

*Passage naar Rome* - Appendix: Results of research



# Research report

## *Passage naar Rome*

*De opzienbarende  
bekeringsreis van koningin  
Christina van Zweden  
1654-1655*

### **Appendix: Results of research**

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This research report summarizes the main findings of the historical investigations for the Dutch book *Passage naar Rome*.

The report is available in Dutch and English and may be downloaded for free at [www.viachristina.nl](http://www.viachristina.nl).

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# I. Faults and fabrications

Countless stories have been told about Christina of Sweden, and most of them have stood the test of time. That does not make historical research any easier. Many of these traditions are at odds with historical reality, and it is often not immediately clear to the researcher what belongs to the wheat and what to the chaff<sup>1</sup>. The past three centuries have shown that it is not enough to refute claims and then refer them to the realm of fables. Once they have penetrated the canon of Christina's history, the ghost stories cannot simply be dispelled with such an incantation, and they keep cropping up.

The overview below is a compilation of dubious traditions and pertinent fables about Christina without pretending to be exhaustive. It is based on research conducted for the book *Passage naar Rome* and may be useful as a reference.

## 1. Descartes didn't write ballet poems

It's a moving story. In 1649 Descartes travelled reluctantly from his cosy home in the Dutch village of Egmond to Stockholm by royal command of Queen Christina who wanted to be initiated into his philosophy. There he was kept on a string by the queen with the order to write at first the accompanying verses for a ballet. The spectacle was dedicated to the recently concluded Westphalian Peace (1648) and was called *La Naissance de la Paix*.

The story dates from 1691, when Adrien Baillet referred to it in his biography of Descartes without mentioning the title.<sup>2</sup> It was not until 1920 that the text was rediscovered and added to a new edition of Descartes' collected works. As a result, it was given a place in historiography.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Godfroy, Frans, *Passage naar Rome. De opzienbarende bekeringsreis van koningin Christina van Zweden, 1654-1655*, Utrecht 2022, p. 358 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Baillet, Adrien, *La Vie de Monsieur Descartes*, Vol. II (1691), p. 395.

<sup>3</sup> Descartes, René, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Adam et Tannery, Tome V, Paris 1974, p. 616-627.

That came to an end when the story was disproved in an article in *Archives de Philosophie* in 1990 by Richard Watson<sup>4</sup>. In 2002, he elaborated on this question in his biography of Descartes<sup>5</sup>. Watson points out that the attribution is based on just one postscript under a letter from Descartes to his friend Bregy in Paris, whom he informed about his adventures from Stockholm: ‘To make the package a little bigger so that it won’t get lost, I’ve added the verses of a ballet to be performed here tomorrow night.’ There is no indication whatsoever for the biographer Baillet’s assumption that Descartes himself was the writer of the verses, which would have been extremely surprising since Descartes did not write poetry. It is not so strange that Descartes added the sheets to the letter, as Watson explains on the basis of reliable sources. Descartes had probably seen the ballet *La Diane Victorieuse* in Stockholm together with Bregy and knew that his friend was a lover of this genre. So, he sent Bregy, who had suddenly had to leave for Paris because of the death of his father, the text of the newly programmed ballet.

Comparison with authorized cognate ballet texts suggests that Hélié Poirier, present at the Swedish court at the time, was the author. Unfortunately, Watson was unable to find direct evidence of this in the form of signatures or copies of payments.

So, even if we have to be careful with the attribution to Poirier, it has to be recognized that, based on Watson’s findings, the anecdote about the ‘ballet poet Descartes’ was sufficiently unsettled to be dismissed from now on as unreliable. Indeed, some ‘Christina authors’ put the story aside after the appearance of Watson’s article, notably Garstein<sup>6</sup> and Lanoye<sup>7</sup>, who certainly would have mentioned it if it were not dubious. Moreover, Susanna Åkerman emphasized Watson’s conclusions and elaborated on their significance in her book.<sup>8</sup> Predictably, the message had been passed by less serious authors, such as Veronica

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<sup>4</sup> Watson, Richard A., ‘René Descartes n’est pas l’auteur de “La Naissance de la paix”’, in: *Archives de Philosophie*, juillet-septembre 1990, Vol. 53, No. 3, *La Politique Cartésienne*, p. 389-401.

<sup>5</sup> Watson, Richard A., *Cogito, Ergo Sum. The Life of René Descartes*, Boston, 2002, p. 303-304.

<sup>6</sup> Garstein, Oskar, *Rome and the Counter-Reformation in Scandinavia. The Age of Gustavus Adolphus and Queen Christina of Sweden, 1622-1656*, Vol. IV, Leiden 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Lanoye, Diederik, *Christina van Zweden. Koningin op het schaakbord van Europa, 1626-1689*, Louvain 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Åkerman, Susanna, *Queen Christina of Sweden and her circle. The transformation of a Seventeenth-Century Philosophical Libertine*, Leiden 1991, p. 48.

Buckley, who in her Christina biography has made little effort to verify sources and has mainly limited herself to the uncontrolled copying of juicy anecdotes by others.<sup>9</sup>

More surprisingly, in his book *Descartes - Zijn Nederlandse Jaren*, Dutch philosopher Hans Dijkhuis unconditionally retold the story of ballet poet Descartes in 2022.<sup>10</sup> That is all the more notable because elsewhere in his book the author relies amply on the biography of Richard Watson: so, he must be aware that the claim is controversial.

Yet, Dijkhuis doesn't supply any justification. He fantasizes about the intentions of the poet Descartes with the text: 'Descartes himself undoubtedly used his own experiences in Germany for some passages in *The Birth of Peace*, a poem on rhyme he made for the Swedish Queen Christina for a ballet performed at the Stockholm court in late 1649 to celebrate the Peace of Westphalia. He described a ravaged earth, where forests had been cut down, cities and castles had been destroyed, and fields had been abandoned; what he said in the poem by the Estropiés, the war invalids, undoubtedly came from his heart: "Whoever sees what has become of us, and thinks that war is beautiful, or is worth more than peace, he is mutilated in his braincase".' Ignoring Watson's solid argumentation for the conclusion that the verses most likely did not flow from the pen of Descartes but from that of a true poet: Poirier.

## 2. Saumaise was never Rector of the University of Leiden

About the stay of the French Calvinist and philologist Claude Saumaise at Christina's court, Garstein writes: 'In the end he consented to pass more than one year in Stockholm, but he refused to settle there permanently or to resign his post as Rector of Leyden University, to which position he had been elevated a few years earlier.'<sup>11</sup> And about his return to Leiden: 'He was unable to prolong his leave of absence from his post as Rector of Leyden University, and so was forced to quit the country.'<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Buckley, Veronica, *Christina, koningin van Zweden*, Amsterdam 2004, (Dutch translation of: *Christina, Queen of Sweden*, London 2004) p. 132-133.

<sup>10</sup> Dijkhuis, Hans, *Descartes. Zijn Nederlandse jaren*, Amsterdam 2022, p. 37 and p. 407.

<sup>11</sup> Garstein, p. 575-576.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 642.



However, Saumaise was never Rector of the University of Leiden. He was professor there from 1632 until his death in 1653. He got the special title 'Academiae Lugduni Batavorum Decus' (Jewel of the University of Leiden) and held a priority position in the Senate.<sup>13</sup>

In the historiography of Christina, Saumaise's position in Leiden may be a minor point, but in that of Saumaise itself and the University of Leiden, it is of essential importance. Saumaise's status in the Senate was a source of contention and intrigue. Notorious are the continuing quarrels between Claude Saumaise and Daniel Heinsius. Ironically, Daniel's son Nicolaas, together with his companion Isaac Vossius, came under Saumaise's feet at Christina's court.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. The trinity Frederik van Hessen-Eschwege

Mistaken identity is one of the kinds of errors that should keep a serious historian awake. Unlike in novels, in which the number of names is deliberately kept within limits so that the readers – and the authors themselves – can remember who is who, the number of main and secondary characters in a historical work can quickly get out of hand. Hence the register of persons, which should not be missing in such a book. The book *Passage naar Rome*, from which you are now consulting the list of errors and fables about Christina, contains nearly 400 personal names, not counting those mentioned only in the source list or the notes. Whether or not the writer has actually mixed-up people or not, it doesn't even matter; he will lie awake. After all, someone can always ring the bell if a Janszoon appears to have been confused with a Pieterszoon or an Urbanus IV with an Urbanus V. Even more attention is recommended when a duke in the duchy that he inherited from his grandfather was called Carlo II of Gonsaga and in the duchy that he took over from his father Carlo III of Gonsaga<sup>15</sup>. Also be wary when two brawlers in Schleswig-Holstein, namely the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp and his liege lord, the King of Denmark, are both named Frederick III.<sup>16</sup> And so sometimes things go wrong.

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<sup>13</sup> *Biografisch Lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme*.

<sup>14</sup> Vrieze, F.S. de, 'Academic Relations between Sweden and Holland', in: *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century. An Exchange of Learning*, Leiden 1975, p. 345-365.

<sup>15</sup> Godfroy, p. 393, n. 60.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 97.

A special case of mistaken identity occurs in Diederik Lanoye's book about Christina's stay in the Spanish Netherlands: an amalgamation of three people into one. This trinity, referred to by Lanoye as Frederik van Hessen-Eschwege, figures as a distant relative of Christina, who converted from Calvinism to Catholicism, and ultimately as a cardinal charged to accompany her for the last few miles to Rome.<sup>17</sup> First and foremost: the Von Hessen family has provided a very treacherous banana skin here, over which Lanoye unfortunately slipped. Still, after some research into the history of the Von Hessen dynasty, the puzzle can be solved. Friedrich von Hessen-zu Eschwege, as he is called in German, was indeed related to Queen Christina, albeit by marriage: his wife Eleonora Catharina was a cousin of Christina and sister of Karl Gustav, who would succeed Christina. Curiously, while Christina was still queen and secretly preparing her own conversion, she wrote a letter of warning to Friedrich that he should not convert to Catholicism. Christina did this at the request of her cousin, the crown prince, who was afraid of popish influences in the Swedish royal family through his sister Eleonora Catharina. That fear was caused by the fact that a brother of Friedrich, Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels, had converted to the Catholic faith with his whole family. The fear that Friedrich would follow that example turned out to be unfounded; he was not interested at all.<sup>18</sup> So Friedrich was the relative by marriage and his brother Ernst was the convert.

Unfortunately, causing Lanoye more confusion, the third Von Hessen was also called Friedrich, although his second surname sounded clearly different. We are talking about Friedrich von Hessen-Darmstadt, who belonged to another branch of the Von Hessen dynasty. He converted to the Catholic faith at the age of twenty and embarked on a Roman career that ultimately earned him the Cardinal's hat. This Cardinal von Hessen-Darmstadt was honourably tasked with leading Queen Christina into Rome.<sup>19</sup> Less than six months later, His Eminence already regretted this when she publicly wiped the floor with him in a pamphlet against the Spanish-Habsburg lobby.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Lanoye, p. 126-127, 147 en 184.

<sup>18</sup> Godfroy, p. 63-64.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 249, 250, 258, 259, 358.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 293.

#### 4. Christina's equestrian portrait: 'only' 3,40 m high, and not in Rome but in Madrid

You may not only copy other people's mistakes, but also your own. The Museo del Prado in Madrid demonstrated this by retaining a typo in the painting catalog from 1920 in all subsequent printed catalogues up to 1996. The height of the equestrian portrait of Queen Christina of Sweden by Sébastien Bourdon had to be typed at 3.38 m, but it was accidentally types at 3.83 m. After 1996, the catalogue entered the digital age, and the error was finally discovered and corrected: 3.40 m is read now, still two centimetres higher than the measurement that was noted until 1920.

That everyone blindly trusts the measurements printed in a museum's catalogue, is apparent from all the publications through which the canvas passed over the course of the twentieth century. In each case, the colossal dimensions were mentioned: no less than 3.83 m tall. That was significant, because the painting was extra impressive because of its size, and, moreover, in 1653, the transport from Stockholm to Madrid had been a hell of a job. The height of another painting that had hung next to it in the Alcazar's dining room for years, the equestrian portrait of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria on the battlefield of Lützen in 1633 by Peter Paul Rubens, was apparently overlooked by art historians. That was also 3.40 m high, and that is why the two canvases had hung together so beautifully.<sup>21</sup>

At least as remarkable is another misconception about Christina's equestrian portrait. In her biography *Queen Christina* (1968), Georgina Masson wrote that the canvas was a favourite of the Queen, which is why she had it hanging in her bedroom at Palazzo Riario in Rome. According to Masson, this was stated on the inventory list of the household effects after Christina's death in 1689.<sup>22</sup> How she arrived at that misreading – the painting is not on that list – we do not know exactly due to the lack of an accurate source reference. In her book, Masson shows no knowledge of the 1653 shipment of the painting from Stockholm to

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<sup>21</sup> Bottineau, Yves, 'L'Alcazar de Madrid et l'inventaire de 1686. Aspects de la cour d'Espagne au XVIIe siècle', afl. 4, in: *Bulletin Hispanique*, jrg. 60 1958 nr. 3. Bordeaux 1958, p. 292. Bayton, Gloria Fernández (ed.), *Inventarios reales. Testamentaria del rey Carlos II. 1701-1703*, Vol. I. Madrid 1975, p. 40-41.

