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The Economic Implications of the Erection of the Church of San Nicolás in Alicante as a Collegiate Church and Its Rivalry with the Parish Church of Santa María

Antonio Carrasco-Rodríguez

THE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE ERECTION OF THE CHURCH OF SAN NICOLÁS IN ALICANTE AS A COLLEGIATE CHURCH AND ITS RIVALRY WITH THE PARISH CHURCH OF SANTA MARÍA

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Abstract

This article explains the process of erecting the parish church of San Nicolás in Alicante into a Collegiate Church. The project was promoted by the city of Alicante and had the support of Philip II, who intervened with Clement VIII to establish the Collegiate Church. The economic demands and the patronage requirements of the Holy See complicated the negotiations and delayed the issuance of the papal bulls. The city of Alicante had to invest a significant amount of money throughout the process; it even donated to endow the new Collegiate Church, yet it still lost the patronage of some of its benefices. The execution of the papal bull for the establishment of the Collegiate Church was delayed due to the opposition of the parishioners of the Santa María church, which had been the city's most prestigious church until then, and because of the personal interests of the bishop of Orihuela, under whose diocese Alicante was located. The creation of the Collegiate Church of San Nicolás was just the starting point for a series of tensions that confronted the civil and religious authorities of Orihuela and Alicante throughout the 17th century.

Keywords: Alicante, collegiate church, Saint Nicholas, Saint Mary

1. Introduction

The main objective of this research work is to explain the process of creation of the Collegiate Church of San Nicolás de Alicante, and its economic implications, at the end of the sixteenth century. It is part of a broader line of research, which begins with the erection of the Collegiate Church, during the reign of Philip II, and focuses on the disputes that maintained throughout the seventeenth century the Church of San Nicolás with the Parish of Santa María, which had also aspired to get the honor of collegiality. This is a subject on which there is abundant documentation, scattered in centers such as the Diocesan Archive of Orihuela-Alicante (where the collections of the churches of San Nicolás and Santa María are concentrated), the Municipal Archive of Alicante (which, despite losing much of its documentation in the fire caused by the French bombing of the city in 1691, has preserved several books on the process of the Collegiate's erection), the Archive of the Kingdom of Valencia, the Archive of the Crown of Aragon and the Archive of the Spanish Embassy near the Holy See, in Rome. The question has hardly been treated by historiography. Martínez Morellá published a book entitled *La Iglesia de San Nicolás de Alicante* (1960) and a transcription of the bull of erection of the Collegiate Church (1979); and Sala Seva, a monograph entitled *Acontecimientos notables en la Iglesia de San Nicolás de Alicante: 1245 a 1980* (1980). These works were carried out with a mainly informative purpose and hardly went into the subject in depth. Likewise, the erection of the Collegiate Church is described in the historical chronicles of Alicante, by Bendicho (1640), Maltés (1991) and Viravens (1876).

The project of the Collegiate of Alicante was an initiative of the civil authorities of the city, supported by the clergy and the bishop of the diocese, and promoted by Philip II. Its main purposes were to increase the prestige of the city, which was booming, and to promote divine worship in it. The Prudent King, always eager to ensure the purity of the faith and the vigor of Catholicism in his dominions, did not hesitate to intercede with Pope Clement VIII to achieve the creation of the Collegiate.

Alicante was part of the Kingdom of Valencia and was the second town in hierarchy, after Orihuela, in the Governorate of the Kingdom of Valencia to the south of Jijona. In 1490, the town was granted the title of city by Ferdinand the Catholic and already then it stood out, according to the privilege, for its bay and its dock, and for hosting a good number of merchants (Olivares, 1863: 14). Throughout the 16th century, Alicante grew under the protection of the military fortress of the castle of Santa Barbara, located on top of Mount Benacantil, on whose slopes, bathed by the Mediterranean, the streets and houses of the city stretched. Its port maintained a great commercial activity, mainly as a redistribution center for overseas and Castilian products. Alicante benefited from its taxation-comparatively privileged- and the security of its walls, and attracted a good number of foreign merchants, mainly Genoese. During the reign of Philip II, the dock was expanded and although the Atlantic turn reduced commercial activity, this did not prevent the port from continuing to be the economic engine of the city (Carrasco-Rodríguez and Bernabé Gil, 2015: 1219).

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From the religious point of view, Alicante was within the limits of the diocese of Orihuela, created at the behest of Philip II in 1565 (Carrasco-Rodríguez, 2001). It had two parish churches (those of Santa María and San Nicolás) and several convents and hermitages, and the clergy was under the orders of a vicar forane, with less jurisdiction than the vicar general of the bishopric. The church of Santa María was founded by Jaime I and built on the space occupied by the old main mosque of the Muslim *madina*. Its initial construction underwent several alterations, especially after its fire in 1484. It was the the oldest and the main church (Ramos Hidalgo, 1984: 284). On the other hand, the church of San Nicolás de Bari was erected in the suburb of *Madinat Laqant*, probably on the site of the old Islamic cemetery, during the reign of Jaimes I. In his chronicle, *Libre dels feits*, San Nicolás is cited as the “*novella de fora*” church (the new church from outside), to differentiate it from “*la major*” (the main church), which was Santa María (Bujalance Silva, 2020).

The urban configuration of Alicante was articulated along two main axes. From east to west, parallel to the sea and within the walls, were the Portal Nou, Villavieja Street, Fruta Square (where the city house was located) and Mayor Street, until reaching the Portal de Elche, located on the edge of the Canicia ravine, which served as a defensive moat, on the other side of the wall. The other axis had a south-north direction, and went from the Portal de Elche, along Labradores Street to the Portal de la Huerta. The church of Santa María was located at the eastern end of the city, at the beginning of Villavieja Street, at the top of a slope, and from its square one could see the port and the beach on the other side of the wall. The church of San Nicolás had a better location, as it was near the intersection of the two axes, in the center of the city, between Mayor Street, where the knights and honorable citizens resided, and Labradores Street, where the residences of the main businessmen were concentrated. Outside the walls, two suburbs grew, San Antón – to the north – and

San Francisco – to the west –, where the workers of the orchards and the sea respectively resided (Ramos Hidalgo, 1990).

The municipal government of Alicante was elected annually through the system of insaculation, established in 1459. It consisted of the justice, four jurors, the syndic, the “*racional*” (accountant), the “*almotacén*” (market inspector), the “*sobrecequero*” (responsible for managing the water for irrigation) and the “*clavario*” (treasurer), in addition to other minor positions. There was also a “*Consell*” (Council), made up of several dozen people, which represented the common interests of the city (Alberola Romá, 1990).

Alicante maintained a more or less veiled struggle with Orihuela, which was the political, administrative, ecclesiastical, and cultural capital of the southern lands of the kingdom of Valencia. Since its incorporation into the Crown of Aragon, this area was articulated administratively with the creation of a Governorate and a General Bailiwick, both based in Orihuela and independent of their Valencian counterparts. The head of the first, the “*portantveus de general governador ultra Sexonam*” (governor), was the executive arm of royal power and the highest judicial and military authority in the territory. He resided in the city of Low Segura River because of the military value of a place that was on the border with Castile. However, over the years, the growing importance of Alicante led to the creation of a subrogate or delegate of the governor, who acted on his behalf when he was not present. On the other hand, the General Bailiwick was also located in Orihuela. However, the need to streamline the management of the Crown’s fiscal rights determined the creation of two Patrimonial Boards, with headquarters in Orihuela and Alicante. The latter was presided over by the local bailiff of Alicante. Therefore, gradually, although the differences in hierarchy remained, an administrative splitting emerged. Alicante accepted its secondary position, but its desire to match Orihuela remained latent since its promotion from “*villa*” (town) to city. During the 16th century, the military value of the city of Benacantil grew in a context marked by the continuous Berber pirate incursions and war conflicts in the Mediterranean, while Orihuela’s strategic importance as a border town with Castile, which was no longer a natural threat, declined. In addition, the reinforcement of monarchical authority curbed the bellicose Orihuela nobility, which until then had been a destabilizing component. And little by little, the political center of gravity in the south of the kingdom of Valencia shifted towards Alicante. In addition, Alicante greatly surpassed Orihuela in economic terms, thanks to its port and commercial activities, which almost continuously required the presence of the general bailiff in the town of Benacantil (Bernabé Gil, 1990). And although Orihuela managed to reinforce its institutional hegemony with the creation of the bishopric (Carrasco, 2001) and a university (Martínez Gomis, 1987), the demographic and economic growth led the civil authorities of Alicante to initiate an offensive to be equal in honors and power to the city of the Low Segura River during the final years of the reign of Philip II. In this

context are inserted the actions related to the intention of obtaining the splitting of the position of lawyer and fiscal attorney of the General Bailiwick, so that there would be one in Alicante with the same rank as the one in Orihuela, and the negotiations aimed at the creation of the Collegiate Church.

