

# The Power of the Quill: Espionage under Charles V during the Tunisian Campaign

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*Dividin Gücü: V. Charles Döneminde Tunus Seferi İstihbaratı*

Öz ■ Osmanlıların onaltıncı yüzyılda Batı Akdeniz'e doğru genişlemesi, Akdeniz'de Habsburglar ile şiddetli bir rekabete dönüşmekte gecikmedi. Elinizdeki makale bu çatışmayı değişik bir açıdan ele almayı amaçlıyor: Habsburg istihbaratı. Bir yandan 1530'larda İç Deniz'deki siyasi değişimleri analiz ederken, öte yandan da İmparator Şarlken'in hizmetindeki en önemli haber alma mekanizması olan Napoli istihbaratını tetkik edeceğiz. Daha da spesifik olarak, İmparator'un Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa'ya karşı giriştiği Tunus Seferi'nde casusluğun rolü ve katkısı üzerinde duracağız. Anahtar kelimeler: Akdeniz çalışmaları, yeni çağ istihbaratı, casusluk, Osmanlı-Habsburg rekabeti, Napoli krallığı, Mağrib.

The sixteenth century was a golden age of espionage for several reasons, both in Mediterranean and in Europe. First, the rise of the Modern state and diplomacy endorsed the craft of spies. Furthermore, the spread of the press transformed the transmission of data and circulation of news – similar to the internet in the History of Communication. Renaissance ideas about the connection between knowledge and power helped spies. At the same time, both the Protestant Reformation and the colonization of America broke with the traditional image of the world, which forced people to look for epistemological alternatives in front of the new reality.<sup>1</sup> As a final point, the *Cinquecento* was a period with many conflicts that benefited the agents' ability to cross the frontier.

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I would like to thank Cristelle Baskins and Miguel Ángel de Bunes Ibarra for their comments.

1 Arndt Brendecke, *Imperio e información. Funciones del saber en el dominio colonial español* (Madrid-Frankfurt: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2012).

In the beginning of the early modern period, the Habsburgs were the most powerful dynasty in Europe, with domains on four continents. However, on par with them, another family built a great power: Ottoman Empire. In fact, the Sultan of Constantinople was the only enemy with the capacity to face the emperor Charles V. Western expansion of the Ottoman Empire turned into an “obsession” for European people.<sup>2</sup> In a changing world, the Habsburgs found in the Turk an ideal *alter ego*: the image to join different territories.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, because of the conflict, Ottoman lands was prohibited to Habsburg subjects, so only a few persons were able to move between the Levant and the Maghreb. Spies could understand the meanings of news beyond the frontier.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, for a long time, researchers undervalued the topic of espionage. Traditionally, scholars defined intelligence gathering in the early modern Mediterranean as anecdotal, at least, until the publication of two volumes that changed the perception of historians.<sup>5</sup> The first was *Servizi segreti di Venezia* by Paolo Preto, in which the author demonstrated the essential role played by intelligence in the governance of Venice.<sup>6</sup> The second was *Cervantes y la Berbería* by Emilio Sola and José Francisco de la Peña who analysed for first time, in a systematic form, Habsburg intelligence in the Maghreb, in addition to highlighting the link between the spy networks and economic activities, such as slave trafficking.<sup>7</sup>

Since then, espionage in the early modern Mediterranean turned into a topic that has captivated the interest of scholars. Although the historiographical debate has many dimensions, it is possible to detect three guiding themes in the study

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2 Mustafa Soykut, *Image of the “Turk” in Italy. A History of the “Other” in Early Modern Europe: 1453-1683* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2001).

3 Marina Formica, *Lo specchio turco. Immagini dell’Altro e riflessi del Sé nella cultura italiana d’età moderna* (Rome: Donzelli Editore, 2012).

4 Miguel Ángel Bunes Ibarra, *La imagen de los musulmanes y del Norte de África en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII, los caracteres de una hostilidad* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1989).

5 Although on another period and space, an important antecedent was Lucien Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Fayard, 1990).

6 Paolo Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia. Spionaggio e controspionaggio ai tempi della Serenissima* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1994).

7 Emilio Sola and José Francisco de la Peña, *Cervantes y la Berbería. Cervantes, mundo turco-berberisco y servicios secretos en la época de Felipe II* (Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996).

of Habsburg espionage: analysis of the institutional framework;<sup>8</sup> the role of espionage in diplomacy and war;<sup>9</sup> and examination of the social contexts and biographies of the spies.<sup>10</sup> Newly published studies concentrating on other espionage networks, in the payroll of diverse governments, provide us with the opportunity to make interesting comparisons.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to studies in early modern international relationship have been renewed through an interesting interdisciplinary approach that focuses on diplomacy, such as a social connection, the most recent investigations have pointed out how this “art of negotiation” could be a new historical field able to analyse the cross-cultural interactions.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, a few works have deepened in the contents of the secret correspondence, until now the only research monograph still being *Los que van y vienen* by Emilio Sola.<sup>13</sup>

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- 8 Carlos Carnicer Garca and Javier Marcos Rivas, *Espas de Felipe II. Los servicios secretos del Imperio espaol* (Madrid: Esfera de los libros, 2005); Diego Navarro Bonilla, *Los archivos del espionaje. Informacion, razon de estado y servicios de inteligencia en la Monarqua Hispanica* (Salamanca: Caja Duero, 2004).
- 9 Gennaro Varriale, *Arrivano li Turchi. Guerra navale e spionaggio nel Mediterraneo (1532-1582)* (Novi Ligure: Citt del Silenzio Editore, 2014); Mara Jos Rodrguez-Salgado, *Felipe II, el “Paladn de la Cristiandad” y la paz con el Turco* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2004); Alain Hugon, *Au service du Roi Catholique «Honorables ambassadeurs» et «divins espions». Reprsentation diplomatique et service secret dans les relations hispano-franaises de 1598  1635* (Madrid: Casa Velzquez, 2004).
- 10 Noel Malcolm, *Agents of Empire. Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean World* (London: Penguin Book, 2016); Emilio Sola, *Uchali, el calabrs tioso o el mito del corsario mulad en la frontera* (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2010); Jos Mara Floristn Imzcoz, *Fuentes para la poltica oriental de los Austrias. La documentacin griega del Archivo de Simancas (1571-1621)* (Len: Universidad de Len, 1988).
- 11 Emrah Safa Grkan, *Sultanın Casusları. 16. Yzyılda İstihbarat, Sabotaj ve Rşvet Ađları* (Istanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2017); Nathalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire. Trans-imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2011); Gabor goston, “Information, Ideology, and Limits of Imperial Policy: Ottoman Grand Strategy in the Context of Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry”, in *The Early Modern Ottomans. Remapping the Empire*, eds. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 75-103; Eric Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople. Nation, Identity and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).
- 12 Birgit Tremml-Werner, *Spain, China, and Japan in Manila, 1571-1644. Local Comparisons and Global Connections* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).
- 13 Emilio Sola, *Los que van y vienen. Informacin y fronteras en el Mediterrneo clsico del siglo XVI* (Alcal de Henares: Universidad de Alcal, 2005). On another space: Johann Petitjean,

The following pages will investigate espionage under the Habsburgs in the Mediterranean within a specific context: the third decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. To reach that goal, we will present the geopolitical changes of a decade in which the Ottoman Empire began a process whereby it became a naval power thanks to the contribution of the Barbary corsairs. We will then cover the development of Imperial intelligence in the Levant by focusing on its main frontier territory: The Kingdom of Naples. Lastly, we will delve into the activity of spies during Charles V's Tunis campaign, aimed at Khayr al-Dīn Barbarossa, the most powerful among the Muslim corsairs.