<sup>22</sup> Masson, Georgina, *Queen Christina*, London 1968, p. 313.

King Philip IV in Madrid, or of the fact that, apart from a single exhibition loan in the twentieth century, it never left Spain.

The copycat biographer Veronica Buckley is even more wrong with this slip-up: she made it the motto for the cover of her book (2004) with the canvas, noting, ‘This was her favourite portrait, which hung in her bedroom until the end of her life.’<sup>23</sup>

But alas! It was never in Rome. In 1653, it went as a gift from Christina in Stockholm to King Philip IV in Madrid and can still be admired there in the Museo del Prado, provided with the now corrected dimensions in the catalogue.<sup>24</sup>

## **5. Nothing peculiar about Christina’s church-going on the Sunday of her departure from Stockholm**

When Queen Christina began her journey south on June 11, 1654, a few days after her abdication, no one in Sweden knew that she intended to convert to the Catholic faith. The few initiates were elsewhere in Europe, and her intention had to remain secret for the time being. According to some historians, she publicly attended a Lutheran communion service just before her departure to show everyone that there was nothing wrong with that.

But what do these researchers base themselves on?

Curt Weibull mentioned the sacrament meeting in his 1966 English-language book<sup>25</sup>, not in his 1931 Swedish book, on which that English-language edition is largely based<sup>26</sup>. Unfortunately, the Swedish book does, but the English book does not contain notes, so we cannot determine from which source he drew.

Did he perhaps borrow the story from Linage de Vauciennes, the only contemporary source where it can be found? ‘Having learned that the ministers had spread the rumour among the people that she left the kingdom with the intention of becoming a Catholic and that she had to be kept in the country to prevent that, she stayed up on purpose Sunday in Stockholm to participate in the

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<sup>23</sup> Buckley, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> More on this subject in the essay *The Secrets of Christina’s Equestrian Portrait* by Frans Godfroy at [www.viachristina.eu](http://www.viachristina.eu).

<sup>25</sup> Weibull, Curt, *Christina of Sweden*, Stockholm 1966, p. 92.

<sup>26</sup> Weibull, Curt, *Drottning Christina. Studier och forskningar*, Stockholm 1931.

sacrament meeting in the main church, as a sign that that rumour was false and that she was a very good Lutheran,' it says.<sup>27</sup>

The problem is, Curt Weibull had concluded that the later volumes of *Linage de Vauciennes*, written by François Picques, secretary of the French embassy in Stockholm, are completely unreliable. Curt's findings were based on research, initiated by his father, Martin Weibull.<sup>28</sup> The quote about the sacrament meeting is taken from the unreliable writings of Picques. Anyone who takes a critical look at his texts has to agree. They contain numerous unproven anecdotes and gossip, which often portray Christina and the Spanish ambassador Pimentel in a less favourable light, and interpretations based on half-truths or less.

The latter certainly also applies to the quote about Christina's church-going, where Picques seems to know exactly what hidden agenda she had in staying 'on purpose' in Stockholm for Lutheran worship on the Sunday of her departure, while there is no proof whatsoever. Christina probably went to church every Sunday. Perhaps she usually went to the palace chapel, but the court also had reserved seats in the Storkyrkan, Stockholm's 'main church'. Did she mean to pretend to be a good Lutheran? Surely. But she had always had that intention, especially since she had been keeping the secret for three years that she had decided to become a Catholic. Going to the Lutheran church on Sundays? There was little else to do.

When asked whether Weibull gave up his critical attitude towards Picques for a while and in this case relied on his dubious testimony, it must be argued in Weibull's defence that he omitted Picques's conspiracy theory. He merely stated that the Queen 'on Sunday, June 11, took part in sacrament meeting at the Storkyrkan in the capital'.

In that regard, the treatment of this passage by two other authors got more seriously derailed.

Garstein, who fully endorses the criticism of Picques's method<sup>29</sup>, must have been delighted when, instead of his version, he found another peg on which he thought he could hang Christina's church attendance on June 11, 1654<sup>30</sup>: two

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<sup>27</sup> Linage de Vauciennes, Pierre, *Mémoires de ce qui c'est passéen Suède, et aux provinces voisins, depuis l'année 1645 jusques en l'année 1655. Tirez des depesches de M. Chanut*, Vol III, Paris 1675, p. 445.

<sup>28</sup> Weibull, Martin, 'Drottning Kristina och Klas Tott', in: *Lunds Universitets Års-skrift*, Vol. 29. Lund 1894, p. 3-6. Garstein, p. 537-538.

<sup>29</sup> Garstein, p. 537-538.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 723.

letters by Christina's librarian and Latin teacher Nicolaas Heinsius. In these writings, he reported to his correspondence friends Carolus Datus and Cassian Puteus of Christina's abdication and departure from Stockholm.<sup>31</sup> The curious thing is that neither letter mentions a sacrament meeting that Christina is said to have attended. How, then, does Garstein arrive at this erroneous reference? It seems that a sloppy translation from Latin in one of the letters is the cause. Heinsius wrote to Puteus: 'Postero die sacramentum Regi est praestitum a quatuor Regni Ordinibus; ...' The words *sacramentum Regi* here refer to the oath of allegiance that the four estates of the country (*a quatuor Regni Ordinibus*) took to the new king, Karl X Gustav, the day after the enthronement. Garstein seems to have seen the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in it without ascertaining how that term fit into the rest of the sentence. He immediately adopted the interpretation that Picques had given to it. Referring to the two letters, he writes: 'According to one contemporary source she put in an appearance at the Lutheran Communion Table, receiving the Sacrament in public, it is believed the last time.' It remains unclear who he means by 'one contemporary source': Picques or Heinsius?

'In order to reassure the Swedish king, she did everything she could not to give offense and to dispel the rumours of her imminent conversion,' Lanoye wrote in his book about Christina's episode in the Spanish Netherlands, citing the same two letters as his source: 'Her librarian Nicolaas Heinsius mentions in his letters that the queen had appeared at the Lutheran supper during the last days of her stay in Stockholm. This would be one of the first times the Queen had gone against her new beliefs.'<sup>32</sup>

However, Heinsius does not mention such an event anywhere. Moreover, it was neither one of the first times (Lanoye) nor the last time (Garstein) that Christina attended a Lutheran church service leading up to her conversion. The presumable last time that Christina attended a sacrament meeting was a few weeks later at the Lutheran Petrus Church in Hamburg, where she sat down with relatives and acquaintances.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Heinsius, Nicolaas, letter to Carolus Datus, Uppsala 19 juni 1654 and letter to Cassianus Puteus, Uppsala June 19, 1654, in: *Clarorum Belgarum Epistolae ad Magliabechium*, Vol I (1745), p. 199 en 205.

<sup>32</sup> Lanoye, p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> *Hamburgensie Nr 1128/Tratziger Chronik, bis 1699*, Das Editionsprojekt hamburger-chronik.de, p. 420-421.

## 6. Christina's illness soon slowed the traveling party, but not in Brokind

Christina had to interrupt her trip after only a few days because of a lung infection. The seventeenth-century chronicler Gualdo Priorato, who wrote a book about Christina's conversion journey from Stockholm to Rome in 1656, states that she rested for eight days at the home of the nobleman Natt och Dag, eight Swedish miles south of Jönköping. There are no further indications.<sup>34</sup> Which descendant of this well-known Swedish family offered her hospitality, and where exactly was that house located? The Natt och Dag family lived in Brokind, Östergötland, which is thirteen miles (about 140 km) northeast of Jönköping rather than eight Swedish miles (about 85 km) south of it: quite a deviating direction. On the other hand, historians couldn't find houses of the family in the region of Småland indicated by Gualdo Priorato around 1654. This problem was solved in various ways by different authors.

Garstein and Lanoye omit Christina's breakdown in their story. Garstein even writes: '...she travelled at great speed south-westwards across Sweden to Halmstad close to the Danish frontier'<sup>35</sup> and according to Lanoye 'she hastily crossed the south of Sweden to the province of Halland'<sup>36</sup>. The company covered considerable distances per travel day indeed, but on an average it went rather slowly because of the delay caused by the queen's illness. However, the delay probably didn't amount to eight days, as Gualdo Priorato points out, but four or five.<sup>37</sup>

Both father and son Weibull mention the delay, but they suppose that Christina recovered at the residence of the Natt och Dag family in Brokind.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, that location in no way fits into Christina's itinerary or the route Gualdo Priorato describes. One might imagine that she took a detour for granted because she became ill during the journey and needed a bed. But that's neither very plausible because she had just had a rest day at the royal castle of Linköping, two and a half miles to the north, where she might have been better off staying or returning.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Gualdo Priorato, Galeazzo, *Historia della Sacra Real Maestà di Christina Alessandra, Regina di Svetia &c.*, Rome 1656, Book 1, p. 36-37.

<sup>35</sup> Garstein, p. 723.

<sup>36</sup> Lanoye, p. 35.

<sup>37</sup> Godfroy, p. 379, n. 54.

<sup>38</sup> Weibull, Martin, p. 23, n. 2. Weibull, Curt, 1966, p. 93.

<sup>39</sup> Godfroy, p. 378-379, n. 53.

So, we had to look further for members of the Natt och Dag family in the indicated region, Småland, about eight miles south of Jönköping. We did, eventually, discover one, and it was not the least. Carl Persson Natt och Dag, a member of the Swedish Riksdag, lived in the manor house Toftaholm, which belonged to his mother, in 1654.<sup>40</sup> Direct evidence that Christina stayed there is lacking, but Toftaholm was at least at the indicated location.

A small complication: Carl Persson Natt och Dag wasn't able to receive Christina in person, as he was in Uppsala at the time for the Riksdag.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps his wife had observed the honours.

## 7. Jumping to freedom across a non-existent frontier brook

Often contradicting gossip is like rowing against the tide, but occasionally it has effect. For example, hardly any author still claims that Queen Christina, arriving at the stream south of the small town of Laholm that formed the frontier between Sweden and Denmark, would have jumped over it while crying 'Free at last and out of Sweden, where I hope to never return again'. As an exception, the French professor Bernard Quilliet maintained it in 1982 in his biography of the queen, filled with gossip and erotic fantasies.<sup>42</sup>

Already in 1892, Martin Weibull gave short shrift to this umpteenth invention of the French embassy secretary, François Picques.<sup>43</sup> That was not difficult. Just by pointing to the map of 1654, he was able to show that there was no stream at all on the frontier.<sup>44</sup>

Yet the anecdote is still mentioned not only by Quilliet, but by most other Christina authors, although they do indicate that it is a fable.

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<sup>40</sup> Rosman, Holger, *Bjärka-Säby och des ägare*, Stockholm 1923-1927, Vol II, p. 77-140.

<sup>41</sup> *Sveriges ridderskaps och adels riksdagprotokoll*, 1652-1654, p. 161-278.

<sup>42</sup> Quilliet, Bernard, *Christina van Zweden. Een uitzonderlijke vorst*, Schoten 1987 (translation of: *Christine de Suède*, Parijs 1982), p. 195.

<sup>43</sup> *Linage de Vauciennes*, Vol. III, p. 461.

<sup>44</sup> Weibull, Martin, p. 23, n. 2.



## 8. Danish fairy-tales (1)

Christina's passage through Denmark already created Danish fairy tales, long before Hans Christian Andersen put that country with it on the map. One of these came from the secretary of the French embassy in Stockholm, François Picques. As we saw before, in his writings, the latter liked to target Queen Christina and Ambassador Pimentel, who had been added to her by the Spanish King Philip IV and whom she seemed very fond of. She had founded for Pimentel the Order of the Amaranthe, whose members had to promise not to marry — or at least not to marry again — and in which, except for Christina, only her chosen lords were admitted. Picques was not one of them.<sup>45</sup> Picques' fairy tale was inspired by that intriguing society, and it could be summarized as follows.

Once upon a time there was a queen, Christina, who was unhappy with her throne and her faith, so, she left her country under false pretences and in disguise. When she had just crossed the border, she felt so liberated that she became intoxicated with joy and behaved very strangely, even stranger she had while ruling her own country. Dressed as a man, she ended up at an inn with her travelling companions, where they had a meal. For dessert, she ordered a glass of wine. In the middle of the dining room, she got down on her knees and made a toast to the beauty of the fire. She then ordered the rest of the party to do the same. The colour of the ribbon of the Amaranthe Society was the colour of fire, and it signified that a toast was made to Pimentel's health. So far François Picques.<sup>46</sup>

It is questionable whether Picques really intended to make his readers believe in this unlikely story. It seems more like sour mockery.

## 9. Danish fairy-tales (2)

Madame du Noyer, born Anne-Marguerite Petit, was known throughout Europe. She was born when Queen Christina was 36, so the two were more or less contemporaries. There may also have been some kind of soul mate, because like Christina, Madame du Noyer converted from Protestantism to Catholicism,

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<sup>45</sup> Godfroy, p. 95.