Before beginning the analysis of the process of erection of the Collegiate Church of San Nicolás, we reproduce a fragment of a memorial presented in 1592 to the Archbishop of Valencia, Juan de Ribera, in which the authorities of Alicante described the city:

Que dicha ciudad de Alicante es de población de mil y quinientos moradores, como son algunos señores de lugares, muchos cavalleros, ciudadanos y mercaderes, y es uno de los más importantes puerto y plaza que Su Magestad tiene en estas partes, y adonde concurre el mayor trato y comercio que ay en la mayor parte de nuestra España. Con su castillo de homenaje puesto en orden militar, con su guarda ordinaria de noche y de día, artillería, municiones y provisiones, por ser como es la llave de este reino. Del qual castillo, por su antigüidad y qualidad, an sido alcaydes y castellanos señores de título, como lo es hoy el conde de Elda, y su tenencia provehida en sujetos militares. Y tiene muy grande territorio y jurisdicción en los quales están fundados los lugares de Monforte, Agost, Busot, Mujamel, Sant Joan, Benimagrell y la Villanueva, que se funda al presentem llamada Villafranqueza, que promete qualidad y cantidad y con más de seyscientos casales, con sus torres separadas de los dichos lugares, lo que se refiere no embargante sean cosas públicas y notorias.

Que en dicha ciudad hay fundados quatro monasterios de los quatro órdenes mendicantes, sive otro monasterio y convento de monjas franciscas descalzas, so invocación de la santa Verónica, de mucha qualidad y santos nombres; sive muchas cofadrías y hermitas, y lo temporal compuesto por oficios de diversas artes mecánicas, moradas y formadas con sus clavaros, mayores, pendones y banderas a exemplo e imitación de los oficios mecánicos de la presente ciudad. Lo que se halla en pocas ciudades de este reino o en ninguna.

Que, en dichas dos iglesias parroquiales, la una so invocación de Nuestra Señora y la otra so invocación del bienaventurado San Nicolás, se celebran los oficios divinos con mucha auctoridad y las missas conventuales con diácono y subdiácono, con asistencia en el coro de veinte clérigos en cada una de ellas, órgano, capilla formada con su maestro y menestres, todos conducidos y asalariados.

Que en dicha ciudad y dichas dos parrochias concurrirán de comunión más de ocho mil personas, y que para la administración de los sacramentos en cada una de las dichas dos iglesias hay fundados dos beneficios curados, a los quales es anexa la dicha administración de sacramentos¹.

2. The Creation of the Project for the Erection of the Collegiate Church

As we have already indicated, the city of Alicante had two parish churches in the 16th century: Santa María, which was the first in dignity and had ended on the outskirts of the walled urban center, and San Nicolás, which was located right in the center of the city. In 1551, the civil authorities and the clergy of both churches requested the bishop of the diocese of Cartagena (to which Alicante belonged, given that the bishopric of Orihuela was created in 1565) to set the maximum number of clergies that could be benefited in each of them, since their number was growing, and they feared that the income was not enough to provide them with a decent livelihood. The prelate, Esteban de Almeida, acceded to the request and established by decree that the churches could not have more than 25 clergymen each, and that their election should be made among the priests of Alicante, preferring graduates over non-graduates, and among graduates, those with a higher degree; and not having graduates, those who had been in the priesthood for a longer time. The episcopal decree suggests, on the one hand, the interest in accessing to the benefits and chaplaincies of the Alicante temples and, on the other hand, the limitation of their revenues².

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The project of the Collegiate Church was a latent idea among the authorities and the clergy of Alicante since the creation of the bishopric of Orihuela. In fact, we know that, in 1585, they managed to convince the “*pavorde*” (the first dignity) and the chapter of the Cathedral of Orihuela to write to Philip II to beg him to favor the city in its purpose of getting the erection of one of its two parish churches as a collegiate church³. Nevertheless, the chapter did not always have such a complacent attitude... At the beginning of 1592, it begged the pope for the suppression of the four simple benefices and the two loans that existed in the churches of Santa María and San Nicolás of Alicante, to annex the revenues to the chapter’s endowment of the Cathedral. Philip II interceded before Clement VIII to deny the request, arguing that having these prebends in Alicante encouraged the locals of the city and its district to dedicate themselves to study and virtue, and allowed to make the

1 Archivo Municipal de Alicante [AMA], Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 4, ff. 15-15v.

2 Archivo de Santa María [ASM], *Ferma de Dret del clero, vicaris, y capellans de Santa Maria de la ciutat de Alacant contra lo Capítol y canonges de Sant Nicolau de la dita ciutat*, ff. 89-90.

3 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 2, ff. 46-47.

divine worship with “*decentia*” (decency)⁴. Months before, on October 13, 1591, the Council of Alicante agreed to carry out “*lo que molts anys ha, está determinat per esta ciutat, en que es procuràs que una de les ysglesies parrochials de la dita present ciutat se erigís en Colegial*” (what the city has been planning for many years, which is to try to get one of the parish churches of the city to be erected as a Collegiate Church)⁵.

From that moment on, preparations began, which intensified when the news of the king’s refusal to accept the suppression of the benefices and loans of the churches of Alicante and the union of their revenues to the chapter’s endowment of the Cathedral of Orihuela became known. At the beginning of April 1592, the justice and the jurors of Alicante wrote to José Guerra, archdeacon of the Cathedral of Segorbe and, at the same time, benefice holder in the church of Santa María de Alicante, to commission him to go to the court in representation of the city, to request the king the erection of one of the two parish churches in Collegiate⁶. The work of Archdeacon Guerra was key to the success of the project, as, in addition to being the procurator of Alicante for this business, he contributed decisively to the preparation of the documentation of the new structure of the Collegiate. The presentation of the initiative must have taken place at the beginning of July 1592, since Philip II asked the viceroy of the kingdom of Valencia, the Marquis of Aytona, and the archbishop of Valencia, Juan de Ribera, for their respective opinions about the erection of the Collegiate Church⁷. The prelate must have consulted the authorities of Alicante because they sent him a memorial, in which they explained in detail the situation of the city, the spiritual benefits that could be derived from the creation of the Collegiate and the plan they had for its organization and its financial endowment⁸. The archbishop warmly welcomed the initiative and replied to the Alicante officials, explaining the objections he found in it and making various proposals to improve the administration of the sacraments and divine worship⁹. And in mid-August 1592, the viceroy, the governor of Orihuela and the archbishop of Valencia communicated to Philip II that they approved the claim of the Collegiate Church¹⁰.

While Guerra was still at the court, the authorities of Alicante went to the Royal Audience of Valencia, presented the project, and obtained its approval. In addition, they received from this institution the order to cover all the expenses that the negotiation would cause (Martínez Morellá, 1960: 26). The efforts of José Guerra in the court finally bore fruit on

4 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 4, f. 11.

5 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 4, f. 10.

6 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 4, f. 12.

7 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 4, ff. 13-14.

8 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 4, ff. 15-16v.

9 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 4, ff. 17-18.

10 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 4, ff. 19-20.

