederick writes to Elizabeth about Lady Michalowitz (or Michalovic), who was taking care of little Rupert.<sup>29</sup> Her exact identity is unknown; she was possibly a relative of Bohuslav and Jan Smil of Michalovice.<sup>30</sup> She might have served Rupert already in Prague, but the only further information about her service that we know of is that Frederick and Elizabeth were unhappy with her and that by 1623, she had left her post.<sup>31</sup> The source of their discontent is unknown. It might have had something in common with the said lady’s conversion to Catholicism in 1628.<sup>32</sup>

Polyxena of Lobkowicz allegedly described Elizabeth’s court in Prague as a place for second-rate characters.<sup>33</sup> An example of this can be seen in townswoman Ester Teufl. Thanks to her great loans to Frederick, she managed to gain a social status greater than that of a regular burgher. Her son was knighted by Frederick during the coronation, and Elizabeth, along with Frederick, visited her home.<sup>34</sup> Though Ester cannot be considered a part of the Queen’s court, this story illustrates well the uncertainty and oddity that marked Elizabeth’s days in Prague, as this visit greatly contrasts with the sense of pride she showed earlier in life.<sup>35</sup>

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Markéta’s unfortune. Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 221, 223, 225.; Tieftrunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká, III.*, 437–442.

<sup>27</sup> Jaroslav Čechura, *Smiřičtí: Krátké dějiny úspěšného rodu* (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2018), 340.

<sup>28</sup> Čechura, *Smiřičtí*, 151; Juřík, *Dominia*, 43.

<sup>29</sup> Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 327–8.

<sup>30</sup> The first a supporter of Frederick, executed in 1621. Jan Smil was his son, also a supporter of Frederick, who escaped Bohemia and joined his king. Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 356; *Ottův slovník naučný: illustrovaná encyklopaedie obecných vědomostí*, vol. XVII, s. v. “z Michalovic.”

<sup>31</sup> Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 327–8.

<sup>32</sup> Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 696–7.

<sup>33</sup> Janáček, *Ženy*, 223.

<sup>34</sup> Janáček, *Ženy*, 176.; Tieftrunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká, III.*, 376.

<sup>35</sup> See for instance Akkerman, *Elizabeth Stuart*, 115.

## Court structure, contrasts and potential

Composed of at least two groups from very different cultural worlds and situated in a new country, Elizabeth's court faced many challenges. This was apparent already in the Palatinate, where the court culture established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century still reflected the Calvinist nature of the country.<sup>36</sup> James' court (and consequently Elizabeth's), on the other hand, was based on a less strict French model.<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth's arrival in the Palatinate helped accelerate the gradual secularisation and relaxation of the norms.<sup>38</sup>

Court culture in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown contrasted with both the above-mentioned models. Despite the tension between the estates and the Habsburg kings, the nobility was accustomed to the Spanish court model,<sup>39</sup> though perhaps some (e. g., those belonging to the Bohemian Brethren) were also familiar with Dutch and Palatine courts as they visited them during their studies or political journeys.<sup>40</sup>

Looking closely at the female (more specifically, princely consorts') courts, we see great differences between the two above-mentioned models. Habsburg consorts shared parts of their households with husbands leading to relatively small courts<sup>41</sup> when compared with their French and English counterparts, whose households consisted of more people (especially male staff) and included married women.<sup>42</sup> The courts of the French royal couple were two independent parallel structures,<sup>43</sup> and so were the Scottish and English courts of James I and Anna of Denmark.<sup>44</sup> Courts in France and England also offered

<sup>36</sup> Though not as strict anymore, some courtly entertainment was still frowned upon, for instance theatre. Thomas L. Andrew, *A House Divided: Wittelsbach Confessional Court Cultures in the Holy Roman Empire, c. 1550–1650* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 70, 91.

<sup>37</sup> Gary Taylor, "Thomas Middleton, 'The Nice Valour' and the Court of James I," *The Court Historian* 6, no. 1 (2001): 2.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew, *A House Divided*, 91.

<sup>39</sup> Janáček, *Ženy*, 222; Josef Polišenský, "Comenius, the Angel of Peace and the Netherlands in 1667," *Acta Comeniana* 25, no. 1 (1969): 60.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew, *A House Divided*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Katrin Keller, *Hofdamen: Amtsträgerinnen in Wiener Hofstaat des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2005), 21, 25.