<sup>46</sup> *Linage de Vauciennes*, Vol. III, p. 461.

although she would later convert back to Protestantism. She has been called the first female journalist in Europe and is known for her impressive production. No wonder that her stories can be found in many historical books about the period in which she lived (1663-1719). However, there is a problem: her texts are not always reliable. She liked to embellish history, and unchecked gossip and rumours easily found their way into her writings, if only they were tasty enough. The second Danish fairy tale that we consider, therefore, flowed from her pen. Here's a brief overview, and if it resembles other fairy tales, that is no mistake: fairy tales often have striking similarities.

Once upon a time there was a queen, Christina, who was unhappy with her throne and her faith, so, she left her country under false pretences and in disguise. When she had just crossed the border, she felt so liberated that she became intoxicated with joy and behaved very strangely, even stranger she had while ruling her own country. Dressed as a man, she ended up at an inn with her traveling companions, where they had a meal. The neighbouring country where she was now, Denmark, also had a queen, Sophia Amalia, although she had become queen by marrying the king. So, it was difficult to compare with the majestic position of Christina, who had ruled her country herself and had abdicated on her own initiative while retaining her royal status.

There was no war going on at the moment, but the relationship between the two countries and their royal houses wasn't very warm. Sophia Amalia had heard that Christina was traveling incognito with some horsemen through her country, disguised as a man. She had also learned which inn the party would eat at that day, and she decided to repay the Swedish intruder with the same coin. Sophia Amalia could disguise herself as well. She put on a waitress dress and took over the service at the inn that day. During the meal, Christina chatted with her companions, dragging the Danish king, whom she didn't like, through the mud. Afterwards, she learned that the waitress, who had heard everything, was the Danish queen. But it didn't bother Christina, and she said: 'Then happened to her, which happens to most curious people. They make discoveries that don't make them happy.'<sup>47</sup>

After reading such a story, one can imagine that Madame de Noyer was known throughout Europe for her entertaining journalism. A serious historian,

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<sup>47</sup> Noyer, Anne Marguerite du, *Lettres Historiques et Galantes*, Vol III, London 1757, p. 186-187.

however, will not attach any value to this account. Nevertheless, the nineteenth-century diplomat and historian Charles de Burenstam, who wrote a book about Queen Christina's stay in the Spanish Netherlands, took it for granted.<sup>48</sup>

## 10. Persistent rumor: Christina's Jewish lesbian courtesan

Some historians apply scientific standards for research remarkably free. For example, the well-known French historian and member of the Académie Française, Bernard Quilliet, in his biography *Christine de Suède, un roi exceptionnel* (1982, 2007) constantly draws from notoriously unreliable sources.<sup>49</sup>

A salient example is the story that in Hamburg, where Christina stayed during her conversion trip for some time with her Jewish banker Diego Texeira, she was provided with a lesbian courtesan named Rachel, a cousin of Diego. Quilliet was probably well aware of the shaky foundation on which this tradition rests, for he avoids mentioning the original source, although the passage in question in his book<sup>50</sup> bears striking resemblance to the anonymous 17th century scandal pamphlet, full of fabrications and slanders, in which we read: '...elle devint amoureuse d'une Juifve, qu'elle menoit publiquement dans son carosse, et qu'elle faisoit coucher quelques fois avec elle'.<sup>51</sup>

Among Christina's numerous Hamburg enemies, this story has been retold and re-detailed over the centuries. Quilliet also draws from this. He refers to an obscure 19th-century publication from that area, for which neither the title nor the author – one Konrad Danelius – can be found in contemporary library catalogues. It tells us that the Jewish lady was the cousin of Diego Texeira, 'a very beautiful, young brown woman named Rachel Sylw or Silva, a renowned lesbian who had already given so much pleasure to several distinguished ladies in the

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<sup>48</sup> Burenstam, Charles de, *La reine Christine de Suède à Bruxelles et à Anvers*, Brussels 1891, p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Haffemayer, Stéphane, review Bernard Quilliet – *Christine de Suède*, 2003 (<https://archive.wikiwix.com/cache/index2.php?url=http%3A%2F%2Fclioncr.clionautes.org%2Fchristine-de-suede.html%23.VidmtaKxiV4#federation=archive.wikiwix.com&tab=url>). See also the examples in this overview.

<sup>50</sup> Quilliet, p. 111.

<sup>51</sup> *Recueil de quelques Pieces Curieuses, Servant à l'Esclaircissement de l'Histoire de la Vie de la Reine Christine. Ensemble plusieurs Voyages qu'elle à faites*. Keulen 1668, p. 44.

city and the castles of the area'. According to Danelius, she had to appear afterwards before a family council to account for her services to Christina, which doesn't make much sense given the professional reputation she already had. She is said to have replied that her work on behalf of 'one of the most glorious queens of Europe is more honour than shame'.<sup>52</sup>

Quilliet serves it all up without any restriction. Nor is he bothered by the anti-Semitic context of the allegations, which characterized the attitude of Lutheran Hamburg towards the Jewish community and the Texeira family in particular.<sup>53</sup>

## **11. A dubious source doesn't become more reliable when it happens to turn out well**

In volume 4 of his standard work, *Rome and the Counter-Reformation in Scandinavia*, the Norwegian historian Oskar Garstein made an important contribution to the critical analysis of all that has been transmitted concerning Queen Christina. His systematic examination of the numerous historical sources is of great value.<sup>54</sup> He makes reservations about many of those sources and dismisses some as completely unreliable. The latter category includes two anonymous libels from 1655, attributed to A.H. Saint-Maurice, *La Genie de la Reyne Christine* and *Brief Relation de la Vie de Christine, Reyne de Suède, jusque à la demission de sa Couronne et son arrivement à Bruxelles*. Others had already preceded Garstein in his criticism, and nowadays Saint-Maurice is no longer regarded as a serious historical source.<sup>55</sup>

However, even Garstein sometimes seems unable to resist the temptation to put aside such disapproving judgment for a good-sounding story. It can be read in *La Genie de la Reyne Christine*. When Christina arrived in Hamburg, she chose to move in with her Jewish banker, Diego Texeira ('un Medecin Juif', Saint-Maurice writes). Some senators were outraged by this, and ministers from the pulpit shamed her for staying with 'an enemy of Jesus Christ'. The queen is

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<sup>52</sup> Danelius, Konrad, *Christina von Schweden als Königin*, Cottbus 1866-1868, p. 79.

Untraceable at WorldCat, but cited by Quilliet, p. 111-112.

<sup>53</sup> Stern, Selma, *Der Hofjude im Zeitalter des Absolutismus*. Tübingen 2001, p.94-103.

<sup>54</sup> Garstein, p. 525-546.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p. 537.

said to have responded to the criticism that Jesus, himself Jewish, had been dealing with Jews all his life.<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps Garstein thought it was a nice statement from Christina in which she distanced herself from anti-Semitism, and so he adopted it all the same.<sup>57</sup> But it comes from an unreliable libel directed against Christina, and the question is whether it was all meant so kindly. After all, the story emphasized the criticism of the ministers once again, and Christina's reaction may have been smart, but it was also quite impertinent of her to align herself with Jesus. The final remark of Saint-Maurice is there for a reason: 'Jugez vous mesmes de la response.' [*'Judge the answer for yourself.'*]

## 12. Reception in Wandsbeck: not by Albert Behrens but by brother and sister Marselis

How easily mistakes penetrate into historiography becomes clear from Hermann Kellenbenz's contribution to Christina's adventures in Hamburg in the collection *Queen Christina of Sweden – Documents and Studies (1966)*. He writes that Queen Christina, on the last day of her stay in Hamburg in July 1654, allowed herself to be celebrated with a large party 'by the Danish representative in Hamburg and lord of the castle of Wandsbeck, the wealthy Albert Balthasar Berens' in this residence.<sup>58</sup> Kellenbenz probably derived this from the as reliable considered contemporary *Hamburger Chroniken*, which he names as one of his sources: '... da sie zu Wandsbeck auf Albert Balzar Behren's Hoffe vom Landt Grafen von heßen, und andern hohen Standes persohnen tractiret worden,...', we read there.<sup>59</sup> So, Kellenbenz seems to have a good source. However, his information is incorrect. Albert Behrens had been dead for about two years at

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<sup>56</sup> Saint-Maurice, A.H., *Brieve Relation de la Vie de Christine, Reyne de Suède, jusque à la demission de sa Couronne et son arrivement à Bruxelles*, Paris 1655. p. 10-11.

<sup>57</sup> Garstein, p. 725.

<sup>58</sup> Kellenbenz, Hermann, 'Königin Christina und ihre Beziehungen zu Hamburg', in: Platen, Magnus von (ed.), *Queen Christina of Sweden. Documents and Studies*. Stockholm 1966, p. 189.

<sup>59</sup> *Hamburgensie Nr. 1128/ Handschriftliche sogenannte Traziger Chronik, fortgeführt/ bis 1699*. Das Editionsproject [hamburger-chronik.de](http://hamburger-chronik.de), p. 421.

the time of the reception.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps the castle was still referred to by his name. In that case, the information in the chronicle was technically correct, though it naturally misled subsequent researchers.

If Kellenbenz had checked the information, he would have found interesting data. He would have seen that the widow of Behrens was a sister of the Dutch merchant Leonard Marselis. Christina had met Duke Frederick III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp shortly before her arrival in the city, at Leonard's estate Ottensen, in connection with the marriage of one of Frederick's daughters to the Swedish king.<sup>61</sup> Leonard Marselis was a very important moneylender to both the King of Denmark and the Duke. The trading house of the late Albert Behrens was now continued by a company run by the widow, Elisabeth, and her brother, Leonard Marselis. Christina was therefore received in Wandsbeck for the second time by members of the powerful Dutch merchant family Marselis, which was allied with Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>62</sup>

### **13. Fake news about Christina's Jezuitism in the first Roman Catholic town she visited: Münster**

With her abdication, conversion, and the actions that followed, Queen Christina aroused much resistance and provoked gossip and smear campaigns. The contamination of the tradition is largely caused by the related falsifications. These became part of the historiography by way of various shortcuts. A handy peg was the travel story by the chronicler Gualdo Priorato, which appeared as early as 1656. To the adventures of the queen recorded by him, her enemies later added smooth and evil concoctions.

An example is the story of Christina's visit to the Paulinum Jesuit College in Münster, the first Catholic city she visited during her journey south. In Gualdo Priorato's *Historia* we read that after an overnight stay in the city, she visited the college and the church of the Jesuits incognito, where she was recognized

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<sup>60</sup> Amburger, Erik, *Die Familie Marselis. Studien zur russischen Wirtschaftsgeschichte*. Gießen 1957, p. 55.

<sup>61</sup> Godfroy, p. 98-99.

<sup>62</sup> Amburger, p. 55.

by one of the Fathers who had a portrait of her. But he didn't want to take away from her the pleasure of traveling incognito, and so he kept quiet about it.<sup>63</sup>

The visit takes a completely different turn in an 'anonymous letter to an unknown confrere', supposedly written by one of the Jesuits in Münster and published by Arckenholtz. According to that writing, Christina made herself known to the fathers, was taken around the convent, and entered into a debate with them. She also sat in the refectory, where she was not very polite. After she was poured a glass of wine, she took a sip and threw the remnant away with a wide gesture, saying, 'I'm not a big wine drinker'. Then she gave the fathers a donation of one hundred ducats and left.<sup>64</sup>

From this story arises an image of Christina, which Lutheran ministers in Northern Europe liked to present to their believers: she shared with the hated Jesuits, and moreover, she did not know how to behave majestically. But it is a highly improbable representation. It is not at all obvious that Christina and her travelling companions made such a spectacle of their visit to the Jesuits in Münster, if only because they still had a lot of Protestant territory to pass through and had no interest in stirring up feelings there. The anonymous sender and the anonymous recipient make the whole thing even weaker. Nevertheless, it turns up here and there as true, such as with the 19th-century English author Bain, who uncritically copies many dubious stories.<sup>65</sup>

Garstein underscores the implausibility by pointing out that it is inconceivable that a public reception of the Queen would not have been recorded in the annals of the Jesuits, who, in accordance with the rules of the Order, record every event of any significance. But then he runs on as he speculates about how this fable came about. He points out that the name Münster is reflected in the name Neumünster. Christina had gone there to meet the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp and his daughters in order to find a bride for her cousin King Karl X Gustav. Portraits were also involved on that occasion; they were sent to the groom-to-be.<sup>66</sup> How far can you look? Meanwhile, the origin of the story is

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<sup>63</sup> Gualdo Priorato, Book 2, p. 44-45.

<sup>64</sup> Arckenholtz, Johann, *Mémoires concernant Christine, reine de Suède, pour servir d'éclaircissement à l'histoire de son règne et principalement de sa vie privée et aux événements de son temps civile et littéraire*, Amsterdam & Leipzig 1751-1760. Vol. II (1751), Appendice p. 104-106 (No. 54).

<sup>65</sup> Bain, F.W., *Christina, Queen of Sweden*, London 1890, p. 248.

<sup>66</sup> Garstein, p. 729.

up for grabs in the austere but believable version by Gualdo Priorato, whom Garstein considers to be a very reliable source elsewhere.

