

INTRODUCTION¹

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In August 1534 Hayreddin Barbarossa, ruler of Algiers, and after 1533 also Admiral of the Mediterranean fleet of the Ottoman sultan, Süleyman the Lawgiver, captured the city and sultanate of Tunis. The Hafsi ruler, Mulay Hassan, referred to by Christian sources as King of Tunis, fled and appealed to his most powerful Christian ally, the emperor Charles V for aid. In the summer of 1535 Charles V personally commanded a large, amphibious operation with forces drawn from most parts of Europe to help Mulay Hassan recover the kingdom. With only token support from the Tunisian exiles, the combined Christian forces successfully besieged the fort of La Goleta outside Tunis and, despite their alliance with the deposed king, went on to sack the city itself before handing it back to its ruler. Writing in the 1760s William Robertson pondered how it was that Barbarossa, a potter's son and thus not "of rank to be illustrious", had raised the city-state of Algiers and the region of Barbary to become "formidable to the Europeans". He concluded that it was due to Barbarossa's "restless and enterprising spirit"; his valour, energy, talent and ambition, qualities that could be found in other conquerors, adding to the mix what he saw as the "bigoted hatred" of Christianity that inspired the inhabitants of the Maghreb. The result was to pose such a threat to "Europeans" that it made the history of the region, "worthy of more attention"².

The Christian eurocentrism and stark religious dualism that characterise Robertson's account of the Tunis campaigns of 1534 and 1535 were widely shared at the time and have long influenced the historiography of the campaigns. The reality was far from this and far from simple: there was bigotry and hatred on all sides, and conflicts and devastating wars. But there was also a good deal of mutual comprehension and collaboration, as was amply demonstrated in these campaigns, most notably by the alliance between Charles V – who as Holy Roman Emperor held the most prestigious title in Christendom – and the Tunisian ruler, Mulay Hassan; as well as the alliance between

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² W. Robertson, *The reign of Charles V*, in *The Works of William Robertson, D.D.*, T. Cadell, London, 1821 [1769], vol. V, pp. 420-436, cits. p. 421 and 422.

Francis I of France – The Most Christian King – and Süleyman the Lawgiver who was the leader of Sunni Islam. This collection of articles arises from the international research project designed to explore and extend our knowledge of contacts between Christian and Muslim powers in the early-modern period³. It focuses on one of the most spectacular and complex events in those two centuries: the struggle for control of Tunis between the Ottoman sultan and his North African allies on the one hand, and Tunisian supporters of Mulay Hassan backed by Charles V on the other.

As the articles published here emphasise, the aura of success that clings to the emperor's campaign in 1535 and its enduring reputation as a Catholic Crusade are largely due to an over-reliance on the part of historians on the voluminous propaganda generated by the imperialists, both at the time and especially in the 1540s and 1550s. The wide-ranging literary and visual output extolling the virtues of the Habsburg monarch was also of such high quality that it could not fail to have a lasting impact, from Titian's equestrian portrait and Vermeyen's tapestry cartoons, to less familiar but much more widely circulated engravings and medals, chronicles, sermons and laudatory poems. Charles V – and subsequently the Habsburg dynasty and their successors – considered the conquest of what they still thought of as ancient Carthage to be one of his most outstanding deeds and used all available media to project this message. In the emperor's triumphant progress through Italy in the autumn of 1535 Charles V was represented as the new Scipio, succeeding where Louis IX of France, St. Louis, had failed – and paid for his failure with his life. In the short term, such representations facilitated the raising of funds, particularly in Sicily and Naples. It would be further elaborated subsequently. From the outset, Spanish and Italian writers vied to ascribe full credit for the success on their "nation" which led to distorted and contradictory accounts of key events but which largely succeeded in presenting the campaign as a hispano-italian enterprise, a Catholic crusade to reconquer Muslim territories. In fact, they fought as part of a coalition that included Tunisian Muslims, orthodox Christian horsemen from Albania, German infantry – the landsknecht accounted for a quarter of the military forces and was made up of Lutherans, Anabaptists and other Evangelicals as well as Catholics – and men from the emperor's own lands, mostly but not exclusively Catholic.

The Hafsi kingdom of Tunis did not present a danger to the Christian Mediterranean states. It had made commercial and political agreements

³ *Tratar con el Infiel: Diplomacia hispánica con poderes musulmanes (1492-1708)*/"*Negotiating with the Infidel: Diplomatic contacts between Spain and Muslim powers (1492-1708)* (PGC2018-009152-B-I00).

with neighbouring Christian powers for centuries, as had many other Muslim rulers in the Maghreb. This did not prevent them from tolerating and benefitting from the activities of corsairs who preyed on Christian shipping and coastlines. The real danger for Spain and, to a lesser extent, Italy, came from Hayreddin Barbarossa once he consolidated power in Algiers. His success attracted other corsairs and his power was reinforced when he accepted the sovereignty the Ottoman empire. This destroyed the equilibrium that had been reached in the Western Mediterranean. The danger was compounded when he was appointed admiral – *kapudan-ı derya* – of the Ottoman Mediterranean fleet. It signalled a greater commitment on the part of the Ottoman sultan to expand into the Central and Western Mediterranean. Süleyman (1520-1566) had already demonstrated the change of direction in Ottoman policy when he increased the navy and conquered Rhodes in 1522, expelling the most committed and formidable Christian corsairs, the Knights of St. John. That campaign, and the relentless Ottoman advance into Hungary and Austria during the rest of that decade, exposed the internal divisions and lack of cooperation among the Christian states.

Charles V was no less eager to develop a powerful Mediterranean navy in the 1520s but it proved difficult to do while he was consolidating his power over his scattered possessions and fighting the French. His predecessor in Iberia, Ferdinand The Catholic, had marked the path to follow with a series of campaigns in the 1490s which were part of a strategy to ensure the security of the Iberian and Italian states by creating a defensive bulwark along the Maghrebian coast, first taking key ports and using them as a base from which to expand into the neighbouring hinterland. North Africa was neither exotic nor peripheral for the Spanish and Italian realms. States on both sides of the sea had long been closely connected and remained so despite divergent ideologies and political divisions. Charles V wanted to gain control over the Western Mediterranean but, as had been the case with his grandfather, he was repeatedly diverted by the longstanding conflict with France. His position in the region was transformed when he succeeded in securing the services of Andrea Doria and the powerful Genoese fleet in 1528. Two years later he transferred the island of Malta, hitherto part of the Sicilian realm, to the Knights of St. John to compensate them for the loss of Rhodes and make sure of their future cooperation. He also insisted that they maintained a base in Tripoli. For a brief period after peace was signed between Charles V and his French rival, Francis I, in 1529 it looked as if Christendom might be able to unite against the Ottomans. But Francis I was unwilling to abandon the friendly relations he had established with Süleyman, and the Holy League which was formed and successfully took Ottoman-held ports in

the Adriatic did not survive the internal competition between the Christian powers over the spoils.

Even without the Venetian fleet, the largest Christian fleet in the region, but neutralised by its alliance with the Ottoman sultan, Charles V was able to gather an extraordinary mixture of naval forces in 1535 from his own lands and those of his allies. The imperial fleet included ships and materials from the Spanish realms, the Low Countries, Naples, Sicily, Genoa, Florence, the Papal states, the Knights of St. John, and Portugal. It was an impressive achievement. A fleet manned and transporting thousands of men who had never before fought in the Mediterranean, particularly the infantry levied in southern German and Swiss lands.

Factual accounts of the 1535 campaign, with more or less detailed descriptions of the main stages of the conflict are easy to come by. The five articles that make up this dossier address some of the many gaps in our knowledge of this campaign and challenge some of the enduring misconceptions that continue to circulate about the conflict. To do so, they broaden the context and consider the situation before the campaign, as well as looking beyond the imperial alliance to how other powers responded. They approach the topic from a cosmopolitan viewpoint and share the fundamental aim of reconstructing the complex political and religious situation. The contributors set themselves ambitious goals to cover important topics and fill gaps and have had to overcome serious problems due to limited source materials.

The dossier opens with the Ottoman-corsair conquest of Tunis in 1534, a subject which has not been adequately studied to date. In the absence of Ottoman political correspondence, Evrim Türkçelik analysed the chronicles of the period as well as those of the following century to address the fundamental question whether Barbarossa launched the conquest of Tunis in 1534 under explicit orders from Süleyman, that is in order to execute an Ottoman strategy of expansion in the Maghreb; or if he commandeered the Ottoman forces under his command in order to carry out what was in essence a Muslim corsair strategy to control the Mediterranean by taking the most strategic ports in the region, and specifically Tunis which facilitated attacks on the Italian states. One of the chief merits of Türkçelik's article is to offer a systematic analysis of the Ottoman sources and thereby to present an alternative perspective of the conflict from the point of view of a political culture that is very different from the dominant, Western vision.

Calculating the economic impact of financing an amphibious expedition of the magnitude and complexity as that launched by Charles V in 1535 is crucial. Levying and transporting some 30,000 men from all over Europe and fitting out a fleet that probably reached

some 300 vessels required vast expenditure. Yet, surprisingly, at present we know very little about the cost of the campaign, and rather more about the booty that the emperor and his leading commanders seized. The figures for the overall cost given to date are more or less convincing estimates, some based on contemporary assessments by observers, or by using project proposals which sometimes included calculation of notional costs. Miguel Ángel de Bunes Ibarra searched multiple archives to advance our knowledge of this aspect, only to find that there are relatively few surviving documents, whether relating to ordinary taxes, loans, or the treasure from Peru that Charles V seized to finance the expedition. In the archives of the kingdom of Navarre, the municipal archives of Málaga, and the state archives at the Archivo General de Simancas, he found only partial series of accounts from paymasters and government accountants. He offers guidance as to what can be gleaned from this limited and diverse documentation and gives details of the multiple materials that were provided to fit out part of the galley squadron. He gives a rare insight into real-time needs and problems of provision faced by the rapidly mustered royal officials in Barcelona.

While historians agree that the long-term impact of the 1535 imperial campaign was slight, there has been a general assumption that contemporaries considered it as much of a success as it appears in imperial propaganda and in subsequent historiography. María José Rodríguez-Salgado set out to investigate this by analysing how the news of the campaign and the emperor's victory were viewed in a number of Christian courts. The main focus is on the emperor's attempts to control information and the response of Francis I of France and the English king Henry VIII to the news. As Christian monarchs officially at peace with the emperor they were constrained in terms of what they could say or do in public when faced with an expedition which the pope confirmed as a Christian campaign against the Infidel, but both were fearful of an increase in Charles V's power. The article illustrates the widespread manipulation of information by all courts; the problems of presenting inter-faith alliances; and the deliberate use of various tactics to give or deprive news of publicity. Even the emperor's allies participated in playing down the victory in order to persuade him to attend to their own needs. It also highlights how short-lived interest in the campaign was in a world as avid for the latest news as we are now, and mostly keen to highlight imperial weakness.

The alliance and friendship that bound Charles V and Mulay Hassan is a subject much in need of study, and the subject of Rubén González Cuerva's article. Despite the scant aid he provided to the imperial forces, Mulay Hassan was reinstated as the ruler of Tunis in 1535, save for La

Goleta which was handed over to Charles V. González Cuerva traces the creation of a Habsburg protectorate over the ancient Hafsi kingdom from the point at which both sovereigns met, and describes how they were able to communicate and how they negotiated their personal encounters. He places their relationship in the context of the rich, late-Medieval Iberian tradition of alliances between Christian and Muslim monarchs. He also demonstrates the important role of intermediaries, and how the exchange of gifts and rituals of mutual courtesy were employed both to project the emperor's magnificence and the good faith and friendship of the Tunisian ruler.

The volume ends with Miguel Deyá's study of José de Cañizare's long forgotten play, *Carlos V sobre Túnez*, written around 1705. At first sight it seems surprising that so long after the event, both contenders for the throne of Spain during the War of Spanish Succession should have turned to this campaign at a crucial moment in their conflict. For supporters of the Habsburg candidate it was a testimony to the greatness of their dynasty. For the Bourbons it was a way to associate themselves with, and even to appropriate, an important event in Spanish history and share its reflected glory. Consequently, the play avoided criticism of the French which had been such an integral part of the original campaign propaganda and subsequent narratives. Less obvious is why the play should have remained relatively popular during the XVIII, particularly in the final decades, as is demonstrated by Deyá's detailed data of new productions and revivals. He offers a multi-layered explanation that merges an analysis of the message of the play with the national and international political context, the importance of its author, and the situation in Spanish theatres. Its revival during the War of Independence against Napoleon is attributed primarily to a surge of Spanish patriotism which resonated with that running through the play. The article confirms how the emperor's campaign had become a fundamental element in Spanish nationalism.

With these original and diverse contributions we have sought to widen the study of the important topic of European and Ottoman expansion in North Africa during the early-modern period, and to highlight how much more there is still to research on the struggle for control of Tunis.

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