November 12, 1592, since Philip II, being in Logroño, signed the request to Clement VII of the establishment of a Collegiate in Alicante¹¹. The Archdeacon of Segorbe, to whom the Alicante authorities owed money from his salary and *per diem*, closed the last details and left Madrid on January 5, 1593. He arrived in Valencia six days later, after a tortuous journey caused by torrential rains and difficult roads. From the capital of the kingdom, during the months of March and April 1593, he continued working on the project, writing letters, and drawing up a “forma y traça” (form and structure) of the new Collegiate Church¹². Guerra understood that the revenues from the benefices and loans of San Nicolás and Santa María (which amounted to about 1,000 pounds) would be insufficient to complete the endowment of the new Collegiate and recommended to the Alicante officials to make a perpetual donation of another 1,000 annual pounds, from the city’s own assets and revenues to the chapter’s endowment of the future Collegiate¹³.

The Alicante Council accepted the donation proposal in September of that year 1593 (Bendicho, 2018: 211), but its management at the court remained pending. During the following months, the authorities of the city of Benacantil focused on refining the project. At the end of November, they decided to settle the matter of choosing which church would become the Collegiate. They entrusted the decision to four clergymen of the Cathedral of Orihuela: the sacristan Francisco Despuig, the archdeacon of Alicante Melchor Punter, and the canons Jaime Amat and Gerónimo Aracil. A couple of weeks later, on December 5, the commissioners formally communicated, through letter, that the church of San Nicolás was their choice for the erection in Collegiate and recommended to the city officials to obtain the royal approval of the municipal donation of the 1,000 pounds. They justified their choice as follows:

Los senyors comisaris [...] foren de parer que la esglesia parrochial de Sent Nicolau era la mes commoda per a la dita erecció de Collegial, així per lo edifici tenir disposició per a les processons claustrals, com per lo lloc a on esta edificada, lo qual te commoditat per a tot lo poble y per a les matines que se han de dir de nit y per a la administració dels sacraments al malalts, així de nit com de día, tot lo qual no te tanta disposició en la esglesia de Santa Maria, que per la occasio de la plaçeta seria de gran inconvenient exercir les dites coses en la dita esglesia de Santa Maria per a tota la ciutat, y haver de exir los capellans en hivern de nit apres de matines y per estar apartada dita esglesia de Santa Maria no participarien tants de la solemnitat dels officis divinals

11 Archivo de la Embajada de España cerca de la Santa Sede [AEES], bundle 150. AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, f. 6v.

12 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 4, ff. 22-58.

13 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 4, ff. 29-29v.

com podrán participar en la esglesia de Sent Nicolau¹⁴.

The correspondence between the commissioners and the city officials continued throughout January 1594, aiming to enhance the documentation they intended to present to the pope. Meanwhile, at the court, the syndic of Alicante tried to reactivate the request for the municipal donation. As a result of his efforts, in April 1594, the monarch consulted the viceroy on the matter. The dispatch of a new procurator to the court, Nicolás Martínez Clavero, expedited the matter and, at the end of August, Philip II acceded to the request of the city officials, giving order to the governor to demand the payment of 2,250 pounds for the right of amortization and seal of the perpetual donation to the Collegiate Church¹⁵.

In November 1594, the city officials obtained that the clergymen who had the benefices and loans of Santa María and San Nicolás agreed to renounce their revenues so that they could be merged to the chapter's endowment of the new Collegiate¹⁶. And before Christmas, procedures sped up. On December 20, the municipal authorities committed to paying all expenses arising in connection with the establishment of the Collegiate¹⁷ and the clergy of San Nicolás and Santa María, gathered in chapter in the presence of the vicar foran, Tomás Pérez, appointed procurators to negotiate in Rome the erection of one of the two parishes in Collegiate. Those chosen to represent them were the Orihuela presbyter Nicolás Martínez Clavero, and two clerics residing in Rome, Dr. Miguel Blasco and Francisco Candel. A day later, on December 21, the municipal authorities appointed Martínez Clavero, Blasco and Candel, and also Francisco Alcántara, who, like the last two, resided in Rome, as procurators of the city for the business of the Collegiate¹⁸. That same day, the municipal authorities appeared before the bishop of Orihuela, José Esteve, to choose the candidates that would be presented to the pope, with the mediation of the king, for the different prebends that were to be created in the new Collegiate. According to the Alicante proposal, it was to have three dignities, dean, precentor, and sacristan (with annexed canonries), eleven canonries, four hebdomadary curates, and one deacon and one subdeacon benefices. The municipal officials were responsible for proposing

14 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 2, ff. 22-27. "The commissioners believed that the parish church of San. Nicolás was the most comfortable for the erection of the Collegiate, because the building was better prepared to organize cloistered processions and because the place where it was built was more comfortable for the whole town, and because matins have to be said at night and for the administration of sacraments to the sick, and for all this the location of the church of Santa María is not so good, and it would be a great inconvenience for the whole town, and the chaplains would have to leave in winter, at night, after matins, and because the church of Santa María was far away, they would not participate as much in the solemnity of the divine offices as they could participate in the church of San Nicolás".

15 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 4, ff. 29-29v and volume 2, ff. 32-34v.

16 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, ff. 12-15v, 17-20 y 22-25v.

17 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 3-3v.

18 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, ff. 1-4 and 61-65.

the dignities, ten canonries (all except the penitentiary) and the deacon and subdeacon benefices. Pedro Ferrández de Mesa was proposed for the deanery, with the condition that he graduate in Canons; Gerónimo Bernat was nominated for precentor; Bartolomé Moltó was elected for the dignity of sacristan; and among the list of candidates for the canonries appeared the name of Nicolás Martínez Clavero, the procurator who had to travel to Rome to negotiate the erection of the Collegiate. The bishop, for his part, presented Tomás Pérez, vicar foran of Alicante, for the penitentiary canonry, and proposed the candidates for the four hebdomadary curates¹⁹.

3. The Steps Taken at the Holy See up to the Acceptance of the Erection of the Collegiate Church

On January 16, 1595, the civil authorities of Alicante handed Nicolás Martínez Clavero the instructions he was to follow for the negotiation of the erection of the Collegiate. The procurator was to contact His Majesty's ambassador in Rome, the Duke of Sessa, and give him the king's letters he had for him. He was to beg the pope for the erection of one of the parishes of Alicante as a collegiate church, in accordance with the supplication he was carrying. He had to try that His Holiness granted the patronage of all the dignities, canonries, and benefices to the officials of Alicante, and that the vacancies were provided in natives of the city and its district. And they warned him that, if he had any doubt of importance, he should consult them²⁰.

Martínez Clavero left Alicante a day later, on January 17, and after a hectic journey, with a stopover in Genoa, he arrived in the Eternal City on April 1. In the meantime, Philip II consulted the project of the Collegiate Church with the bishop of Orihuela. In a letter dated February 20, the bishop expressed his belief that was erroneous to provide the Collegiate's prebends and benefices of the Collegiate only to natives of Alicante and its district, and that, if they were not "sufficient", they should be assigned to other natives of the kingdom, giving priority to those born in the diocese of Orihuela. On March 18, the king consulted this question with the Council of Aragon and decided to write to the prelate thanking him for the indication. He also took the opportunity to send two letters to his ambassador in Rome. The first was addressed to the Duke of Sessa. In it, the monarch indicated that he had decided to favor the pope's establishment of one of the parishes of Alicante in Collegiate, after agreeing with the authorities of the city and with the bishop of Orihuela the form, the endowment, and the candidates to occupy the prebends of the new church. He indicated to him that he should specify to the pope that these candidates

¹⁹ AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, ff. 42-58.

²⁰ AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, ff. 66-67v.

should be natives of Alicante and its district, and that, if there were not enough, those appointed had to be born in the bishopric of Orihuela. He asked him to give credit to the procurator of Alicante, Nicolás Martínez Clavero. He indicated to him that the chosen one to be Collegiate was the church of Santa María. And he commented to him, finally, that he was writing the same to His Holiness, Clement VIII. We believe that the choice of Santa María by the monarch was a mistake, an oversight, since the one recommended by the Alicante officials was San Nicolás and, finally, it was this church that was erected in Collegiate. However, we have not found any subsequent letter from Philip II to the Duke of Sessa (which must have existed), in which he warned him that the chosen one was San Nicolás. It is also possible that the choice of Santa María was his initial will, since it was the oldest and largest church in the city²¹.