#### **14. Encounter with Anna Maria van Schurman: ingeniously invented**

A fabrication wrapped in a good-sounding story finds acceptance more easily. A successful example of this can be found in *Gynaeceum doctum*, which was published in 1682 by the Lutheran University of Wittenberg. The history in question is so well-conceived that it is still taken seriously by some, despite the fact that what it claims, cannot possibly be true.

Queen Christina is said to have visited the Calvinist Anna Maria van Schurman, who lived in Utrecht, on her way south. Van Schurman was already known as a savant in her own time. She had championed women's right to higher education. It was tolerated that she attended lectures at Utrecht University from behind a curtain due to her exceptional intelligence and inquisitiveness. She was therefore in an exceptional position, as studying was actually reserved for men. To this day, she is honoured by Utrecht University as the very first female student.

According to *Gynaeceum doctum*, Christina, accompanied by some Jesuits, paid a visit to this wise woman from the Low Countries. Christina and the fathers used the opportunity to challenge Anna Maria on all kinds of theological issues, but she was not deterred. The Jesuits were amazed by this and asked her if she was sometimes helped by a house spirit. Anna Maria replied: 'Certainly, it is the spirit through which I live and breathe.'<sup>67</sup>

The book was a compendium of learned women. The author, Pascius, has documented all the entries well with citations, but it is striking that the story about the meeting between Christina and Anna Maria lacks such a reference. That doesn't seem like a coincidence, because it couldn't possibly have happened as described. Queen Christina has only visited Utrecht once in her life, namely in 1654 on her way from Hamburg to Antwerp. At the time she was not accompanied by any Jesuits. Only her chamberlain Wolf, her chief equerry Steinberg, and three servants travelled with her. None of them knew about her conversion plan. There were no initiates in the group that followed her either.

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<sup>67</sup> Pascius, Johannes, *Gynecium doctum*, Wittenberg 1686, p. 54-55.



Furthermore, Christina's alleged visit to the very antipope Anna Maria accompanied by Jesuits would have caused a huge scandal in the Calvinist republic. Even during Christina's stay in the Spanish Netherlands, there is no indication of such an encounter. It is inconceivable that this would not have been mentioned in the annals of Gualdo Priorato or in the official messages of ambassadors Montecuccoli, Pimentel and internuncio Mangelli.

The story nevertheless became very popular in Protestant circles and was passed on in the eighteenth century by the Lutheran writers Paullini and Mollerus, in the nineteenth century by the Reformed minister Schotel and in the early twentieth century by the English biographer Una Birch. The story recurs in a slimmed-down form for various Christina authors: apparently it was recognized that the presence of Jesuits was not a real possibility, so it was a meeting without these Catholic clergy, but contemporary sources are not mentioned. According to De Burenstam the two women exchanged letters, but there is no trace of such correspondence. Everything indicates that a meeting between Christina and Anna Maria never took place. Except in *Gynaecium doctum*, this is therefore not mentioned in any contemporary source, not even in correspondence or other writings by the two women themselves or by notorious letter writers from their environment.<sup>68</sup>

Despite this, some people stubbornly believe this ingeniously invented fable. For example, the Utrecht researcher Pieta van Beek retains the original version in which the Jesuits and the Queen stood on Anna Maria's doorstep, and the meeting is mentioned as an interesting historical fact in a commemorative book from Utrecht University that Van Beek, commissioned by the Executive Board, wrote about Anna Maria van Schurman.<sup>69</sup>

## **15. Before Christina's reception by the archduke in Innsbruck, he knew about her conversion**

'On November 2, the travelling party arrived in Seefeldt, a small town near Innsbruck, where Archduke Karl Ferdinand and his brother Cardinal Archduke

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<sup>68</sup> Godfroy, p. 359-362.

<sup>69</sup> Beek, Pieta van, *The first female university student: Anna Maria van Schurman (1636)*, Utrecht 2010, p. 157-159.

Sigismund Franz, as nephews of Ferdinand III representatives of the House of Habsburg, met her. They, too, had no idea what would happen in Innsbruck in the coming days.<sup>70</sup> Thus Diederik Lanoye summarizes some of the follow-up in the epilogue of his book about Christina's stay in the Spanish Netherlands. This passage contains various inaccuracies.

In the first place, the archduke and his brother didn't encounter Christina in Seefeld – the usual spelling is without a *t* – but in Zirl, a village between Seefeld and Innsbruck. In the second place, this did not happen on November 2, but on October 29, 1655. Third, the archduke's name was Ferdinand Karl, not vice versa. (Admittedly, this is a pitfall, because Gualdo Priorato also reverses the two first names.) Fourth: the brother of the archduke was not a cardinal, but an – unconsecrated – bishop. Fifth – and this is more important – the archduke and his brother knew exactly what was coming over the next few days: Christina's public confession of faith. Indeed, they had only been informed two days earlier by the Pope's special envoy, Lucas Holstenius, who had come to tell them. That was too short a time to adapt the program. The archduke had decided not to bother the Lutheran queen with Roman miracle-plays or oratorios, but had prepared some profane theatre performances. Had he known about the conversion, he would have made a different choice.<sup>71</sup>

## **16. Christina certainly didn't call her public confession of faith a 'farce'**

The fact that the hosts in Innsbruck were unprepared for the main purpose of Christina's visit – her public conversion to Catholicism – and that they had therefore only programmed profane theatrical performances, was later given a different twist by some of her enemies. In an undocumented collection of 'historical' anecdotes, the Frenchman Urbain Chevreau wrote in 1700 that at the afternoon performance, immediately after her confession of faith, the Queen said to her hosts: 'Nice that you gave me the spectacle, after the farce I played for you.'<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Lanoye, p. 142.

<sup>71</sup> Godfroy, p. 394-395, n. 94.

<sup>72</sup> Chevreau, Urbain, *Chevraeana, ou, Diverses pensées d'histoire, de critique, d'érudition et de morale*, Amsterdam 1700, p. 25.

No source is mentioned, and apart from that, it is a completely unbelievable story. Even if Christina's confession of faith had something theatrical – she wasn't a stranger to theatricality – that served not to play down her conversion, but, on the contrary, to make it appear more convincing.

Ever since an important 18th-century source, Arckenholtz, mentioned the anecdote<sup>73</sup>, even with some reserve, it has continued to crop up, as in Bain and Buckley.<sup>74</sup>

## 17. Confusion about Christina's entrance into the Papal States

The reception of Queen Christina on behalf of Pope Alexander VII in November 1655 at the frontier of the Papal States went miserably into disaster. The delegation of four bishops and the papal master of ceremonies with their retinue, who should have festively caught up with her at the frontier town of Melara, was too late. This was partly because the queen reached His Holiness's terrestrial realm a day earlier than originally anticipated, partly because the host committee's attempt to arrive at the frontier in time failed due to the harsh weather conditions. When Christina's procession arrived in the pouring rain, no one was waiting for her. So, she entered the Papal States without being welcomed. Only after eight Italian miles (about fourteen kilometres) the papal delegation met her.<sup>75</sup>

If history reflects on the moment when Queen Christina entered her new homeland, you would think that the failed reception would be mentioned. That is not always the case. In particular, Garstein, who devotes several paragraphs and various references to the entry into the Papal States, completely ignores this remarkable derailment of the ceremonial protocol, and not only that. He completely disrupts the sequence and coherence of events. According to Garstein, by the evening of November 21, Christina's procession had arrived at the Po, 'which formed the northern frontier of the Papal States'. On both banks of the river, lit by a thousand torches, stood sizable regiments of foot soldiers and horsemen. The reception committee with the four bishops welcomed her.

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<sup>73</sup> Arckenholtz, Vol I, p. 491.

<sup>74</sup> Bain, p. 257. Buckley, p. 206.

<sup>75</sup> Godfroy, p. 212-213.

Accompanied by music and cannon shots, Christina was carried in the palanquin the Pope had given to the river, where a yacht was laid to take her across. But she chose to cross on foot over the boat bridge that lay there for the carriages and horses. A little further on, a new delegation met her, carrying a letter from the Pope for her. The high clergy came out of their carriages to greet her despite the heavy rain, and the Queen did the same. After the ceremonies, everyone returned to their carriages, and the road continued to Ficarolo and from there to Ferrara. According to Garstein.<sup>76</sup>

Garstein's misconception is based on the assumption that the river Po formed the northern frontier of the Papal States. That is not the case. At Ferrara, the frontier was much further north.<sup>77</sup> It meant that Christina's procession entered the Papal States over a land frontier at Melara and then continued for another 43 kilometres via the north bank of the Po before crossing it. Ficarolo is located on the north bank, not the south bank, as Garstein believes.

In order to fit the found pieces with his sources, he also had to change the sequence. Garstein's second delegation, carrying the Pope's letter, was in fact the first delegation, arriving late, as we saw above, and only meeting Christina when she was already eight miles into the Papal States. The scene with the torches and regiments along the Po and the crossing over the boat bridge, with which Garstein begins the welcome, did not follow until a day later, on November 22, after an overnight stay in Ficarolo.<sup>78</sup>

Garstein is not alone in misrepresenting the northern frontier of the Papal States. Buckley, who may have copied from Garstein, writes that Christina's procession rode east along the Po, 'the northern frontier of the Papal States'.<sup>79</sup>

## **18. Threesome Santinelli-Santinelli-Monaldeschi: fierce fantasies of an oversexed professor**

The book by the French historian Bernard Quilliet about Christina of Sweden forms a separate category in the long series of misunderstandings and falsifications of history devoted to her. Not only it is a collection of erroneous de-

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<sup>76</sup> Garstein, p. 752-753.

<sup>77</sup> For the topography in the year 1655: Godfroy, p. 211, routemap 9.

<sup>78</sup> Godfroy, p. 212-214.

<sup>79</sup> Buckley, p. 207.

terminations of time and place and unfounded gossip, it can also serve as a textbook example of putting up smoke screens by justifying sources half-heartedly, uncritically, and, if useful, not at all.

For example, where does he get the story about the sexual excesses on the occasion of the application of Gian Rinaldo Monaldeschi and the Santinelli brothers as the queen's new Italian staffers? They are said to have staged these excesses 'before her eyes' on her passage to Rome in Pesaro. Quilliet claims, among other things: 'An additional and not inconsiderable detail: our three fellows bravely surrendered to sodomy, in a completely democratic spirit, as they could switch indiscriminately from the active to the passive role during their successive parties; better yet, when they played men, they chose their mates of any gender.'<sup>80</sup>

There is a great temptation to look for the lampoon from which Quilliet derived this frenzied tale, but where to begin in the huge pile of scandal papers published about Christina, especially in France in the seventeenth century, if the professor doesn't mention a source? It's no wonder that Quilliet is usually ignored by serious Christina viewers, but the story is still published in the book by this laureate member of the Académie Française, known from radio and TV, and so it seems credible anyhow.

Suffice it to say that Christina, as the most important convert of the seventeenth century, would not have jeopardized her triumph in such a crude manner, surrounded as she was by a large company of high-ranking hosts and traveling companions, for whom such outrageous behavior by her and her new employees could not possibly have been kept secret. In addition, Monaldeschi, who is presented here as one of the porn actors, was not even there during her reception in Pesaro. He did not appear before the queen until four months later in Rome.<sup>81</sup>

## **19. Recurrent theme: Christina as a shameless woman-chaser**

Was Christina a lesbian? It seems like an attractive assumption. It could explain her aversion to marriage, as well as her preference to dress in men's clothes. It is almost certain that at the court in Stockholm she shared the bed with Ebba

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<sup>80</sup> Quilliet, p. 208.

<sup>81</sup> Godfroy, p. 282.

Sparre, a lady-in-waiting whom she called 'La Belle'. But she was also attracted to men and later fell madly in love with Cardinal Azzolino in Rome. Despite this, at an older age, she wrote that she considered herself fortunate that she had the strength to forgo the pleasures of love.<sup>82</sup>

We know little about the queen's sexual life with certainty, although the stories, often inspired by her masculine traits and her extravagant behaviour, are numerous. Some deal with her alleged escapades as a woman-chaser. We have already seen an example of this above. There it was about the services of a courtesan during her stay in Hamburg. Later on, during her first trip to France, she is said to have misbehaved again when attempting to catch a woman in plain sight. The source of this story is a 'copy of a letter' by Edward von der Pfalz to his brother-in-law, Duke Carlo II of Mantua. This copy was published anonymously in 1885. Edward is said to have written the letter from Auxerre, where he and his family had witnessed the passage of Queen Christina at the end of August 1656. In addition to a description of the queen (... 'her appearance is completely masculine and not feminine at all' ...) we read a short account of what is said to have happened in Lyon: 'She is very fond of beautiful women. She found one in Lyon that she liked. She kissed her everywhere: on the neck, the eyes, and the forehead, very much in love. She even wanted to French kiss her and go to bed with her, but the woman wouldn't.'<sup>83</sup>

Already in 1930, Fredrik Ulrik Wrangel shattered this myth. He searched the Duke of Mantua's archives, but found no trace of such writing in the collection of letters from Edward to Carlo II. In addition, Edward is said to have written the account when he saw the queen pass by at Auxerre, 300 kilometres and over a week north of the scene, so it wasn't an eyewitness account anyway, but at most hearsay. In addition, the sender of the letter copy is anonymous, and it is not stated where he got it from. Wrangel's right conclusion is: 'The documentary value of the letter is therefore zero.'<sup>84</sup> This warning falls on Quilliet's deaf, red ears: he takes over the story entirely.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Christina, Queen, *Apologies*, Texte présenté, établi et annoté par François de Raymond, Paris 1994, p. 126.