### **The end of the Mediterranean status quo: the beginning of the 1530s**

The decade of the 1520's ended with an event that predicted a battle between titans: for over two weeks the troops of Suleiman the Magnificent besieged Vienna. After their overwhelming victories in the Balkans and the Middle East, the Ottomans were now targeting the heart of Europe. Thus, panic seized the Habsburgs, who had already suffered a disastrous defeat at the second battle of Mohacs in 1526. In the days prior to the arrival of the enemy, King Ferdinand I wrote to his brother, the Emperor Charles V, expressing his great concern "according a report and all espionage sources seem to confirm that [Suleiman] intends to march directly to the city of Vienna".<sup>14</sup>

However, in the West, the balance of power had changed. Charles V had achieved some decisive successes, both militarily and symbolically, thanks to which he was able to gain the upper hand in the international scene. The repression of the *Comuneros*, the defeat of the French king in the battle of Pavia and the sack of Rome confirmed the power of an Emperor who, in 1529, could afford the luxury of riding with his troops to make the much-feared army of the Turk flee. Thus began a game of mirrors that would mark the period.<sup>15</sup>

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*L'intelligence des choses. Une histoire de l'information entre Italie et Méditerranée (XVIe-XVIIe siècles)* (Rome : École française de Rome 2013).

14 «Por cierta relación como por todas las espías se tiene por cierto que quiere venir derecho a la ciudad de Viena». Archivo General de Simancas [hereafter AGS], *Estado* [hereafter E], Legajo 635, f. 52. Ferdinand I Habsburg to Charles V, Linz 18 August 1529.

15 Özlem Kumrular, *El duelo entre Carlos V y Solimán el Magnífico (1520-1535)* (Istanbul: Isis, 2005).

After the siege of Vienna, the Mediterranean was to become the apple of discord. In fact, the Ottoman Empire had already made incursions into that sea, which in Istanbul was called the Hispanic Sea: *Ispanyol bahriye*. The most important incident had occurred in the year 1480 when the famous Gedik Ahmet Pasha attacked and seized the port of Otranto in the Italian region of Apulia, which at the time was under the rule of the Trastamara from Naples, relatives of Ferdinand the Catholic.<sup>16</sup> For fifteen months, the Ottomans controlled the city, which they abandoned upon the death of Sultan Mehmet II the Conqueror, Suleiman's grandfather, while the reaction by the Christians had been late and meagre.<sup>17</sup>

Subsequently, in 1522 Suleiman achieved a decisive victory against the Knights Hospitaller, his chief adversaries in the Aegean Sea, whose control was essential for the Ottoman economy as its routes connected Constantinople to the rest of the Mediterranean, particularly to the Egyptian ports. After the conquest of Rhodes, the Ionic and Aegean islands became part of the domains of the Kapudan Pasha, that is, the Admiral of the fleet; also, in the Spanish or Italian sources of that time the territory identified with the name of the Archipelago.<sup>18</sup>

As the Ottoman Empire expanded, between the latter years of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Mediterranean became the stage of a general movement of individuals with a remarkable knowledge in maritime activities. After decades of incapacity by Byzantium, the Sultan put order in some seas, covered by pirates. In fact, many of them moved to North Africa due to the war between Mehmet II's sons over the throne which Selim I, Suleiman's father, eventually won. Cacciadiavolo, Sinan the Jew and, above all, the Barbarossa brothers, were the forerunners of an epic story that was to turn the Maghreb into an equivalent of the American colonies for the Turks: a place where there was an opportunity of promotion for poor sectors of Ottoman society.<sup>19</sup>

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16 Miguel Ángel Bunes Ibarra, "Italia en la política otomana entre los dos sitios de Otranto (1480-1538)", in *El Reino de Nápoles y la monarquía de España, entre agregación y conquista (1485-1535)*, eds. Giuseppe Galasso and Carlos José Hernando Sánchez (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, 2014), pp. 561-584.

17 Giovanni Ricci, "I superstiti di Otranto e l'ombra dell'Islam", *Franciscan Studies*, 71 (2013), pp. 183-196.

18 *The Kapudan Pasha. His Office and His Domain*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Rethymnon: Crete University, 2002).

19 Emrah Safa Gürkan, "The Centre and the Frontier: Ottoman Cooperation with the North African Corsairs in the Sixteenth Century", *Turkish Historical Review*, 1/2 (2010), pp. 125-163.

Under the double threat of the Catholic Kings and the Barbary corsairs, the Maghreb was some sort of paradigmatic frontier where different forces coexisted and fought among themselves.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the old emirates of the region collapsed one after the other until 1574, when the Ottoman Empire conquered Tunis permanently. At any rate, during the first two decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Sultan did not seem to be too committed to the conquest of those distant lands: his interest focused on the conflicts with the Mamlukes, from whom the Ottomans wanted to take away Syria and Egypt. Then, the Ottomans accepted the declarations of submission made to them by the Barbary corsairs gradually – for instance Khayr al-Dīn Barbarossa after his brother’s death –, but the tributes paid by them were minimal both in terms of men and supplies. The situation was to change completely in the 1530s.<sup>21</sup>

In 1532, Suleiman decided to launch a new campaign against Vienna. Once more, the Ottoman troops commanded by the Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha overcame, without much difficulty, the enemy lines.<sup>22</sup> However, the resistance offered by the Habsburgs and the implementation of an erroneous strategy turned the campaign into a relative failure: the army of the Turk got stuck in the siege of the town of Kőszeg in Hungary. Nevertheless, the main novelty was something else: for the first time the Emperor ordered a naval campaign against an Ottoman territory.<sup>23</sup>

At the end of the winter, Charles V made in Regensburg the decision of gathering the Imperial fleet, along with his Genoese and papal allies, in the port of Messina. From there, under the orders of Andrea Doria, the armada was going to set sail towards the Levant to conquer some port in the Peloponnese, encouraged by the “call to arms” made by the Greek-Albanian people. The idea was to strike at Ottoman targets in the cradle of Europe, taking advantage of the discontent among Christian subjects of the Turk due to the so-called *devshirme* or blood tax,

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20 Beatriz Alonso Acero, *Cisneros y la conquista española del norte de África. Cruzada, política y arte de la guerra* (Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, 2006).

