The economic foundations of the royal household of the Spanish Habsburgs, 1556–1621

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In historiographic terms, the resurgence in recent years of studies on the court of the early modern era has been something of a Europe-wide phenomenon. Research on this topic has also blossomed in Spain, although, in my view, here it has displayed two distinctive features of its own: firstly, it has taken comparatively longer to develop and publish research than in Italy, France, or Great Britain; secondly, both the approach to topics in this area and their treatment have been widely divergent, which may be attributable to a less solidly based historiographic tradition than is found in other countries.  

These two characteristics of Spanish research are apparent in the recent “rediscovery” of one of the basic institutions of the court, the royal households, especially with regard to economic issues. After being virtually neglected by historians for decades, the economics of the royal households is now proving to be fertile ground for researchers in Spanish historiography. We have, for example, a brief yet extremely detailed article by Ladero Quesada about the economic foundations of the court and royal households during the reigns of the Catholic

1 This study has been carried out as part of the research group “Solo Madrid es Corte”: CAM-HUM-2007-0045.
Monarchs; a doctoral thesis, later published, by Jurado Sánchez, setting out the trends and characteristics of royal household expenditure during the whole of the early modern period; another earlier doctoral thesis, as yet unpublished, centring on the reigns of Philip III and Philip IV; my own research on the way the royal household was set up and maintained in the sixteenth century, published in two compilations devoted to the court in the reigns of Charles V and Philip II, and also a recent article on the financing of Philip III’s household; and last, but not least, a substantial monograph on the Bourbon dynasty.

With this wealth of historiographic material available to us, now seems an appropriate moment to try and synthesize what we know about the royal households: how they were sustained economically, their costs in terms of amounts and trends, how they were organized institutionally, and where their funds came from during the reigns of Philip II and Philip III. The choice of period is not arbitrary, since I believe that

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6 José Jurado Sánchez, *El gasto de la Casa Real, su financiación y sus repercusiones hacendísticas y económicas* (Madrid, 2000), republished with slight corrections as *La economía de la corte: El gasto de la Casa Real en la Edad Moderna, 1561–1808* [hereafter, *La economía de la corte*], (Madrid, 2005). This is the version cited from now on.


9 Carlos Gómez-Centurión and Juan A. Sánchez Belén (eds.), *La herencia de Borgoña: La hacienda de las Reales Casas durante el reinado de Felipe V* (Madrid 1998).

10 In addition to the studies above, it should be remembered that there are valuable data on the costs of the royal households in the historiography specializing in the study of the
the institutional development of the royal households of the Spanish Habsburgs was marked by three phases. During the first phase, in the time of Charles V, the system gradually took shape; in the second, between 1556 and 1621, which is the period that concerns us here, the organs and ceremonials of the domestic palace service were consolidated in line with the process which had turned the Spanish Monarchy into an institution; the third phase, under Philip IV and Charles II, saw successive reforms carried out in response to the increasing maturity of the institutional organs of the royal households.

An economic assessment of the royal household

The growth of research into the economics of the royal household is hardly surprising given that its institutional position rested directly on two main cornerstones of the Monarchy of the Habsburgs: the court, and the royal treasury or the hacienda real. It formed part of the court through its socio-political significance as the focal point of patronage, whilst it was an integral part of the royal finances as a substantial section of ordinary non-financial expenditure (financial expenditure or costs being the interest and fees paid to lenders). Consequently, the way the royal households were maintained economically was an important point of contact between both politico-institutional structures, and simultaneously reflected their circumstances and characteristics.

From this initial scenario, various basic questions arise, which studies on the economics of the royal households are now attempting to resolve: the first is to determine the magnitude of the cost of the royal household, and how it evolved in current and constant values; the second concerns the percentage it represented of the hacienda, and lastly, its socio-economic importance as a major area of court expenditure. In order to make these assessments, it is necessary to begin by recalling, first of all, how royal household and court expenditure were defined in accounting and economic terms, since they have occasionally posed difficulties of understanding and application, even though they appear not to be very complex.

Basic definitions from the perspective of economic accounting:
royal household and court expenditure

It should be pointed out first of all that the institutional characteristics of the royal household, particularly its economic accounting aspects, were established in a process which lasted, approximately, from 1515 to 1559. The first date marks the formation of Charles V’s household in the style and customs of Burgundy. The first years of his reign are recalled as the time when his royal household, in the broadest sense of the term, came into being and the principles were laid down of the way the Monarchy’s court expenditure should function in economic and financial terms.

The emperor decided to preserve the household of Castile almost in its entirety, and some sections of it, such as the chapel, the hunt, and the monteros de Espinosa guard, were absorbed directly into his service. However, the Casa de Borgoña, with an increasing complement of Spanish nobles and courtiers, continued to form the nucleus of his domestic palace support and its cost was charged from that time to the hacienda real of Castile.

In short, Charles V basically used two centres, each with its own administration, financing and accounting methods, to support his domestic palace service: the Casa de Borgoña, and a secondary one, the Casa de Castilla (the latter divided, in turn, into two sections, one in Tordesillas and another which accompanied the emperor). Although the Casa de Castilla remained in the service of Charles V, it was overshadowed in economic, political and social importance by the Casa de Borgoña, as can be seen from the fact that the latter household, at that time, cost more than 200,000 ducats and the former, 35,000, a lower figure than in the time of the Catholic Monarchs. They were,

11 Given its nature and the way it was formed, there were numerous testimonies during the early years of Charles’s reign from major figures fearful that the change of dynasty might entail the disappearance of the traditional Casa de Castilla. It did not look as if the household that served his mother, Joanna, in Tordesillas was in any danger, but since the education and customs of the young sovereign had been forged in the heart of the Casa de Borgoña, it would not have been surprising if there had been doubts as to whether the new king would use the Castile institutions directly in the service of the palace. For the dynamics of this and the data which follow, see Carlos Javier de Carlos Morales, “La llegada de Carlos V y la división de la Casa de Castilla,” “La cuestión de la financiación de la corte y la defensa del modelo de Casa castellana durante las Comunidades,” “Las reformas de las casas reales en 1522–1525,” and “La problemática definición de los soportes hacendísticos de las casas reales,” in Martínez Millán, Corte de Carlos V, 1: 166–177, 190–197, 221–231 and 251–259.
therefore, two distinct entities in terms of their origins, the way they operated, and their accounting and financing methods. Despite this, throughout his reign there was mutual influence and interaction between the subsections and constituent parts of the two households in the sharing of court space and the practice of patronage. In other words, the royal household of Charles V in its broadest sense was made up of the sum of the departments of the two households, although we should also point out that, properly speaking, ‘the household,’ to his contemporaries, referred to the Casa de Borgoña. At the same time, the royal household of Aragon also continued in existence, albeit in symbolic form, out of respect for the political and legal code of this Crown, although this was not a burden on the hacienda real of Castile (as was also the case with the household of Portugal after 1580).

During the reign of Philip II, when the officers of the hacienda made their global estimates of the Monarchy’s annual financial requirements and noted down the costs under a variety of headings, the terms “casa ordinaria” or “casa de Su Majestad”, in the context of personal palace services, were understood as referring to the original Casa de Borgoña. In later accounting consultations, the households belonging to the other members of the royal family were added, and, finally, the Casa de Castilla. This, therefore, was the network of royal households that made up a substantial part of the court. For this reason, a rigorous assessment of royal household expenditure must specify the particular entity being referred to: whether the Casa de Borgoña on its own, this one combined with the Casa de Castilla, or a general one including all the households belonging to the royal family.

Accounting for the expenditure of the royal households presents additional difficulties. In the Casa de Borgoña, there were some entries classified as expenditure which did not pass through the hands of the treasurer of the chamber (maestro de la cámara) so that precise quantification of total costs may be contingent upon the particular documentary source being consulted. At the beginning of Philip II’s reign, for instance, the annual expenditure for the Casa de Borgoña was estimated at some 250,000 ducats, of which about 217,000 was spending which can be classified as ordinary and foreseeable; the rest arose from funeral rites, journeys and festivities, favours and private chamber expenses.12 Several authorities in the household, apart from

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12 Carlos Morales, “Sostenimiento económico de las Casas de Felipe II,”, 86–87.
the treasurer of the chamber, received funds from the general treasurer (tesorero general). A few examples, spread over time, are as follows: in 1559, the tesorero general issued 313,502 ducats to the maestro de la cámara; 7,231,000 maravedís (mrs.) to the sumiller de corps (groom of the stool), Ruy Gómez de Silva, for chamber expenses; 432,900 mrs. to the limosnero mayor (lord almoner) Lupercio de Quiñones; and various payments to help defray the costs of and pay favours to members of the household who had accompanied the king during his sojourn in the Low Countries.\(^\text{13}\) In 1579, in addition to the tesorero general’s contributions to the maestro de la cámara (67,574,728 mrs), a hefty sum was issued to an ayuda de cámara (valet of the chamber) Sebastián de Santoyo (94,500,000 mrs.), and a smaller amount to the lord almoner (8,048,327 mrs).\(^\text{14}\) Years later, in 1610, the tesorero general, Juan Ibáñez de Segovia, issued 15,375,000 mrs. to an ayuda de cámara, Rodrigo Calderón, and 2,400,000 mrs. to the countess of Lemos, the queen’s chief lady-in-waiting, in addition to the transfer of 238,742,704 mrs. to the maestro de la cámara.\(^\text{15}\)

Furthermore, at different periods the maestro de la cámara of the Casa de Borgoña was also responsible for managing the expenses of other royal households. This was the situation in the final five years of Philip II’s reign, and also when Philip III married and the maestro de la cámara took charge, first, of the new queen’s household and, later, of the palace services of their children. A final demonstration of the occasionally blurred boundaries defining royal household costs is the existence of indeterminate entries which swelled their total amount. It seems beyond doubt that the payments to the lord almoner and to cover chamber expenses referred to earlier were included under household expenditure. Another example, according to Ulloa’s calculations, was the periodic transfer of the sum of 20,000 ducats to the empress Maria during her stay at the Imperial court, although the same researcher excludes from his overall total the cost of Philip II’s household of Castile.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{13}\) AGS (Archivo General de Simancas), CMC (Contaduría mayor de Cuentas), 1ª época, leg. 1336.

\(^{14}\) AGS, CMC, 2ª época, leg. 146.

\(^{15}\) AGS, CMC, 3ª época, leg. 1142.

\(^{16}\) Ulloa, La hacienda real, 94.
On a broader scale, the term *court expenditure* is similarly in need of clarification because of the blurred boundaries of this concept.\(^\text{17}\) It is generally understood that, in addition to the various royal households, the court was made up of the councils, the court tribunals, and the palace and retinue of the king. In principle, calculating total court expenditure is simply a matter of determining the amount that corresponds to each of the above entities and adding them all together; in practice, however, and even though quantifying everything this way is dictated by the nature of the documentary evidence, this only takes into account the court from an institutional perspective.

What makes weighing up court expenditure as a whole difficult is putting a value on the dynamic elements, and including or separating out items such as commissions and embassies, expense allowances and favours, royal progresses, maintenance and improvements to royal sites (subject to the jurisdiction of the *Junta de Obras y Bosques*, the Board of building work and woodlands), funeral rites and provisions made in wills.

**The quantification and distribution of household expenditure**

As we have just stated, the difficulty of indicating and marking boundaries affected the very definition of royal household expenditure. Even so, thanks to existing research, a number of complete series of the nominal costs of the royal households is available covering the reigns of Philip II and Philip III, in both current and constant values,\(^\text{18}\) and which I shall not, therefore, repeat here in full. In brief, there was a sharp increase in the first decade of Philip II’s reign following the expansion and diversification of the royal family’s households: in 1560, total upkeep was already estimated at some 385,000 ducats, of which 250,000 corresponded to the king’s *Casa de Borgoña*; by 1565, the amount had reached some 470,000 ducats, with only 220,000 allocated to it. After this expansion, the current values of these outgoings practically stagnated during the following decades; so, for example, in 1591, the estimated amount for the *Casa de Borgoña* was 274,000 ducats and the overall cost of the various households, 418,000. Between 1588

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\(^\text{17}\) Already noted by Gómez-Centurión and Sánchez Belén, 13–14. For considerations of their historiographic assessment, see Jurado Sánchez, *Economía de la corte*, 91–93.

\(^\text{18}\) Jurado Sánchez, *Economía de la corte*, 95–101 is of great help on this point; also, with pertinent comments, in Carlos Morales, “Sostenimiento económico de las Casas de Felipe II” and “Gasto y financiación de las Casas reales de Felipe III,”.
and 1598, average spending on the household of Burgundy remained stable at some 240,000 ducats per annum. If we move from current to constant values, we are able to deduce that, after a sharp rise at the beginning of his reign, the cost of maintaining the royal households fell slightly under Philip II; moreover, as a proportion of all the royal exchequer’s ordinary expenditure, it decreased in relative terms.

During the reign of Philip III, spending on the royal households averaged out at 600,000 ducats per year. Jurado Sánchez states, with greater precision, that: “the cost of the royal household in current prices quadrupled between the last decade of the sixteenth century and 1618.” The major spurt in the royal households’ current expenditure took place between 1601 and 1604 (1601: 240,177 ducats; 1604: 606,406 ducats), although the upward trend continued until 1612 (1,174,406 ducats). However, costs then underwent a small but significant reduction until 1618 (1618: 996,789 ducats). Now, it should be mentioned that when these figures are converted into constant values, the general situation looks a little different: indexed spending on the personal palace service of Philip III and the queen fluctuated from 100 in 1599 to 215 in the middle years of his reign (1609–1613), before falling back to 133.5 in the final years.19

Jurado Sánchez has also calculated the percentage of the hacienda real’s income used to maintain the royal households. According to his data, the figure was around 3% in the reign of Philip II and 10% in Philip III’s. I regard it as more appropriate to consider the cost of the royal households against the total annual budget of the hacienda real under the heading of ordinary non-financial expenditure. In general, the officers responsible for making such estimates for the Consejo de Hacienda, or Council of the Exchequer, had a solid view of the grouping of payments and for the question that concerns us here, ordinary non-financial expenditure was made up of already consolidated military outgoings, both at sea and on land, at home and abroad; maintenance of the royal households, embassies, councils, and court tribunals; work carried out on fortresses or prisons; and expenses incurred in the grounds or premises of the royal estates.20

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19 Jurado Sánchez, Economía de la corte, 99.
20 However we ought to point out that this block of expenditure may vary from year to year depending on the documentary source being consulted, given the constellation of payers and outgoings, in both cash and other types of financial instrument, and the fact that expenditure was not centralized. Ulloa, chap. 3, sec. A, identifies them as “costs of governance”: royal households; construction on royal sites; internal governance which
The Economic Foundations of the Royal Household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget amount for ordinary non-financial expenditure (in ducats)</th>
<th>Budget amount for royal households (in ducats)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1556</td>
<td>1,400,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1557</td>
<td>1,348,866</td>
<td>316,667</td>
<td>23.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>1560</td>
<td>1,624,000</td>
<td>385,813</td>
<td>23.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1561</td>
<td>430,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1562</td>
<td>1,581,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1565</td>
<td>1,416,670</td>
<td>464,500</td>
<td>32.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1568</td>
<td>468,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1574</td>
<td>3,200,000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1575</td>
<td>477,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1583</td>
<td>388,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1585</td>
<td>2,833,130</td>
<td>422,667</td>
<td>14.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1587</td>
<td>3,315,833</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1589</td>
<td>4,468,428</td>
<td>370,000</td>
<td>7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1591</td>
<td>418,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1599</td>
<td>267,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td>487,233</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1603</td>
<td>4,223,333</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>14.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td>7,400,000</td>
<td>800,000</td>
<td>10.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1607</td>
<td>7,272,173</td>
<td>934,120</td>
<td>12.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1610</td>
<td>4,200,000</td>
<td>851,467</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1612</td>
<td>3,060,000</td>
<td>720,000</td>
<td>23.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1615</td>
<td>3,772,100</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>26.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1617</td>
<td>3,730,000</td>
<td>980,000</td>
<td>26.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1620</td>
<td>3,658,000</td>
<td>914,000</td>
<td>24.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1621</td>
<td>4,016,200</td>
<td>924,200</td>
<td>23.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Budget for ordinary non-financial expenditure compared to budget for royal households (except Casa de Castilla)

On the basis of these figures, the sum budgeted for royal households in the first decade of Philip II’s reign increased by 49.8%. As we know, the king’s wedding and the setting up of services for his son, Carlos, and his half-brother, don John of Austria accounted for this increase. Meanwhile, ordinary non-financial expenditure barely progressed by was expressed in the “court payroll” (councils, ministers, officers and their subordinates, the king’s local representatives, mayors, and so on); the diplomatic corps and postal service; and the maintenance of a standing army and navy and their installations.
5% as a result of ordinary military commitments stagnating after the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis. From then on, the gradual increase in this item, coinciding with the Monarchy building up its military strength, significantly reduced the contribution of the percentage represented by the royal households. This amount also decreased because there were fewer family members of the king with personal palace services. In the time of Philip III it becomes glaringly obvious that the cost of the royal households was the most significant entry under ordinary non-financial expenditure borne by the hacienda real of Castile, since it was effected through “large” or “general” asientos [short term credit loans] following the Medio General of 1608.

In addition, it is important to match the amounts received by the treasurer of the chamber with the outgoings of the royal treasury.\textsuperscript{21} To this effect, I have used and compared three types of contemporary document: firstly, the cargo and data [charge and discharge] accounts of the treasurer of the chamber and other persons of the household authorized to handle funds, such as the lord almoner; secondly, the proposals of the Consejo de Hacienda where the nominal costs of the households for the following year and the total expenditure to be borne by the royal exchequer were estimated; and, thirdly, the accounts of the royal treasurers of Castile, where the annual allocations to the treasurer of the chamber and other members of the royal household were recorded under “discharges.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Discharges from the royal treasury</th>
<th>Allocation to the royal households</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1559</td>
<td>1,452,067</td>
<td>313,502</td>
<td>21.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1566</td>
<td>2,487,207</td>
<td>199,452</td>
<td>8.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1586</td>
<td>3,487,512</td>
<td>344,000</td>
<td>9.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1589</td>
<td>2,443,155</td>
<td>236,986</td>
<td>9.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1605</td>
<td>1,927,705</td>
<td>601,452</td>
<td>31.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1610</td>
<td>1,850,308</td>
<td>636,647</td>
<td>34.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1614</td>
<td>1,721,088</td>
<td>649,069</td>
<td>37.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1618</td>
<td>2,289,428</td>
<td>990,482</td>
<td>43.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Royal treasury discharges and transfers to the royal households (in ducats)

\textsuperscript{21} These data are taken from my articles. From 1590, Guillamás Velázquez also took responsibility for the expenses of their Royal Highnesses.
Comparing the data in the two tables enables us to match fluctuations in the royal exchequer and the royal treasury against movements in the assets and liabilities of the royal household. In the first place, there is a difference between the amounts received by the treasurer of the chamber and the estimates made by the Council of the Exchequer, creating a floating deficit carried over from year to year. As the treasurer of the chamber could not disburse more than had been paid to him in each financial year, and this amount was insufficient for him to meet his commitments, a series of cumulative arrears and debt payments arose, whose settlement was deferred to later financial years. In other words, the royal household began each year with defaults and liabilities of unpaid stipends and purchases. This deficit was periodically settled, either by cancelling consignations given to businessmen, or, when some royal progress was planned outside Castile, it was appropriate to make a “general payment” to clear the backlog of stipends.

Finally, I present some data of interest about trends in the distribution of expenses in the Casa de Borgoña. At the beginning of Philip II’s reign, the bulk of the expenses, at 44%, was accounted for by household salaries of all kinds (except those due to the corps of German and Spanish Royal Bodyguards), followed by la Despensa (the larder), at 16.23%, and the stables, at 15.64%. The running costs of the larder, in particular, increased significantly over time. Where monthly consumption was roughly 2,000 ducats at the beginning of Charles V’s reign, this figure had risen to 3,000 by 1559 (32,500 ducats per year, equivalent to 66,000 florins). In 1560, this amount rose to 4,000, and again in 1561, to 6,000 ducats per month (72,000 ducats per year). Shortly afterwards, a small additional amount itemized as “extraordinary larder expenditure” was consolidated with “ordinary larder expenditure,” so that by 1566, the total annual cost under this heading was some 80,000 ducats. At the end of the sixteenth century, during the transition from Philip II to Philip III, these costs had already risen to 8,000 per month: 6,000 ducats for ordinary larder expenditure and another 2,000 per month for “the extraordinary expenditure of the said larder.” In total, then, at 96,000 ducats per year, or 36%, the larder had become the most important section of the maestro de la cámara’s spending, ahead of salaries.

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22 It is worth breaking off at this point since Jurado Sánchez, *Economía de la corte*, 107–118 concentrates on the second half of seventeenth century. The data that follow are based on information from my own research, cited in n. 8.
At the turn of the new century, the expenditure soared again, as a result of the celebrations held at court at the beginning of Philip III’s reign and the establishment of a household for the new queen, which the king’s treasurer of the chamber took charge of, both for accounting and expenses. In 1601, monthly payments of ordinary and extraordinary expenditure on the larder came to 17,000 ducats (204,000 for the year), amounting to 41.86% of total estimated costs. From this date, it becomes difficult to distinguish the volume of expenditure on the larder, since it is run together in the accounts with that of the stables, to form the set of “ordinary” and “extraordinary” expenses of the royal household. Thus, at the end of Philip III’s reign, out of a total of 924,000 ducats, 69.9% was ordinary expenditure (646,000), 6.5% extraordinary (60,000), 19.5% household salaries and stipends (180,200), and 3.24% (30,000) was spent on state vehicles. In this respect, the question arises of how much the growth in the nominal cost of the larder was due to price increases and how much to an increase in the volume of goods purchased.

The royal household and distribution of revenue

Quantifying royal household expenses is just one starting point for assessing its economic value. From another perspective, we must situate the royal households in the socio-economic context of the period. In my opinion, and looking at the royal household as a centre where incomes were concentrated, the least important part is the quantification of its payroll, consisting of salaries and bouche of court which, even when they were updated, always lagged behind prices. Since the court had become the focal point of patronage relationships, it is important to stress the role of the royal households as one of the pinnacles of the gift economy that characterized the age. In this respect, we find that when we use documents about the way the royal households functioned, they resonate with the language of the political economy of the time.

On the other hand, as a fundamental part of the court, resources and economic flows were concentrated in and distributed from the royal household, turning it into a centre of consumption that absorbed a significant part of the court’s total demand for goods and services. In the mid-sixteenth century, supplies to the royal household were usually channelled through officers responsible for areas of consumption, and who negotiated the quantity, quality and prices of products with particular suppliers and sellers. So, for example, in the fourrier’s
department, positions existed for baker, water bearer, spice provider, *salsier* (responsible for supplying vinegars and sauces), *busier* (a wood and coal supplier) and so on, whilst the *escuyer de cocina* was responsible for supervision, ensuring that everything that was going to be consumed was of the requisite quality. Meat, wine, dressings, clothing, leather, cloth and textiles, wax, straw, horse accessories, jewels, timepieces, furniture, tapestries and a host of other products constituted the kinds of goods arranged in advance with merchants and suppliers for a particular period of time and at previously agreed prices.

In the reign of Philip II, the supply arrangements for the royal household underwent a few modifications, largely as a consequence of the court being established in Madrid. Hence, the way of obtaining goods and services in the reign of Charles V, which could be characterized as itinerant, now gave way to a market settled in one place. In this way, by the seventeenth century, three means of acquiring merchandise had become established at the same time: purchasing produce direct from specific vendors, undertaken by various royal household officers; secondly, the provision of cereals, coal and wood from within an area of five leagues around the court, which was the responsibility of aldermen in the centres of population concerned, and at prices previously set by the royal officers authorized to seek out the obligation to supply; and thirdly, those purchases which were the object of contracts or of *asientos de abasto* [supply contracts] with private individuals responsible for specific goods or merchandise.\(^{23}\)

Credit and debt centred on the royal household, giving rise to an intricate framework for managing time schedules, guarantees and revenues. The characteristically erratic payment schedule of the royal treasury conditioned the treasurer of the chamber’s actual disbursements: in general, larder expenses were paid with relative punctuality, whilst arrears and debt payments associated with stipends built up. It was, therefore, quite usual for stipends and salaries to be paid with considerable delay. While gentlemen, because of their social background, normally had other means of support so that their difficulties did not prove too arduous, those minor officers and subordinates who relied solely on their remuneration from the royal household to support their families, were constantly forced to ask for credit or the services of the court banks. The accumulation of arrears created obvious difficulties for their families, as was shown, for example, in one petition drawn up in 1607

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\(^{23}\) Jurado Sánchez, *Economía de la corte*, 111.
by various skilled craftsmen who served in the household (chair makers, saddlers, shoemakers, tailors and the like) who received no wages and were only paid per finished article. When they required payment of arrears, they would point out that it was “impossible to serve if they were not being paid for their work, because their debts mounted up and then they became bad payers, and their creditors harassed them.”

The administration of the Burgundian household’s economic affairs of the Casa de Borgoña

An account of the way the royal household of Burgundy managed and administered its economic affairs in the period we are studying necessarily begins with the foundation of Charles V’s household, which took Charles the Bold’s as its model. The new regulations governing the Casa de Borgoña of Charles V, comprising a total of 665 people, were published on October 15, 1515. An extensive hierarchy of positions and palace duties was created which was reflected in the corresponding salaries and payment structures; scant attention, however, was paid to controlling the expenses incurred by the institution. The responsibilities of the maistre de la chambre aux deniers [the treasurer of the chamber] were to take receipt of funds and make payments supervised by the first chamberlain or stewards, with the agreement of one of the two contrerolleurs [comptrollers] who took it in turns every six months to record transactions.

This scheme gradually took shape during his reign; more detailed functions of the principal officers responsible for administering the household’s economy and the sections comprising the household are found in the account written in Philip II’s reign by Jean Sigonney, who had been grefier [secretary or clerk] since the time of the emperor. It is of great interest, as a complement to Sigonney’s description, to use the royal treasury accounts as a document to shed more light on the way the economy of the royal household functioned between 1556 and 1621.

24 AGS, CJH (Consejo y juntas de Hacienda), leg. 475, fajo 17.
25 Raymond Fagel, “Un heredero entre tutores y regentes: Casa y corte de Margarita de Austria y Carlos de Luxemburgo (1506–1516),” in Martínez Millán, Corte de Carlos V, 1: 135–136. For a translated copy of the ordinance, see ibid., 5: 137–168, in which it is noted: “We are sending more to the above-mentioned treasurer of the chamber for him to pay the items of his office with the monies he has, or will have assigned to him and ordered, having first notified the lord chamberlain, and the lord steward and first steward, and in no other way.”
Three levels can be distinguished. Firstly, there were officers responsible for receiving transfers of funds from the royal treasury: the treasurer of the chamber handled funds which were received from this source, and made quarterly distributions for the larder, stipends and wages, pensions and rewards, as well as monthly distributions “on account” for purchases and supplies acquired by the various officers in the fourrier’s department. Apart from discharges to the maestro de la cámara, the royal treasury also made discharges to the lord almoner, the sumiller de corps, and, when he was absent, an ayuda de cámara.

The way transactions of this kind worked was associated with a second category of officer that included those with the authority to make decisions about expenditure: the camarero mayor (the lord chamberlain), or his immediate substitute the first sumiller de corps, the mayordomo mayor (lord steward) and other mayordomos (stewards) who formed the Bureo, the caballerizo mayor (master of the horse) and the limosnero mayor or lord almoner. These figures were authorized to issue payment orders and direct them to the treasurer of the chamber, always subject to the approval of the comptroller.

26 The Bureo (from the French bureau) was composed of the mayordomo mayor and the mayordomos, but on occasions also the sumiller de corps, the caballerizo mayor and the captain of the royal guard attended its meetings. The Bureo audited the accounts of the royal household and sat as a court upon offences committed within the verge of the palace.

27 For a contemporary version of the relationship between the Bureo and maestro de la cámara, see Martínez Millán, Corte de Carlos V, 5:188–189: “The said treasurer of the chamber paid all the ordinary and extraordinary larder expenses, stipends, pensions and rewards accounted for by the bureo and for these expenses, the treasurer, or His Majesty’s general receiver, gave him the necessary monies, and at the beginning of each month, he was given a sum of money to distribute on account amongst the officers who spent according to the orders of the comptroller, with whose payment orders he likewise paid for the things that had been bought for the offices. Every three months, a book was made up of every amount to do with the larder in that time, which was given to the said treasurer of the chamber, and he was handed the difference between what the items cost and what he had received on account and so he ended up paying everyone what was due to them. Another book was made up for the stipends, pensions and rewards accounted for by the bureo in the same three months and the amount was likewise given to the said treasurer of the chamber to pay everyone what they were owed in the said three months, according to what was set down in the said book; and when the larder and stipends for three months had been paid in this way, the said treasurer of the chamber gave his account to the stewards and officers of the bureo who had the power and authority to see, examine and close them, and to consider the paid sum settled. After this position fell vacant in His Majesty’s household, payment of stipends was entrusted to an officer of the royal treasury of Spain who followed His Majesty’s court for this purpose, and the payment for the larder to His Majesty’s grefier.”
Finally, there was a third kind of office in the household whose officers were responsible for recording and controlling revenue and expenditure transactions: the board of the Bureo, the comptroller and the grefier. Control of disbursements was the remit of the Bureo committee, made up of the mayordomos with the mayordomo mayor as its chairman. The duties of the comptroller, and his counterpart, the grefier, were set out in some detail in Sigonney’s account. The comptroller, whose authority was on a par with a steward’s deputy, checked that the expenditure decisions made by the Bureo were scrupulously carried out. The indirect result of this was that it was the comptroller who authorized the treasurer of the chamber’s payments and reviewed the purchases made by the appropriate officer, as well as their prices. He also checked that the goods consumed at table corresponded with those that had been purchased.\(^{28}\) The grefier, for his part, was responsible for making a daily record of expenses incurred in the larder and of the stipends of servants in active service, and for making up a monthly book of accounts. In short, he was responsible for duly recording any payments made.\(^{29}\)

\(^{28}\) For the comptroller, see ibidem: “The said comptroller was responsible for seeing that everything supplied and bought for His Majesty’s table, for the estate of the stewards and bouche of court for certain offices was distributed according to the orders given in the bureo and nothing was allowed to be spent without the corresponding order. He had authority to oppose everything he understood as not redounding to the service of His Majesty, and whatever could not be remedied personally by himself had to be notified by him to the lord steward, or to the stewards if he was absent, and, if necessary, to His Majesty himself. Each day he had to visit the offices and see the books of the officers in charge of spending and delete from them any unauthorized expenditure, and reprimand the officer who had spent it. He had to know the prices of things that were ordinary expenses to curb the officers’ books accordingly. To do this, he often needed to visit the marketplace. And likewise he had to know the dishes planned for His Majesty’s table, for the estate of the stewards and find time to meet the kitchen supervisor in the larder to order the said dishes and be present when the food was served. […] / He also had to see all the chamber and stable accounts, even if they had been signed by the master of the horse and sumiller de corps. All the officers obeyed any order he gave concerning His Majesty’s service as a deputy steward […]”

\(^{29}\) For the grefier’s functions, see ibidem: 5:188–190: “The said grefier was responsible for collecting and setting down in a monthly book all expenses incurred, itemized daily after the comptroller had seen and added them, as the stewards used the book to give a daily account of the larder in the bureo, and the same for the stipends, as well as those accounted for in the acroy’s books, and also for extraordinary expenditure so that the amount of expenses and stipends incurred for that day could be seen every day.”
Sources of maintenance and financing of the royal households

As we have pointed out, Charles V’s decision to maintain the Casa de Castilla in his service and to include Spaniards in his Casa de Borgoña coincided, in the early years of his reign, with another decision, no doubt related to the previous one: to assign the economic upkeep of the Casa de Borgoña to the hacienda real of Castile from 1516 when transfers of funds from the tesorero general to the maestro de la cámara and argentier (the steward of royal expenditure and court banker) commenced. Within a short period of time, an attempt was made to ensure the annual endowment of the Casa de Borgoña by using asientos negotiated with merchant bankers; the bankers were to contribute fixed monthly sums and receive, in consignment, remittance orders of payment from the Indies and revenue from the Military Orders. This system, however, failed to produce the desired effect and, from 1525, upkeep of the household was tied definitively to direct transfers from the royal

Extraordinary expenses were also set down in the same book on the last day of the month, and a weekly total of what the larder expenses and stipends had amounted to that month was made; and the said grefier could make no entry without the comptroller first seeing it. In the bureo, the said grefier read out all the entries for expenses and stipends which were accounted for in it, which the stewards, comptroller and the grefier himself counted using silver disks, and the said grefier set down the sums in his book, and his officer passed the cumulative total to another book that they called the steward’s contrarolo [control account] that lasted a whole year and which could not be opened or written in without the said stewards being present, as it was sealed with the seal of one of them. And when the bureo was over, they read out the sum totals that had been counted, the grefier reading them out from his book and the steward for the week looking at them in the control book, and which, when the sums had been read out, was closed again.

The said grefier had a note of the gentlemen and officers absent from court, with and without permission, in order to account for each in the bureo according to the time they had resided there or had been given leave. And he signed all the proceedings to do with justice, warrants, ordinances, sentences and other matters dealt with in the said bureo.

He had to be present when the oath was taken of any servant belonging to His Majesty in order to record it in the said bureo’s books. He kept all the agreements made in the said bureo for the provision of ordinary and extraordinary household expenses.

He also had to keep all the expense accounts accounted for in the bureo, as well as those signed by the sumiller de corps, lord steward, lord almoner, and those passed by the stewards and the comptroller.”
From then on, successive treasurers resorted to two procedures to provide the Casa de Borgoña with the revenue it needed. The first was to charge expenses directly to the servicios of the Cortes, which failed, nonetheless, to prevent the frequent delays in supplies and stipends. The second was to negotiate asientos with merchant bankers who advanced money in exchange for orders of payment on ordinary and extraordinary servicios, the Casa de Contratación in Seville, and the sale of juros [interest-bearing state bonds]. Until the final years of the reign of Charles V, annual contributions fluctuated between 150,000 and 250,000 ducats. The difference between these two amounts is explained by the accumulated arrears from previous financial years being added, in the second case, to the average annual cost of 200,000 ducats.

At the beginning of Philip II’s reign, with annual costs of 250,000 ducats, the financial situation of the household gave cause for concern. It was decided to fix a large part of the expenses, up to 200,000 ducats, on ordinary and extraordinary servicios, although the crisis in the royal exchequer ruined any expectations to that effect. So it was that, despite the suggestion of a measure which would guarantee the treasurer of the chamber resources for the household in one annual payment or in quarterly instalments, the royal treasury had no alternative but to make irregular payments which gave rise to arrears and overdrafts. To give an example, in 1559, Domingo de Orbea made out twenty-four orders of payment to the treasurer of the chamber, Francisco de España, on widely differing dates and for varied amounts: with up to five payments some months, and just one in others. The following year, we find thirty-two discharges from the royal treasury recorded as paid to the treasurer of the chamber, also in differing amounts and on irregular dates. In those days there was still no permanent source of sustainable income and the royal treasury had no other choice but to resort to external, even exceptional financing methods, such as the cancellation of consignations to the businessmen, in 1561, after suspension of
payments in November 1560, as a way of facing the mounting arrears in paying stipends and even larder expenses. This measure would be repeated in each of the later “bankruptcies” of Philip II and Philip III.

Given the difficulties posed by the absence of a firm financial basis and the resulting dependence on transfers of funds from the royal treasury, plans were repeatedly drawn up in the reigns of Philip II and Philip III to find some fixed consignation to bear the economic brunt of maintaining the royal households. In 1561, plans were made for royal household funding to be based on the encabezamiento general de alcabalas, or sales taxes, which rose sharply from that year. However, this attempt was a failure and there was no other way out than to resort once more to bank loans; after negotiations with the treasurer, the asentistas (creditors) undertook to make monthly payments, which Orbea transferred to the treasurer of the chamber, Francisco de España. In consignation, the Gentiles, Grimaldis, and other Genoese bankers received orders of payment on the extraordinary income of the hacienda real of Castile and even on the recent increase in the alcabalas. From 1566, coinciding with Diego de Espinosa’s presidency of the Consejo de Hacienda, new projects were drawn up to provide stable financing for the royal households. More specifically, there was a proposal to base the endowment for the Casa de Borgoña on revenue from the salt deposits, with queen Isabella’s household charged to the almojarifazgo mayor de Indias (a trade tax levied on goods from the Indies), and those of don Carlos and don John of Austria on sea tithes and the almojarifazgo mayor. It seems that, indirectly, the exploitation of the salt deposits eventually met a large part of the expenses of the Casa de Borgoña, since it was to serve as consignation for the contracts agreed by the tesorero general to provide the treasurer of the chamber with funds; however, the assigning of expenses to fixed income did not become institutional practice on that occasion either. From 1574, coinciding with another crisis in the royal exchequer of Castile, fresh plans were drawn up. It was proposed this time that the financial basis of the royal households should be the ordinary and extraordinary servicios of the Cortes, a measure which would undoubtedly have been to the liking of the procuradores (procurators), but was, once again, deferred.

It was quite apparent, though, that, after they had passed through the crucible of the asientos negotiated by the Council of the Exchequer, the servicios of the Cortes, and even such unreliable sources of income

32 IVDJ (Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan), Madrid, Envío 50, fol. 252.
as *arbitrios* (discretionary taxes levied to raise funds for public expenditure) and the selling of *juros*, all implemented in Seville at the beginning of the 1580s, served as consignation for bankers supplying the stream of funds to the treasury which were then made available to the treasurer of the chamber.\(^{33}\) The major innovation affecting the way the royal households were financed concerned the new treasury regime instituted in 1584: the three coffers with three keys (ordinary income, extraordinary income, and the Three Graces). It was initially hoped that ordinary expenditure, such as that represented by the royal households, would be met out of the coffer of ordinary income, but it was not long before this was shown to be a pipe dream. As a result, the new treasurer, Portillo de Solier, used the ordinary coffer to give the treasurer of the chamber funds for the larder and stipends, and the extraordinary coffer for arrears and outstanding debt. Shortly afterwards, from 1588 onwards, there is evidence of the existence of new coffers which had been split off from the original extraordinary coffer (made up of *juros*, the treasure fleet and the new mint in Segovia) and that the royal households received their finances from any one of these coffers, no matter which, although the principal amount came from the ordinary coffer.\(^{34}\) Nonetheless, between 1590 and 1592, the major sources of revenue employed by the royal treasurer to finance the royal households were the treasure fleets and the recently inaugurated Segovia Mill Mint. The same irregularity in the treasury’s revenue was reflected in the provision made for the royal households, so that, in 1593, the situation was modified and the treasurer of the chamber, Guillamás Velázquez, received 61.66% of royal treasury transfers from a new source, known as the “emergency coffer”. This coffer supplied the royal treasury with the surplus from the *millones*, borrowings and the treasure fleets. The remaining 38.34% came from the extraordinary coffer.\(^{35}\)

In the reign of Philip II, the result of the irregular and insufficient revenues to the royal household was an increase in debt and arrears, mostly stipends, so that liabilities constituted an ongoing deficit, transferred from one financial year to the next. This dynamic was less the result of expenditure on the royal household increasing, since it virtually stagnated under Philip II, and more the corollary of having no fixed sources of sustainable income to serve as consignation when needed. The treasurer of the chamber’s dependence on the treasury of

\(^{33}\) Carlos Morales, “Sostenimiento económico de las Casas de Felipe II,”, 105–108.
\(^{34}\) Ibidem, 109–115.
\(^{35}\) AGS, CMC, 2ª época, leg. 117.
Castile gave rise to a deficit between expenditure contracted and funds received.

This situation continued, with barely any modifications, during the reign of Philip III. The maestro de la cámara dependence on whether the royal treasury was in liquidity or in penury could only be overcome by resorting to credit to bring funds into the royal households. In the early years of the reign, increased court expenditure was the reason why even the consignations that could be offered to the bankers were as precarious in nature as they had been unusual in earlier times. So, the profits from Portuguese pepper, leasing the royal monopoly of black slaves, surpluses from the dry ports and sea tithes were used in 1600 and 1601 as guarantees for the asientos that the royal exchequer was obliged to take out with the businessmen with the object of finding money for the treasurer of the chamber. In the end, in 1601, as an obligation contracted by the king with the Cortes when the new servicio de millones was granted, the royal exchequer came to terms with the fact that provision for the royal households and other ordinary expenses had to be allocated in a permanent manner from a fund consisting of Cruzada income and the ordinary and extraordinary servicios. This resolution was soon deferred; the following year, it was a struggle to obtain any kind of financing for the royal households at all and increases in juros and an advance on rental income from the maestrazgos [lands belonging to the military orders] were proposed.36

In short, signing asientos was the only way of ensuring that the royal treasury could supply a regular amount to the treasurer of the chamber. The greater the sum contracted in the loan, the further into the future it could be extended, and in fact, at the end of 1602, an asiento was signed with Octavio Centurión guaranteeing, in exchange for various consignations on extraordinary revenue, that Castile’s external and internal expenditure would be met for three years and that a substantial proportion of it would be assigned to the royal households. As an extra complement to this deposit, the maestro de la cámara received hefty payment orders against the arbitrio del vellón, which was preferentially assigned during these years for the maintenance of the royal households. Until 1606, these were the main financial instruments used; nonetheless, there was no way of staving off the accumulation of debts and arrears, which had swollen once more with the unfortunate demise of the Junta de Desempeño, or Recovery Committee.

As long as the cost of providing services for the royal family continued to increase, finding a more solid source of income was a matter of urgency. In fact, there was no doubt about this in the plans of the Consejo de Hacienda, and the renewed servicio de millones became the new mainstay of the royal household’s finances. After recovering the consigned securities when payments were suspended in 1607 (an amount which had been largely earmarked for neglected internal expenses, amongst which, of course, figured royal household arrears), the cost of maintaining the various households of the royal family fell on the new servicio of 17.5 millones. Although the Castilian Cortes favoured the millones being regarded as the foundation for ordinary internal expenditure when drawing up budgets, two factors did not take long to thwart this idea: the first was that the sisa tax brought in too little income, and the second, that too many consignations and orders of payment were tied to this source of income. So, once again, no fixed income had been found to maintain the royal households, nor had the deficit problem disappeared. The only procedure, albeit temporary, to prevent arrears and debts from accumulating over several financial years, was to sign asientos which brought in rapid liquidity and settled outstanding balances in the various departments of the households; but by assigning repayment to future instalments generated by the millones, an ongoing deficit was produced; this had to be faced in the medium term by declaring partial moratoria on payments to creditor bankers, the recovery of which served, precisely, to pay off debts and arrears associated with various ordinary expenses.

From 1612, the attempt to assign internal expenditure directly to the millones having failed, a new idea was applied to financing the Monarchy’s compulsory payments. Having accepted that the best (or, probably, the only) way to obtain liquidity was to resort to the businessmen, it was decided at least to avoid the proliferation of minor asientos by concentrating most of the credit financing and the corresponding consignations into a single contract, one large or general asiento, that would be binding on the royal exchequer and the moneylenders over one or even two annual payments. In this way, every general asiento signed from then on undertook to guarantee a regular stream of payments to cover the various regular internal and external outgoings facing the royal exchequer. In particular, one of the stipulations was that the banker be obliged to pay a fixed amount each month to the treasurer which he,

37 ACC (Actas de las Cortes de Castilla), vol. 24: 752, 754, 757 and 764.
for his part, had to allocate to the royal households. In the end, despite this, the funds received by the treasurer of the chamber turned out, year after year, to fall short of those initially forecast at the beginning of the financial year. When the bankers advanced a loan, the general asiento could fix the assignee (Habsburg Netherlands, royal households, and so on), as well as the consignations and interest to be received. Shortfalls were inevitable, however, as long as there was no way of ensuring that the treasurer was obliged in his budget to make identical payments for each purpose. And as soon as something unexpected occurred, or there was some war necessity abroad that had not been anticipated, the fund initially earmarked for the treasurer of the chamber, was reassigned, either partly or entirely, and used to finance the new outlay required in Italy, the Netherlands or Germany.

In short, the general asientos drawn on between 1612 and 1621 failed to guarantee the maestro de la cámara a regular supply of money or to wipe out the chronic deficit afflicting the royal households. To resolve the problems and deal with the arrears and debts, partial measures at least were adopted: making general payments of stipends whenever there was a royal progress; making sporadic cost reductions; taking out asientos for lower amounts; and seeking out various sources of extraordinary income. Yet despite everything, the finances of the royal households did not cease to be insufficient, irregular and constantly in deficit.

Conclusions

Some reflections by way of conclusion are called for now that the general characteristics of the economic foundation of the royal households of the Spanish Habsburgs during the reigns of Philip II and Philip III have been outlined. My own opinion is that, although advances have been made in recent years in economic studies of the court and royal households, we can see that numerous topics still remain to be analysed. Broadly speaking, I think future research will have to address some aspects which are largely unknown at present; to indicate some questions of interest, it would be well worthwhile studying, one by one, the economic administration and expenditure of the major departments of the household; how the wages of their members developed in relation to general price levels; how the presence of the court influenced the supply of goods and services; and what repercussions there were on price trends. In sum, I think we can feel satisfied with what we know of
the position of the royal households with respect to the royal exchequer, but there is still a good deal of ground to be covered with respect to relations between the court and the development of the economy during the period.