<sup>83</sup> *L'intermédiaire des Chercheurs et Curieux*, November 10, 1885, p. 656-657.

<sup>84</sup> Wrangel, Fredrik Ulrik, *Première visite de Christine de Suède à la cour de France, 1656*, Paris 1930, p. XXV.

<sup>85</sup> Quilliet, p. 111.

## 20. ‘Crowd’ turns into ‘madwoman’ Christina, by translation error

To err is human. In the category ‘translation errors’ it may cause bizarre slip-pages. We saw above that in a letter from Nicolaas Heinsius, Garstein and Lanoeye completely misinterpreted the Latin *sacramentum* meaning ‘oath of fidelity’ as ‘sacrament of the Lord’s Supper’.

Another salient example is provided by Wrangel<sup>86</sup> who found it in a book by the English historian Count de Soissons about the excessive private wealth of Cardinal Mazarin and his heirs. It is about the option of admitting Christina to Mazarin’s private quarters during her visit to Paris in 1656. The Cardinal himself is at the summer residence of the French court in Compiègne at the time, so he gives directions by letter to Minister Colbert, who does the honours. For security reasons, Mazarin wants the queen, if she insists, to be let in alone without her retinue, because he fears that his small paintings will be stolen during a group tour: ‘... *je vous prie de prendre garde que la foule n’entre pas dans mes cabinets, car on pourrait prendre de mes petits tableaux.*’<sup>87</sup> ‘La foule’ means ‘crowd’, but the Englishman reads into it the English ‘fool’ (the French ‘folle’), meaning ‘crazy’, and he makes it: ‘...*I beg you not to allow the madwoman to enter my study, for my small pictures might be stolen.*’<sup>88</sup>

Indeed, to err is human. But would someone who is seriously poring over this history, and is not predisposed to the prejudice that Christina was a depraved woman, make such a mistake? Probably not. Even if Mazarin had doubts about Christina’s trustworthiness, which is not unthinkable, he would have kept them to himself at the stage of rekindling friendship and cooperation in which Christina’s relationship with the French court was at the time. A well-informed and uninhibited translator would have been surprised at the sentence that came out and only had to consult the French-English dictionary to determine that he was wrong.

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<sup>86</sup> Wrangel, p. XV en 220.

<sup>87</sup> Mazarin, Jules, note to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Compiègne September 16, 1656, in the margin of a letter from Colbert to Mazarin, Paris, September 12, 1656. Bibliothèque Nationale, Baluze, Papiers des Armoires, Vol. 176, fol 268, in: Clement, Pierre (ed.), *Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Colbert*, Vol. 1, 1650-1661, Paris 1861, p. 262.

<sup>88</sup> Soissons, The Count de, *The Seven Richest Heiresses of France*, London 1911, p. 57.

## 21. Monaldeschi's fate: lumpish executioners, lying rulers, and lazy writers

The death sentence, pronounced November 10, 1657, in Fontainebleau Castle on Marquis Gian Rinaldo Monaldeschi by his mistress, Queen Christina<sup>89</sup>, was the cold announcement of a tragic end of life and an inglorious memory. Not only did he face the ordeal of a slow martyr's death at the hands of inept executioners<sup>90</sup>, but his morally and legally questionable execution was also later whitewashed by lying reports, and his biography was mutilated by the nonsensical gossip of careless historians, with which we are still bombarded.<sup>91</sup>

Had not Monaldeschi betrayed the queen? Was he innocent? That's not what this is all about. He was no saint, as far as we can find out, and the treason Christina accused him of may have been on his plate. What matters, however, is whether he had a fair trial, whether his execution was proportionate, and whether the course of justice was properly accounted for afterwards. The answer to this is three times no.

There have been endless discussions about the question of whether Christina was legally authorized to act as a judge in this case. Some argue that she was on French territory and that the case should only have been heard by a French court. Others believe that Christina was simply recognized as a sovereign monarch and that she therefore had jurisdiction over her courtiers.<sup>92</sup> Most likely, one will never get out completely. Christina's sovereignty was, all things considered, a legal monstrosity, which she had been granted in the negotiations for her abdication in order to reach an agreement. Declaring a queen with no country as sovereign is asking for trouble. After all, in practice, the sovereign rights always relate to a territory and to subjects, who are clumsily missing in such a construction. Legally, one cannot therefore ignore the sovereign rights of the queen, but for an accused courtier, in this case Monaldeschi, it results in an extremely weak legal position, even by 17th-century judicial standards.

The legal monstrosity of Christina's sovereignty also entailed that she believed she could apply criminal law without having access to an adequate criminal justice system. If you think you can impose the death penalty, you should be able to carry it out. You need at least a skilled executioner and the

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<sup>89</sup> Godfroy, p. 329.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, p. 329-331.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, p. 331-334.

<sup>92</sup> Weibull, Curt, *Drottning Christina och Monaldescho*, Stockholm 1936, p. 83-116.



technical facilities for executions. Those were missing from Christina's traveling court. So, she improvised. This meant, among other things, that three colleagues, who had no experience in this area, had to execute Monaldeschi. It became a bloody torture that seemed to have no end. The report of this by Father Lebel<sup>93</sup>, who witnessed the event from start to finish, caused general indignation.

Christina does not seem to have realized that the bloody execution in one of the palaces of Louis XIV would provoke angry reactions from the king and the French population. Christina's host, Cardinal Mazarin, got into a state of alert, when he received her report of the incident from Fontainebleau, and did everything he could to divert attention from her, and thus from himself. He instructed her to pass the blame onto her staff, which she refused. Through his assistant, Abbot Joseph Ondedei, the cardinal then engaged a ghost-writer, one Marco Antonio Conti, to compose a fabricated version of the execution: Monaldeschi, was not killed by order of Christina, it was the initiative of one of her courtiers, Francesco Santinelli. It apparently didn't matter that Francesco was in Rome at the time of the execution – called 'murder' by most commentaries –. Perhaps that was even a good thing, because with that, an important part of the scandal – the offender – had already left the country. The fact that other versions were also circulating worked against Mazarin, but the uncertainty about how and why was preferable to an unambiguous truthful explanation of what had occurred, as in Father Lebel's official report.

Although Christina insisted that she herself had ordered the execution, she also kept the rumour mill going by concealing the exact scope of the treason she accused Monaldeschi of. She kept the letters that had served as evidence for herself. These would never be found again.<sup>94</sup> The fact that numerous versions of the story have been circulating since then is hardly surprising: from love affairs and the ensuing jealousy inside and outside Christina's court to the betrayal of Mazarin and Christina's secret plan to conquer Naples from the Spaniards. But why above all tarnish the memory of the unfortunate Monaldeschi with ostentatious gossip and sheer nonsense merely because people are too lazy to verify facts?

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<sup>93</sup> Lebel, 'Proces verbal de la mort du marquis de Monaldeschi, esquier de la Reyne de Suède, par P. Lebel, supérieur des Frères de la Trinité, à Fontainebleau', in: Vidal, Antoine, *L'Église d'Avon et le meurtre de Monaldeschi*, Paris 1874, p. 65-75.

<sup>94</sup> Godfroy, p. 334-337.

Thus, Marquis De Monglat writes in his *Mémoires* about the year 1658: ‘Queen Christina, who was at Fontainebleau, went to Paris to celebrate Carnival, where she went every evening in mask; and after taking part in all the festivities, she returned to Fontainebleau, where in the Galerie des Cerfs, out of jealousy, she cold-bloodedly killed a nobleman who accompanied her.’<sup>95</sup> The writing marquis, a courtier to Louis XIV, apparently did not consider it necessary to inquire among his colleagues whether his memory was not deceiving him here. Anyone to whom he would have presented it would have replied that the murder had taken place not around Carnival 1658, but on November 10, 1657. They would also have reminded him that there was probably a lot more going on than jealousy.

Another extreme example of sloppiness mixed with gossip, which continues to this day, can be found in Pierer’s *Universal-Lexicon* of 1860. In the short biography of Monaldeschi, it is stated that he went from Italy to Sweden, where in 1652, at the intercession of his relative Magnus de la Gardie, he became equerry to Queen Christina. He would have succeeded in ousting Magnus from his preferred position. After Christina’s abdication, he became her chief equerry and travel guide to the south. Anyone familiar with Christina’s history will immediately see that her Swedish equerry Anton Steinberg and the later chief equerry Monaldeschi are amalgamated here into one and the same person. Apart from that, according to Pierer’s *Universal-Lexicon*, Monaldeschi’s fall was caused by a revengeful lady who, after a broken affair with him sent his letters with indiscretions about Christina to the queen.<sup>96</sup>

Time must have shown by now – it is August 2022 – that Pierer’s biography makes no sense, you would think. Nothing is less true. One reads this bosh at Wikipedia as the life story of Monaldeschi for years, whereas a lot of much more interesting and reliable data is available to report about him, such as his close connections with Mazarin and the central role he played in the failed French attack on Naples in 1654.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *Collection des Mémoires relatifs à l’histoire de France, Mémoires de Monglat*, Vol III, p. 46.

See also: Wrangel, p. XIII.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Monaldeschi’ in: *Pierer’s Universal-Lexicon*, Band 11, Altenburg 1860, p. 376.

<sup>97</sup> Godfroy, p. 282-283 and p. 411, n. 97.

## 22. Posthumous condolence

Again, to err is human. Even in Bernard Quilliet's fantastic tales about Christina, a fault can simply have been made by mistake.

Christina died on April 19, 1689. The puritan Pope Innocent XI, who had been a nail in her coffin for the last thirteen years of her life<sup>98</sup>, survived her for almost four months. He breathed his last on August 12 of the same year. Quilliet makes an obvious mistake when he dates the death of Innocentius two years earlier, namely on August 12, 1687.<sup>99</sup> He probably does not believe this himself, because a page before that he mentioned that Innocentius pronounced the ban on the French ambassador Lavard after his unwanted entry into Rome on November 16, 1687. It only becomes incomprehensible when he adds to Innocent's obituary: 'The queen allowed herself to be represented at the funeral.' Given the hostile atmosphere between Christina and Innocent, this sounds like an ominous statement, but above all, it was impossible because Christina had been dead for four months.

Did Quilliet make this up himself? Or did he copy it from someone else? We don't know because he leaves us in the dark about his sources. Even if he has found this miracle of posthumous condolence elsewhere, he remains liable.

We cannot repeat it enough: mistakes are to be corrected, not copied.

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<sup>98</sup> Godfroy, p. 352.

<sup>99</sup> Quilliet, p. 303.

## II. The Kircher-letters

**The extremely glorious welcome that Queen Christina was given at the Collegio Romano of the Jesuit Fathers on January 20, 1656, was one of the highlights of her triumphant introductory tour of Rome. Her return to the Jesuit college a week and a half later, this time to be shown around by Father Athanasius Kircher in his famous science museum, underlined the great significance the Collegio apparently represented to the queen.**

**Until recently, historians were left in the dark about the origins of her extraordinary interest. That changed as, in 1997, an extensive collection of letters from Kircher turned up in the archives of the Collegio Romano, which contained the key to solving the riddle.**

### Christina and the Collegio Romano

Public attention to the queen's reception at the Collegio Romano was so great that, despite the deposition by the Swiss Guards at the frontdoor, she could barely make her way through the crowd, according to the report by chronicler Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato.<sup>100</sup> The entrance and the halls of the institute were richly decorated with ornaments devoted to the queen and to the branches of science in which the Jesuits conducted education and research. Under a canopy, a throne stood ready for the queen. The rector, Father Ludovico Bompiani, addressed her in Latin. Then she visited the classrooms one by one. In each of them, she was welcomed with a poem by the best student in the class. Ultimately, the party went to the famous college church, dedicated to Saint Ignatius. She sat there listening to the choir sing motets.

Not long after, Christina visited the Collegio Romano again. The first time she hadn't gotten around to what interested her most: the library, the herb garden, and Father Kircher's science museum. This time, accompanied by a small retinue, she was let in through a back door. Without the pressure of an overloaded ceremonial, she had plenty of time to view the incunabula and manuscripts and the portrait gallery in the library, admire the medicinal herbs in

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<sup>100</sup> Gualdo Priorato, Book 7, p. 276 sqq.

the garden, and take a tour of the numerous scientific objects in Kircher's museum: music machines, skeletons, stuffed animals, measuring instruments, ovens, models of the micro- and macrocosm, and scale models of obelisks full of hieroglyphs, interpreted by Kircher's own translations.