<sup>42</sup> Keller, *Hofdamen*, 27, 29.

<sup>43</sup> Mallick, "Clients," 233.

<sup>44</sup> Field, "Anna of Denmark," 217.

more opportunities for women to take part in the contemporary politics though their influence shall not be overestimated.<sup>45</sup>

Elizabeth’s court adhered more to the French model. As illustrated above, her household included male members and married women,<sup>46</sup> whose husbands held offices at Frederick’s court.<sup>47</sup> After all, she was following her mother’s footsteps, as Anna’s court was also based on this model.

However, some phenomena were shared throughout female courtly societies. They all played a significant role in the development of local culture and politics (via patronage, theatre, art etc.).<sup>48</sup> On a smaller scale, courtiers (especially in more senior positions) were often chosen based on language skills so they could serve as interpreters.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps the most omnipresent feature of consorts’ courts were conflicts between the different cultural (or language) groups<sup>50</sup> and Elizabeth’s household offered no exception.

Dresses and fashion in general were one of the areas where the tension could be seen very clearly. Just as her mother did, Elizabeth wore dresses with a low neckline and (drum) farthingale. This English or French style was condemned by many, for instance, by the Danish embassy to England.<sup>51</sup> In the Palatinate, Elizabeth might have used the style to differentiate her native courtiers from the rest, not unlike her mother.<sup>52</sup> Shortly after arriving in Prague, Ludwig Camerarius wrote a report on the situation in Prague. This message was later conveyed by Pavel Skála of Zhoř in his work *The History of the Church* and includes some remarks on the English style. According to Skála, Camerarius was upset about their behaviour in general, and Bohemian ladies were especially scandalised by the lack of modesty among the English.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Nadine Akkerman, Brigit Houben, “Introduction,” in *The Politics of Female Households*, ed. Nadine Akkerman and Brigit Houben (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2014), 25, 26.

<sup>46</sup> In the list of arriving courtiers, only Juliana of Solms-Braunfels in clearly married to another courtier, but the number will increase already in Prague and then in exile.

<sup>47</sup> Another common feature of court based on the French model. Keller, *Hofdamen*, 29.

<sup>48</sup> Akkerman, Houben, “Introduction,” 2.

<sup>49</sup> Keller, *Hofdamen*, 114.

<sup>50</sup> Keller, *Hofdamen*, 69; Mallick, “Clients,” 246–7.

<sup>51</sup> George Philip Vernon Akrigg, *Jacobean Pageant: Or, The Court of King James I* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 242.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Pearce, “Anna of Denmark: Fashioning a Danish Court in Scotland,” *The Court Historian* 24, no. 2 (2019): 138–139.

<sup>53</sup> “And what offends their minds the most, especially the honourable female sex, is that the ladies-in-waiting do not cover their breasts or bosoms.” Tieffrunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, III., 379.

The same can be said about the shape of their skirts.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, Elizabeth, too, seemed surprised by the fashion popular in Bohemia.<sup>55</sup> Judging by Elizabeth's letter on Ursula of Solms-Braunfels' wedding and the engraving of a banquet after Prince Rupert's baptism, the English ladies later adapted the local styles (at least to some extent).<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps the greatest difference between Elizabeth's court and the Bohemian nobles was the language. German was, of course, a widely spread language among the inhabitants of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown; however, it seems that Elizabeth never fully mastered German and communicated either in English or French.<sup>57</sup> The same can be said about Czech;<sup>58</sup> Frederick could not speak it either,<sup>59</sup> and the estates had known about it.<sup>60</sup> Bohemian noblewomen spoke only Czech and German,<sup>61</sup> as Elizabeth pointed out in her letters,<sup>62</sup> which further complicated their position at the queen's court. On the other hand, the language barrier could potentially hinder the transmission of some critique from either side (a small, yet important asset, at least to some extent).<sup>63</sup>

To avoid any misunderstanding and confusion upon arrival, the Bohemians always chose someone capable of speaking French.<sup>64</sup> During various welcoming ceremonies, it was often Václav Vilém of Roupov who served as their spokesman.<sup>65</sup> When the royal train stopped in Žatec, local matrons had

<sup>54</sup> Rosalind K. Marshall, "Elizabeth Stuart – die Winterkönigin," in *Der Winterkönig Friedrich V.: Der letzte Kurfürst aus der oberen Pfalz*, ed. Peter Wolf et al. (Amberg: Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte, 2003), 40.

