

The Habsburg Mediterranean, 1500-1800

Veranstalter: Head of the House of Habsburg, HIRH Archduke Karl von Habsburg-Lothringen; HIRH Archduke Georg von Habsburg-Lothringen

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Although 'Habsburg history' resists being easily pinned down and concretely defined, it is arguably the empire's splendid court culture and continental politics that spring to mind when considering its historical legacy – rather than its dominance on the seas. The international symposium intended to challenge this entrenched focus on the former empire's inland European centres by highlighting its peripheries in and around the Mediterranean Sea. As an invited speaker to the symposium, it was very rewarding to contemplate Habsburg history from this novel perspective. Participants were invited to consider how the periphery, the lands along the Mediterranean, impacted on the overall cultural, military and political decisions of the centre. It was in fact critical to the empire's self-definition in the early modern period, particularly in negotiating its economic activities and material cultures, political crises, military campaigns, and spiritual prerogatives. The papers, presented by an international group of experts, gave witness to the multidisciplinary of approaches.

This last point was made even stronger since the symposium took place in Jerusalem, the historical Holy Land and beating heart of the Mediterranean for many imperial subjects. By the end of the conference the consequence of a Habsburg thalassocracy upon the intellectual and cultural communities, material exchanges, and shared histories of the domains and provinces of the empire and its neighbors was left without dispute.

This rich inheritance was firstly considered by STEFAN HANß (Manchester) and DOROTHEA MCEWAN (London) in their introductory notes, which outlined how the vast, connected spaces of the Habsburg Mediterranean merited an historical approach following the example of recent, pioneer-

ing oceanic histories.¹ The Mediterranean, which linked divided land masses and cultural spheres, offered a lively topic for exchange. It was suggested that giving priority to the Mediterranean might counter the problematic tendency in Habsburg history, particularly following the reign of Charles V (1500-1558), to distinguish and accentuate two separate branches of the Habsburgs – those of Central Europe and those of Iberia.

The scene was set early by GÉZA PÁLFFY (Budapest). His paper used the example of Habsburg military campaigns against the Ottomans between 1521 and 1566 to highlight the entanglement of interests and the movement of people between the Mediterranean and Central Europe. Engaged in battles at the Austrian borderlands and around the Mediterranean basin, Charles V and Ferdinand I shared not only policies and strategies but also military officials like the Italian General Sforza Pallavicini (1520–1585) who had a remarkable career protecting Habsburg sovereignty in Hungary. The movement of people was also considered by ERIC R. DURSTELER (Provo), whose paper additionally positioned the Venetian Republic as important Habsburg adversaries in the Mediterranean. His case study on Clissa (Klis), an Ottoman fortress on the Veneto-Ottoman-Habsburg frontier near the city of Split, emphasised the cross-border movement of Habsburg, Ottoman, and Venetian subjects in the area and the fluidity of local, cultural identities. An incident when the fortress was temporarily captured by a small band of rebels in 1596 has typically been summarised as an example of Christian revolt against Muslim overlords. Dursteler argued however, that the event was more symptomatic of economic strains than religious tensions. Both Dalmatian self-definition and its political borders, he concluded, were in constant flux.

Dorothea McEwan redirected the audience back to the Holy Land to discuss the bilateral stipulations protecting the legal rights

¹David Armitage / Alison Bashford / Sujit Sivasundaram [eds.], *Oceanic Histories*, Cambridge 2018); Peter N. Miller, *Peiresc's Mediterranean World*, Cambridge (Mass.) 2015; Peter N. Miller, Introduction: *The Sea Is the Land's Edge Also*, in: Peter N. Miller [ed.], *Thalassography and Historiography*, Chicago 2013, 1–26.

and religious freedoms of Christians living within the Ottoman Empire: the so-called 'Church Protectorate'. As McEwan demonstrated, in the lands of the 'Sublime Porte' (including Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Armenia), Christian subjects were able to negotiate commercial privileges and the establishment of churches and monasteries. The paper of SUNDAR HENNY (Bern) further examined the position and practices of the very diverse communities in Jerusalem, focusing especially on the 'cacophony' of different rites and chants of Greek, Armenian, and other 'non-Latin' Christians at the Holy Sepulchre Church, witnessed and recorded by the Hungarian Bartholomeo Georgius (c. 1505-1566).