The Norwegian historian Oskar Garstein wrote in 1992: 'What actually excited the Queen's sensibilities most during these visits to this famous Jesuit foundation is not known. But surely one of the highlights of her guided tour must have been her meeting with the universally acclaimed philosopher and mathematician, Jesuit Father Athanasius Kircher, incidentally her confidant Paolo Casati's colleague at the *Collegio Romano*.'<sup>101</sup> What Garstein did not know was that Kircher had corresponded with Christina since 1649 and had been involved in the conversion plan from the start. In 1992, the letters, from which that history could be read, were still waiting to be discovered in the archives of the Collegio Romano.

## Hidden Kircher-archive

The credit for unlocking Kircher's extensive correspondence, largely housed in the archives of the Pontifica Università Gregoriana in Rome, is due to the American researcher Michael John Gorman and his collaborators. He announced his discovery to the world in 1997.<sup>102</sup>

Two years later, Gorman referred to two letters from the excavated correspondence: one from Kircher to Queen Christina and one in reverse. In an article about the impact on society of the scientific practice of the Jesuits in the seventeenth century, he elaborated on the visits by Queen Christina to the Collegio Romano in 1656.<sup>103</sup> The correspondence between Kircher and Christina preceded these events.

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<sup>101</sup> Garstein, p. 763-764.

<sup>102</sup> Gorman, Michael John, 'The correspondence of Athanasius Kircher : the world of a seventeenth century Jesuit : an international research project', in: *Nuncius, Journal of the Material and Visual History of Science*, Florence, A. 12. fasc. 2 (1997), p. 651-658.

<sup>103</sup> Gorman, Michael John, 'From <The Eyes of All> to <Usefull Quarries in philosophy and good literature>: Consuming Jesuit Science, 1600-1665', in: O'Malley, John W. a.o. (ed.), *The Jesuits. Cultures, Sciences and the Arts, 1540-1773*. Toronto - Buffalo - London 1999, p. 170-189.

Among other things, the father had written to the queen on November 11, 1651: ‘Your Majesty will know that our Society not only holds you in intimate affection, as is fitting, but also esteems and admires above all other things those rare and sublime treasures bestowed by heaven that divine bounty has hoarded up in your breast. This is especially true of this Roman College of our Society, both of the famous men and writers and of the novices, who have come from all of the nations of the world, where we speak 35 different languages, some native to Europe, Africa, and Asia, the remainder to the Indies and America.’<sup>104</sup>

In the undated letter from Christina to Kircher, it was stated that she hoped to be able to speak freely with him soon and that she was curious if he still intended to dedicate a book to her.<sup>105</sup>

## Open source

The two letters quoted were part of Kircher’s correspondence, which had just surfaced and contained more than 2,000 items. Gorman and his team had hardly had an opportunity to decipher and translate them (most of the letters were written in Latin), not to speak of studying them in context.

Unlocking such an enormous collection of documents according to the usual method would take years. But a faster method was conceivable. Gorman and his associates devised an ingenious plan at the time, in which the most advanced technological facilities and the latest insights in the field of knowledge sharing would lend a hand. The more than 2,000 manuscripts were all digitized and put online by Stanford University in California. Thanks to this open-source project, the *Athanasius Kircher Correspondence Project*<sup>106</sup>, any researcher, anywhere in the world, who wanted to learn more about Kircher or his correspondents, could get started.

Still, it took until 2008 before the correspondence between Kircher and Christina was noticed by others. In an article about Christina’s interest in esotericism, Susanna Åkerman quoted from the two letters mentioned by Gorman. She read from them, among other things, that Kircher had sent his book

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<sup>104</sup> Gorman, 1999, p. 175-176.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>106</sup> Internet: [web.stanford.edu/group/kircher/cgi-bin/site/](http://web.stanford.edu/group/kircher/cgi-bin/site/)

*Musurgia Universalis* to the queen in 1651.<sup>107</sup> In 2011, John Edward Fletcher compiled a list of the highlights of the Kircher correspondence that had been retrieved. This showed that Kircher had written even more letters to Christina.<sup>108</sup>

This access to Kircher's Treasury was extremely beneficial to the research for the book *Passage naar Rome*. Yet it was important to see the manuscripts with our own eyes. What had been written about it thus far by others was remarkable enough, but did not offer a complete understanding of the material. Integral transcriptions were not available, and some interpretations gave rise to doubts.

Deciphering and translating the manuscripts was a challenge. Kircher's writing was legible as long as he hadn't tampered with it: all of his texts were drafts, with numerous deletions and corrections in the margins and between the lines. The physical condition of the letters was not that bad after three and a half centuries, but the ink on the mostly two-sided sheets was often printed through, which made the text difficult to read, if not illegible. Other obstacles were the seventeenth-century handwriting and the Latin used by Kircher, which is characterized by complicated, endless sentence structure and baroque imagery and is larded with ancient Greek text fragments. With the help of three Latinist friends, the letters were taken care of one by one.

## Results

The results showed up well. Six letters were involved: three Latin letters from Kircher to Queen Christina; a letter in German from Christina to Kircher; and a letter in Latin about Christina from Father Van Zylle s.j. in Louvain to Kircher. We also included a letter from Kircher to Christina's cousin, Crown Prince Karl X Gustav, in the investigation. This one, kept in the *Riksarkivet* of Sweden, was already known but came to be seen in a new light.

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<sup>107</sup> Åkerman, Susanna 'Queen Christina's esoteric interests as a background to her Platonic Academies', in: *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, 20, 2008, p. 17-37.

<sup>108</sup> Fletcher, John Edward, *A study of the life and works of Athanasius Kircher, "Germanus incredibilis": with a selection of his unpublished correspondence and an annotated translation of his autobiography*, Leiden - Boston 2011.

1. Undated letter from Athanasius Kircher to Queen Christina, presumably May, 1649.<sup>109</sup>

Although there is no date, it can be determined with great certainty when Kircher wrote this letter, thanks to the enclosed address.<sup>110</sup> In addition to Queen Christina, who is referred to by a long series of titles, it reads: '*Matthias Palbitzky, gentilhomme dela chambre de sa Mté de Suède*'. That record is interesting, because we know exactly when Christina's envoy Palbitzki<sup>111</sup> was in Rome thanks to his diary and his official messages from Italy to the Swedish court: from about April 27, 1649<sup>112</sup> to the end of August 1649<sup>113</sup>. Kircher wrote another, dated letter to Christina on June 4. This undated letter, which clearly has an introductory character and must have preceded it, was therefore probably written sometime in May.

The letter itself is a submissive, not to say obsequious, response to an honourable request from the queen's envoy, Palbitzki, to share knowledge with her on the scientific topics he was pursuing, particularly his research on the ancient Egyptian languages (*..Aegypti sapientiam..*). Kircher pours himself out in praise from start to finish, but how he intends to accommodate the queen's wishes remains unclear. It seems as if this draft version, without a date, is not yet finished. This is also indicated by the paragraphs that Kircher has scribbled in the margin, which are unfortunately almost illegible. All in all, it remains a mystery what message Kircher ultimately conveyed to the queen. Nonetheless, as the beginning of the secret correspondence between the Lutheran queen of Sweden and the learned Jesuit in Rome, this letter has historical significance.

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<sup>109</sup> Kircher to Queen Christina, undated, Archivio della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome, APUG 561 fol. 52r.

<sup>110</sup> Kircher to Queen Christina, undated, addendum, Archivio della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome, APUG 561 fol. 53. Fletcher wrongly thinks that Kircher wrote this letter as a third, i.e., after the letter of November 11, 1651. He appears to be unfamiliar with Palbitzki's diary, when he writes: 'This letter is addressed to the Queen via one Mathias Paltistch [sic], <gentilhomme de la Chambre de sa Citté [sic] de Suède>'.

<sup>111</sup> Sometimes the last character of the name is written y, sometimes i.

<sup>112</sup> Palbitzki, Mathias, letters to Queen Christina, Venice April 14, 1649, Rome April 28, 1649 and Rome May 5/15, 1649, Riksarkivet Stockholm, *Diplomatica Italica* 2, 3208 g, Vol. 21. 1655. Palbitzki, Mathias, 'Mathias Palbitzkys Journal 1623-1667' in: Nisser, Wilhelm, *Mathias Palbitzki som connoisseur och tecknare*. Uppsala 1934, p. 128.

<sup>113</sup> Palbitzki, Mathias, 'Mathias Palbitzkys Journal', p. 129.





The surprising discovery in 1997 of an exchange of letters between Kircher and Christina, initiated in the spring of 1649 by the contact made by Christina's envoy Palbitzki in Rome, suddenly opened up a new perspective on the historical course of events. In 1649 nobody spoke about conversion plans yet. The young queen was, however, deeply interested in classical antiquity, ancient and contemporary art, and current scientific developments. That is why, in addition to his diplomatic mission to the courts of Venice and Florence, she entrusted her favourite envoy, Palbitzki, with a cultural mission in Italy: to collect art, scientific writings, and literature from classical antiquity and the modern era, and to invite sculptors and designers to her coronation celebration, which was finally scheduled for 1650, six years after she took office.

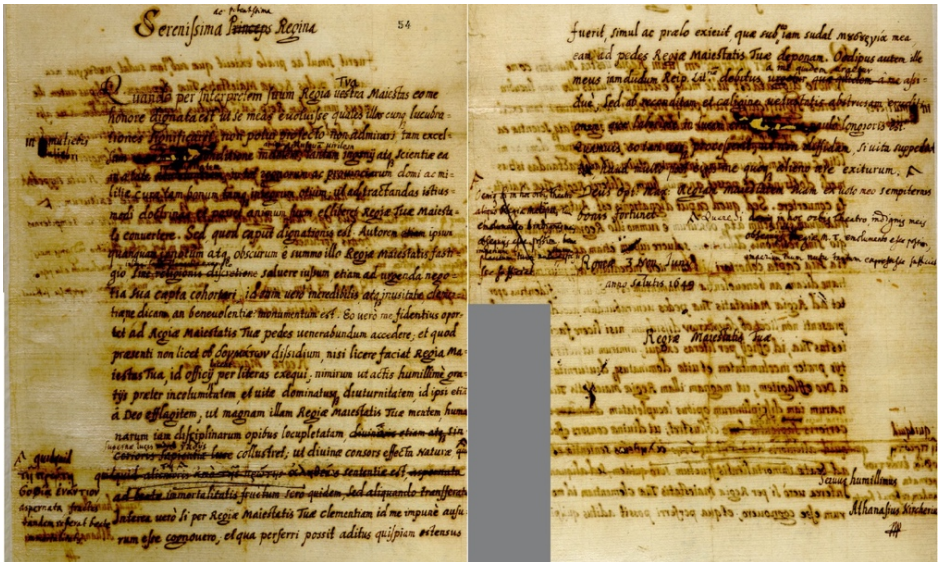
Why Palbitzki hardly pays any attention to this cultural component in his diary is not entirely clear. Perhaps he regarded that part of his work as an assignment that he carried out not so much for the Swedish nation as for the queen privately, which in a sense it was. Anyhow, the official messages he sent to Christina show that he spared no expense to please her in this respect.

Even so, those reports did not tell everything. Nothing is said about his interactions with Kircher. Was a connection between the Swedish Lutheran queen and the learned Jesuit maybe too explosive to mention in his reports? Kircher's follow-up letters to Christina contain allusions to this: '...(now) a way has been found through which it can be sent...' <sup>114</sup> and '...our Palbitzki...' as confidential intermediary <sup>115</sup>. If Christina and Kircher had the intention to hide their connection from the outside world, they've done a great job anyway. Until 1997, no one had heard of this secret correspondence that got underway quite some time before Christina presented her conversion plans to the Jesuits Macedo, Nickel, Casati, Malines, Francken, and Mandescheidt. The sequel will reveal something else that we didn't know before, namely that Kircher was one of the first to be involved in that game, as soon as Father Macedo arrived in Rome with two top-secret letters from Christina: one for the general superior of the Jesuits and one for the learned Father Athansius Kircher. However, that would take another two and a half years.

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<sup>114</sup> Kircher to Queen Christina, Rome June 3, 1649. Archivio della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome, APUG 561 fol. 54r-v.

<sup>115</sup> Kircher to Queen Christina, Rome November 11, 1651. Archivio della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome, APUG 561 fol. 50r-v.



Letter from Kircher to Queen Christina, June 3, 1649. (Archivio della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome.)

## 2. Letter from Athanasius Kircher to Queen Christina, June 3, 1649.<sup>116</sup>

Shortly after the submissive but vague (undated) letter, Kircher again sat at his desk on June 3, 1649, and wrote a letter to the queen. He was now more specific about how he thought he could satisfy her thirst for knowledge. He was working on a book called *Obeliscus Pamphilius* about the obelisk on Bernini's *Fontana dei quattro fiumi* in Piazza Navona. It covered exactly what the queen was looking for: ancient Egyptian, Coptic, and the decipherment of hieroglyphics, hieratics, and Coptic characters. Unfortunately, there was still a year of work left. Another book, *Musurgia Universalis*, dealing with music, was nearing completion. Still, it would be a few more months before it was printed. Palbitzki would have left for the north by then, so it would have to be sent.

‘Meanwhile, having truly realized that I shall dare this with impunity thanks to your Royal Majesty's leniency and that a way has been found by which it may be sent, I will give my *Musurgia* as soon as it has come out of the printing press – and beneath it is already sweating – lay it down at your Royal Majesty's feet,’ Kircher wrote to the queen.

<sup>116</sup> Kircher to Queen Christina, Rome June 3, 1649.

When the book was finished in February 1650, Kircher sent it to the queen via the secret route proposed by Palbitzki.

3. Letter from Athanasius Kircher to Karl Gustav in Nuremberg, February 28, 1650.<sup>117</sup>

Kircher's letter to Christina's cousin, Karl Gustav, was already known and is saved in the *Riksarkivet* of Sweden. This is the letter of presentation to Karl Gustav accompanying Kircher's book *Musurgia Universalis*, sent to his residence in Nuremberg. On behalf of Sweden, he conducted the implementation negotiations following the Peace of Westphalia. Palbitzki had travelled there in August 1649 because he had been added to the negotiating delegation.<sup>118</sup> It is not certain why Karl Gustav also received a copy, although it is conceivable that this was Palbitzki's idea in order to neutralize the present from a Jesuit, still a very suspect species in Sweden at the time. If Christina were questioned about it, she could simply say that others had also received this gift from the popish scientist.

In this letter, unlike in the drafts in the Kircher archive, we see Kircher's beautiful, extremely legible handwriting without deletions or ragged additions. In his typical verbose style, he explains why, in addition to Christina, he also wants to give Karl Gustav a copy of his latest book. 'After the blessed Royal Majesty, the mostly wise Queen of the Swedes, has deigned to condescend so much that she has been pleased to accept some of the writings arising from the night labours of my insignificant person, in accordance with her utmost esteem and benevolence for literate men, I have thought that it was by no means fair to pass over him who, with the highest power, presides over the Swedish cause, and shows equally great benevolence and leniency towards the promoters of the noble arts.'

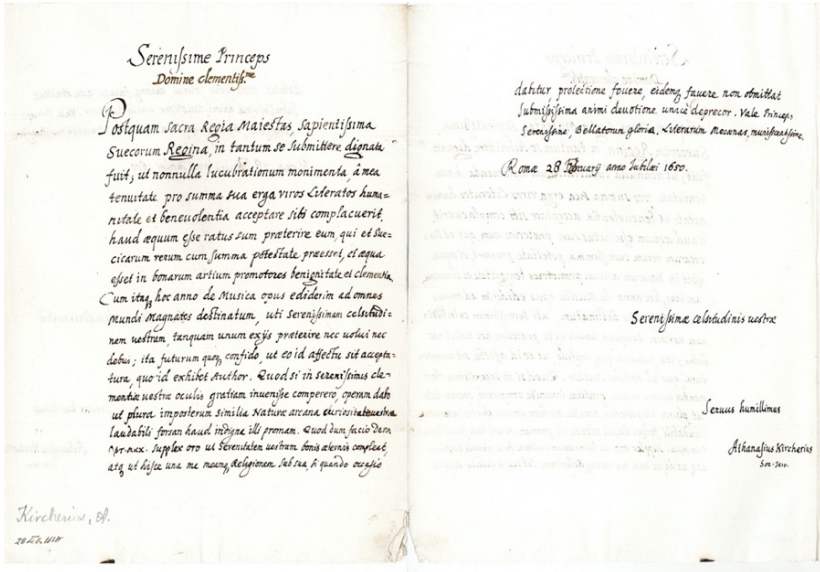
Through this open gesture to Christina's cousin, the head of the Swedish negotiating delegation in Nuremberg, Kircher effectively removed the gift of his book from the sphere of secrecy and suspicious contacts. It is doubtful, however,

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<sup>117</sup> Kircher to Karl Gustav, Rome February 28, 1650. Riksarkivet Stockholm, Stegeborgsamlingen, E 146.

<sup>118</sup> Godfroy, p. 33-34.





Letter from Kircher to Prince Karl Gustav, February 28, 1650.  
(Riksarkivet Stockholm, Stegeborgs-samlingen.)

whether Kircher and Christina were equally frank about their correspondence, given the allusions therein to the secret ways that had to be chosen and the lack of opportunities to communicate freely. This is also indicated by the fact that a letter of presentation accompanying the copy of *Musurgia* for Christina is not to be found in the Swedish *Riksarkivet*. The package probably reached her by the ‘found way’ through which it could be sent without any problems, that is, by evading the suspicious Swedish court bureaucracy.

#### 4. Undated letter from Queen Christina to Athanasius Kircher, August-September 1651.<sup>119</sup>

The only letter from Christina to Father Kircher that we have known since the discovery of the Kircher archive is undated and brief. For the first time, two years after Palbitzki’s visit, Father Kircher read words that the queen herself had entrusted to the paper in her typical inclining forward and right-sloping handwriting. At the time, he had immediately started writing diligently, sent her

<sup>119</sup> Queen Christina to Athanasius Kircher, undated. Archivio della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome, APUG 556, fol. 172r-173v. Transcription: *ibid.* APUG 555 fol. 276r. Italian translation: *ibid.* APUG 556 fol. 174r.

several books, and indicated his intention to dedicate one of his next publications to her. However, no answer had come.

Now, at the end of October 1651, a Portuguese confrere, Father Macedo, had suddenly appeared on the doorstep. He had been sent directly from Stockholm to Rome for a secret mission by Queen Christina. In great confidentiality, he told her unbelievable news: she wanted to become a Catholic and called on the Jesuit Order to help. In addition, he brought a letter from her to Kircher with him.<sup>120</sup>

Christina's astonishing plan revealed a lot about the lack of response to his letters and book packages. It was understandable that, in the particular situation she had entered, she was trying to avoid traceable contacts with Jesuits that were not strictly necessary. In her letter, she thanked him for the books he had sent. She apologized for her long silence and added guiltily: 'I should like to know whether you still consider me worthy of dedicating your incomparable works to me.'<sup>121</sup>

We already knew another part of the story of Father Macedo's secret mission from the chronicle of Gualdo Priorato and from archive documents of the Jesuit order.<sup>122</sup> Macedo had left Sweden for Rome in disguise on September 2, 1651. The Queen had dispatched him with the top-secret message of her conversion plan for the Jesuit order's Superior General, Father Francesco Piccolomini.<sup>123</sup> In a letter to the Superior General, she explained how she had become curious about the scientific work of the Jesuits in recent years. She requested that the proposals presented by Macedo on her behalf be considered and that some learned Jesuits be sent to her to share their knowledge. The announcement that

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<sup>120</sup> Godfroy, p. 47-48.

<sup>121</sup> In the two earlier letters written by Kircher to Christina in 1649, no passage can be found where he explicitly suggests to dedicate one of his books to Christina. Maybe in the final version of the first letter sub (1) such a passage is added as yet. It is also conceivable that Kircher gave hints about it in the (unsaved) letters of presentation at *Musurgia Universalis* and later at (probably) *Obeliscus Pamphilius*. Ultimately it is possible that Kircher made convey this option by Christina's envoy Palbitzki only verbally.

<sup>122</sup> Gualdo Priorato, Book 1 p. 18-20. Christina to Francesco Piccolomini, General Superior of the Jesuits, undated, Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu, Opp. NN 174-175 fasc. B. Published in: Garstein, p. 635.

<sup>123</sup> When father Macedo in October arrived in Rome, the General Superior Piccolomini appeared to be deceased. His substitute was Vicar-General Goswin Nickel (who finally would be Piccolomini's successor). So Macedo handed the letter over to Nickel. (Gualdo Priorato, Book 1, p. 20.)

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Dat. A. Kircher Saluten.

der her Daser Maesto der Drenge  
 geschickten mit übergeben Schrift  
 Van mir geschicktes Zeugnis, geben mit  
 Was ich ihm ich seine person vorgelesen  
 bin, der blät auf den heren meinst  
 vliegen Jansen für Jansenisten  
 suchen so viel <sup>für</sup> selbige Personen, wurd  
 dar bey meine Schuldigen An  
 den in Jhne nicht so meine Jansenisten  
 was dreyzig Jahr, Ich fühlte die Arbeit  
 Et mit viel Anwesenheit von den in  
 Jansenisten gegen mir Controversien  
 Ich sollte mit der Zeit in gleiche Schrift  
 freigele Correspondenz mit ihal bey  
 Jansen, welcher Zeit ich mit ihm  
 zu Jansenisten was er nicht in der  
 Studij dem gemeinen Leben zu gut  
 gelien hat, wurd ob die mich noch Jansenisten  
 Jansenisten sein in Compensator Arbeit  
 zu deducen, Ich bin die hat nicht abstrah  
 für mit got gebeten Christlich.

A Monsieur  
 Kircherus  
 Pere de Lorde  
 de Jesu

Letter from Queen Christina to Kircher, undated, August-September 1651.  
 (Archivio della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome.)

all this was dominated by her intention to become a Catholic was not described in the letter, but was communicated orally by Father Macedo for safety's sake.

Notable in the letter to the Superior General is the passage in which Christina refers to her growing interest in the scientific activities of the Jesuits: 'Reverend Father, the esteem I so rightly pay to this glorious order, of which you have the honour to be the worthy head, has made me long for the blessing of your knowledge for some years; reason to convey to you my feelings of esteem, which oblige me to seek your friendship.' It is not stated which factors contributed to this increased interest in recent years. Before crossing the path of Father Macedo, member of a Portuguese legation, in 1651, she had never met a Jesuit.<sup>124</sup>

Much of this has been clarified by the Kircher correspondence, which surfaced in 1997. At first, the finder of the Kircher letters, Michael John Gorman, mistakenly assumed that the queen's undated letter to Kircher was a response to a visit made to her by the Jesuits Casati and Malines in 1652 at her request.<sup>125</sup> Apparently, Gorman was unaware of the pioneering role Father Macedo had played a year earlier as Christina's very first confidant and secret agent to convey her conversion plans to Rome. The fact that in the beginning of the letter to Kircher, Father Macedo is mentioned as the courier, reveals that on his secret mission from Stockholm to Rome in the autumn of 1651, Macedo carried not one, but two letters: one for the Superior General of the Jesuits and one for Father Kircher. Taken together, these two letters mark the irreversible beginning of the conversion process that Christina had decided to embark on, and now, in their interrelation, we perceive their full significance.

In both letters, Christina refers emphatically to the oral message that Father Macedo was to convey. It underlines the danger of his mission: the information about her intended conversion was too explosive to be committed to paper. Telling in this context is Christina's lament at the end of the letter to Kircher, which betrays impatience: 'I hope that from now on we will be freer and assured of mutual correspondence, and that we will be able to communicate unhindered.' In reality, Christina had to wait another three years before she could communicate more freely with the Catholic world. She wouldn't meet Kircher for another four and a half years.

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<sup>124</sup> Gualdo Priorato, Book 1, p. 18.

<sup>125</sup> Gorman, 1999, p. 176. Susanna Åkerman adopted this misinterpretation by Gorman in her article mentioned above (Åkerman, 2008, p. 22).



5. Letter from Athanasius Kircher to Queen Christina, November 11, 1651.<sup>126</sup>

Kircher's enthusiasm for Christina's proposed conversion was boundless. But he had to hold back because the plan was top-secret. The number of initiates had to be kept as small as possible. Fortunately, he was able to talk about it with a direct colleague, who was soon involved in the conspiracy: Father Paolo Casati. Interim Superior General Goswin Nickel had approached him as one of two confreres who would proceed to Stockholm disguised as traveling salesmen to assist the queen on her path to a Catholic confession of faith. Like Kircher, Casati was a mathematician at the Collegio Romano and had a great deal of knowledge of Galileo's theories which were rejected by the Catholic Church and about which Christina wanted to know more. Father Francesco Malines, a theology teacher at the Jesuit College of Turin, had been selected as his traveling companion.<sup>127</sup>

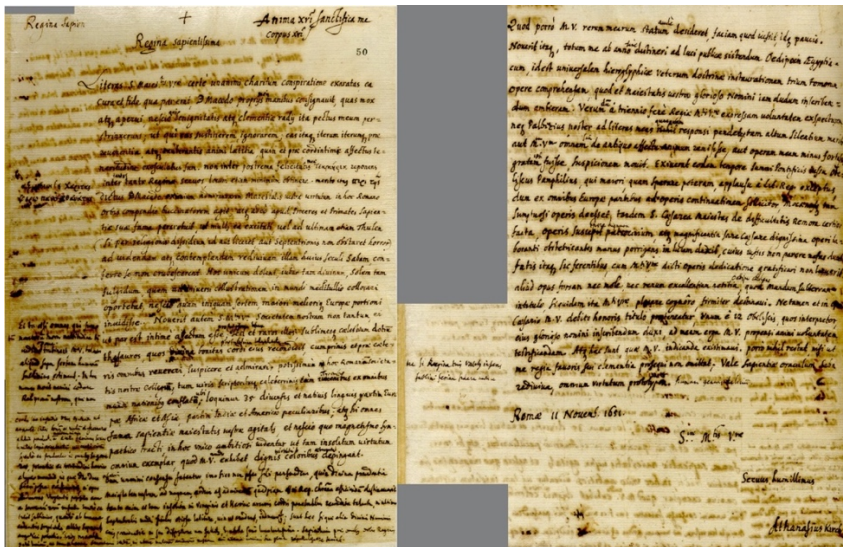
In the weeks of preparation that remained, Kircher and Casati could freely exchange ideas about the miracle of conversion that would unfold before their eyes and the part they both played in it. Even before his two confreres, under the pseudonyms *Don Bonifacio Ponginibbio* and *Don Lucio Bonanni*, set out on the journey to the far north, Kircher wrote the jubilant letter to the queen, from which, as we saw above, Gorman already quoted several sentences in his 1999 article. Kircher, however, avoided naming her secret directly. And although no one outside the select company of initiates was aware of the play being prepared behind the scenes, Kircher unconcernedly endorsed the entire Jesuit community, including teachers and students, especially those of the Collegio Romano, behind his eulogy. The fact that Christina was still regarded by the Roman part of Europe as a heretical queen of a heretical country couldn't stop him: 'All of them are excited by the fame of your Majesty's wisdom, and attracted by some unknown sympathetic magnetism, and their only ambition is to paint the extraordinary example of all virtues that your Majesty exhibits to the world in all the colours that it deserves.'