After his arrival in Rome, Martínez Clavero contacted the other procurators and waited for the reception of the documentation by mail. While waiting, in May, he wrote to the Alicante officials suggesting that they should have a cardinal protector and that it was necessary for them to write to some of those who had influence over the pope, such as Cardinal San Severina. He also recommended sending gifts like honey, gloves from Valencia, Cordovan leather from Murcia, or nougats from Jijona and Alicante, to facilitate dealings. Likewise, he took care of obtaining money on credit on behalf of the Alicante authorities²².

‘The Alicante officials’ package arrived in Rome on June 7. Immediately, Martínez Clavero delivered the letters addressed by the authorities to the procurators Candel, Blasco, and Alcántara. On June 10, the syndic managed to meet with the Duke of Sessa, who, after reading the monarch’s letter, assured him that he would treat the business “*com a cosa propia sua*” (as his own affair). Hopeful, Martínez Clavero wrote to the Alicante municipal authorities updating them on the progress and to alerting them that he had the impression that there would be difficulties in obtaining the patronage of the first dignity, the deanery, which was usually left, by the rules of Chancery, in the hands of His Holiness or the bishop, depending on the months of vacancy. Initially, the Duke could not meet with Clement VIII, because he was resting in his summer residence in Monte Cavallo.²³ Later, the Collegiate matter was put on hold because the ambassador received another priority royal assignment, the secularization of the Seo del Salvador of Zaragoza²⁴. According to Martínez Clavero, the Duke of Sessa could not risk angering the pope. He had to ask for the patronage of the Seo of Zaragoza for His Majesty and to beg for the Collegiate Church,

21 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, ff. 68-70v.

22 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, ff. 72-75.

23 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, ff. 76-77.

24 The bull of secularization of the Cathedral of Zaragoza was finally issued on July 17, 1604, by Clement VIII (García, 2010: 10).

whose patronage was to fall to the city, was not an appropriate strategy. Moreover, Clement VIII and the cardinals postponed all the business of the Curia to focus on a matter of great political scope, the “blessing of the king of Navarre”, referring to the absolution of the King of France, Henry IV, whose ceremony took place on September 17 (Tellechea Idígoras, 2001: 63-64)²⁵.

Finally, on October 7, the Duke of Sessa presented the supplication for the erection of the Collegiate of Alicante to Clement VIII. His Beatitude forwarded the matter to Cardinal Girolamo Mattei, who was in charge of the Congregation of the Council. However, the efforts of Martínez Clavero, who was assisted by Dr. Blasco, suffered a new delay because the Cardinal fell ill when the negotiations were nearing completion. Once recovered, Mattei accepted the request from Alicante and the Congregation of the cardinals decreed the creation of the Collegiate on January 11, 1596, but introducing some modifications with respect to the original request. In the decree it was specified that the acts of worship related to the memory of the deceased should be carried out, not in the Collegiate, but in the church where they were buried, so as not to go against the last will of the testators. And, in addition, to the serious detriment of the city of Alicante, the Holy See reserved the patronage of the deanery and five canonries, leaving the city with the provision of the other two dignities and the six remaining canonries, and the bishop of Orihuela reserved the nomination of the four hebdomadary priests and the beneficiaries of the diaconate and subdiaconate²⁶.

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The news reached Alicante and municipal authorities did not take kindly the division of the patronage of the prebends of the Collegiate. On the contrary, they blamed it on Nicolás Martínez Clavero, who had been expressly instructed to ensure that the provision of all the prebends had to remain in the hands of the city. They revoked his procuration and appointed Francisco Candel and Francisco Alcántara as representatives for the Collegiate matter, forgetting Miguel Blasco, who had actively collaborated with Martínez Clavero in the negotiations. The measure upset the Bishop of Orihuela, who demanded that the Alicante officials back down and trust Blasco again²⁷. José Esteve’s letter probably had the effects expected by the prelate, since Martínez Clavero and Blasco continued to make representations in Rome regarding the establishment of the Collegiate.

On March 26, the Collegiate’s request was approved by the pope and on April 16, it arrived at the Apostolic Datary. The issuance of the papal bull was pending the payment of the “*componenda*”, which was the amount paid for some bulls and licenses whose rights

25 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, ff. 80-80v and 83.

26 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, ff. 85-85v, 89-89v and 91-91v.

27 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, f. 90.

did not have a fixed rate. In the case of the rescript of the Collegiate, the *componenda* amounted to about 6,000 ducats of gold from the Apostolic Chamber, whose main concepts were broken down as follows: 1,100 for the union of eleven benefices to the new chapter's endowment of the Collegiate; 1,700 for the possibility of the capitulars wearing habits and capes; 1,700 for granting the prebends to natives of Alicante and its district; 500 for the patronage; and 800 for the union of the churches²⁸.

4. Payment of the Bull for the Erection of the Collegiate Church of San Nicolás

The procurator Martínez Clavero could not obtain on credit the 6,000 ducats requested by the Datary, and the expedition of the papal bull was indefinitely postponed. In May and June of 1596, Clavero wrote to the Alicante authorities that, not having the money to pay the *componenda*, the Duke of Sessa had not intervened to expedite the issuance of the bull. He believed that with the duke's intervention, the cost might be reduced to about 4,000 ducats. Clavero and Blasco remained in Rome, hoping to receive the funds needed to make the payment, but they did not arrive. In October 1596, Blasco left Rome for Spain, leaving Clavero behind, still waiting for the funds to pay for the papal bull²⁹.

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In the meantime, the Alicante officials, who were very annoyed with the division of the patronage, with the efforts of Clavero and Blasco, and with the amount requested by the Datary, begged Philip II to intercede with the pope for a reduction in the fee. Their request took effect, since, at the end of November of 1596, the king wrote a letter to the Duke of Sessa, ordering him to intercede before His Holiness so that the settlement would be reduced³⁰. The intervention of the ambassador in Rome resulted in the Datary fixing the new price of the tax at 3,000 gold ducats from the Apostolic Chamber, just half of what was initially requested. At the end of February 1597, Martínez Clavero wrote to the civil authorities of Alicante to inform them of the good news and to ask them to send him the credit in three bills of exchange, one for 2,000 ducats, and two others for 500, in case they could be obtained at a lower price and to avoid the greed of the cardinals and the work of the spies or informers that the Datary had scattered around the court. Finally, Martínez Clavero left Rome and returned to Alicante on December 14, without the bull of the Collegiate³¹.

With the price fixed at 3,000 ducats, the civil authorities of Alicante wanted to get the money for the settlement using the annual allocation they had to redeem censuses.

28 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, ff. 85-85v, 89-89v and 91-91v. Book 5, volume 2, f. 176.

29 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, ff. 93-95, 97.

30 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, f. 101.

31 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 4, volume 3, f. 111. And Book 5, volume 2, ff. 37-41.

However, in July 1597, Philip II ordered them to use the money for another more pressing need: the purchase of arms for the defense of the city. This delayed the payment of the compromise until the following year, 1598³².

Wishing to solve the problem, on February 21, 1598, the monarch wrote to the Alicante officials ordering them to send Nicolás Martínez Clavero to Rome without further delay, with the 3,000 ducats of the cost of the bull, divided into the three bills of exchange. In addition, he emphasized to them that they should not try to introduce any changes in the content of the bull, since San Nicolás was to be the Collegiate and there should be no changes in the candidates named by the pope for the dignities and canonries. And, finally, he ordered them to pay Martínez Clavero the amount owed to him in per diem and other expenses derived from his journey and stay in Rome. This comment shows that the officials wanted to penalize the procurator by leaving him without collecting the amount owed to him for expenses and per diems. On the other hand, that same day, the king also wrote to the governor of the Kingdom of Valencia beyond Jijona, Álvaro Vique y Manrique, ordering him to do what was necessary so that his order was fulfilled³³.