An 'ethnographer' of Eastern Christianity, Georgius emphasised religious plurality in the Holy Lands, producing his *De ritibus et differentiis Graecorum et Armeniorum* for European audiences in Antwerp in 1545. The central European reception of so-called 'Arabian princes' was discussed in the following paper by TOBIAS GRAF (Oxford). These alleged dignitaries from the Ottoman Empire and especially the Levant sought charity and refuge in Europe on account of their Christian beliefs, and used a variety of strategies including the adoption of calligraphic signatures and 'oriental' fashion to dress ennobled, near eastern identities. As Graf concluded, it is less interesting to question the authenticity of these possible 'imposters' than it is to review how the eastern Mediterranean was imagined in Habsburg-ruled Europe.

The next section of the symposium addressed the role of material and visual culture in the Habsburg Mediterranean. VÁCLAV BŮŽEK's (České Budějovice) paper cited the example of two elephants given to the emperor Maximilian II as a present by his Spanish and Portuguese family members. Diplomatic exchanges of exotic presents also enabled the circulation of allegorical meanings: in the case of the elephants, referencing the biblical fight of the dragon and the elephant (representing the eternal struggle between God and the devil). The elephants' journeys not only connected the Habsburg European world and entered into a shared visual culture, but they were also embedded into ceremonial programmes, serving to broadcast the

Habsburg commitment to defend the Christian faith. The movement of goods was also considered by SUZANNA IVANIČ (Kent). Focusing on the city of Prague around 1600 under the reign of Emperor Rudolph II, Ivanič demonstrated the movements of artisans and their lively exchange of materials and objects that circulated between Central Europe and the Mediterranean. 'Globally-connected' Prague was shown in this paper to be a useful subject through which the cultural hybridity of material culture could be further explored; and yet, as Ivanič urged, rather than boiling everything down to an 'amorphous' globally-hybrid category, it is still useful to keep in mind diverse confessional identities and overlapping spheres of belonging.

Shared aesthetic tastes were also examined by STEFAN HANß (Manchester), who turned his attention to the appreciation of Ottoman Levantine art and design by Italian, Spanish, and German consumers, for whom textiles, carpets, and calligraphic art were especially popular. Habsburg officials, particularly those connected to the imperial embassy in Istanbul like the chaplain Stephan Gerlach, were shown by Hanß to have used their knowledge of and contacts around the city to obtain coveted items. Shifting from material culture to visual culture, KATHERINE BOND (Basel) introduced the Mediterranean as it was experienced by Christoph von Sternsee, a well-travelled Habsburg military professional who commissioned a vivid costume album around 1548-1549 to commemorate his imperial service and the knowledge about diverse cultures that he had consequently acquired. The Mediterranean as a site for encounters, exchanges, and skirmishes was demonstrated in Sternsee's album of Charles V's 1535 campaign in Tunis. The album paints not only the citizens, slaves and soldiers caught up in the campaign, but also the vast armadas the Ottoman and Habsburg sides furnished. Waterways as sites of interchange and negotiation between Habsburg and Ottoman powers was further examined by the paper of EVELYN KORSCH (Erfurt) and PETER RAUSCHER (Vienna), who combined their expertise to compare and contrast commercial and diplomatic activities in the Mediterranean and the Danube River amidst

military conflict. The mutual importance of trade for both sides meant that conditions of access around these waterways were constantly being reworked, with the peace treaty of Passarowitz in 1718 marking a significant turn in commercial relations.

MICHAEL J. LEVIN (Akron) turned the audience's attention to Genoa, demonstrating its great importance for Habsburg rulers Charles V and Philip II as a site of strategic value in the Mediterranean, which led to the question: „why did Charles V allow Genoa to stay a republic?“ Genoa was home to the accomplished admiral Andrea Doria and several powerful banking families, benefitting the Habsburg cause both on a military and financial level. Thus, keeping the Genoese loyal and cooperative, was a crucial but delicate balancing act for any Habsburg ruler. EMANUEL BUTTIGIEG (Malta) stressed the Habsburg relationship with Malta and its protectors, the Knights Hospitaller (the Order of St John). Many Habsburg-subjects from Iberia and Central Europe were admitted into the Order and maintained Hospitaller property in continental Europe. These associations maintained long-held traditions and for their part, the Hospitallers offered military support for Habsburg causes, playing an important role in the 1535 Tunis campaign and in the Danube campaign of Charles VI of 1736-1739. From 'knights' to 'pirates', the paper of ALEXANDER KOLLER (Rome) introduced the lively activities of the Uscoks in the Adriatic Sea. These Christian Slavs, refugees who had migrated from the northern Balkans to the Croatian coast to escape Ottoman advances, supplied the Habsburgs with an unofficial border force. However, to compensate their precarious livelihoods many Uscoks resorted to raiding and piracy, antagonising the other great Adriatic power, the Republic of Venice.

The conference's final paper by WILLIAM O'REILLY (Cambridge) extended the audience's vision of the Habsburg Mediterranean into the long eighteenth century. What interested O'Reilly the most was the extent to which the Habsburgs maintained globalising interests and colonial ambitions. Vienna's attempts to establish a navy in the eighteenth century to compete with British and French expeditions reinforced the strategic positions

of Ostend and Trieste, at a time when even talks of establishing an East India company were floated. O'Reilly's paper revised the notion of a 'land-locked' empire, showing that Habsburg influence over and interest in the seas remained well into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The participants of the symposium shared an intellectually rich couple of days together at the Austrian Hospice, enjoying the generous hospitality of the house under the leadership of rector Markus St. Bugnyár. Speakers, their families and participants of the Symposium were provided a guided tour around Jerusalem's historical sites which concentrated on spaces particularly significant to the Habsburgs over the centuries. A decision was made to produce the Symposium papers in a published volume. The breadth of the papers merits such a decision, presenting questions of imagined and actual spaces, peripheries and centres, and the vibrancy of commercial, material, spiritual, and military exchanges around the Mediterranean, focusing on sites around Iberia, North Africa, the Adriatic, the Balkans, and the Levant and urban centres including Jerusalem, Istanbul, Rome, Vienna, Prague, Genoa, and Madrid. Recent Habsburg histories of the early modern period emphasise contact and frontier zones, the porosity of borders, and relationships between imperial agents of diverse national identities. The planned publication stands to enter this conversation from the innovative perspective of the Mediterranean.

Conference Overview:

The Mediterranean Stage of the Habsburg-Ottoman Military Rivalry

Géza Pálffy (Budapest): The Habsburg Defence in Hungary and the Mediterranean in the Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent

Eric Dursteler (Provo): Habsburgs, Ottomans, and the Venetians on the Frontiers of Dalmatia: The Capture of Clissa in 1596

The Holy Land the Habsburg Empire

Dorothea McEwan (London): The Church Protectorate in the Lands of the Sublime Porte and its Legal Framework

Sundar Henny (Bern): The Engaged Com-

paratist: Bartholomeo Georgius at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Tobias Graf (Oxford): Fleecing the Habsburgs and their Subjects? Alleged Dignitaries from the Holy Land in Austria and the Holy Roman Empire during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Material Culture and the Symbolic Universe of the Habsburg Mediterranean

Václav Bůžek (České Budějovice): The Elephant at the Court of Maximilian II

Suzanna Ivanič (Kent): Citizens of the World and the Mediterranean Portal: Global Identity in Rudolphine Prague, c. 1600

Stefan Hanß (Manchester): A Shared Taste? Material Culture and Intellectual Curiosity in the Habsburg-Ottoman Realms

Katherine Bond (Basel): The Habsburg Mediterranean through the Eyes of an Imperial Soldier: the Travels and Costume Album of Christoph von Sternsee, 1520-1550

Habsburg Economic Activities: The Great Sea and the Danube

Peter Rauscher (Vienna) / Evelyn Korsch (Erfurt): Commerce and Trade in the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires in the Mediterranean and the Danube Region 1718-1784

Habsburg Mediterranean I: Genoa

Michael J. Levin (Akron): Of the Empire but not in it: Habsburg Spain and Genoa in the Sixteenth Century

Habsburg Mediterranean II: Malta

Emanuel Buttigieg (Malta): Habsburgs and Hospitallers in the Early Modern Mediterranean: Contacts, Relations, Movement

Habsburg Mediterranean III: Adriatic Sea

Alexander Koller (Rome): The Uscoqs: Habsburg's Pirates in the Mediterranean

Imperial Enterprises in the Mediterranean and Beyond: New Approaches in Habsburg Studies

William O'Reilly (Cambridge): Globalising Habsburg Interests in the Long Eighteenth Century

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