21 Miguel Ángel Bunes Ibarra, *Los Barbarroja* (Madrid: Albarabán, 2004).

22 Ebru Turan, “The Marriage of Ibrahim Pasha (CA. 1495-1536): The Rise of Sultan Süleyman’s Favorite to the Grand Vizierate and the Politics of the Elites in the early Sixteenth-century”, *Turcica*, 41 (2009), pp. 3-36.

23 Gennaro Varriale, “Nápoles y el azar de Corón (1532-1534)”, *Tiempos Modernos. Revista electrónica de Historia Moderna*, 22/1 (2011), pp. 1-30.

which they had to pay to the Ottomans.<sup>24</sup> The Marquis of Atripalda, chief of the Neapolitan espionage services, sent a letter to Charles V in which he informed him about his meeting with some Christian rebels: “the Albanians and Greeks are waiting for Your Royal Highness with open arms”.<sup>25</sup>

In September 1532 the Imperial army attacked the port of Koroni, a coastal town on the Ionian Sea in present day Greece, which couldn't withstand Andrea Doria's military might and fell in a couple of days. The victory of the expedition to the Levant generated great enthusiasm in the Imperial side. The alliance between Doria and Charles V seemed to confirm the superiority of the Habsburgs over the Ottomans in naval warfare. Ambassador Rodrigo Niño rejoiced in his messages sent from Venice: “all of Morea has rebelled, and each day both Albanian and Greeks went over in great numbers to the Prince [Andrea Doria]”.<sup>26</sup>

The most important result of the military campaign was the establishment of a garrison of soldiers in the newly conquered city of Koroni, which was to depend by the Kingdom of Naples, where at the time the new viceroy, Pedro de Toledo, was just arriving.<sup>27</sup> The stronghold of Koroni was the only case in which the Habsburgs set up a stronghold in the Levant, similar to the ones on the Barbary Coast. However, despite the proclamations, a general uprising of the population in the Morea against the Turk never materialized so the Imperial troops and their local allies soon had to face a difficult situation: defending an enclave surrounded by Ottoman territories. Already in March 1533, Viceroy Toledo received worrying news from Jerónimo de Mendoza, the officer in charge of Koroni's defence, while thanking him for sending wheat over from Naples “to save the population from dying of hunger”.<sup>28</sup>

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24 Gulay Yilmaz, “Becoming a Devshirme: The Training of Conscripted Children in the Ottoman Empire”, in *Children in Slavery through the Ages*, eds. Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph C. Miller, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2009), pp. 119-134.

25 «Albanesi et greci che con le braze aperte aspettano Vostra Alteza». AGS, E, Legajo 1007, f. 127. Marquis of Atripalda a Charles V, Naples 3 December 1530.

26 «Toda la Morea estava levantada, y cada día venían ajuntarse con el Príncipe gran número de albaneses y griegos». AGS, E, Legajo 1309, f. 190. Rodrigo Niño to Charles V, Venice 13 October 1532.

27 Carlos Hernando Sánchez, *Castilla y Nápoles en el siglo XVI. El Virrey Pedro de Toledo* (Valadolid: Junta Castilla y León 1994).

28 «A faltar tengo por fe pereciera gran parte deste pueblo». AGS, E, Legajo 461, f. 134. Jerónimo de Mendoza to Pedro de Toledo, Koroni 28 March 1533.

When the Ottoman army returned to Constantinople, Suleiman had a lot to consider about recent events. Thus, there was a heated debate at the *Divan-ı Hümayun*, the main decision-making institution in the Ottoman Empire, where the members decided to call over Khayr al-Dīn Barbarossa, who was to assume control of the fleet to fight the Habsburgs in the Mediterranean. In a few years, the integration of the Barbary corsairs into the Ottoman navy enabled the Porte to become a naval power.<sup>29</sup> In September 1533, from the Maghreb garrison of Béjaïa, Governor Perafán de Ribera confirmed to Empress Isabella that Suleiman had summoned Barbarossa to “be his captain”.<sup>30</sup>

For two years, the Imperial fortress of Koroni resisted the Ottoman army. Even in 1533, Andrea Doria managed to force the enemy to abandon its positions. However, the following summer it seemed that the town of Koroni was doomed. In the Old Continent, rumours persisted that the King of France was going to attack Genoa with the help of the Barbary corsairs. In addition, all sources of intelligence in the Levant asserted that the Ottoman fleet under the command of Barbarossa was getting ready to strike at some target in the West. Thus, nobody was going to risk sending their ships to rescue the small stronghold in the Peloponnese. Furthermore, rumours spread about an outbreak of the plague in the ports of the Levant.

Since any help from outside seemed impossible for Koroni, the soldiers from the garrison, led by Rodrigo Machicao, launched an attack by night against the Ottoman camp nearby that ended in a disaster. Because of that, the fortress was evacuated, and the survivors moved to the Kingdom of Naples, where they instituted the so-called *Coronea Nation*. When Viceroy Toledo found out about the news, he disconsolately informed Charles V: “the offensive action taken by Machicao though courageous had been a great mistake”.<sup>31</sup>

In June 1534, Khayr al-Dīn Barbarossa departed from Constantinople and headed towards the West. For the first time in his life, he led ships in great numbers. Thus, that summer another stage of the Mediterranean conflict began: the

29 Colin Imber, “The Navy of Suleyman the Magnificent”, *Archivum Ottomanicum*, 6 (1980), pp. 211-282.

30 «Ser su capitán». AGS, E, Legajo 461, f. 129. Perafán de Ribera to Isabella of Portugal, Béjaïa 8 September 1533.

31 «Aquella empresa, que en la verdad a salir con ella fuera cosa notable, aunque parece fue muy grande el horror suyo en aventurarse a cosa que no tuviessen por muy cierta». AGS, E, Legajo 1017, f. 39. Pedro de Toledo to Charles V, Naples 28 March 1534.

Kapudan Pasha was going to sail west beyond the Strait of Sicily, an unprecedented move. Frightened by the warnings sent by spies, Viceroy Toledo set up heavy defences in the Eastern coast, because the Neapolitan Court was convinced that the enemy's target was Apulia. They were wrong: Barbarossa attacked the Tyrhenian coast instead. Corsairs and janissaries devastated the coast from Calabria to Liguria, carrying out feats that became legendary, like the attempt to kidnap Giulia Gonzaga, the prettiest woman in the Italian Peninsula. The Viceroy of Naples had to admit in a letter addressed to the emperor that "nobody foresaw that the Ottoman fleet was going to strike there".<sup>32</sup>

The change in route was due because French envoys warranted a military action by King Francis I against Genoa. When the Ottoman fleet docked at the port of Marseille the suspicions that had been circulating for years proved true: Francis I and Suleiman had an agreement.<sup>33</sup> Barbarossa departed from Provence somewhat annoyed by the indecision of the French army to attack Genoa. The admiral Barbarossa then headed with the Ottoman fleet towards the Maghreb and captured Tunis, triggering a chain reaction. A written testimony from those days drew a comparison between the event and classical history to set off the alarm: "this would be a bad neighbour for us; (that you know in how few hours the fig of Cato came from those coasts)".<sup>34</sup>

### **The Marquis of Atripalda and the foundation of the espionage in the Levant**

Until the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529, the centre of espionage per excellence for the Habsburgs on the Levant had been their Embassy in Venice. During the early modern period, the city represented a privileged place to obtain information from and about the Ottoman Empire. After all, Venice was the only

32 «Se tenía poco pensamiento que la armada havja de hazer el viage que hizo». AGS, E, Legajo 1017, f. 67. Pedro de Toledo to Charles V, Naples 30 September 1534.

33 Christine Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel. The Ottoman and French Alliance in the Sixteenth Century* (London-New York: Tauris, 2013).

34 «Questa saria una cattiva vicinanza, per noi altri di questa; (che sapete in quante poche hore venne da quelle bande il fico di Catone)». British Library, London (hereafter BLL), 1057 h.9 (5). Hieronimo Fantini, *Sucesi di Roma, et di tutta l'Italia, con l'apparecchio de l'Armata contra Barbarossa, et di molti accidenti de la Magna, di nuove sette d'Heretici, con tutti li loro progressi, & la Vittoria del Sofin' contra al gran Turcho; et ultimamente la morte del Sig. Luigi Gritti Bassan' del gran Turcho* (Rome 1534-1535). Letter, 6 March 1535.

one among the old maritime republics that had kept its influence in the Eastern markets after the conquest of Constantinople by the Sultan. Although the Venetians were in an unfavourable position compared to the Ottomans, the Republic still ruled over some places in the Adriatic and the Aegean like Kotor, Zante or Corfu, which became strategic towns to spy on the Turk, while the *Bailo*, Venetian diplomat, in Constantinople converted in a key figure in the Porte's political scene.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, from the Habsburgs' perspective, dependence on Venice in this regard was a dangerous risk now that the Ottoman fleet was targeting the Mediterranean coasts. The Venetian Senate felt cornered by the expansionist ambitions of both Charles V and Suleiman. Because of that, in view of the conflict that ensued in the Mediterranean, the Venetians always tried to maintain a neutral position. For their neutrality the senators were derided, as Venice, the Turk's concubine, by Hispano-Italian authors.<sup>36</sup> Thus in the autumn of 1530, Ambassador Rodrigo Niño explained to the Emperor with regard to the Venetian authorities: "I suspect that we only know the information they want us to know".<sup>37</sup>

Then, Charles V and his entourage laid the foundations for the setting up their own espionage network in the Mediterranean, which reached its zenith during the reign of his son, Philip II. Throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the intelligence services of the Habsburgs were in a permanent state of alert against the emergence of the Ottoman threat; any news on the subject was welcome, although very soon the increasing amounts of data became more refined. Imperial espionage rested on three pillars: Venice, Sicily, and Naples, where there was an organization capable of interpreting the information from the Levant.<sup>38</sup>

The 1530s saw an exchange in roles between the Ambassador in Venice and the Viceroy of Naples, whose territory became the main rear-guard of the spies. The supremacy of the Neapolitan administration in this regard was due to heterogeneous reasons. No other territory of the Habsburgs in the region had human and natural resources comparable to those in Naples. The kingdom was

35 Paolo Preto, *Venezia e i turchi* (Roma: Viella, 2013).

36 Lucette Valensi, *Venise et la Sublime Porte. La naissance du despote* (Paris : Hachette, 1987).

37 «Yo sospecho que no sabemos sino aquellas que quieren que se sepan». AGS, E, Legajo 1308, f. 115. Rodrigo Niño to Charles V, Venice 20 November 1530.

38 Gennaro Varriale, "Lo spionaggio sulla frontiera mediterranea nel XVI secolo: la Sicilia contro il sultano", *Mediterranea. Ricerche Storiche*, 38 (2016), pp. 477-516.

ideally located on the Mediterranean map and geographical proximity favoured the exchanges between the Ionic and Adriatic Sea shores, where links and bonds of kinship had existed at least since the days of Alfonso the Magnanimous in the previous century.<sup>39</sup>

In fact, the expansionist dreams of the Aragonese king resulted in a continuous flow of hundreds of Greek-Albanian people who, in the face of the Ottoman advance, moved to the Kingdom of Naples. There, with help from the Crown, they founded communities in the countryside and in the capital itself. The presence of such “peculiar subjects” at the frontier of the empire was a blessing for the viceroys as many of them came from families with experience and knowledge about warfare, thus widening the long-established tradition of the intake of *stradioti*.<sup>40</sup> The Greek-Albanians often possessed a skill that was often essential for the task of providing intelligence: command of several different languages. Unlike the other Europeans, the Greeks did not raise any suspicions in the Ottoman domains, where they went unnoticed. Lastly, the refugees from the Levant hated the Sultan, at least in theory, because he had been the cause of their exile. Thus, they seemed to be the ideal candidates to fulfil the role of spies.<sup>41</sup>

The organizer of Neapolitan espionage was Alfonso Granai Castriota, Marquis of Atripalda, a descendent from Albanian exiles who had moved to the Kingdom of Naples after the death of Skanderbeg, Iskender Bey. Having settled down in the South of Italian peninsula, his family was always loyal to the Aragonese and subsequently to the Habsburgs, under whose banners it participated in several military campaigns. In 1526, Charles V had told the Viceroy of Naples: “about the numerous and distinguished services that House Castriota had been rendered and still render in favour of our Royal Crown”.<sup>42</sup> Finally, in 1529, the Marquis of Atripalda led the conquest of the last strongholds, which the French King

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39 Idem, “La vuelta a Levante: Fernando el Católico en Nápoles frente el Turco”, *Estudis. Revista de Historia Moderna*, 43 (2017), pp. 69-96.

40 Francesco Storti, *L'esercito napoletano nella seconda metà del Quattrocento* (Napoli: Laveglia Editore, 2007).

41 Gennaro Varriale, “Exiliados griegos en una capital de la frontera mediterránea”, in *Los exiliados del rey de España*, eds. José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez and Igor Pérez Tostado (Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2015), pp. 185-206.

42 «Por los muchos fieles y señalados servicios que los de la Casa Castriota han hecho y hazen a nostra real Corona». AGS, E, Legajo 1007, f. 126, Charles V to Charles of Lannoy, Granada 30 August 1526.

still had in Apulia: “retaken all the territories that had rebelled”.<sup>43</sup> Thanks to his background, the Viceroy, Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, named Alfonso such as Governor of the province, Lands of Bari and Otranto in Apulia.<sup>44</sup>

The Marquis of Atripalda was the perfect example of a frontiersman with a *sui generis* lifestyle. A Greek of the Catholic faith, Alfonso even became the patron and sponsor of poets and mathematicians – exiles from the Levant who had escaped to the Kingdom of Naples, where the Marquis had been ombudsman of various communities of refugees. In 1518 Pope Leo X annulled his first marriage with Cassandra Marchese, muse and lover of the poet Jacopo Sannazaro, while Alfonso had an affair with a Neapolitan lady, Julia de Gaeta, who gave birth to Constantine, a future knight of Malta. Later, the Marquis married Camila Gonzaga, a relative of the Lords of Mantua; their wedding was celebrated with a Renaissance-styled banquet attended by artists and writers. Alfonso Granai Castriota’s physical appearance was rather original as revealed in a letter by Pedro de Toledo to Francisco de los Cobos in which he is described as the most honest gentleman in the world “although he dyes the beard and has long hair”.<sup>45</sup>

From 1519 until Toledo’s arrival, the Marquis of Atripalda held the position of governor in the province of Apulia, which enabled him to set up an espionage network against the Ottoman Empire based on his knowledge of and contacts in the Levant. When Colonna was still Viceroy of Naples, Alfonso sent a message to the Emperor: “I have frequently informed Your Imperial Majesty about what has been going on in Constantinople and elsewhere through my own men and by other means”.<sup>46</sup> Toledo freed the Marquis from all tasks that were not related to providing intelligence on the Levant.<sup>47</sup> The order to do so came from none other than Charles V, who wrote directly to Alfonso: “we entrust you with the

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43 «Se an cobrado todas las tierras rebelladas». AGS, E, Legajo 1005, f. 106. Marquis of Atripalda to Charles V, Copertino 11 September 1529.

44 Paolo Petta, *Despoti d’Epiro e principi di Macedonia. Esuli albanesi nell’Italia del Rinascimento* (Lecce: Argo, 2000), pp. 61-117.

45 «Aunque se tiñe la barba y trae el cabello largo». AGS, E, Legajo 1015, f. 16. Pedro de Toledo to Francisco de los Cobos, Naples 9 March 1533.

46 «De continuo he avisada Vuestra Majestad Cesárea de todo lo que de Constantinopla y de otras partes assí por hombres propios como por otras vías». AGS, E, Legajo 635, f. 108. Marquis of Atripalda a Charles V, Naples 19 August 1531.

47 Dejanirah Couto, “Spying in Ottoman Empire: Sixteenth-Century Encrypted Correspondence”, in *Correspondence and Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400-1700*, eds. Francisco

most important mission of being careful and vigilant at all times for we trust you in all regards".<sup>48</sup> In this way, spies and agents enjoyed the protection of one of the most outstanding personalities of the Empire, don Pedro de Toledo, who did all he could to perfect the secret activities of espionage against the Turk.<sup>49</sup>

Backed by the Viceroy, the Marquis of Atripalda consolidated the system of confidential information thanks to an increase in the budget and patronage. Although he spent seasons in Naples, for most of the year Alfonso lived in the Land of Otranto, where he moved like a fish in the water. Around the entire coast, the noble had men that he could trust, starting with his own nephew Pirro, the new governor of Apulia, who from his institutional position could help to solve any problem. Along with Pirro, the network counted with auditors and secretaries who listened to declarations and wrote letters. The confidential information was sent with messengers riding horses to the court along a route that linked the region to the Vesuvian capital.<sup>50</sup>

In March 1533, an auditor from the Land of Otranto, Prospero Polizio, met with the informer *magister* Toderino, a Greek resident in the zone, whom the Marquis of Atripalda had sent as a spy to Constantinople. Based on the data supplied by the agent, the report was sent by Alfonso to Naples, where the Viceroy attached it to a letter for Charles V. The document contained detailed information about the enemy and about Toderino's activities. Built on a text containing brief questions and careful answers, the spy explained his mission beyond the frontier. Doctor Prospero's specialized profession bore witness to the direct involvement of the Viceroy and his administration in the intelligence activities of the Marquis of Atripalda, who officially held no position in the province.<sup>51</sup>

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Bethencourt and Florike Egmond, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 274-312.

48 «Os encargamos mucho que estéis con el cuidado y vigilancia que de vuestra persona confiamos para todo». AGS, E, Legajo 1561, f. 37. Charles V a Marquis of Atripalda, September 1534.

49 José María Del Moral, *El Virrey de Nápoles Don Pedro de Toledo y la guerra contra el Turco* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1966).

50 Archivio di Stato di Napoli, *Cancelleria e Consiglio*, Collaterale, Curiae, busta 9, cc. 234v-235r. Orders by Pedro de Toledo to Pedro Marzanas, Naples 12 July 1539.

51 Jean Aubin, "Une frontière face au péril ottoman: la Terre d'Otrante (1529-1532)", in *Solliman le Magnifique, et son temps*, eds. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: École du Louvre, 1992), pp. 465-484.

Apart from magistrates and secretaries in Apulia, the network of the Marquis of Atripalda had at its disposal individuals posted in strategic locations in the Mediterranean. At the base of the organization, there were spies who carried out activities beyond enemy lines: the correspondents and the agents. The former were men that lived outside the empire; in the case of the Neapolitan network, the majority lived in the Venetian territories of the Levant and subsequently in Ragusa. The Habsburgs encountered difficulties in setting up a stable group of informers in Constantinople. But already in the time of the Marquis of Atripalda contacts were made, like the spy who swore: “it is my duty as a good Christian to give to you this information”.<sup>52</sup> Usually, the correspondents were merchants because trading was one of the few professions that required writing skills. Besides, the local Ottoman authorities did not suspect that their correspondence with other trading towns might contain material of interest to spies.<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, the agents were spies that travelled to the territories of the Sultan by express orders from Atripalda or his men. Charles V was acquainted with the method used by the intelligence services to infiltrate themselves in the streets of Constantinople; in fact, in July 1531 Alfonso Granai Castriota informed the Emperor: “the man that I had sent to Constantinople had reported back”.<sup>54</sup> A few weeks later the agent, Dopuo Apolonio, returned to Apulia, after spending three months in Constantinople, where he tried to compile all information to make a general sketch of the Ottoman capital. During his stay there, the spy even saw Suleiman when he was riding with his retinue towards the palace. Apart from reporting on military and diplomatic affairs, Dopuo sent news to the secretary about the Great Turk’s family, which the Sultan had “three boys, the first about twelve years old, the second about seven years old, the third born this April”.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, the main goal of both correspondents and the agents was to gather sensitive information of a military nature, particularly concerning the Ottoman fleet. The reports from the Levant were therefore full of references to the armada.

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52 «Mi ha parso esser il debito mio per esser bon christiano darne de questo aviso». AGS, E, Legajo 461, f. 108. Report of news, Constantinople 11 November 1531.

53 AGS, E, Legajo 461, f. 179. *News from Levant*, summer 1531.

54 «El hombre que havia enviado en Constantinopoli referia». AGS, E, Legajo 1010, f. 35. Marquis of Atripalda to Charles V, Copertino 15 July 1531.

55 «Have tre figlioli mascoli, lo primo da circa anni dudece, lo secundo da circa anni septe, lo tercio nato questo aprile». AGS, E, Legajo 1010, f. 39. Report to Charles V, Lecce 2 August 1531.

Following Barbarossa's landing in the Golden Horn, a spy informed a secretary in Otranto: "reports from many different places confirm in Corfu how Barbarossa's armada of seventeen ships, including galleys and fustas".<sup>56</sup> Atripalda's informers also provided news about the European diplomats in Constantinople. In the summer of 1535, according to another spy, the French Ambassador had "taken possession of a house with a vineyard outside Pera as he was not in the same situation which the Christians in Constantinople faced".<sup>57</sup>

The information from spies encompassed the huge territories controlled by the Ottoman dynasty. Thus, for instance, on one occasion the Marquis of Atripalda informed Charles V about Portuguese expeditions against the Arabian Peninsula: "the king of Portugal's governor general in India has sent Hector de Silvera, commander of the navy, to the Straits in the Red Sea".<sup>58</sup> Within the same context, Alfonso sent a letter about the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca to highlight the importance of that event in the Ottoman policy, because the "[Shah] killed many thousands of pilgrims and by order of the government of that region, Ibrahim had to go".<sup>59</sup>

The spies came from quite different places, although most of them were of Greek-Albanian origin. Many others were Italian merchants, whose presence was traditional in the Levant, where many of them worked as correspondents.<sup>60</sup> Thanks to their collaboration with the Viceroy's administration, the merchants not only earned money but also obtained vital contacts for their businesses. Until the expulsion of Jews from the kingdom, Neapolitan intelligence had at least

56 «Que por avisos ciertos venidos de numerosas partes se a afirmado en Corfó como el armada de Barbarroxa en número de diziete de velas entre galeras y fustas». AGS, E, Legajo 1015, f. 142. Declaration by Michel Caravozano, Otranto 16 October 1533.

57 «Avía tomado una viña con una casa fuera de Pera por no estar en la sugección que están los Christianos en Constantinopoli». AGS, E, Legajo 462, f. 7. News from Constantinople, 18 June 1535.

58 «El gubernator generale de la Maestà del Re de Portugallo in India ha mandato Hector de Silvera capitano magior del mar a la bocca dello stretto del Mar Ruxo». AGS, E, Legajo 1010, f. 37. Reports by Marquis of Atripalda to Charles V, July 1531.

59 «Admazato multe migliaria de pellegrini et che per questo e per lo governo de quella parte il predetto Abraym dovea andar». AGS, E, Legajo 635, f. 109. Marquis of Atripalda to Charles V, 29 August 1531.

60 Kate Fleet, "Turks, Italians and Intelligence in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *Balance of the Truth. Essays in Honour of Professor Geoffrey Lewis*, eds. Çigdem Balim-Harding and Colin Imber (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 2000), pp. 99-112.

one Jewish man in its service, Angelo de Mosse, a resident in Brindisi, who went to Salonika to find out about the reactions of the Sephardic community to the conflict.<sup>61</sup> The Marquis of Atripalda did not have scruples over resorting to Muslim spies either, like one called Mustafa. Nonetheless, in June 1532 the agent did not show in port of Brindisi, because he was afraid that the Venetians might give him away for engaging in counterespionage activities: “he stopped for fear of being impaled”.<sup>62</sup>

In conclusion, on the eve of the Tunis campaign, Emperor Charles V possessed a network of spies based in the Kingdom of Naples that watched over all the corners of the Ottoman Empire. In addition, unlike fortuitous informers, the members of the intelligence group had the necessary knowledge to evaluate the news from the Levant.<sup>63</sup> A rumour about the death of Suleiman in 1533 led the Marquis of Atripalda to refer to it in a report to the Emperor as “wishful thinking”.<sup>64</sup>

### **Intelligence before the Tunis campaign**

“If you don’t take Tunis this year, you will never take it”.<sup>65</sup>

An anonymous correspondent of Italian origin who lived in Constantinople exhorted the Imperial high command in February 1535. Suleiman was in the Middle East, where heavy rains and snow had compelled him to take refuge in Egypt. Now the time was ripe to defeat Barbarossa because otherwise the following year nothing could prevent an attack on the Italian Peninsula launched from Tunis. The informer presented himself as an expert on the Levant to the extent that he recalled his missives to Pope Clement VII, who had recently died, keeping him briefed in the past about the Porte.

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61 AGS, *E*, Legajo 1021, f. 119. Declaration by Angelo de Mosse, 13 June 1535.

62 «Por miedo de ser descubierto y empalado se detenió». AGS, *E*, Legajo 1011, f. 194. Marquis of Atripalda to Charles V, 25 July 1532.

63 About the messenger trust: Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News. How the World Came to Know About Itself* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 2-3.

64 «Fácilmente lo que mucho desea crehe». AGS, *E*, Legajo 1016, f. 39. Marquis Atripalda to Charles V, 23 January 1533.

65 «Non pigliando voi questo anno Tunizzi, mai più il piglierete». AGS, *E*, Legajo 462, f. 3. News from Constantinople, 22 February 1535.

In the months prior to Charles V's Tunis campaign, espionage had played its role. From different places in the Mediterranean reports arrived at court that encouraged the Emperor to launch the enterprise against Barbarossa. The success of the recent naval clashes produced confidence among the Imperial ranks. In Naples, the agent *messere* Vincenzo confirmed to a secretary "when hear the army of the Emperor and Andrea Doria, the Turks tremble".<sup>66</sup> At same time, the new Ambassador in Venice, Lope de Soria, sent off a report, where he summarized the news by the informers, which emphasized the need to strike at the Turk: the spies suggested that the Sultan was going to take repressive action against all the Christians in Constantinople, "because he had already imprisoned some Venetians and Florentines".<sup>67</sup>

Upon getting to know the Emperor's decision to go ahead with the enterprise, Viceroy Toledo sent to him a summary of reports in which he could see the steps taken by Neapolitan spies aimed at obtaining information before the military campaign. Apart from resorting to their usual agents deployed in Constantinople, the secretaries in the Lands of Bari and Otranto had gathered information from other sources. A document sent to Charles V also mentioned two brothers, the Zangarulis, who from Corfu provided the first information about Suleiman's setbacks in Asia, but the most interesting of all was the reference made to their contact in Constantinople: "Master Antonio de Maurançolo, silversmith of the Grand Turk".<sup>68</sup>

For months, the court of Naples made efforts to expand the information it had about the Ottoman Empire. Although the Ottomans had stepped up control at their frontiers, the Marquis of Atripalda managed to send several agents to Constantinople to find out Suleiman's reaction to the military preparations of Charles V. The correspondents informed Toledo, which a messenger of King Francis I called Seraffin de Gozo, had given all sorts of details about the Imperial fleet. Consequently, there were strong rumours about the possible return

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66 «Sentendono nominare l'armata del Imperator et Andrea de Orya li turchi tremano». AGS, E, 1017, f. 84. Report by *messere* Vincenzo came from Constantinople, Naples 6 April 1534.

67 «Porque ya avian puesto en prisión algunos venecianos y florentinos». AGS, E, 1021, f. 102. Synthesis by Lope de Soria about letters from Constantinople, Venice 28 June 1535.

68 «Maestre Antonio de Maurançolo platero de la plata del Gran Turco». AGS, E, 1021, f. 5. News from Levant sent by Pedro de Toledo, November and December 1534.

of Barbarossa to the Ottoman capital, because “there [Constantinople], it was widely believed that Your Imperial Majesty was preparing a very powerful fleet”.<sup>69</sup>

When Charles V had conquered Tunis, the informer Gregorio Cecchi returned to Apulia from Constantinople, where he had been for over three months. An inhabitant of Otranto, the agent was involved in a mission worthy of the best espionage novels. After sailing for twenty-five days, Gregorio arrived in the Ottoman capital, where a few days later a Jew recognized him, because he had lived in Apulia. The spy was jailed, but after a month he was freed thanks to the mother of the Grand Vizier, Ibrahim Pasha; she “lives like a Christian, has her own church and the patriarch often goes there to say mass, and when the man was set free he stayed in her house for his own security”.<sup>70</sup>

This episode clearly bears witness to the heterogeneity and religious tolerance that existed within the Ottoman elite, which many people joined through the *devshirme* system, such as Ibrahim Pasha, whose family was Christian. Besides, there were also Christian renegades who had converted to Islam for all sorts of reasons. From his new position of safety, thanks to the mother of the Grand Vizier, Gregorio Cecchi kept sending information. He had even managed to see some of Ibrahim Pasha’s letters regarding Ottoman manoeuvres around the Tigris River.<sup>71</sup>

Cecchi’s situation was rather surprising. For him to climb so high in Ottoman society to reach the Grand Vizier’s mother, he must have had influential protectors in the city, perhaps the Greek patriarch whom he mentioned in his declaration. In fact, a couple of years before, a man called George Cecchi had been an agent of Atripalda, who had ordered him to go to the Ottoman capital. In this case, the archival sources specify that the spy in question was of Hellenic origin and lived in Corfu.<sup>72</sup> Gregorio must have belonged to one of many Greek-Albanian families - with members living in towns located on both the Ionic and Adriatic Sea shores – that were involved in espionage activities for the Habsburgs.

69 «Allí era publica voz y fama que Vuestra Majestat mandava poner en horden muy poderosa armada». AGS, E, Legajo 1021, f. 118. News from Levant, Constantinople 17 April – 2 May 1535.

70 «Bive como cristiana y tiene su iglesia y muchas vezes el patriarcha va a decir missa allá, y que después de libre estuvo siempre en casa de la dicha madre por poder mejor entender y con seguridad ver». AGS, E, Legajo 462, f. 4. Report by Gregorio Cecchi, Galatone 27 July 1535.

71 AGS, E, Legajo 462, f. 4. Report by Gregorio Cecchi, Galatone 27 July 1535.

72 AGS, E, Legajo 1015, f. 133. News from Levante, Otranto 23 May 1533.

Otherwise, the incident about the Jew in Constantinople who had supposedly reported him to the Ottoman authorities would not make sense.

Charles V also obtained information directly from Tunis. For example, the Imperial Ambassador in Genoa, Gómez Suarez de Figueroa, underlined in a letter to Charles V that he had thought about sending over “a Catalan who is there [Genoa] and has been consul in Tunis for seven years”.<sup>73</sup> At the beginning of 1535, an extensive report was dispatched to the court with instructions that it be handed directly to the Emperor. The author was a man called Arzilla, who signed the manuscript as a captain, although a few months later another document referred him such as doctor. Unfortunately, like in the case of many other personalities involved in espionage, he is scarcely mentioned in the existing documentation. At any rate, regardless of whether he was a captain or a doctor, Arzilla had great writing skills; definitively, he was a real expert about the Tunisian region.

In the report, the author began by referring to his previous messages - that dated back to Barbarossa's landing at Port Farina and subsequent taking of Tunis -, in which he had given some specific information on the situation. Arzilla then gave privileged news that could only have come from Tunis, like the real size of Barbarossa's forces, the number of corsairs, janissaries and local supporters, and the different moves made by the dethroned emir. In addition, Arzilla anticipated all the clues to Charles V's campaign both in the political and in the military fields. The informer even mentioned the unsuccessful crusade led by the French King, Louis XI the Saint, in 1270. The Emperor must have examined thoroughly such a detailed and well-written report, which might explain some of his obsessions during his campaign in Africa, like his caution regarding water wells. Arzilla had pointed out in his report that when the French soldiers “drank the water, many of them were killed through trickery”.<sup>74</sup>

Another episode illustrated a typical characteristic of the Habsburgs' intelligence in the 16<sup>th</sup> century: the members of the Empire's high command had private networks that occasionally supplied sensitive data to the court. Thus, during that month of January of 1535, Charles V received another letter, on that occasion in Italian, which a Genoese called Francesco de Ferraris had sent to Andrea

73 «Un catalán que está allí que ha sido cónsul en Túnez VII años». AGS, E, Legajo 1367, ff. 116-117. Synthesis letters by Gómez Suarez de Figueroa, Genoa 25 December 1535.

74 «Tomaron el agua y le mataron mucha jente por un engaño». AGS, E, Legajo 462, f. 14. Report by Arzilla, beginning of 1535.

Doria from a dungeon in Tunis. The author was a desperate captive asking for help to redeem him. Hidden by a merchant from Ragusa, the message in no way resembled Arzilla's superb report. It was very badly written, confusing to read, more along the lines of a plea than those of a spy's report, although Francesco asserted: "Your Excellency can rest assured that this is very true".<sup>75</sup>

At same time, Friar Juan de Rimes sent letters both to Charles V and to Arzilla. The clergyman had gone the previous year to Tunis to redeem captives but the Emir Muley al-Hassan forced him to stay there because of some "disagreements". His testimony is exceptional in that it explained in writing Barbarossa's expedition, conquest and rule from behind the walls of Tunis itself. Friar Juan had even held a conversation with the corsair at the church of Saint Francis, in which Barbarossa "had answered very humanely".<sup>76</sup>

Finally, the most important espionage mission against Barbarossa was the one carried out by Luis Presenda. Perhaps because of the mission's tragic outcome, the agent is quoted in most contemporary literature. The soldier and writer Martín García de Cerezeda gave some biographic data about the spy: "Genoese, very knowledgeable in the language and other matters of the Moors".<sup>77</sup> In the autumn of 1534, Charles V sent Presenda to the Maghreb via the Italian Peninsula. The Emperor did not want to have to face another disappointment like what happened in Koroni, when most of the Greek-Albanian informers had sworn that there would be an uprising in the region of Morea, which did not happen.

Charles V informed the authorities of the Italian territories about the mission so that they might back Presenda during his travel. Apart from keeping an eye on Barbarossa, observing his moves, the spy had instructions to contact the dethroned Emir Muley al-Hassan, under the supervision of the Viceroy of Sicily. The Emperor's orders were clear; the goal was "getting to know and understand what was going on in Tunis and cheering up the Moorish King".<sup>78</sup> Interestingly,

75 «Vostra Excellenza la po tenere per certissime». AGS, E, Legajo 462, f. 15. Francesco de Ferraris to Andrea Doria, Tunis 24 January 1535.

76 «Le respondió muy humanamente». AGS, E, Legajo 462, f. 67. Synthesis letters by Juan de Rimes, 1535.

77 «Ginové, en la lengua y en las cosas de los moros muy platico». Martín García Cerezeda, *Tratado de las campañas y otros acontecimientos de los ejércitos del Emperador Carlos V en Italia, Francia, Austria, Berbería y Grecia desde 1521 hasta 1545*, vol. II (Madrid: Aribau, 1873), p. 2.

78 «Saber y entender lo que se haze en Túnez y anymar al rey moro». AGS, E, Legajo 1561, f. 107. Charles V to Gómez Suarez de Figueroa, 7 December 1534.

only in the fragments of the instructions addressed to Andrea Doria and the Genoese institutions added the spy's second surname: "Vivaldo".<sup>79</sup>

Presenda left Castile in the middle of November 1534 and arrived in Genoa in less than a month, where he met both Ambassador Figueroa and Doria, who suggested to the spy the most appropriate way to reach Sicily, the base for his mission, "since about eight days he left".<sup>80</sup> Charles V transmitted a letter to the admiral Doria thanking him for "ensuring that [Presenda] reached his destination quickly and safely to fulfil his mission".<sup>81</sup> In fact, the Emperor was concerned about the rumours that had leaked the agent's mission, at least according to a dispatch from Gómez Suarez de Figueroa addressed to the court. Once in Genoa, Presenda met the Imperial Ambassador, who contacted some merchants that were going to travel to Tunis with safe-conducts from Barbarossa so that they might take the agent with them. However, his request was turned down: the merchants explained to Figueroa that they did not want to end up impaled, since "word was already going around the city [Genoa] about what Luis Presenda's mission was".<sup>82</sup>

After travelling around the Italian Peninsula with a stopover in Naples, Luis Presenda arrived in Messina, where he wrote a letter to the Emperor, in which he described the last part of his journey. Snow in Calabria had hampered the agent's travel, so he made it to the Sicilian Port behind schedule. During his stopover in Messina, Presenda found some merchants. They had arrived from Tunis and informed him about an exchange of captives, "a man called Millimati who had been taken prisoner in Xaxel, a former servant of the Prince of Melfi [Andrea Doria], was freed by Barbarossa in return for the release of a Turk being held captive by the Prince".<sup>83</sup> When he received the letter, Charles V wrote back to the agent,

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79 AGS, *E*, Legajo 1561, ff. 50-51. Orders by Carlos V to Luis Presenda, Madrid 13 November 1534.

80 «Sono circa otto giorni che si è partito». AGS, *E*, Legajo 1367, f. 168. Andrea Doria to Charles V, Genoa 12 December 1534.

81 «Por los medios que buscastes para que pudiesse yr a entender en lo que lleva a cargo, y que lo más seguro y breve». AGS, *E*, Legajo 1563, f. 256. Charles V to Andrea Doria, Madrid 10 January 1535.

82 «Se dezía por la ciudad a lo que yva Luis Presenda». AGS, *E*, Legajo 1367, f. 114. Gómez Suarez de Figueroa to Charles V, Genoa 25 December 1534.

83 «Capitado a Palermo uno que se llama Millimati qual fue tomado en lo de Xaxel qual era criado del Príncipe de Melfi lo qual Barbarosa lo soltó porque le embiassen en su lugar un

thanking him for his efforts, “all I can say to you is to continue on your way making use of the same diligence you have shown so far”.<sup>84</sup>

Presenda met the Viceroy in Palermo, where the last details about the mission to Africa were ironed out. The plan was quite simple; once he arrived in Tunis, Luis had to present himself as a merchant, who wanted to win over Barbarossa by means of rich gifts, for which purpose Presenda had 5,000 ducats. Contacting Muley al-Hassan was still of crucial importance. In fact, the agent carried with him a letter by Charles V addressed to the Emir: “Presenda, our servant, hands to you this letter and will talk to you on our behalf”.<sup>85</sup> The spy’s fake identity would allow him to return often to Messina, from where he could send regular reports to the Viceroy and the Emperor.

After leaving Sicily, Presenda’s trail in the archives is faint because the mission was so disastrous that he could not send a single letter to the court. Thus, we must resort to literary sources and trust them to get to know what happened. According to Cerezeda, the agent travelled to Tunis with a man from Malta and another from Zamora, who spoke Arabic and knew the Muslim customs, because he had lived in Tripoli. In Trapani, Sicily, Presenda bought a Tunisian slave to be his guide in the region, but when they landed in Maghreb the captive escaped and warned Barbarossa.<sup>86</sup> According to Prudencio Sandoval, however, