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Visions of a Habsburg Mediterranean in the Reign of Charles V

Katherine Bond

Introduction

During the reign of Charles V (r.1519–56) the Habsburg Empire gathered a hitherto unrivalled number of territories into its fold. A political situation emerged that saw increasing numbers of subjects from culturally diverse populations united by the diplomatic and military strands of empire. For the intrepid and ambitious, Habsburg networks, stretching across central and eastern Europe, Italy, the Iberian Peninsula and the Low Countries, offered attractive opportunities for travel and commerce. Among those who profited from this cultural climate was the imperial officer Christoph von Sternsee (d.1560), who from 1535 served in the emperor's German Guard and was promoted to captain five years later. Neglected by scholarship since the early-mid twentieth century, Sternsee's thirty-year *Diary* and his illuminated *Costume Album* bring to life the biography of an imperial soldier who capitalized on Charles V's cross-Mediterranean rule.[1] The Mediterranean certainly looms large in these two works, where it emerges as a decisive channel for the movement of imperial officials around the centres and peripheries of empire as well as a lively site of exchange between nominal allies and adversaries. Indeed, relationships between disparate imperial territories, as well as a sense for what the imperial banner stood for, were negotiated through the flows and courses of the Mediterranean Sea. Sternsee's *Diary* and *Costume Album* are thus singular sources demonstrating how the connectivity of the Mediterranean spurred and enlivened cultural production upholding Habsburg themes.

Adopting methods for working with early modern autobiographical and self-narrative sources, this chapter constitutes a microhistory of how Habsburg subjects experienced, articulated and shaped the Habsburg Mediterranean. It proposes to shift the perspective away from official imperial accounts, turning attention towards the literary and visual output of a lower-ranking imperial official representing a normally obscured viewpoint. This approach diverges from established historiographical tendencies to dramatize Christian Habsburg and Muslim Ottoman power struggles in the Mediterranean, traditionally fuelled by a focus on the grandiose narratives of the era's

[1] Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna (ÖNB), Cod. 14001 Han, Christoph von Sternsee, *Historia Rerum in Aula et Ab Exercitu Caroli V. Gestarum A. 1525–1555* (hereafter cited as *Diary*). A full transcript of Sternsee's *Diary* spans the final two volumes of Herta Plaschke's dissertation, from which all citations have been taken, translations my own: Herta Plaschke, *Die Chronik Christophs von Sternsee 1525–1555*, 3 vols. (Vienna: unpublished PhD dissertation of the University of Vienna, 1940); Museo Stibbert, Florence (MSF), MS Cat. 2025, Christoph von Sternsee, 'Costumes of the Time of Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, and King of Spain, of Costumes of All Nations of the World, circa 1540' (*c.*1548–49, hereafter cited as *Album*).

authorized Habsburg propaganda stream. This account, by investigating the position of the Mediterranean in Sternsee's worldview, illuminates the nuanced, personal recollections of an individual who forged a career and built personal relationships across the Habsburg Mediterranean.

For subjects like Sternsee, it was more often the experience of travel, foreign cultures, technologies, and cultural knowledge, more so than violence and religious crusade, that left a marked impact on how the Mediterranean was remembered and interpreted. Sternsee's *Diary* and *Costume Album* frame the actions, recollections and acquired knowledge of the soldier in relation to a social world that brought together diverse imperial allies and foes. This chapter thus adopts Gabriele Jancke and Claudia Ulbrich's position on early modern autobiographical works, which insists that: "[T]he concept of the individual no longer sits particularly well with the experiences and expectations of people who are used to thinking and acting in terms of networks."[2] Retracing his experience of imperial personhood, the following analysis contemplates how Sternsee registered the Habsburg Mediterranean world as a collective site. Nevertheless, the soldiers, citizens, ships and wildlife he observed, particularly during the imperial campaign in Tunis, did not merely chronicle an imperial story, but were wielded by Sternsee to increase his visibility in a sphere of power and prestige.

Experiencing the Mediterranean prompted Habsburg soldiers and officials to reflect not only on the role this contact zone played in substantiating empire, but also on what it meant to be a part of its operations. Foremost in Sternsee's line of sight was Tunis and the campaign Charles V launched there in 1535. It was a subject that for Sternsee condensed the many strands of empire and epitomised, more than any other occasion, his belonging to a shared Habsburg cause. Relationships spanning Hungary through to Brussels, Genoa down to Naples, were instantiated through the momentum of the conquest of this North African city. But precisely what constituted a Habsburg Mediterranean was open for negotiation. Sternsee, it will be seen, maintained a distinctly Germanic perspective also visible in the writings of his Swiss contemporary Nikolaus Guldin, whose account of the Tunis campaign shares many resonances with Sternsee's. Through close source analysis of Sternsee's *Diary*, his *Costume Album* and a copy of the *Album* produced in the second half of the sixteenth century, the following chapter investigates how the Mediterranean was articulated in visual and narrative terms through the eyes of an aspiring soldier.[3]

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[2] Gabriele Jancke and Claudia Ulbrich, 'From the Individual to the Person: Challenging Autobiography Theory', in *Mapping the 'I': Research on Self-Narratives in Germany and Switzerland*, eds. Claudia Ulbrich, Kaspar von Greyerz and Lorenz Heiligensetzer (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 15–33, here 15.

[3] Images reproduced in this chapter are taken from the sixteenth-century copy. Images from the original *Album* could regrettably not be reproduced on this occasion due to a forthcoming edited facsimile of Christoph von Sternsee's album by its holding institution, the Museo Stibbert, Florence.

Christoph von Sternsee: Imperial Soldier

Christoph von Sternsee was a native of Laibach, present-day Ljubljana, which in the sixteenth century fell within the historical territory of Carniola, a hereditary duchy of the Austrian Habsburgs. Sternsee was born around the turn of the sixteenth century into a family from the German-speaking lesser nobility of the region.[4] Following in the footsteps of his father he pursued a career as a *Landsknecht* soldier and in 1526 enlisted with a German regiment stationed in Milan.[5] Much of his biography can be reconstructed through the *Diary* (*Tagebuch*) that he diligently kept for three decades. It was begun at the close of the Battle of Pavia in late February 1525. Sternsee, in his early to mid-twenties, was at that time a common mercenary serving in Charles V's army in the wars against Francis I of France (1494–1547). He describes waiting with the other German foot-soldiers in his regiment to receive payment, before returning to his hometown Laibach for a brief spell.[6] Sternsee continued to defend Charles V's interests in the Italian peninsula throughout the late 1520s, joining imperial forces in various conflicts against the League of Cognac.[7] In February 1530, his company was enlisted to serve and guard Charles on the occasion of his imperial coronation in Bologna. Over the next five years he served imperial allies in Italy, including the Duke of Mantua Federico II Gonzaga (1500–40), Pope Clement VII and his successor Pope Paul III, until he received news that the emperor was planning an assault on Tunis.

In the months before the campaign, Sternsee wrote that many captains and journeymen had been drawn from far across the seas to serve with the emperor in a foreign land.[8] His career to date had consisted of serving alongside German soldiers in Italy, although he noted, with a hint of regret, that he had not yet served the imperial court itself.[9] The Tunis campaign marked a turning point and proved an opportunity to broaden Sternsee's horizons. At the campaign's close, he seized the chance to enlist with the emperor's personal guard force, the imperial *Trabanten* or bodyguards.[10] Military detachments like these had become routinely present at the courts of early modern Europe to protect

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[4] See Johann W. Valvasor, *Die Ehre Deß Hertzogthums Crain: Das ist/ Wahre/ gründliche/ und recht eigendliche Gelegen- und Beschaffenheit dieses (…) Römisch-Keyserlichen herrlichen Erblandes (…)*, vol. 3 (Laibach: Nuremberg, 1689), 112–13, in which the Sternsee family are recorded as members of the landed gentry who had earlier populated Carniola. For more on Sternsee's family, travels and *Costume Album*, see Katherine Bond, "Mapping Culture in the Habsburg Empire: Fashioning a Costume Book in the Court of Charles V," *Renaissance Quarterly* 71 (2018): 530–79."

[5] Sternsee reports receiving a nobleman's salary because the captain of his company in Milan was a former acquaintance of his father's. Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 2, 2–4.

[6] Ibid., vol. 2, 1.

[7] An alliance between the Kingdom of France, the Republic of Venice, the Duchy of Milan, the Republic of Florence, the Kingdom of England and the Papal States that aimed to disrupt Habsburg hegemony.

[8] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 2, 34: *[…] Auch viel Hauptleuth und etlich Gesellen die kein Bestlich gehabt haben, ehrenthalben also weit über die See mit Röm. Kais. Maj. in ein fremd Land gezogen.*

[9] Ibid., vol. 2, 34: *[…] und dieselbige Zeit ich nicht am Kais.Maj. Hof gedient, sunder unter dem deutschen Regiment und Kriegsleuht mein ehrlich Unterhaltung gehabt*.

[10] Ibid., vol. 2, 47.

monarchs from personal attack.[11] Charles V maintained an international bodyguard that was a visible force of his foreign influence and hegemony, reflecting the sweep of his sovereign powers. The hundred strong *Deutsche Trabanten* was matched by equivalent Spanish and Netherlandish troops of guards, who together acted conspicuously as escorts during public ceremonies, among other duties.[12]

Sternsee's social ascent continued when in 1540 he was elevated to captain of the German Guards. In 1546 he was granted governance over recent Habsburg holdings in Friesland, a province acquired by Charles in 1524.[13] Here Sternsee married into local aristocracy and thereafter divided his time between his Frisian holdings, his guard duties and the emperor's military operations. Sternsee thus enjoyed a career in which he rose from a mercenary soldier of the Austrian hereditary lands to the mayor of the Frisian towns of Harlingen and Barradeel. He profited from the mobility available to agents of empire and was among the innumerable military professionals, courtiers, bureaucrats and ambassadors of the time who availed themselves of Habsburg imperial networks. In his early career that meant joining companies of soldiers identified as Germans in his diary who, alongside their fellow Spaniards, Netherlanders and Italians, were mustered, transferred and dismissed from various posts around continental Europe and the Mediterranean. After joining the imperial guards, this mobility was only increased as he escorted the itinerant Charles V between his numerous sovereign territories.

Sternsee's Self-Narratives

Studying Sternsee's experience of the Habsburg Mediterranean, as framed by his *Diary* and *Costume Album*, furnishes both a biographical and a micro-historical approach to the question of this larger structural concept. Kept between 1525 and 1555, Sternsee's *Diary* exists as a 415-folio manuscript in the collection of the National Library of Austria.[14] Variously entitled a "diary," a "chronicle" and a "history" in the limited existing scholarship, it is best considered an amalgamation of these genres as Sternsee narrates his own movements and regularly uses the first person "I" (*ich*), but likewise chronicles current affairs and military campaigns.[15] Although it can be considered a self-narrative,

[11] Philip Mansel, *Pillars of Monarchy: An Outline of the Political and Social History of Royal Guards 1400–1984* (London: Quartet, 1984), 1–5.
[12] Harriet Rudolph, 'Heer und Herrschaftsrepräsentation: Militärische Dimension der Selbstinszenierung bei Herrscherbesuchen (1550–1800)', in *Zeichen und Medien des Militärischen am Fürstenhof in Europa*, eds. Peter-Michael Hahn and Matthias Müller (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2017), 56.
[13] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 2, 153, 155.
[14] The manuscript was purchased in 1866 by the Viennese antiquarian firm Gerold and had earlier been in the Amsterdam collection of the naturalist Jean Henry van Swinden (d.1823).
[15] Existing scholarship and transcriptions of the *Diary* peaked in the first half of the twentieth century, after which it fell into scholarly obscurity. Christoph Sternsee, *Tagebuch, (fol. 385r–415r)*, ed. Heinrich Schulte (Vienna: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 1913); Johann Bauer, *Das Tagebuch Christophs von Sternsee: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte Karl V* (Vienna: unpublished PhD dissertation of the University of Vienna, 1916); Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*.

Sternsee's sense of selfhood is stifled; the *Diary* rather embeds his travel movements and supposedly eye-witness observations within a wider social environment where connections to others, and their actions and responses to events, predominate. This strategy aligned the soldier's identity to the Habsburg sphere of influence, which, by extension, elevated Sternsee's own social stature. He was not unique in this regard; indeed, as Kaspar von Greyerz, Gabriele Jancke and Claudia Ulbrich have emphasised, drawing from Natalie Zemon Davis, early modern self-narratives focus more on relationships and group cultures than on the individual.[16] Jancke hypothesises "relational persons", whose "autobiographical representation manifests a conception of relational structures and possibilities of action oriented around one's own person".[17] Hence autobiographical expressions like Sternsee's are more interested in the author's active participation within and relation to a group-specific habitus.[18] The *Diary* thus provides insights into aspects of the imperial system with which Sternsee identified.

Most conspicuous was the opportunity for travel necessitated by the operations of the vast Habsburg empire, which exposed him to foreign soldiers, battlefields and courts. In her 1940 doctoral dissertation on Sternsee's *Diary*, Herta Plaschke characterised the imperial soldier as *reiselustig*; a travel enthusiast so proud of his accomplishments that on 10 January 1551 he tallied up the miles and destinations of his journeys to date.[19] "I, Captain Christoff vonn Sternsee," he effused, "totalled up the afore-written cities that I have travelled through", which were categorised as German, French, Spanish, Italian or Barbary Coast territories. He had diligently logged the miles travelled "over water and land" between different towns and ports throughout his *Diary*; consequently, he could calculate the astonishing number of 445 cities and 18 islands visited across a distance of roughly 5,034 German miles.[20] Sternsee's enumerations were not simply a self-congratulatory exercise, but a communicative strategy emphasising that a life on the road --and on the sea-- as a rising imperial official had opened his mind to different courts, cities, cultures and languages, widening his social networks.

The *Costume Album* commissioned around the years 1548 and 1549 offers a pictorial counterpart to this catalogue of travel. Stationed in the artistic hub of Brussels, Sternsee pursued a

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[16] Jancke and Ulbrich, 'From the Individual to the Person'; Gabriele Jancke, 'Autobiographical Texts: Acting within a Network. Observations on Genre and Power Relations in the German-Speaking Regions from 1400 to 1620', in *Mapping the 'I'*, eds. Ulbrich, von Greyerz and Heiligensetzer, 118–65; Kaspar von Greyerz, 'Ego-Documents: The Last Word?', in *German History* 28, no. 3 (2010): 273–82.

[17] Jancke, 'Autobiographical Texts', 122, 165.

[18] Von Greyerz, 'Ego-Documents', 281.

[19] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 1, 29.

[20] Ibid., vol. 3, 326, 331: *10 Jänner ich Hauptmann Christoff vonn Sternsee zusammengerechnet die far geschrieben Städte die ich durch reist habe, benentlichen die Städte die hie nach einander geschrieben stehen: deutsch, französisch, spanisch und italienisch und Barbarias*; *Vermerkt die Meilen die ich Christoff von Sternsee durchrast zu Wasser und zu Landt bis am 10. Jänner im 1551 Jahr aus dem Buch zusammen gesummiert und tut deutsche Meilen: 5034 Deutsch Meil*. In his *Diary*, Sternsee alternates between the spellings "von" and "vonn" when referring to his name.

series of gouache illuminations embodying the lands, peoples and animals that he had experienced over his career. The illustrations mostly attend to the regional clothing of diverse populations spanning Iberia, France, the Low Countries, England, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Croatia, Greece, Ottoman Turkey, Tunis and the Americas. In this respect, the *Album* resembles the well-known *Trachtenbuch* of the southern German artist-traveller Christoph Weiditz (ca. 1500–59), whose journeys to the Spanish and Flemish courts of Charles V in the years 1529–32 stimulated Weiditz's observation of the costumes and daily life of the inhabitants of different regions.[21] Like the *Trachtenbuch*, Sternsee's *Album* pairs illustrated costume figures with short descriptions concluding how such individuals look and dress. Positioned into groups, figures are often turned towards each other as though in conversation, showing the side and rear views of garments. While an artist cannot be conclusively attributed to Sternsee's *Album*, several of its illustrations can be connected to the oeuvre of Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen (c.1504–59), a Habsburg court favourite of Margaret of Austria and Mary of Hungary, who was sent to Tunis as the emperor's field-artist in 1535 and was afterwards employed to design commemorative tapestries.[22]

The subject of regional costumes may have dominated the *Costume Album*; however, topics and themes of greater association to Charles V's empire frame the work. The centrality of the emperor is established in the work's opening pages with the positioning of portrait roundels of Charles and his consort, Isabella of Portugal, and the emperor's coat of arms. Together with a double-page portrayal of the emperor enthroned, flanked by the seven German electors, and a procession of knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece, Charles's ceremonial and constitutional powers reign supreme over the *Album's* international subjects (fig. VI.1). The hegemony of the Ottoman empire, the counterweight to Charles's influence, is acknowledged with a depiction of the Ottoman emperor sitting in state wearing magnificent robes shot through with gold, flanked by his courtiers. The political as well as ethnic makeup of Europe and, to a lesser extent, Asia, Africa and the Americas, is touched upon as well: interspersed with the costume figures are coats of arms of the manifold duchies, principalities and other sovereign states that constituted Sternsee's geopolitical worldview.

But it is Tunis and the battle that took place there in 1535 that holds a unique position, represented by vignettes of ships and crews as well as the area's population, flora and fauna. In this section the album charts the Habsburg Mediterranean, picturing how Habsburg initiatives and the manifold people serving them converged on Tunis, descending upon this strategic Mediterranean

[21] Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nuremberg (GNM), Hs. 22474, Christoph Weiditz, *Trachtenbuch*, ca. 1529–32. A digital edition of this manuscript may be consulted at: http://dlib.gnm.de/item/Hs22474/1. Sternsee may have encountered Weiditz's *Trachtenbuch* during his years in Augsburg on the occasion of the Imperial Diet of 1547–48. See Bond, "Mapping Culture", 531, 540, 542–44.

[22] On this connection see ibid., 559–70.

stronghold. Maintaining textual descriptions that insist on direct observation and acquired knowledge, the *Album*, which closes with the coats of arms of Sternsee's family, positions Sternsee as protagonist and witness. Although completed by a third-party artist, this framing shows Sternsee's proliferation of this imperial space—an imagined, artistic site upon which were collapsed the values and aspirations of Habsburg rule.

A copy after the *Costume Album* was made in the decades following the composition of Sternsee's work.[23] In this copy, Sternsee's biographical experiences are pared down; it lacks the images of ships, wildlife, and heraldic arms that made the original more than simply a collection of regional dress habits. While it calls attention to the growing appeal of costume figure collections as a lens through which to view the world's culturally diverse populations, the copy shows a disinterest in Sternsee's personalised worldview that was, following the reign of Charles V, already a fading memory. Likely produced in the Netherlands (possibly Friesland), as indicated by the use of Latin script, the new scribe heavily reduced the content of the image captions and reproduced the original German descriptions poorly. It is a fascinating source linking the Habsburg empire's Mediterranean borderlands with its northern provinces and demonstrates how cultural memory can transform and shift in meaning across time and space.



Fig. VI.1: Charles V Enthroned. *Códice de trajes* (pen and gouache on paper, 20 x 40 cm), second half of sixteenth century. BNE, MS RES/285, ill. 36. Image owned by the Biblioteca Nacional de España. Copy after Sternsee's *Album*, c. 1548–49. MSF, Cat. 2025, ill. 93.

[23] Biblioteca Nacional de España (BNE), MS RES/285, [*Códice de Trajes*], second half of the sixteenth century. A digital edition of this manuscript may be consulted at: http://bdh.bne.es/bnesearch/detalle/bdh0000052132.

Shifting the Narrative

Sternsee's *Costume Album* stands apart from the written chronicles and other visual artefacts commissioned and circulated by the imperial inner circle. The Tunis campaign inspired a flurry of literary and artistic works as Charles V and his advisors capitalised on the military operation that had sought to release the city from the grip of the Ottoman corsair Khayr ad-Din Barbarossa (c.1478–1546).[24] In the 1520s Barbarossa's Turkish and eastern Mediterranean corsairs had pursued territorial expansion into the Maghreb, operating on behalf of Ottoman interests. The Ibero-African frontier heated up as a site of contest, as the Hafsid sultanate and the Berber population found themselves squeezed between Turkish-Muslim imperialist ambitions and Spanish attacks on coastal bases.[25] In 1534 Khayr ad-Din Barbarossa was appointed grand admiral of the Ottoman naval forces and the governor general of the Mediterranean islands (*Cezayir-i Bahr-i Sefid*).[26] Eager to curb Spanish aggression in the western Mediterranean, sultan Süleiman I (r.1520–66) commanded Barbarossa, who was already established in Algiers, to capture Tunis from its Spanish-allied Hafsid ruler, Mulay Hasan (r.1526–43).[27] For Charles V, this alarming move necessitated a counter-attack, especially since the recent alliance of his long-term rival Francis I with the Ottoman sultan had only exacerbated tensions. His Spanish, German, Netherlandish and Italian soldiers joined forces with allies from the Republic of Genoa, the Papal States, the Kingdom of Portugal and the Knights of St John to form what Miguel Ángel de Bunes Ibarra describes as a "pan-European fleet", materializing two of the emperor's "most beloved ideas throughout his reign: to unify Christianity under a single command and to fight against the enemy of the Church and of the faith."[28]

The literary and visual images that entered the propaganda stream of Charles V were, argues Peter Burke, active "media events" that shaped the responses to his policies and actions.[29] Dynamic media works appeared shortly after the campaign's end, broadcasting the image of a victorious Christian emperor triumphant over his rival. For a number of celebratory imperial entries in Italy, from Messina to Genoa, triumphal arches were erected proclaiming Charles to be *Domitor Africana* (the

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[24] Khayr ad-Din Barbarossa and his elder brother Oruç were natives of the island of Lesbos, who set up in the Mahgreb in the second decade of the sixteenth century.
[25] Andrew C. Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier: A History of the Sixteenth-Century Ibero-African Frontier* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 65, 68–70.
[26] Pinar Emiralioğlu, *Geographical Knowledge and Imperial Culture in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 32–33.
[27] David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 418.
[28] Miguel Á. de Bunes Ibarra, 'La conquista de Túnez por los cronistas españoles', in *Túnez 1535: Voces de una campana europea*, eds. Miguel Á. de Bunes Ibarra and Rubén González Cuerva (Madrid: Polefemo, 2017), 9.
[29] Peter Burke, 'Presenting and Re-Presenting Charles V', in *Charles V, 1500–1558, and His Time*, eds. Wim Blockmans and Hugo Soly (Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 1999), 393.

tamer of Africa) and *Turcarum Eversori* (the Turkish destroyer).[30] Broadsheets announcing the victory were printed before the year was out.[31] The imperial secretary Antoine Perrenin, who had participated in the battle, wrote an account in the form of a diary, which was translated into Spanish by the secretary of state Francisco de los Cobo, and later into Latin by Johannes Etrobius.[32] Maarten van Heemskerck painted a classicised exultation of the emperor's conquest of Tunis—complete with a heavily armoured Charles on horseback, brandishing a sword—that later appeared as a widely-circulated engraving (fig. VI.2).[33] Most jubilant of all, however, was the ambitious tapestry series commissioned by Charles's sister Mary of Hungary (1505–88) in 1546, designed by Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen and woven in Brussels by the Willem Pannemaker workshop.[34]

These visual records shared a propensity to show the emperor as the dominant person around which two intertwined discourses circled. First, the crusading rhetoric that pitted Christian forces against perceived Islamic aggressors, and secondly, the concept of a united Christendom and universal empire with Charles V at its head. The latter had been actively promoted by his advisors for around two decades, chief among them the imperial chancellors Mercurino Gattinara and Alfonso de Valdés.[35] The expansionist sentiment of Charles's personal device of the Pillars of Hercules (the cliffs flanking the Strait of Gibraltar) with the motto *Plus Ultra* (further beyond) was, from its inception, bound up with the religious ideals of the Order of the Golden Fleece, for whom Charles had become grandmaster in 1516. As Andrew C. Hess noted, the Strait of Gibraltar not only symbolised the Ibero-African frontier but was the imagined site of a cultural division between Islam and Latin Christendom.[36] The physician Luigi Marliano explained the device at the meeting of the Order that year: it showed that a single monarch ruled over the entire world; Charles was offered a unique opportunity to "unify Christians for the protection and expansion of the faith and the recovery of Africa and Asia"; and, finally, Charles as "a new Hercules or an Atlas" would uphold his global hegemony.[37]

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[30] Ibid., 433–34.

[31] Ibid., 434.

[32] Bunes Ibarra, 'La Conquista de Túnez', 14; Burke, 'Presenting and Re-Presenting', 434; Johannes Etrobius, *Com[m]entarium sev potivs diarivm expeditionis Tvniceae, a Carolo V imperatore (...)* (Louvain: Impresis Petri Phalesii, ac Martini Rotarii, 1547). Antoine Perrenin, one of Charles's trusted Burgundian ministers, was a secretary of state between 1525–38. Francisco de los Cobos (c. 1477–1547) was Charles's hugely influential Spanish secretary who advised on his Castilian affairs.

[33] The Dutch painter Maarten van Heemskerck (1498–1574) developed his classicizing style during his Italian period between 1532–36.

[34] The twelve-piece series was not complete until 1554.

[35] As Charles's Grand Chancellor, the Italian humanist Mercurino Gattinara (1465–1530) dominated Charles's imperial policy in the 1520s. Like Gattinara, the Spanish chancellor Alfonso de Valdés (c. 1490–1532) was an avid proponent of the ideas of Erasmus.

[36] Hess, *Forgotten Frontier*, 4–5.

[37] Translated by and quoted in Earl Rosenthal, 'The Invention of the Columnar Device of Emperor Charles V at the Court of Burgundy in Flanders in 1516', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973): 223–24. Luigi Marliano (c.



Fig. VI.2: Dirk Volkertsz Coornhert after Maarten van Heemskerck, *The Fall of Tunis* (engraving, 168 x 245 mm) 1559. From the series *The Victories of Emperor Charles V*. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. RP-P-1892-A-17528.

Charles was granted a spiritual mission inspired by the crusading ideology that moulded him as a champion of the Faith. However, his rival Süleiman I was correspondingly envisioned by his advisers, particularly İbrahim Pasha (c.1495–1536), as a universal ruler destined to unite humankind under one religion.[38] Süleiman's advisors also exploited the arts to reinforce claims of imperial legitimacy. Gülru Necipoğlu has convincingly argued that the patronage of western European artists encouraged by Pasha, including Venetian jewellers for the sultan's famed, jewel-encrusted helmet-crown, and the tapestry cartoon draughtsman Pieter Coecke van Aelst, were even intended to reach to a European audience through a "Western discourse of power".[39] The tiered helmet-crown, reminiscent of the papal tiara and fashioned in the style of the classicized helmets beloved by the aspirant Caesar Charles thus traded in an iconography of universal sovereignty familiar in western Europe.[40] As Jardine and Brotton note, it was an imperial rivalry with shared preoccupations that many European artists

1484–1521), born in Milan, not only served as the personal physician of the adolescent Charles but was also a close advisor.
[38] Emiralioğlu, *Geographical Knowledge*, 31.
[39] Gülru Necipoğlu, 'Süleyman the Magnificent'. The Flemish artist Coecke van Aelst was sent by the Brussels tapestry makers Willem and Jan Dermoyen to Istanbul in 1533 to furnish the sultan with tapestries. Following the death of İbrahim Pasha, these were never executed, however the artist did produce a celebrated portrait of the sultan.
[40] Ibid., 411.

enthusiastically profited from.[41]

Because of the charged rhetoric that emanated from both the Habsburg and Ottoman courts, the events in Tunis have been viewed by historians including Roger Crowley as part of a series of Mediterranean skirmishes between the 1520s and 1570s that represented a protracted "contest for the sea" between two powerful emperors vying for world dominance.[42] While the Mediterranean might have been visualised as Crowley's "biosphere of chaotic violence where Islam and Christianity clashed with unmatched ferocity" in the carefully curated records of the Tunis campaign, which Pope Paul III had declared a crusade,[43] Sternsee's impressions of this western Mediterranean frontier shift the narrative away from warring Caesars and religious supremacy. His *Album* and his chronicle of Tunis in his *Diary* demonstrate the more nuanced and individual visions and values of a German mercenary soldier in the Habsburg Mediterranean. His written account is comparable in tone to that produced by his contemporary Nikolaus Guldin, a Swiss-born Anabaptist, who served in the same regiment in Tunis under the colonel Marx (Maximilian) von Eberstein.[44] These works demonstrate genuine curiosity for the Barbary coast and the islands of the western Mediterranean. They distinguish between different peoples involved in the campaign, rather than fixating on Christians against Muslims, and reveal an appreciation for maritime technology and the coordination of a large-scale military enterprise. Contrasting with the imagined divide between Islam and Christendom, which, in Hess's observation represented the Ibero-African frontier in the popular mindset of the first half of the sixteenth century, Sternsee's vision is of a site of encounter and exchange.[45]

Tunis: A Habsburg Mediterranean

On 24 March 1535, news reached Sternsee in Bologna that the emperor was amassing an armada to sail to Barbary.[46] He travelled to Spezia to join the German *Landsknecht* regiment of Marx von Eberstein, with whom Sternsee had briefly served on the occasion of Charles V's coronation.[47] The

[41] Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West* (London: Reaktion, 2000), 120.
[42] Roger Crowley, *Empires of the Sea: The Final Battle for the Mediterranean 1521–1580* (London: Faber, 2008), 7.
[43] Burke, "Presenting and Re-Presenting", 433.
[44] Nikolaus Guldin (Guldi), a native of St. Gallen, joined the anabaptist movement in 1525 and was incarcerated several times, ultimately recanting. He received the support of the Strasbourg preacher Martin Bucer to reintegrate into St. Gallen in the 1530s. See Rubén González Cuerva, 'La aportación centroeuropea a una empresa mediterránea', in *Túnez 1535*, 39–40. Guldin's account was preserved in a letter to the St. Gallen humanist Joachim Vadian (1484–1551), an avid supporter of Zwingli, reproduced in Nikolaus Guldin, 'Relato de la jornada del emperador Carlos V a Túnez', in *Túnez 1535*, 109–36.
[45] Hess reads this imagined, symbolic divide to parse over the great deal of religious and cultural plurality that continued to exist between Iberian and north African societies. Hess, *Forgotten Frontier*, 4–5.
[46] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 2, 36.
[47] Ibid., vol. 2, 28, 36. Eberstein (d. 1536), who led 8,000 German troops in Tunis, came from an aristocratic family of Swabia with a long tradition of military service to the Austrian Habsburgs. He had earlier served in the Battle of Pavia.

emperor had little difficulty drawing support from across his vast networks. Ottoman incursions in the Danube basin had been keenly felt in the German and Austrian lands, particularly after the 1529 Siege of Vienna, while subjects in Spain, Portugal and coastal Italy were eager to curb the slave-capturing raids of Turkish and Barbary corsairs around the western Mediterranean coastline.[48] Repositioning the Ottoman-Habsburg battlefront from central Europe to North Africa capitalised on the heated rivalries occurring in this area of the Mediterranean.



Fig. VI.3: Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen, *Battle scene at Tunis* (pen and ink drawing, 355 x 345 mm), 1540–1550. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. RP-T-1963-265.

[48] More precisely, it had been a case of "reciprocal plunder": Spanish and Portuguese privateers looted ships and sacked ports along the north African coast, while the Knights of St John were active pirates in the eastern Mediterranean. Abulafia, *The Great Sea*, 414; James D. Tracy, *Emperor Charles V, Impresario of War: Campaign Strategy, International Finance, and Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 133–34.

Sternsee described each campaign event from the pre-battle preparations to the siege of Goleta and the sack of Tunis. On 14 June 1535 the imperial fleet sailed for Goleta, the port entrance to Tunis. The ships' artillery pounded the fortress of Goleta until it was stormed and captured.[49] As the imperial troops descended upon Tunis, civilians were slaughtered, shops and mosques plundered, and slaves captured.[50] Sternsee was unapologetic about his role in the onslaught. Describing how Barbarossa beseeched the imperial troops to show mercy to the city's inhabitants, he chillingly concludes: "And so we moved into the city and plundered it, and beat 6,000 men to death, and led 12,500 women and children away, the others had run away, and freed 20,000 Christians who had been trapped there."[51] Jan Vermeyen, in his capacity as campaign artist, recorded the affray. A surviving preparatory sketch for the later tapestries portrays the violence that ensued (fig. VI.3). Two fallen Tunisians dominate the foreground, their torn clothes and cut bodies abandoned by the imperial soldiers who continue their violence outside the city walls. Barbarossa, following his flight from Tunis, sacked the harbour town of Mahón in Minorca, capturing and enslaving several thousand people in retribution.[52] Mulay Hasan was restored to his vassal state while Sternsee, as a new imperial guard, accompanied the emperor to Messina and onwards to Rome and Florence, where he enjoyed the glorious processions awaiting a Christian conqueror.

In 1546 Vermeyen began composing the visual programme for a twelve-piece tapestry series to commemorate the campaign. Unsurprisingly, the scene of the fallen innocents did not end up in the officially sanctioned cartoons, incompatible with the tapestries' triumphant agenda.[53] Making use of classical references to old Carthage, the tapestries connected Charles's exploits with those of the illustrious Roman general Scipio Africanus (236–183 BC) and his defeat over Hannibal (247–183/1 BC) in the Second Punic War. Allusions like these, argue Jardine and Brotton, elevated a "relatively insignificant military victory into a culturally significant moment in the development of sixteenth-century notions of imperial power".[54] Despite the delay of ten years before Mary of Hungary commissioned the tapestries, Vermeyen wasted no time publishing several prints in the 1530s demonstrating familiarity with the topography and inhabitants of Tunis, for which he obtained an exclusive privilege from the Council of Brabant to protect.[55] The years in which he worked on the

[49] Ibid., 147.
[50] Ibid., 149.
[51] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 2, 45: *So sein wir in die Stadt gezogen und die geplundert und bei 6000 Mann zu tot geschlagen und bei 12½000 Moren Weib und Kinder weggeführt, die andern sind fortgelaufen und bei 20.000 Christen erlöst die da gefangen sein gewesen.*
[52] Abulafia, *The Great Sea*, 418.
[53] Mary E. Barnard, *Garcilaso de La Vega and the Material Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 45.
[54] Jardine and Brotton, *Global Interests*, 86.
[55] Hendrik Horn, *Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen: Painter of Charles V and His Conquest of Tunis. Paintings, Etchings, Drawings, Cartoons and Tapestries* (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1989), 14, 19. For example, *Mulay Hasan and his Retinue at a Repast in*

tapestry cartoons coincided with Sternsee's stay in Brussels from 1548 to 49, which might explain the timing, content and imagery of his *Costume Album*.



Fig. VI.4: Procession of the King of Tunis. *Códice de trajes*, ill. 15. Image owned by the Biblioteca Nacional de España. Copy after Sternsee's *Album*, ill. 47.



Fig. VI.5: Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen/ Real Fábrica de Tapices de Santa Bárbara, Madrid, (Detail) from tapestry IX 'The

Tunis (ca.1535) and *Portrait of Mulay Ahmad* (ca.1535).

Capture of Tunis'. From an eighteenth-century copy after the *Conquest of Tunis* Tapestries (silk and wool, after the workshop of Willem Pannemaker 1543–1554), 1731–44. Salón de los Tapices, Real Alcázar, Seville. Photo Credit: Alberto Bravo/ Wikimedia Commons.

Where Vermeyen's designs chronicle the unfolding episodes of the battle, the *Album* presents the inhabitants, battle participants, naval power and wildlife of the region in epistemic detail. Many folios share subject matter with the tapestry series, however, and are potentially derived from Vermeyen's source material. For example, a cavalry group of Berber soldiers in the *Fall of Tunis* tapestry share features of dress with the Sternsee *Album*'s illustration of the Tunisian king and his entourage (figs. VI.4–VI.5). Turbans, full-length tunics and long, double-pointed spears carried above the soldiers' shoulders appear in each depiction as the costume of Berber horsemen. In both portrayals, moreover, an accompanying footman wears a fringed mantle and carries a dagger. The original commentary, consistent with Sternsee's passion for measurements, informs us that the spears are twenty-eight feet in length.[56] This was exaggerated to thirty-six feet in the caption of the later copy. Sternsee had, in fact, recorded in his *Diary* the arrival of Mulay Hasan and his entourage, complete with one hundred horses, at the imperial camp on 28 June and thus had an opportunity to personally observe their garments and weaponry.[57]

The *Album* also charts the appearance of Tunis civilians. Sternsee's involvement in their harassment is glossed over by showing local residents in their finery. One illustration is described in the original commentary to portray noble maidens "with the nails of their hands and feet painted red, as well as with golden rings at their ears, and a black footman in the manner of the Moors" (fig. VI.6).[58] The later copy stresses this to be a trait of the rich. Elsewhere, others distinguished as "rich burghers" of Barbary and Haidt (Haïdra), are shown in conversation.[59] The *Album* identifies racial distinctions here, too, contrasting male citizens with pale, pink skin against a black woman who, despite her gold jewellery, stands apart from the group. Following Charles V's reinstatement of Mulay Hasan, it made sense for Habsburg allies to want to see a flourishing, well-ordered society free from Turkish control. Habsburg associations with the Hafsid dynasty were maintained. In July 1542 Sternsee documented the arrival of Tunisian ambassadors in Spain bearing gifts for the emperor and in February 1548 he noted the visit to Augsburg by the new king of Tunis.[60]

[56] MSF, MS Cat. 2025, Sternsee, *Album*, ill. 48, *Also Reitten seine Edel unnd Kriegsleut in Gelben Peltzen und lanngen Spiessen Achtundzwanzig schüech lang*.
[57] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 2, 41.
[58] MSF, MS Cat. 2025, Sternsee, *Album*, ill. 50, *Also ghenn die Edljunkhfrauen mit Rotgeferbten negel an henden und füessen, auch gulden Ringlen an iren Ohren Und ein Schwarzer Lackei auff Morrn*.
[59] Ibid., ill. 51. *Also ghenn die Reichen Bürger geklaidt in Barbaria Vnd haidt.*
[60] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 2, 109, 203.



Fig. VI.6: Civilians of 'Barbary'. *Códice de trajes*, ill. 16. Image owned by the Biblioteca Nacional de España. Copy after Sternsee's *Album*, ills. 49–50.



Fig. VI.7: Turkish and Tatar Soldiers. *Códice de trajes*, ill. 62. Image owned by the Biblioteca Nacional de España. Copy after Sternsee's *Album*, ill. 156.



Fig. VI.8: Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen/ Real Fábrica de Tapices de Santa Bárbara, Madrid. (Detail) from tapestry IV 'Skirmishes on the Cape of Carthage'. From an eighteenth-century copy after the *Conquest of Tunis* tapestries (silk and wool, after the workshop of Willem Pannemaker 1543–1554), 1731–1744. Salón de los Tapices, Real Alcázar, Seville. Photo Credit: Paul M.R. Maeyaert/ Wikimedia Commons.

Sternsee's *Diary* always distinguished Moors from Turks, even while the loyalties of the Moorish fighters seemed to swing back and forth in his narrative. The *Album* went further, depicting not only Turkish but other ethnic groups within the Ottoman army, including Tatars, Mamluks and Janissary soldiers—many of whom were recruited from Slavic prisoners-of-war—thus representing the true mélange of ethnicities involved in the campaign (fig. VI.7). The *Album* thus shared the commitment of the *Conquest of Tunis* tapestries to differentiate through dress and appearance the manifold peoples serving the Ottoman and Habsburg sides. Vermeyen needed to make the different warring parties clearly distinguishable to portray the unfolding episodes.[61] In a scene depicting the siege of La Goleta, harquebusiers, identifiable as a German regiment, approach over a hill wearing billowing slashed

[61] Horn, *Vermeyen*, 274.

sleeves, feathered bonnets and colourful, puffed linings (fig. VI.8). Elsewhere a band of Spanish pikemen wade through a lake en route to Tunis. In contrast to the Germans, these soldiers wear figure-hugging jerkins and tight sleeves.

Pictures to distinguish military garments feature in the *Album* too, asserting Sternsee's knowledge of and proximity to the international forces of the imperial alliance. Displaying the characteristic outfits of German, Spanish and Netherlandish soldiers, viewers are invited to compare the neat and slim figures of the Spaniards with their high-necked, tight-fitting doublets against the style of the German *Landsknecht* soldiers with their voluminous puffs and slashes, which were familiar through the circulation of the popular prints of Erhard Schön and Hans Sebald Beham, among others (figs. VI.9–VI.10).[62] Not only the dress but also the actions of the German troops were distinguished from those of the other imperial allies in Sternsee's *Diary*. Effective communication and organisation of international military units on the battlefield followed divisions of language and culture. Differentiating these different "nation" groups in the *Diary* only highlighted the joint effort of the imperial coalition in which the teamwork and the leadership of large units of soldiers recruited from across Charles V's European allies proved formidable.

Throughout the *Diary*'s Tunis narrative, Sternsee chronicled events by tracking the actions and movements of these international forces. He located himself within the German regiment, recording not his own individual deeds, but those of "us", the German troops. Positioning himself within his group of kinsmen was a deliberate strategy that emphasised the combined strength and synergy of the German soldiers with whom he identified. A cog in a well-oiled machine, Sternsee speaks of himself only once in the first person singular, proclaiming with some measure of pride that during the final storm of Tunis by the infantry "I stood beside my captain Bernhart Gerhart in the first rank."[63] Orienting himself in relation to the captain of his company (*Fähnlein*—a smaller unit within the larger German regiment), he nevertheless carved out a space for himself in the narrative to demonstrate his distinction and prowess.

[62] Erhard Schön (1491–1542) and Hans Sebald Beham (1500–50), both natives of Nuremberg, were prolific printmakers. Beham's series of fifty *Landsknecht* woodcuts dated circa 1525–30 is especially illustrative of the eccentricities of the *Landsknecht* style.

[63] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 2, 43: *[…] und ich neben meinem Hauptmann Bernhart Gerhart in dem ersten Glied gestanden*.



Fig. VI.9: German Soldiers. *Códice de trajes*, ill. 42. Image owned by the Biblioteca Nacional de España. Copy after Sternsee's *Album*, ills. 109–10.



Fig. VI.10: Spanish Soldiers. *Códice de trajes*, ill. 9. Image owned by the Biblioteca Nacional de España. Copy after Sternsee's *Album*, ill. 23.

By drawing attention to the multi-national/ multi-ethnic makeup of the Tunis campaign, Sternsee's *Diary* and *Costume Album* transcended a binary Christian versus Muslim rhetoric. They instead demonstrated how the Mediterranean was instrumental for the convergence in Tunis of international groups from across European and African territories, due to the political manoeuvres of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. The maritime features of the campaign, therefore, receive much attention in

Sternsee's works. The campaign's sailors were an integral part of naval warfare, distinguishable in their different roles and hierarchy through their uniform. The *Album* presents two European sailors and a galley slave dressed in simple shirts and breeches of bright scarlet.[64] The slave, with his shorn head and bare legs, most likely represents one of the documented prisoners transported from Antwerp to row the galleys.[65] Elsewhere are illustrated the sailors "on board the large ships".[66] The two figures in their finery, one wearing a purple hooded gown with wide-armed sleeves, the other wrapped in a scarlet, fur-lined mantle, may represent top naval commanders like Andrea Doria, for example, or possibly the commanders of regiments like Marx von Eberstein.[67]

Sternsee's *Diary* eagerly recounts the naval power that crossed the Mediterranean. When he arrived in Spezia he encountered a port full of many "monumental" ships and galleys.[68] Sternsee joined his captain Bernhart Gerhart, on a ship named the *Natzar* that sailed for Naples accompanied by fifteen galleys from Doria's Genoese fleet.[69] Sternsee went on to chronicle the expanding armada gathering in the bay of Naples, in Barcelona and off Sicily, which made a final rendezvous in Sardinia.[70] Ships and galleys arrived from Portugal, the Kingdom of Naples, from the pope and from the Knights of St John. Commenting on the combined fleet, Sternsee declared that "from all countries came many little ships".[71]

He delighted in counting and assessing the ships, their artillery ordnance and the manpower of the armada: a fleet that amounted to nearly four hundred vessels and 35,000 men.[72] The Portuguese sent twenty-one caravels, defined by Sternsee as "warships" laden with guns.[73] The jewels in the crown, however, were undoubtedly the armada's three largest ships: Doria's large galleon, the Portuguese warship the *São João Baptista*, and the *Santa Anna*, the carrack of Rhodes sailed by the Knights of St John from their new Maltese base. The proficiencies of these ships captivated Sternsee. He counted that Doria's large galleon carried one hundred frontline soldiers (*Doppelsöldner*), one hundred gunners and two hundred sailors. Where the smaller ships in the Genoese admiral's fleet held sixty cannons by Sternsee's estimates, Doria's large galleon maintained one hundred.[74] The Portuguese galleon meanwhile, newly launched in 1534, was declared by Sternsee to be just "as huge

[64] MSF, MS Cat. 2025, Sternsee, *Album*, ill. 46.
[65] Tracy, *Charles V*, 146.
[66] MSF, MS Cat. 2025, Sternsee, *Album*, ill. 45: *Also sindt die Schiffleüth geklait von den groszen Schiffen*.
[67] Andrea Doria (1466–1560), of noble Genoese heritage, became a notorious naval commander in the Italian Wars and built up a personal fleet of galleys for hire. He became the admiral of Charles's Mediterranean fleet when he defected to the imperial side, his squadron of galleys greatly supplementing the emperor's naval forces.
[68] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 2, 36: *gewaltige Schiffe*.
[69] Ibid., vol. 2, 36.
[70] Ibid., vol. 2, 37.
[71] Ibid., vol. 2, 37: *Auch sein von allen Landen viel Schifflein mitgefahren*.
[72] Parker, 'Political World of Charles V', 163.
[73] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 2, 37: *[…] sind Kriegsschiff und haben darauf viel Geschütz*.
[74] Ibid., vol. 2, 35.

as Andrea Doria's galleon", also bearing one hundred large cannons and even more smaller guns.[75] Every (smaller) galley, he calculated, "is 150 feet long", had a mast 84-feet high and contained five large cannons, one cannon royal (the so-called *Kartaune*), two falconets and two falconet-operators.[76]

The size and variety of the multi-national armada, the scale of the alliance around Charles V and his ability to unite such a force on the seas hugely impressed Sternsee, who ensured that the campaign's ships were catalogued in the *Album*. Doria's galleon is pictured full of figures, with rows of cannons pointing out of the hatches in the hull. "This is Andrea Doria's galleon when it has no wind", the commentary observed, the ship's sails tied up on the rigging.[77] Along with remarks hinting at eye-witness observations, statistical calculations typical of Sternsee proliferate. In one image a Turkish galley is portrayed bearing a flag with a crescent moon, upon which a shadowy figure raises a whip. As well as accounting for the galley's firepower, the label asserts "each one of these galleys has one hundred and ninety-four men who are chained to row".[78] Cataloguing the naval power wielded by each side was not merely an exercise to measure the strength of two opposing adversaries. Rather, the assorted and abundant naval technologies and people of diverse cultures, social ranks and military roles in the campaign intrigued this Habsburg soldier. For Sternsee, the Tunis episode represented not simply a clash of two empires but an assembly in the Mediterranean of the most advanced military resources active on the waters at that time.

The Tunis campaign represented a personal travel adventure in which the landscape, the people, and the wildlife he encountered piqued his curiosity. The *Diary* eagerly related the information Sternsee consumed about new, foreign sights. In the months leading up to the battle, he sailed between different ports and islands in the western Mediterranean as the imperial armada swelled in size. Around the islands of Ischia and Procida, he noted : "[I]n the autumn one can see many quails coming from other countries, which it is affirmed does not last for long, [and] which are salted in barrels and sold to Naples".[79] He described Palermo as "a big and beautiful city", while Sardinia was "full of corn and fruit, also wine, and good horses".[80] Sternsee's contemporary Nikolaus Guldin provided even more descriptive observations, among them the rules by which the German soldiers were bound aboard ship (if one offended the sacraments, he was to be thrown overboard) and that the Knights of

[75] Ibid., vol. 2, 37: *Auch ist die Armada von Portugal da gewesen und gehabt eine grosse Galeere, hat 100 grosse Stuck darauf gehabt, aber meherer Teil klein Geschütz und so gewaltig als auch der Andrea Doria Galeere.*
[76] Ibid., vol. 2, 37.
[77] MSF, MS Cat. 2025, Sternsee, *Album*, ill. 44, *Das ist Andre Doria Galleon wenn er kain Windt hat [...]*.
[78] Ibid., ill. 41: *Also faren die Türckhischen Galleen Vnnd hat auf einer jedem Galleen hundert vnnd Vierunndnuerzig Mannen die eingeschmidt seindt zu Rüedern.*
[79] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 2, 36: *In der Insel sieht man im Herbst viele Wachteln die aus anderen Ländern kommen, das nit dauernt zusagen ist, das man in Fässlein einsalzt und da zu Neapel verkauft.*
[80] Ibid., vol. 2, 37: *ist eine gute Insel und voll von Korn und Früchten, auch Wein, und guten Pferden […].*

St John wore red livery with white crosses.[81] According to Guldin, a great deal of flax was planted in Barbary and spun into very fine threads that made good linen. The people wore almost no wool or leather, he remarked, instead wearing long linen or silk robes without breeches or hose and often went barefoot.[82] Guldin's vivid descriptions are matched in their intensity by the images in Sternsee's *Album*, which also included pictures of local wildlife. A dromedary, for instance, is claimed "to go more nimbly than any horse", while three ostriches with black, grey and white feathers and pink necks are attested to have "this colour in Barbary".[83] A folio illustrating a monkey scaling a tree explains that they are found in high numbers in Barbary, where they do great damage to fruit trees. The observations and value statements that pepper both the *Album* and the *Diary* assert Sternsee's first-hand acquisition of cultural knowledge—knowledge that stressed to his viewership of associates and family members that the guard captain was a worldly, seasoned traveller thanks to his participation in Habsburg expeditions and exploits, which spanned the Mediterranean.

Chronicles and Costume Books

In their recent volume on imperial rivalries in the early modern Mediterranean, Barbara Fuchs and Emily Weissbourd emphasise the significance of localised media, where highly distinctive cultural phenomena responded to and partook in the connectivities of the Mediterranean. "Even when rhetorics rely on universalizing frameworks, such as the legacy of Rome, the crusading impulse or the project of universal monarchy," they argue, "they remain rooted in particular circumstances and traditions".[84] Sternsee's and Guldin's accounts of the Tunis campaign adhere to the Germanic tradition of military memoirs, which in the early sixteenth century characteristically eschewed emotional language, personal feelings or self-reflection.[85] Erika Kuijpers argues that "chronicling was a way of positioning oneself or one's collectivity in time, in space, in society", its very act integral to memory practices and emotional cultures.[86] In his *Diary*, Sternsee regularly states the arrival of news (*neue Zeitung kommen* [sic]) to highlight his acquisition of the latest information through various social channels including the imperial court or the military. His love of enumerating statistical facts, moreover, demonstrates a compulsion to create meaning in disorder. Weighing up the resources he

[81] See Guldin, 'Relato', 115, 117–18.
[82] Ibid., 122, 126.
[83] MSF, MS Cat. 2025, Sternsee, *Album*, ill. 52: *ghet behennder als khain Pfaerdt*; ibid., ill. 56, *[...] seindt diser Farb im Barbaria*.
[84] Barbara Fuchs and Emily Weissbourd, *Representing Imperial Rivalry in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 3.
[85] Erika Kuijpers, 'Histories, Chronicles and Memoirs', in *Early Modern Emotions: An Introduction*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 103.
[86] Ibid., 103–04.

reviewed around the Mediterranean measured the influence, power and persuasion of a vast network of people he identified as allies, communicating the collective honour of the Habsburg cause—to which he dedicated his life—and, more specifically, the fundamental role his German kinsmen played. In this, Guldin was more explicit, associating the more shameful moments in the campaign such as the killing of women and children and the rapacious plunder of Tunis with the *Welsche* (the non-Germanic troops, that is the Spaniards and Italians), thus absolving his kinsmen of any wrongdoing.[87]

The *Costume Album* was a particularly unique creation for contemplating Tunis and the Habsburg Mediterranean, the confines of its formula generating exceptional results. Costume books and albums emerged in the sixteenth century when the relative reduction of isolation, both physical and intellectual, of disparate parts of the globe brought about an intense interest in the subject of human diversity. They participated in the booming production of atlases, cosmographies and travelogues, which correspondingly aimed to acquire and reinterpret knowledge about space, place and culture. The body became a subject requiring geographic orientation, its dress and appearance being "mapped" in costume books to mark transitions between different territories, cultures and societies.[88] Tunis expands this brief in Sternsee's *Album*, offering a space where different cultures and societies were in direct confrontation and could study one other, a space where ships and wildlife were as useful a measure as clothing. The subjects portrayed were detached from the drama of context, making them icons of a world order dominated by Habsburg hegemony.

Conclusion

By the time Sternsee commissioned his *Costume Album*, he had met with great success as an imperial guard captain, having in 1544 received an improvement to his coat of arms.[89] His imperial favour was confirmed in April 1546 when he was granted the office of *Drossart* (chief commander) of Harlingen in Friesland, a province acquired by Charles in 1524.[90] In August 1548, Sternsee accompanied the emperor to Brussels after a year stationed in Augsburg for the imperial diet. It is possible that, during his Augsburg stay, he observed the costume images of Christoph Weiditz's *Trachtenbuch*, inspiring the captain to have something similar prepared that would commemorate his own travels. Sternsee does not mention the commission in his *Diary*, but its connection to Brussels is plausible. The *Album* deals with subjects and imagery also present in Jan Vermeyen's oeuvre, including content not only

[87] Guldin, 'Relato', 130–31.
[88] Valerie Traub, 'Mapping the Global Body', in *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in Renaissance England*, eds. Peter Erickson and Clark Hulse (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2000), 46–49.
[89] Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖSt), Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (AVA) Adel RAA 409.54, *Sternsee, Christoph von, im Krieg gegen das Herzogtum Mailand, Wappenbesserung (...)*, Speyer 1544.
[90] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 2, 153, 155.

related to Tunis but also to Spain.[91] The timing of the commission also coincides with the period in Sternsee's life when he sought to marry. On 1 June 1550, Sternsee married Kunera van Ropta of local Frisian nobility (d.1555).[92] Discrepancies in pigment hues indicate that her coat of arms was inserted into the *Costume Album* at a later date to Sternsee's, indicating that the commission was completed before they married.

A mature man with governorship over two Habsburg territories, Sternsee was looking to consolidate his legacy. The commission of a one-of-a-kind, hand-painted manuscript linked to these ambitions, demonstrating his worldliness and validating his ability to govern. Unlike the wordy *Diary*, the *Album* had an immediate visual impact. Opening with a portrait of Charles V, the work embraces the dominance of the Habsburg empire on the world stage. Closing with the Sternsee family coat of arms, it emphasises Sternsee's allegiance to the imperial cause, which had granted him the mobility afforded to officers participating within the multi-national Habsburg network. Both the *Diary* and the *Costume Album* constitute social acts in which Sternsee became visible as a Habsburg subject. Although never explicit about his intended audience, the ambitious captain would have been able to show Habsburg associates, Frisian elite and family members his striking costume album, which, along with the *Diary*, was a family heirloom preserving not only Sternsee's legacy, but that of Charles V's empire.

Although Christoph von Sternsee contributed in an unofficial capacity to Charles V's propaganda stream, the records he wrote and commissioned offer fresh perspectives on the meaning of the Mediterranean and the Tunis campaign from the standpoint of a German foot-soldier impressed by the scale of imperial resources and eager to learn about the foreign cultures connected by sea. In contrast to the hyperbolic narratives about the Tunis campaign broadcast in official accounts and artworks, Sternsee's *Diary* and *Costume Album* avoided inflated discourses about vying Caesars or Christendom against the Turkish infidel. Sternsee's Habsburg Mediterranean, condensed through the campaign of Tunis, emerges as a site of confluence where diverse foreign cultures and vast naval technologies assembled to imperial glory in 1535. As the propagator of these visions, Sternsee positions himself as the representative Habsburg soldier. Experiencing the open Mediterranean seas and the Barbary coast for the first time, the imperial soldier from Laibach reveals himself fascinated by naval technologies and receptive to foreign people and lands. Paying attention to Sternsee and his experiences, therefore, can revise how historians review the meaning and impact of the Mediterranean in the context of the Habsburg empire: not simply a stage upon which two powerful emperors and religions clashed, but a space where ordinary people experienced cross-cultural encounters,

[91] For more examples see Bond, "Mapping Culture".
[92] Plaschke, *Chronik von Sternsee*, vol. 3, 228.

knowledge exchange and career progression.