Vique presented the royal letter to the juries on March 24 and two days later, the Alicante officials asked the leaseholder of the “*sisa mayor*” (the main trade tax) to advance them 2,000 pounds and the leaseholder of the “*sisa de la pesca*” (the tax on fishing), to give them 1,000, with the idea of using both amounts for the payment of the papal bull and not to remove censuses, which was their original designated purpose³⁴. The governor’s surrogate, Antonio Mingot, intervened on March 30 and April 2, ordering the justice and the jurors to quickly comply with the royal order, to prevent potential disorders related to the claim of the clergy and parishioners of Santa María that their church was erected in Collegiate instead of San Nicolás. In fact, on April 3, the parishioners of Santa María submitted a proposal to the jurors offering to go to Rome to obtain the papal bull (without sending Martínez Clavero) and to contribute from their own funds the 500 pounds that the journey and the procedures would cost (apart from the 3,000 that the city intended to obtain from the leaseholders of the taxes), with the condition that Santa María would be the church erected as Collegiate, as His Majesty had proposed in letters to the ambassador in Rome and to the pope. The reaction of the clergy and parishioners of San Nicolás was immediate, since the following day they presented a similar proposal to the jurors, offering to pay the 500 pounds, provided that the orders of the king and the will of the pope were fulfilled, that is, that San Nicolás be the new Collegiate church. And the

32 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, f. 1.

33 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 3-4. Álvaro Vique y Manrique was governor from 1588 to 1607. Bernabé Gil provides information on his career in this position (2008).

34 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 10-13.

parishioners of Santa María responded that same day by presenting to the jurors a new deed in which they requested that the officials stop the departure of Martínez Clavero and inform His Majesty of certain irregularities. They pointed out that the pope chose San Nicolás when the monarch had asked both the ambassador and the pope for Santa María to be selected, that the papal bull divided the patronage when it should exclusively belong to the city due to its contribution of 1,000 pounds to the chapter's endowment, and that Martínez Clavero's actions before the Collegiate's plea reached the Apostolic Datary were invalid since his mandate had been revoked by the city authorities³⁵.

A few days later, on April 13, the governor's surrogate intervened, instructing the councilors not to attempt changes in the initial nominations for the dignities and canonries of the Collegiate, which had already been approved by the pope. They were also directed to propose candidates for the chantry and a canonry, which had become vacant due to the deaths of their beneficiaries, Gerónimo Bernat and Ginés Martínez de Fresneda. On that same day, the jurors met to discuss the royal orders and the proposals of the parishioners of Santa María and San Nicolás. They decided to adhere to the king's mandates, sending Nicolás Martínez Clavero to Rome and bearing all the expenses that would arise from the procurator's journey and stay, as well as the procurement of the papal bull. In addition, they proceeded to name their candidates for the vacant chantry and canonry. Their choices were Pedro Juan Salort and Francisco Suárez Ibáñez, respectively. The case of the canonry was especially sensitive, since the pope had previously named Dr. Miguel Zaragoza, resident in Rome, for that prebend, and his procurator asked the officials to respect the will of His Holiness. The attempt was in vain since the Alicante authorities chose to exercise their patronage rights and proposed Salort for the position³⁶.

Knowing that he would have to return to Rome, Nicolás Martínez Clavero presented his accounts of the previous embassy, from his departure from Alicante, on January 17, 1595, until his return, on December 14, 1597. For this purpose, he prepared some extremely detailed tables, which included expenses such as payments for the preparation of the documentation presented at the Curia, tips given to the cardinals' servants, the rent of carriages and houses, and the procurator's own daily allowances. The payments made totaled 13,044 reals. Of this sum, Martínez Clavero had only reimbursed 3,840, which meant the city owed him a balance of 9,204 reals (767 escudos of gold)³⁷.

35 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 6-8, 14-18, 20-24v.

36 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 26-36.

37 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 37-41.

While all this was going on, the leaseholders of the major tax and the fishing tax managed to gather, not without some difficulties, the amounts demanded by the officials, and handed them to the city's treasurer. On April 18, 1598, the authorities ordered the treasurer to deliver to a merchant named Marco Antonio Interiano the 3,000 pounds from the taxes and another 224 pounds more for the payment of the expedition of the bull. Interiano received the 3,224 pounds (equivalent to 2,480 gold ducats of the Apostolic Chamber) and gave them three bills of exchange so that Martínez Clavero could get the cash in cash in Rome³⁸.

On April 20, the municipal authorities of Alicante ordered the writing of two letters: one addressed to the Duke of Sessa, in which they pleaded for assistance to Nicolás Martínez Clavero in obtaining the papal bulls in a term of three months set by His Majesty; and another to Carlo Michele Bonelli, the Cardinal Alessandrino³⁹, explaining that they had nominated Pedro Juan Salort for the vacant chantry, and not the pope's choice, Miguel Zaragoza. On the same day, they granted powers to Martínez Clavero to beg the pope for the appointment of Salort, and two days later, they issued him a new procuration so that he could beg His Holiness for the appointment of Francisco Juan Ibáñez, for the canonry that had become vacant due to the death of Ginés Martínez de Fresneda⁴⁰.

Meanwhile, at the court, representatives of the parishioners of Santa María and San Nicolás presented supplications to the monarch in favor of the erection of their church as a Collegiate. On May 10, Prince Philip, on behalf of his father, decided to write to the municipal authorities of Alicante, ordering them to temporarily suspend Martínez Clavero's journey to Rome if he hadn't already left. He also commanded them to deposit the 3,000 pounds, intended for the cost of the papal bulls, at the Table of Deposits in Valencia, so that, from there, the funds could be sent to Rome when he decided to do so. In this way, he wanted to have time to study the case and make a final decision about which church should be elevated to the status of Collegiate. The news reached Alicante around ten days later and on May 27, the parish of Santa María made its procurator appear before the justice and the jurors of the city to request the compliance with the royal order of suspension of the journey. The officials replied that once Martínez Clavero, who was currently in Valencia, returned to Alicante, they would take the necessary steps to fulfill the royal command. But Martínez Clavero ended up leaving in the direction of Rome⁴¹.

38 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 42-47.

39 The Alicante authorities could not have known that Cardinal Alessandrino would no longer have any influence on this issue, since he had just died, victim of a short illness, a few days before, on March 28, 1598.

40 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 48-53v.

41 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 57-60v.

During the wait for the monarch's resolution, Miguel Zaragoza, having failed in his attempt to secure the chantry, appeared before the justice and the jurors of the city. He informed them that he had managed to get Clement VIII to appoint him as the dean of the new Collegiate. He requested them to respect the provision, since, according to the approved papal bull regarding the erection, the appointment was within the jurisdiction of the Holy See. However, the Alicante officials did not accept the Zaragoza's appointment, appealed against it in Rome and sought the monarch's support for their preferred candidate, Joaquín Mingot⁴².

The royal resolution reached the city of Benacantil during the second half of July, as Prince Philip signed a royal letter dated July 8, in which he notified that, after reviewing all the existing documentation on the erection of the Collegiate since 1592, he had decided that the Church of San Nicolás was the one chosen, as Clement VIII had granted. He ordered the lifting of the embargo on the 3,000 pounds held at the Table in Valencia. The prince emphasized that his decision was final, and the parishioners of both churches should accept it and find peace⁴³.

Martínez Clavero arrived in Rome, via Genoa, and handed over to the Duke of Sessa the letter in which the monarch instructed him to facilitate the acquisition of the Collegiate's bull. Shortly after, the ambassador received a new letter from the king, ordering him to suspend all the negotiations related to the Collegiate until further notice. The new mandate arrived in September when Martínez Clavero presented another letter in which the still Prince Philip informed him of the definitive choice of San Nicolás. He instructed the duke to intercede before His Holiness to obtain the papal bull at the most favorable price. The arrival of this letter likely coincided with the death of Philip II, which occurred on September 13, 1598. The negotiations at the Apostolic See were delayed more than expected because there was a dispute over a canonry whose patronage the Apostolic See wanted to take away from the city. Once this problem was resolved, Martínez Clavero, with the help of the ambassador's secretary, Pedro Ximénez de Murillo, obtained the 2,480 ducats of the bills of exchange on April 26, 1599. The negotiation of the final price with the Datary took a few more months. Finally, the papal bull was issued, dated April 1, 1596, at the end of August 1599⁴⁴.