In detail, he answered Christina's question about whether a dedication of one of his works to her was still there. Such assignments were usually accompanied

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<sup>126</sup> Kircher to Queen Christina, Rome November 11, 1651.

<sup>127</sup> Godfroy, p. 54-56.



Letter from Kircher to Pope Christina, November 11, 1651.  
 (Archivio della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome.)

by princely patronages, which provided financial support to scientists and writers. Kircher already envisioned himself as the first Roman Catholic author to be the centre of attention with beneficial patronage from the converted queen of Sweden. Previous opportunities for an assignment to Christina had already passed. He was now working on a four-volume Egyptianological work, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*. The first volume was about to be published and he would have loved to dedicate it to the queen, but in the meantime, none other than the emperor himself, Ferdinand III, had assumed its patronage: ‘While the circumstances showed up like this, it was not possible to reward you by dedicate this work to you. So, I did with certainty designate another work for your Majesty, that may not be behind *Oedipus* in size or treatment of special causes, and that I entitle *Mundus Subterraneus*, at least if I hear that it pleases your Majesty in this way.’ Whether it pleased the majesty we do not know, for there is no acquainted letter or other signal from Christina in which she accepts this offer. In any case, it didn’t work out. *Mundus Subterraneus*, a book on the interior of the earth, published in 1655, was dedicated to Pope Alexander VII. It wasn’t until a year later that Kircher would dedicate a book about the universe, *Itinerarium Exstaticum*, to Christina.

Another offer made by Father Kircher in his letter to the queen was extraordinary. For his four-part publication, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, he examined twelve obelisks. He promised to dedicate one of these columns to the queen. This ‘in order to prevent the indebted dedication from passing your Majesty again this time’. When Father Kircher showed Christina around his museum in Rome in 1656, he proudly showed her the materialization of this assignment: a pedestal beneath one of his wooden imitation obelisks with a tribute to her written on it.

Kircher’s adoration for Christina, however, would soon disappear like snow in the sun. The dedication in *Itinerarium Exstaticum* was replaced in the second edition by a dedication to the son of Emperor Ferdinand III, probably because the sponsorship Kircher expected from the penniless queen stayed away. The dedication on the pedestal of the obelisk was overpainted after some time with a dedication to Pope Clement IX, the successor of Alexander VII, and when he was succeeded by Clement X after a short pontificate, Kircher only had to remove the I of the Roman numeral IX to dedicate the obelisk to someone else again. The disdain with which Christina, once in Rome, belittled the role of the Jesuits in her conversion seriously chilled the once warm relationship with the Societas Jesu. Also, the numerous scandals she caused after her triumphant conversion will not have helped Kircher’s feelings for the famous convert.<sup>128</sup>

#### 6. Letter from Father Otto Van Zylle to Athanasius Kircher, September 25, 1655.<sup>129</sup>

In September 1655, four years after Father Macedo’s confidential announcements, Kircher was still silent about the miracle of conversion. Christina, meanwhile, had adopted the Catholic faith in the palace of Archduke Leopold-Wilhelm in Brussels, but even this successful realization of her daring plan had to be kept silent until the right moment came to proclaim the news to the world. That would be in Innsbruck, where the queen on her way to Rome would definitely have Catholic soil under her feet. On September 12, after a delay of more than a year in the Spanish Netherlands, she left for the south. Still as a ‘Lutheran’ queen, she travelled with a large, almost entirely Roman Catholic retinue from Brussels in the direction of Louvain.

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<sup>128</sup> Godfroy, p. 275-277.

<sup>129</sup> Zylle, Otto van, to Athanasius Kircher, Louvain September 25, 1655. Archivio della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome, APUG 561 fol. 2721.

Kircher, who, as we have seen, was involved in the conspiracy from the start, was informed of her departure by a confrere, Father Otto van Zylle, who was affiliated with the famous Jesuit college of Louvain. Here Christina was received, although she travelled ‘incognito’, which meant that she waived official receptions.

Van Zylle wrote to Kircher: ‘Peace be with you. At last, on the twelfth day of this month, the illustrious Queen of Sweden set out and entered Louvain. The illustrious Archduke escorted her for an hour and a half. Today she may be in Roermond; from there she continues to Cologne, Frankfurt, Augsburg, and Innsbruck. She has pointed out to me that she will not visit Venice, because she is burning with desire to see Rome as soon as possible.’

One of the reasons for Christina’s stay in the Spanish Netherlands had been that neither the King of Spain, Philip IV, nor the *segretario di stato* of the Vatican, Fabio Chigi, had granted Pope Innocent X the reception of the convert of the century. Christina had not been given the green light for her triumphal journey to Rome until Innocent was dead and buried and Chigi himself had been elected pope as Alexander VII. Father Van Zylle emphasized that she had put her trust in him: ‘She has many expectations of this Pope on the basis of his virtues and greatness.’

Van Zylle went on to give details of the procession: ‘In her retinue are Don Antonio Pimentel, envoy of the King [of Spain] at her court, and Don Antonio della Cueva with his wife. Also with them is Father Joannes de la Madre de Dios, ex-provincial of the Discalced Carmelites, with a priest friend and our confrere, Father Carolus Manderscheidt. Moreover, there is a fairly large group of nobles and servants, as well as a squadron of bodyguards on horseback.’ He also reported that Christina intended to visit the Marian sanctuary of Loreto during her journey through Italy.

At the end of the letter, Van Zylle, who had received a portrait of her for the library, stoked the fire of his learned confrere and admirer of Christina, not forgetting to remind him that she had more favourites in the Collegio Romano: ‘She longs to see Kircher and the other scholars, and especially Giattini, of whom I have spoken to her only once.’ Giovanni Battista Giattini was a prominent philologist and Latinist at the Jesuit College in Rome. Like Kircher, he taught a wide variety of subjects, including logic, physics, metaphysics, Bible studies, mathematics, and moral theology. He was an expert on the history of the Council of Trent.



## Conclusions

The role of the learned Jesuit Athanasius Kircher in the history of Queen Christina of Sweden's conversion is much greater than was known until recently. This is apparent from the Kircher letters that turned up in 1997 in the archive of the former Collegio Romano, the Pontificia Università Gregoriana in Rome. Kircher, according to tradition, only appeared unannounced in the story's finale with his reception of the converted queen at the Collegio Romano and his science museum over there: a fitting happy ending to a beautiful adventure. However, no one knew exactly why that reception meant so much to Christina and Kircher. The recovered Kircher letters have clarified a lot about this.

In our research for the book *Passage naar Rome*, we have analyzed five letters from the collection that contain the correspondence between the two protagonists or refer to it, plus an already known letter in the *Riksarkivet* in Stockholm from Kircher to Christina's nephew, Karl Gustav. We learned that Kircher corresponded with Christina as early as 1649, well before she expressed her desire to become a Catholic. Moreover, we were able to determine that the letters and books he sent to her formed one of the motives that prompted her in 1651 to ask the Superior General of the Jesuits in Rome for experts from the *Societas Jesu* in Stockholm to support her conversion plan.

Christina and Kircher were in correspondence with each other amid the tense relationship between Protestantism and the Counter-Reformation. As a result of the fraught history of the Reformation in Scandinavia, relations between Lutheran Sweden and the Jesuit order became even more keen: 'Jesuitism', propaganda for the Roman faith, was punishable by death in Sweden.<sup>130</sup> Pope Innocent X, for his part, refused to recognize the Westphalian Peace because it gave the heretics from the north equal rights with the Catholics, who in his eyes adhered to the only true faith.<sup>131</sup>

Yet practice was often stronger than doctrine. Not everyone was equally rabid. Moderates and fundamentalists were seen on both sides. Queen Christina and Father Kircher are both to be regarded as moderates. Both preferred dialogue to denial. For instance, Christina invited the Catholic philosopher Descartes to Stockholm and corresponded with the Catholic mathematician

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<sup>130</sup> Godfroy, p. 20-21.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.* p. 15-16, 32-33.

Gassendi.<sup>132</sup> The Jesuits aimed ardently to turn the whole world Roman Catholic, but for this purpose they had developed a method of ‘adapting instead of denouncing’, with which they achieved great success, especially in China.<sup>133</sup> Kircher mainly corresponded with Catholic scientists and princes, but now and then Protestants also received a book from him, such as the Dutch Calvinist philologist Johannes Gronovius, who found a copy of *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* in his mail<sup>134</sup>, and returned a beautiful letter of thanks<sup>135</sup>. This libertarian atmosphere among scientists was one of the fruits of the ‘Republic of Letters’, the international community of intellectuals and wealthy patrons who exchanged ideas in letters and writings across nationalities and religions.<sup>136</sup> Perhaps anticipating the Queen's patronage, he addresses her in his first letter as ‘Reip.[ublica]e Lit.[terarum] columen’ (*‘pillar of the Republic of Letters’*).<sup>137</sup>

That does not alter the fact that the correspondence between Kircher and Christina had dangerous sides, not only because of Kircher's suspicious ‘Jesuit’ label, but even more because of Christina’s conversion plans. Her wish to become a Catholic was a no-go area in Sweden. Even with the most permissive views on the free movement of intellectual ideas, this would be unacceptable to her compatriots.

It is difficult to determine when the idea of conversion started to take form in Christina’s mind, but of course she herself was the first of all to realize it and take it into account. It is not inconceivable that, when she ordered Palbitzki to establish contacts with Kircher in 1649, she was already toying with the idea of conversion. With that in mind, she would have required the utmost discretion in her instructions to the envoy. That would explain why statements about Kircher are completely absent from Palbitzki’s reports. Only from Kircher’s confidential letters sent via hidden ways we have recently learned that Palbitzki was the liaison officer.

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<sup>132</sup> *ibid.* p. 36, 93.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.* p. 31.

<sup>134</sup> Kircher to Johannes Fredericus Gronovius, Rome September 2, 1652, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München, 2. Cod. Ms. 617 fol. 100r-100v.

<sup>135</sup> Gronovius, Johannes Fredericus, to Athanasius Kircher, October 13, 1652. Archivio della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome, APUG 568, fol. 971<sup>r</sup>-v<sup>o</sup>.

<sup>136</sup> See among others: Bots, Hans, *De Republiek der Letteren. De Europese intellectuele wereld, 1500-1760*, Nijmegen 2018.

<sup>137</sup> Kircher to Queen Christina, undated, sub (1).

All in all, the staging of Christina's conversion story has been changed by the Kircher letters. The figure of Kircher, in particular, has taken a more prominent place: from festive sidekick in the final scene to intriguing protagonist (albeit often behind the scenes) all the way through the play. Palbitzki's role has also become more important. He is Christina's secret agent and the first person on her behalf to throw out the line to the Jesuits by knocking on the door of the famous Father Kircher in Rome. That opening scene largely determines how the play develops further. Likewise, the letters have shed new light on Christina's own role, particularly in her fascination with Jesuit scientific activism. The issues of faith that came up in the conversations with Kircher's confreres Casati and Malines are the irreversible sequel.

One might wonder why such crucial aspects of the story have remained hidden for three and a half centuries. Of course, sometimes parts of the archives escape everyone's attention for a longer period of time. But so many more sources are available for the history of Christina's conversion. It may be hardly a coincidence that the correspondence between Kircher and Christina has not penetrated either of them. The two protagonists themselves have probably contributed to this to a large extent by avoiding publicity. They attempted to minimize the risks associated with their correspondence by maintaining secrecy. Later on, the silence about these events probably continued because of the strained relationship between Christina and the Jesuits following her conversion. Kircher canceled his dedications to her. And Christina finally didn't say anything more about the Jesuits, who had gone to great lengths to convert her: they are simply ignored in her later writings.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> See particularly: Christina, Queen, *Apologies*. Texte présenté, établi et annoté par Jean-François de Raymon. Paris 1994.