<sup>55</sup> Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 239.

<sup>56</sup> Akkerman, *Elizabeth Stuart*, 140–1; Muzeum hlavního města Prahy, *Vyobrazení hostiny ke cti narozeného prince Ruperta*, 1619, rytina, sbírkový předmět H 002 740.

<sup>57</sup> Lemberg, *Eine Königin*, 16, 21.

<sup>58</sup> Eleonora Mendlová-Mráčková, "Alžběta falcká 'zimní královna' česká," in *Královny, kněžny a velké ženy české*, ed. Karel Stloukal (Prague: Jos. R. Vilímeček, 1940), 275.

<sup>59</sup> Andrew, *A House Divided*, 236.

<sup>60</sup> Yet they expected that Frederick would learn Czech eventually. Tiefrunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká, III.*, 293.

<sup>61</sup> This Elizabeth's claim was not completely true, few noblewomen could speak French and Spanish (Catholics), but it was only a small minority. Lemberg, *Eine Königin*, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 239.

<sup>63</sup> Antonín, Gindely, *Dějiny českého povstání léta 1618*, vol. II. (Prague: F. Tempský, 1878), 191.

<sup>64</sup> Jana Hubková, *Fridrich Falcký v zrcadle letákové publicistiky* (Prague: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy – Togga, 2010), 101.

<sup>65</sup> Tiefrunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká, III.*, 351; He was one of the first Bohemians communicating with her. During exile, this family was very close to Elizabeth (not only Václav Vilém, but also the daughters of his Moravian relative Vilém of Roupov). See e.g. Akkerman,



to appoint a young student or teacher, dressed in women’s garments, as their spokesman to communicate with Elizabeth.<sup>66</sup> In Prague, Elizabeth was welcomed by the wives and daughters of various Bohemian noblemen, but no further information is known.<sup>67</sup>

### Events at the “winter court”

The first big ceremonies that came after the reception were the coronations (on 4 and 7 November NS). Information on Elizabeth’s court’s participation in these events is rather scarce. As expected, Elizabeth and her court, together with Bohemian noble ladies (mentioned separately, therefore not considered part of queen’s household), were present at Frederick’s coronation and the following banquet, which is described by Pavel Skála of Zhoř.<sup>68</sup> The same chronicler also reported on Elizabeth’s coronation,<sup>69</sup> a ceremony significantly shorter due to the queen’s pregnancy.<sup>70</sup> The participation of her household remains unclear, but it could resemble that of other coronations. For instance, Anna of Tyrol’s coronation procession was composed of the wives of Bohemian land officers.<sup>71</sup> In the case of Eleonora Gonzaga, the wives processioned in two columns together with her own ladies-in-waiting (who were also carrying her train).<sup>72</sup>

Both coronations took place in St. Vitus Cathedral, a Catholic church within the Prague Castle complex. Already before the ceremony, questions about the interior had risen, but Frederick allegedly argued that English churches had similar decorations; hence there was no need for adjustment.<sup>73</sup> Later, how-

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*The Correspondence II*, 28, 137.; Otakar Odložilík, “Královna Mab,” in *Královnny, kněžny a velké ženy české*, ed. Karel Stloukal (Prague: Jos. R. Vilímeček, 1940), 281, 283–284.

<sup>66</sup> Hubková, *Friedrich Falcký*, 101; Tiefertunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká, III.*, 356–357.

<sup>67</sup> Tiefertunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká, III.*, 360.

<sup>68</sup> Tiefertunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká, III.*, 376.

<sup>69</sup> Tiefertunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká, III.*, 380–382.

<sup>70</sup> Andrew, *A House Divided*, 200.

<sup>71</sup> Barbora Kličková, “Korunovace císařovny Anny Tyrolské českou královnou v roce 1616,” BA diss. (Charles University Prague 2016), 74.

<sup>72</sup> Keller, *Hofdamen*, 143, 145.

<sup>73</sup> Eliška Fučíková, “Friedrich V. und die Prager Kunstsammlungen – anders gesehen,” in *Der Winterkönig Friedrich V.: Der letzte Kurfürst aus der oberen Pfalz*, ed. Peter Wolf et al. (Amberg: Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte, 2003), 116.

ever, he allegedly changed his opinion while watching kneeling Catholics.<sup>74</sup> The “purification”, or conversion, of St. Vitus Cathedral took place on the 21 December,<sup>75</sup> and many contradictory accounts survived.<sup>76</sup> Some writers and historians blamed Elizabeth and went so far as to claim that she personally helped with the demolition of ornaments and threw away St. Wenceslaus’ remains.<sup>77</sup> Against this accusation stands the account of Pavel Skála, who described the event as less unruly;<sup>78</sup> older (but still relevant) research which traced this information back to Tomáš Pěšina of Čechorod (more precisely to his work from 1673),<sup>79</sup> and the very late stage of pregnancy that Elizabeth found herself in at this time. The role of Elizabeth’s household is reflected in only one minor anecdote. Her chief court mistress (Juliana of Solms-Braunfels) was allegedly stricken with “weirdly grotesque” punishment for her participation,<sup>80</sup> but further information is lacking. The next day, the whole court heard Abraham Scultetus’ sermon justifying the purification.<sup>81</sup>

The dismay caused by the above-mentioned event was at least partially overshadowed by the birth of Rupert on 27 December (NS). Though the name was not an ideal choice in the context of Bohemian history,<sup>82</sup> the arrival of a healthy boy was seen as proof of God’s favour.<sup>83</sup> The birth is described in a stylized manner by an English broadsheet. During dinner, Elizabeth quickly stood up and left. Shortly after, as the little one was so eager to breathe in the Bohemian air, her ladies brought a little Prince to the King.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Vincenc Kramář, *Zpustošení Chrámu svatého Víta v roce 1619* (Prague: Artefactum, 1998), 38.

<sup>75</sup> Tiefertunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, IV., 416.

<sup>76</sup> Description of this event is outside the scope of this study. For the most precise study on this event, see Kramář, *Zpustošení*.

<sup>77</sup> Kramář, *Zpustošení*, 41–42.

<sup>78</sup> Tiefertunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, III., 416–419.

<sup>79</sup> Kramář, *Zpustošení*, 42.

<sup>80</sup> Kramář, *Zpustošení*, 31.

<sup>81</sup> Tiefertunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, III., 419.

<sup>82</sup> Rupert (III) deposed Wenceslaus (IV) from the Holy Roman throne in 1400. According to English print, the choice was conscious – showing an ambition for the imperial throne. *The True Copies of Sundrie Letters Concerning the Affaires of Bohemia...* (1620), B2v, <https://www.proquest.com/books/true-copies-sundrie-letters-concerning-affaires/docview/2248508491/se-2>.

<sup>83</sup> Andrew, *A House Divided*, 246–7; Tiefertunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, III., 422.

<sup>84</sup> *The most Illustrious Prince Fredericke, by the Grace of God King of Bohemia...* (George Waters, 1619), <https://www.proquest.com/books/most-illustrious-prince-fredericke-grace-god-king/docview/2240905512/se-2>.

Rupert’s baptism was planned after his father’s return from a royal tour around the kingdom and was delayed while waiting for Gabriel Bethlen’s (Rupert’s godfather) deputy. Finally, it took place on 31 March (NS). Rupert was brought into the cathedral by Magdaléna Berka of Dubé (née Slavata), Grand Burgrave’s wife, followed by “eight virgins from the queen’s household”<sup>85</sup> carrying the baptismal gown. Afterwards, numerous Bohemian ladies, along with Elizabeth’s Master of the Household (probably Thomas Livingston) and her ladies-in-waiting, came.<sup>86</sup> The company then moved to the banquet in Spanish Hall, which was depicted on an engraving. Elizabeth and Frederick do not appear on it; therefore, the artist might have chosen their point of view. At the head of the first table sat Magdaléna Berka of Dubé, with an unknown lady. The other guests are unlabelled, but judging by the style of dresses, at least some of the ladies might be English.<sup>87</sup> After the lavish dinner, the celebration continued in Queen Anne’s Summer Palace,<sup>88</sup> where they danced until very late at night.<sup>89</sup> Other sources also mention a ballet supervised by Elizabeth.<sup>90</sup>

The courtly festivals and celebrations continued, as the next day, the preparations for the marriage between Ursula of Solms-Braunfels (Elizabeth’s lady-in-waiting) and Christoph of Dohna (a nobleman in the service of Frederick) began and there were plans for a tilt.<sup>91</sup> An anonymous author pointed out that anyone, who had seen how happy and lively the atmosphere at the Prague court was, would not expect that the same company would find itself in the middle of a conflict.<sup>92</sup> To interpret these festivities as mere distractions would, however, be misleading. Firstly, events such as weddings or baptisms often served as meeting points of princes and their envoys. Despite the rather local nature of the Prague christening and wedding,<sup>93</sup> they could still carry political statements on war and early modern nationhood just as the more large-scale

<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately, Skála does not identify the carriers. The same is true for an English print. *The True Copies*, B2r.

<sup>86</sup> Tieftrunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, IV., 30.

<sup>87</sup> Two ladies seem to be wearing a dress with a low neckline. This might not be the best way how to distinguish between them, as some of Elizabeth’s ladies adopted more local styles, but it is the only one. Muzeum HL. m. Prahy, *Vyobrazení*.

<sup>88</sup> Skála calls this palace “Iusthauz”.

<sup>89</sup> *The True Copies*, B3r.; Tieftrunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, IV., 31.

<sup>90</sup> Akkerman, *Elizabeth Stuart*, 138.

<sup>91</sup> *The True Copies*, B3r.

<sup>92</sup> *The True Copies*, B3r–B3v.

<sup>93</sup> When compared to the most known and well-studied festivals like in Stuttgart (1609, 1616) and London/Heidelberg (1613). See e.g., Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly, “The Protestant Union: Festivals, Festival Books, War and Politics,” in *Europa Triumphans. Court and Civic Festivals in*

festivals of the Protestant world.<sup>94</sup> In addition to that, the tilts and other physical activities provided much-needed practice for the battlefield.<sup>95</sup>

Elizabeth, most probably followed by her ladies-in-waiting, was also present during receptions of various envoys. An English print describes the arrival of Ottoman envoy Mehmet Aga, in which Elizabeth took a rather passive role.<sup>96</sup> The opposite can be said about the English embassy arriving in autumn. Elizabeth granted them an audience separately from her husband.<sup>97</sup> In a letter to his wife, Frederick instructed Elizabeth to receive them with all proper honours but nothing more, because they refused to do any good for them, and therefore, it is not worth the money.<sup>98</sup>

## Experiencing Prague

There are also other, less official events and anecdotes from the royal households. Some of them cannot be traced back to original, credible sources,<sup>99</sup> or the authors themselves express uncertainty.<sup>100</sup> The main topic of those commenting on Elizabeth's behaviour is religion. Prints of Catholic origin claimed that she was a staunch supporter of church conversions and wanted to remove any signs of Catholicism.<sup>101</sup> Another story, frequently repeated in later literature, recounts the fate of a crucifix. Elizabeth was allegedly disgusted by the half-naked Jesus on a cross and demanded the removal of the said object. However, this direct accusation comes from the same source as the one regarding her role in St. Vitus' purification.<sup>102</sup> Earlier sources are

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*Early Modern Europe Volume II*, ed. J. R. Mulryne, Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Margret Shewring (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>94</sup> Watanabe-O'Kelly, "The Protestant Union," 15–6, 27.

<sup>95</sup> Watanabe-O'Kelly, "The Protestant Union," 29.

<sup>96</sup> *A most True Relation of the Late Proceedings in Bohemia, Germany, and Hungaria Dated the 1. the 10. and 13. of Iuly, this Present Yeere 1620...* (1620), 1, <https://www.proquest.com/books/most-true-relation-late-proceedings-bohemia/docview/2248573075/se-2>.

<sup>97</sup> Tiefertunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, IV., 335.

<sup>98</sup> Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 258.

<sup>99</sup> Frances A. Yates, *Rozenkruciánské osvícenství*, trans. Martin Konvička (Prague: Pragma, 2000), 41.

<sup>100</sup> Tiefertunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, III., 421.

<sup>101</sup> Hubková, *Fridrich Falcký*, 198, 205.

<sup>102</sup> Kramář, *Zpustošení*, 42.

inconsistent—blaming Frederick,<sup>103</sup> the royal couple as a whole,<sup>104</sup> or other people.<sup>105</sup> Frederick denied the accusations.<sup>106</sup>

One alleged incident took place at Elizabeth’s court itself. On St. Elizabeth’s day, she received flowers made of bread as a reference to the legend connected with this saint. Her ladies-in-waiting began tossing them back and forth. Some flowers fell to the ground, which was considered disrespectful by the Bohemians.<sup>107</sup> Further confusion was caused by Elizabeth’s unclear religious practices. Already in her marriage treaty, she was granted her own (Anglican) worship,<sup>108</sup> and in the Palatinate, she had her own chaplain and place of worship.<sup>109</sup> The All-Saints’ Church was designated for this purpose.<sup>110</sup> To ease the bewilderment, Elizabeth decided to join Frederick during Easter communion.<sup>111</sup>

Elizabeth’s, and consequently her court’s, behaviour in Prague evoked contradictory feelings. English observers had rather positive remarks. While in Bohemia, John Taylor saw the King, Queen, Princes, and the retinue composed of German and Bohemian nobles numerous times. He praised the court for its attractiveness to any visitor as it offered a lot of entertainment. Furthermore, he expressed many thanks for the queen’s generous hospitality.<sup>112</sup> According to another English witness, Elizabeth’s kindness and nonchalance won many subjects’ hearts.<sup>113</sup> Other accounts are more critical. In Pavel Skála’s narrative, the queen’s court is described as unpredictable, especially when it comes to their stance towards meals and the church. But these were only some of the

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<sup>103</sup> Kramář, *Zpustošení*, 91–2.

<sup>104</sup> According to Skála, a rumour emerged that Frederick commanded it so that Elizabeth will not have to look at the “naked barber”. Tiefrunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, III., 421.

<sup>105</sup> Hubková, *Fridrich Falcký*, 198.

<sup>106</sup> Tiefrunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, III., 421.

<sup>107</sup> Andrew, *A House Divided*, 237; Lemberg, *Eine Königin*, 22.

<sup>108</sup> Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 244.

<sup>109</sup> John Harrison, *A Short Relation of the Departure of the High and Mightie Prince Frederick King Elect of Bohemia: With His Royall & Vertuous Ladie Elizabeth; and the Thyrse Hopefull Yong Prince Henrie, from Heydelberg Towards Prague...* (George Waters, 1619), A2r, <https://www.proquest.com/books/short-relation-departure-high-mightie-prince/docview/2240858638/se-2>.

<sup>110</sup> Hubková, *Fridrich Falcký*, 191.

<sup>111</sup> Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 243–4.

<sup>112</sup> John Taylor, *Taylor His Trauels: From the Cittie of London in England, to the Cittie of Prague in Bohemia...* (Printed by Nicholas Okes, for Henry Gosson, and are to be sold by Edward Wright, 1620), C4v, D4v, <https://www.proquest.com/books/taylor-his-trauels-citty-london-england-prague/docview/2248559852/se-2>.

<sup>113</sup> Akkerman, *Elizabeth Stuart*, 137.

many mischiefs committed by the ladies-in-waiting.<sup>114</sup> Elizabeth's independence and way of greeting newcomers (allegedly with a hearty handshake) also caused surprise.<sup>115</sup> But, the discontent was at least to some extent mutual. The details of this affair are unknown, yet Skála writes about a certain conflict between Elizabeth and one of the land officers who did not show due respect while speaking with her.<sup>116</sup> This is another link connecting Elizabeth and her mother, as Anna too feuded with her surroundings.<sup>117</sup>

The queen's mood was also greatly influenced by the king's frequent absence from court, for instance, during Frederick's royal tour which took place from the 27 January to the 14 March (NS), especially during the Cossacks' raid on Moravia.<sup>118</sup> They exchanged many letters, but none written by Elizabeth survived.<sup>119</sup> It is apparent from Frederick's replies that he wanted to calm her down. For example, in a letter from Silesia, he describes the beautiful dresses of the local ladies,<sup>120</sup> perhaps to soften Elizabeth's attitude towards fashion in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown. At other times, he "scolds" her softly for giving way to melancholy. Furthermore, Frederick tried to cheer his wife up with the promise of future times spent together hunting in Moravia.<sup>121</sup>

## Epilogue

The existence of Elizabeth Stuart's court in Prague came to an abrupt end with the Battle of the White Mountain. To this day, it remains a sort of blurred chapter of Czech history with many (contradictory) accounts, as already their contemporaries pointed out.<sup>122</sup> Very often, they narrate the same events in

<sup>114</sup> Lemberg, *Eine Königin*, 22; Tieftrunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, III., 379.

<sup>115</sup> Andrew, *A House Divided*, 237.

<sup>116</sup> More precisely with "Oberstlandhofmeister." Tieftrunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, IV., 45.

<sup>117</sup> Cynthia Fry, "Perception of Influence: The Catholic Diplomacy of Queen Anna and Her Ladies," in *The Politics of Female Households*, ed. Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2014), 271.

<sup>118</sup> Gindely, *Dějiny*, vol. II, 254.

<sup>119</sup> This might have been caused by the loss of some luggage during the journey. Additionally, in a latter message Frederick mentions Elizabeth's request for burning of the letters. Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 220–1, 265.

<sup>120</sup> Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 236.

<sup>121</sup> Akkerman, *The Correspondence I*, 229.

<sup>122</sup> For instance, Skála wrote that "...various accounts...about him [Frederick] and his wife, even about his family were dispersed here and there." Tieftrunk, *Pavla Skály ze Zhoře Historie česká*, III., 379.

completely different ways—for one author, a crowd indicated popularity; for another, it was just a coincidental group of curious people.<sup>123</sup>

The various stories concerned with Elizabeth did not emerge without some motivation. Though not always true, they succeeded in distracting many contemporaries (as well as historians) from real problems, such as issues connected with the administration of the countries, the position of the cities within it, and taxation.<sup>124</sup>

It seems that Elizabeth did not manage to create a deeper connection with Bohemian (or Moravian) noble ladies while in her new country, which was caused by the many differences they had to overcome first. Furthermore, expecting Elizabeth to completely conform to local standards was rather naïve. Just like her mother, she strongly identified with her “birth” dynasty in order to retain her superior royal status.<sup>125</sup>

However, while in exile, she supported many important families from “her” kingdom – including women,<sup>126</sup> perhaps the best examples are the daughters of Vilém of Roupov.<sup>127</sup> This was actually a necessary step for both Frederick and her. After all, if they were to be called the King and Queen of Bohemia, they had to have Bohemian courtiers in their households. Though not fully successful in legitimizing their titles in front of all contemporaries, they kept using them until their deaths.

## Abstract

This study explores the historical significance of Elizabeth Stuart’s court in Prague, drawing on a diverse range of primary sources, varying from letters to published booklets. Despite its short duration, Elizabeth’s court served as a unique example of early modern royal households, as it consisted of three distinct language and cultural groups. This mixture led to certain surprises and conflicts either within the court itself or between the court and the outside world. Conflicting contemporary accounts further underscore the ambiguity

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<sup>123</sup> Hubková, *Fridrich Falcký*, 198.

<sup>124</sup> Jaroslav Pánek, “Friedrich V. von der Pfalz als König von Böhmen,” in *Der Winterkönig Friedrich V.: Der letzte Kurfürst aus der oberen Pfalz*, ed. Peter Wolf et al. (Amberg: Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte, 2003), 101–3.

<sup>125</sup> Field, “Anna of Denmark,” 211–2.

<sup>126</sup> Karel Stloukal, “Žena v českých dějinách,” in *Královny, kněžny a velké ženy české*, ed. Karel Stloukal (Prague: Jos. R. Vilímek, 1940), 39.

<sup>127</sup> E. g., Akkerman, *The Correspondence II*, 375, 377; Odložilík, “Královna Mab,” 281–7.

of the court's legacy. These reports range from celebratory depictions of festive ceremonies and promises of popularity to critical assessments of religious practices—especially in connection with the queen—effectively distracted contemporaries from pressing challenges. Moreover, the research reveals that Elizabeth did not succeed in creating a deep connection with noblewomen from her new country within the first year of her reign. This contrasts with research on latter years which suggests that quite a few members of Bohemian and Moravian nobility appeared at her (or her husband's court).

**Keywords:** Elizabeth Stuart; court; Frederick V of the Palatinate; Prague; Estates' Uprising; Queenship

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