42 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 61-62v, 183-186v, 190.

43 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, f. 63.

44 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 64-66, 73. We know the detailed accounts of the cost of the bull thanks to the breakdown made by Juan Borgio, an official of the Agency who collaborated with Martínez Clavero in the request. The bull for the erection of the Collegiate Church of San Nicolás was transcribed by Martínez Morellá (1979).

5. The Execution of the Bull of the Collegiate Church of San Nicolás

The final price of the expedition was 4,060 ducats, which forced Martínez Clavero to ask for money on credit in Rome, to a merchant named Francisco Martínez, with the dual aim of completing the payment of the bulls of the erection of the Collegiate (1,500 ducats) and to pay those of the appointments of the sacristan and the canons (262 ducats). At the beginning of October, the procurator from Alicante began his return journey to the city of Benacantil, having fulfilled his duties but empty-handed, since the bulls were sent to the Valencia, entrusted to another businessman named Marco Antonio Figinio. He received them on September 21, and he wrote to the Alicante officials, informing them that they owed him 1,762 ducats for the loan from Rome and an additional 500 more for the transportation of the documents to Valencia⁴⁵.

With the backing of Bishop Esteve, the Alicante authorities sought permission from King Philip III to use a portion of the 3,000 pounds, which were set aside for redeeming censuses in 1599, to pay the 1,500 ducats needed to recover the bull of the Collegiate. The monarch authorized it by letter signed on October 30, which was sent to the officials by the secretary of the Council of Aragon on November 4⁴⁶.

The justice and the jurors could not obey the royal order, probably because, late in November, the 3,000 annual pounds had already been spent on the redemption of censuses. Instead, they wrote to the monarch making Nicolás Martínez Clavero responsible for the loss of the patronage and that the issuance of the bull had cost 2,300 pounds more than the procurator had anticipated. Philip III answered them by letter on January 24, 1600, exonerating Nicolás Martínez Clavero and ordering them “without further delay, reply or consultation” to pay the 1,700 ducats owed to Figinio, so that the bull for the erection of the collegiate church could be executed as soon as possible. The king also wrote about it to the bishop of Orihuela, José Esteve, and to the governor, Álvaro Vique. The governor received the royal letter on February 10 and urged the Alicante officials to comply with the king’s order⁴⁷.

On February 11, the jurors asked the leaseholders of the main tax, the fishing tax, and the bakery tax to deliver to the city treasurer the following amounts: 2,000 pounds, 1,000 pounds and 500 pounds respectively⁴⁸. On February 22, the city officials requested the money from the treasurer and proceeded to make the payment to Figinio, giving him 1,000 pounds in cash and the rest in bills of exchange. Figinio faced difficulties in cashing

45 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 67-69.

46 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 70-72.

47 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 73-77, 196.

48 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 78-87.

some of these notes, so on March 8th, he informed the officials that he wouldn't release the bulls until the full payment was made. The matter became even more complicated because the bulls of the Collegiate and those of the prebendaries were all in the same package, and Figinio did not want to release it until the city and all the canons had made their respective payments, and there were still beneficiaries who had not made the payments. In addition, time was passing, and the interest was growing, and Figinio asked for 128 pounds more. Finally, to avoid further delays, the municipal authorities opted to pay them, awaiting the bull's delivery⁴⁹.

The erection of the Collegiate seemed imminent, but new obstacles arose. Although they had not been able to take possession, the dean and the canons of the Collegiate Church claimed payment of their revenues from the date of the bull (April 1, 1596), amounting to about 4,000 pounds. Moreover, Bishop Esteve used two vacant benefits annexed to the Collegiate, totaling about 600 ducats, to grant them to his brothers. City officials wanted to address both issues before executing the bull to avoid additional costs. So, on March 23rd, they wrote to King Philip III, requesting his intervention, and the next day they reached out to the Council of Aragon for support on the claims of the prebendaries and to prevent the papal appointment of Miguel Zaragoza as Dean of the Collegiate. On their end, the canons and the bishop complained to the viceroy, the Count of Benavente, requesting that the bulls be sent to the bishop. The viceroy wanted more time to understand the situation, so on March 27 he ordered Figinio not to send the bull to the Alicante officials. The city officials reacted by writing to Governor Vique on March 29, to report what they considered an injustice and a great harm to the city. Tensions in Alicante heightened with the bishop's arrival. Esteve decided to perform the consecration of the holy oils in San Nicolás on March 30, the feast of Holy Thursday. The city officials ordered the music chapel (created with funding from the city) not to attend the ceremony in San Nicolás, but the one at Santa María, to whose church the officials were going to go because it was the main church of the city (the bull of the Collegiate Church had not been executed). The bishop reacted by ordering the choir master to go to San Nicolás, under penalty of excommunication and a fine of 500 ducats. In response, the jurors threatened the choir master with another fine if he obeyed the prelate. Esteve reacted by announcing in San Nicolás the excommunication of the justice and two jurors, and these, to avoid greater scandals, accepted that the music chapel would go to the consecration of the oils and to the other acts that the bishop would carry out in San Nicolás. And on March 31, Good Friday, the officials decided to write again to His Majesty, and planned to send the chief juror, Bernardo Mingot, to the capital of the kingdom, to meet with the viceroy and the archbishop of Valencia⁵⁰.

49 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 111-113.

50 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 126-137, 146-148v, 160-165, 189-190v.

As the officials were preparing the letters, on March 31, they received a pleasant surprise. The mail of Valencia brought them a package sent by the viceroy containing the bull of the Collegiate and a letter in which he ordered them to forward the bull to Governor Vique. The officials made copies of the bull and on April 2, the feast of Easter Sunday, sent the original document to the governor⁵¹. The following day, they sent one of the copies to the sacristan of the Cathedral of Orihuela, Francisco Despuig, asking for his opinion on its contents. Four days later, on April 7, Despuig sent them a memorial confirming that the bull could not be executed and that the request of the prebendaries should be referred to the pope⁵².

Governor Vique tried to mediate to facilitate the execution of the bull. He met with representatives of the prebendaries of the future Collegiate and learned that they would be satisfied if the city gave them a third of their revenues (4 months per year) from the date of the bull. On April 6, he wrote to the king informing him that he had the bull of the Collegiate and that he knew the way to settle the differences with the beneficiaries and the bishop of Orihuela. Two days later, on April 8, the governor wrote to the Alicante officials to inform them of the potential agreement. In addition, in the letter, he mentioned that he had spoken with the bishop, who had told him that he had discussed the issue of the benefices granted to his brothers with the Council of Aragon and had gotten approval. Vique asked the bishop not to take any actions until he knew the result of his proposal to the Alicante officials. For all this, the governor recommended them to accept the arrangement with the prebendaries and the appointment of the bishop's brothers to avoid the expenses that would arise from dealing with these issues at the Holy See⁵³.

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While the Alicante officials evaluated their options, the Bishop of Orihuela was not idle. On the contrary, after learning of the arrival of the bull, on April 13 he again threatened the municipal authorities with excommunication and a fine of 1,000 ducats if they did not give him the bull within three days. On that same day, the officials informed Governor Vique about the bishop's threat, stating that they had appealed to Archbishop Ribera and suggesting that Bishop Esteve was driven more by personal interests than a genuine desire to see the royal mandate concerning the Collegiate's establishment fulfilled. The bishop, in turn, went ahead with his threat, excommunicating the Alicante authorities⁵⁴.

Amidst all these events, Alicante's chief juror, Bernardo Mingot, traveled to Valencia to meet the viceroy and the archbishop. He delivered the letters he carried for them and detailed the events surrounding Maundy Thursday, emphasizing a weighty argument:

51 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 136-137.

52 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 149, 151-151v.

53 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 154-154v, 197.

54 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 152-154v.

the city had already spent over 40,000 ducats on the establishment of the Collegiate Church⁵⁵.

Meanwhile, at court, on April 17, Philip III wrote a letter to Governor Vique, instructing him to promptly meet with the bishop in his residence. The king urged them to jointly review the Collegiate's bull and the arising issues around it. He recommended that they invite representatives from the city and the prebendaries of the Collegiate to work together in resolving the existing disputes. Philip III specifically asked the governor to send him an authenticated copy of the bull so that he could review it with the Council of Aragon and instructed him to hold off on the Collegiate's establishment until further notice. Two days later, the repercussions of the lawsuit reached Valencia, as the parishioners of Santa María filed a formal complaint in the Royal Audience, claiming some pre-eminences for their church. The complaint noted that the bull for the Collegiate had merged their church with that of San Nicolás, contrary to the city's original plan, which had received King Philip II's approval⁵⁶.

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The Alicante officials planned a new wave of defensive actions, in the courts of the governor, the viceroy and the monarch. On April 21 they drafted two letters. The first was sent to their syndic in Valencia, intending for it to reach the Count of Benavente. In it, they complained about the behavior of Bishop Esteve, who, through threats of excommunication, wanted to acquire the Collegiate's bull to execute it without first resolving the existing difficulties, against the will and interests of His Majesty, since the prelate was meddling in the royal jurisdiction. The second, similarly themed letter, was directed at Governor Vique. Three days later, on April 24, they wrote a very detailed letter, and sent it to Philip III, pleading for his protection and defense against the oppressive actions of the Bishop of Orihuela and his transgressions against royal authority⁵⁷.

On April 29, a courier from Madrid arrived in Alicante bearing a letter from the city's syndic in the court, Marc Antoni Pasqual. In this letter, the syndic informed them that His Majesty was deeply distressed to learn that the bishop had excommunicated them. The king had requested the prelate to absolve them. Regarding the Collegiate, Pasqual mentioned that King Philip III had decided that both the governor and the bishop should resolve all outstanding issues before proceeding with the execution of the bull. Furthermore, the king had asked for a copy of the apostolic rescript to allow the Council of Aragon to verify if it had been issued in line with the city of Alicante's intentions. Lastly, Pasqual shared an insightful opinion, stating his belief that members of the Council of Aragon had recognized

55 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 158-165.

56 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, f. 197. ACA, Consejo de Aragón, bundle 0687, file 001, 1/41.

57 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 169-174.

the slight against the city and might seek justice against Nicolás Martínez Clavero and even appeal to the pope, urging him to grant the privilege in accordance with the city's initial proposal, which had received King Philip II's approval. On that same day, the city officials wrote a letter to Governor Vique, sharing the good news, updating him on their directives, and forwarding the documentation that the Council of Aragon had sent for him. On May 3, Alicante's officials replied to Pasqual, advising him to continue pursuing legal actions at the court against both Martínez Clavero and the bishop. They also reached out to the governor, sharing their satisfaction that His Majesty had entrusted him with the responsibility of smoothing out the difficulties preceding the bull's execution⁵⁸.

The version of the city's procurator in the court regarding the excommunication issue was slightly sugarcoated, as Philip III wrote a letter on April 17 to the municipal officers informing them that he had instructed the bishop to absolve them from the censures issued against them. He also sternly advised them to obey the prelate in matters of divine worship going forward and to avoid causing new issues or scandals. The absolution of the excommunications by the bishop finally took place on May 8⁵⁹.

The meetings between the governor and the bishop of Orihuela, in the prelate's house in Alicante, began in mid-May and lasted several days. Representatives from the Alicante municipality and the prebendaries of the Collegiate church appeared before them. Francisco de Rocafull, precentor of Valencia's Cathedral, was the city's procurator. He presented a highly illuminating memorial of the municipality's stance on the execution of the papal bull. In it, they argued that the bull for the Collegiate church could not be executed for various reasons:

- » Because the apostolic rescript did not conform to the privilege granted by Philip II on March 8, 1595, in which he approved the project presented by the city for the creation of the Collegiate.
- » Because the municipal authorities of Alicante should have the patronage of the three dignities and ten canonries of the Collegiate (all except the penitentiary, which was of episcopal provision), having granted the chapter's endowment with 1,000 pounds from their funds.
- » Because the Holy See had reserved the first dignity, the deanery, and another four canonries.

58 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 178-180.

59 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, f. 192.

- » Because Clement VIII had not respected the initial appointments proposed by the city, with the approval of the bishop of Orihuela, having conferred the deanery on Miguel Zaragoza, instead of keeping the one proposed by the city officials, Joaquín Mingot⁶⁰.
- » Because the procurator Nicolás Martínez Clavero had exceeded his functions in the negotiation of the Collegiate and had deliberately deceived the city (possibly in collusion with the bishop) and not due to negligence.
- » Because the demand for money from the prebendaries from the day of the issuance of the bull was unreasonable as the bull of erection had not been published.
- » Because the union of Santa María to the Collegiate was contrary to the royal privilege and notably harmed its parishioners and the city.
- » Because the academic requirement of the dignities and canonries harmed the will of the city to appoint natives of it and its term.
- » Because the “*racional*” and the oldest lawyer of the city did not appear as patrons.
- » And because the bull had abundant technical errors in its drafting, and there was a possibility that it was a forgery.

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On May 19, after listening to the parties and deliberating on the best solutions, the governor and the bishop proposed a concord that both the city and the prebendaries of the Collegiate accepted⁶¹. These were the main agreements:

- » Concerning the patronage, the city had to yield in its claims since it accepted the pontifical provision of the deanery and the four canonries if the appointed ones were natives of Alicante and its district, and if there were no “skilled and sufficient” ones, they should be born in the diocese of Orihuela or in the Kingdom of Valencia. Regarding the absence of the “*racional*” and the oldest lawyer of the city in the bull, the commissioners proposed that the king should ask the pope for their inclusion as patrons.
- » As for the situation of the church of Santa María, the commissioners specified that its union with San Nicolás only included the revenues of the benefices and

60 Initially, the candidate nominated by the city and the bishop for the deanery was Pedro Ferrández de Mesa. However, the appointment was pending his graduation in Sacred Canons. We have not been able to find out the reason, but the city changed candidates and ended up proposing Joaquín Mingot for the deanery.

61 Information on the meetings of the bishop and the governor, and on the concord, can be found at ASM, *Ferma de dret. Procés del degà, capítol y canonges de la Iglesia Colegial de Sant Nicolau de la ciutat de Alacant*, ff. 86-88.

the loan, and that, in it, after the erection of the Collegiate, there should be eight chaplains and two priests to cover the spiritual and worship needs. Likewise, they established that the acts related to the deceased of the parish should be celebrated in Santa María, although they were performed by prebendaries of San Nicolás; and that these would have to celebrate different offices on marked days of the liturgical calendar. Finally, they made it clear that the clerics of Santa María should respect the preeminence of San Nicolás.

- » On the provision of the deanery, the commissioners agreed with the city that the king would support Alicante's petition to the Holy See so that the appointment of the one proposed by His Holiness (Miguel Zaragoza) would be revoked and the one presented by the city (Joaquín Mingot) would be chosen.
- » Regarding the will of the prebendaries of the Collegiate to collect their revenues from the date of the Collegiate's bull, the parties agreed that the city would pay them 500 pounds (instead of the 4,000 initially claimed).
- » Concerning the work of the procurator Nicolás Martínez Clavero in the negotiation of the Collegiate, the commissioners agreed that the city should continue with its complaints without this having any impact on the execution of the bull.
- » As for the drafting errors and suspicions about the apostolic rescript, the city's request was rejected because the bull had enough indications that its authenticity could not be doubted.
- » On the academic requirement of the nominees for the dignities and canonries of the Collegiate, it was established that it should be examined by the bishop or the vicar general.
- » And, finally, regarding the benefices conferred by the bishop of Orihuela to his brothers, it was agreed that they would renounce their possession, in exchange for receiving from the Collegiate two-thirds of their value.

The governor and the bishop informed the king of the agreement and communicated that the difficulties had been resolved, so the papal bull could be executed whenever he deemed appropriate. Upon receiving the news, on June 5th, the king sent a letter to the authorities of the city of Alicante. In it, he expressed his satisfaction with the agreements reached and mentioned that he would write to the ambassador, to Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini (nephew of the pope), and to Clement VIII regarding the deanery and other pending issues. He also ordered them not to hinder the execution of the papal bull for the Collegiate church. On the same day, the monarch wrote to the bishop of Orihuela

asking him to initiate the execution of the papal bull; and to Governor Vique, ordering him to assist the prelate in execution and to avoid further delays, especially if they were attempted by the parishioners of Santa María⁶².

Indeed, during the second half of June, the parishioners of Santa María opposed the execution of the papal bull for the Collegiate church in San Nicolás, but their claims were halted by the bishop and the governor. Then in July, the municipal authorities of Alicante showed some reservations when they were summoned by the bishop to be present during the execution of the bull. They communicated to the prelate that, although they would attend the act, they would not consent to anything that could be detrimental to their claims⁶³.

On July 16, the last official civil act took place in the church of Santa María. At the request of the Alicante municipal authorities, Philip III agreed to increase the number of jurors in the city from four to five. The municipal officers swore their charges in the temple because, until the execution of the papal bull for the Collegiate, it remained the main church of the city (Viravens, 1876: 183).

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Finally, on Monday, July 24, 1600, the Bishop of Orihuela, José Esteve, in the presence of Governor Vique, and the five jurors of Alicante, proceeded with the execution of the papal bull establishing the Collegiate in the church of San Nicolás. Two days later, the chapter of the Collegiate met for the first time. They agreed that each year a general anniversary would be celebrated in honor of Clement VIII, Philip III, Bishop José Esteve, Governor Álvaro Vique, and the five jurors of Alicante. Esteve, to commemorate the establishment of the Collegiate, decided to place a marble stone in the Sacristy chapel. Its Latin inscription was translated by the chronicler Viravens (1876: 183-184) as: "To Jesus Christ, the eternal king of ages. So that in this new century new honor might also be added to this city, by the authority of Clement VIII, the supreme pontiff, and with the protection of Philip III, the Catholic king of Spain and the Indies, the most pious, most potent father José Esteban, from Valencia, Bishop of Orihuela, erected this church of San Nicolás as a Collegiate, endowed with the public revenues of the Senate and people of Alicante, with common joy and applause, in the year of the Lord 1600, on July 24. Nova Republica Aucta Consulibus".

The establishment of the Collegiate Church of San Nicolás was not the end of a process, but the beginning of a series of controversies and confrontations that lasted a century among the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the cities of Orihuela and Alicante, between the kings of the Hispanic Monarchy and the supreme pontiffs, between the Alicante municipal authorities and the royal officials with the clergy of San Nicolás, and

62 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 191, 198-198v.

63 AMA, Cabinet 5, Book 5, volume 2, ff. 193, 199-199v.

between the clergy and the parishioners of the two churches in Alicante. But we will stop at this point, leaving the study of all these topics for future research and publications.

6. Conclusions

The city of Alicante was the promoter of the project of the erection of the Collegiate. The initiative was to give it prestige at a time when it was necessary to counteract the advantage that Orihuela still had over it, at a hierarchical level, in the Governorate of the Kingdom of Valencia to the south of Jijona. In addition, the creation of the Collegiate Church was going to bring spiritual benefits to the city, since it would increase the number of clergymen at the service of the community, it would offer good prebends for the ecclesiastics of the city and its district, it would promote among them the usefulness of having higher studies and, in addition, it would give a greater shine to the divine worship. The municipal authorities took advantage of the good economic situation that the city was going through, thanks to its port activity and the boom in trade, to launch a project that would require the investment of a large amount of money from its coffers. The initiative formally began at the end of 1591 and had its culminating moment in 1600, with the execution of the papal bull for the erection of the Collegiate Church of San Nicolás. Up to that time, the municipal authorities spent several tens of thousands of ducats remunerating the work of their procurators, commissioning the preparation of documents, endowing the Collegiate, gaining influence and paying for multiple bureaucratic procedures. In addition, the illusion with which they promoted the project had many ups and downs, since, despite having the support of the king and his officials (such as the governor), they had to fight with the interests of the Holy See (which took away the patronage of the deanery and some canonries of the Collegiate), of the bishop of Orihuela (who shared with the Apostolic See the appointments of these prebends and, in addition, benefited his brothers with benefices annexed to the chapter's endowment of the new Collegiate), of the parishioners of Santa María (who, after learning that their church, which was the oldest and the main one in the city, would not be the new Collegiate, tried to hinder the erection of San Nicolás by all the legal means at their disposal) and even the clergymen who had been elected to the dignities and canonries of the Collegiate (who in 1600 claimed from them the revenues they had not received since 1596, even though the bull of erection had not yet been executed and, therefore, they had not taken possession of their prebends).

The erection of the Collegiate Church of San Nicolás did not bring tranquility to the city. During the 17th century various tensions continued to manifest themselves between Orihuela and Alicante, and within the city of Benacantil. The clergy and parishioners of Santa María took every opportunity to question the precedence of the Collegiate Church

of San Nicolás. The bishops of Orihuela, although in general they tried to promote peace and pastoral care, were always jealous that their preeminence and authority (and that of their vicars, general of the diocese and foran of Alicante) were respected. The chapter of the Cathedral of Orihuela tended to favor the opposition work of Santa María, to reduce the brightness of the Collegiate Church of San Nicolás, which was the second church of the diocese. And the municipal authorities of the city of the Low Segura River supported any action that could suppose a diminution of the growing prestige of its political and economic rival. The three minor Habsburgs took decisions generally oriented to achieve peace among their subjects, although there were also those of a marked royalist character. The Holy See continued to be the scene of claims. And the viceroy of the kingdom of Valencia, the Royal Audience and the archbishop of Valencia had to intervene to try to put order in the busy civil and religious relations that were interwoven in the southern Governorate.

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The preparation of this article has not exhausted the possibilities of the documentation analyzed. On the contrary, it has suggested new ideas and topics that could be the subject of future studies. One of them could be the figure of the procurator, as necessary as it is distant from the researcher's focus. The procurators – especially those who carried out their duties away from the city – had to defend the interests of those they represented or had to try to carry out their projects in courts as different as the royal, pontifical, viceregal, or episcopal courts. They had to know the rules of protocol, political and administrative organization, and bureaucratic procedures; they had to have the skills to prepare documentation or to entrust it to legal experts, scribes, and notaries, networking skills, and information contacts; and they had to know the different currencies and the functioning of the credit system. In their work they sought prestige, the satisfaction of providing a good service and doing their duty, and good remuneration, as the *per diems* they were offered were generally juicy. However, the risks were also considerable. Their safety and integrity were often at risk during their travels and stays; they were almost always exposed to diseases – especially infectious diseases –; they usually had to make payments from their own finances (since, although they received money at their destination, they did not get paid until they presented detailed accounts of their expenses, once they returned to the city of their represented parties); and if they failed in their missions, they ran the risk of angering their represented parties, which meant disrepute and non-payments.

Apart from the figure of the procurator, other interesting topics could also be the subject of future research, such as travel times, couriers and negotiations; the documentation prepared for the project of the Collegiate; the organization of civil and ecclesiastical power; and the relations between royal officials, municipal authorities and ecclesiastical authorities; the carrying out of formalities at the Spanish embassy and the Papal Curia, the

relationship with the cardinals and the need to tip and make gifts to expedite procedures; and the management of money over long distances, paying attention to instruments and interest.

This article is only the starting point of a line of research that will allow different studies to be carried out over the next three years.

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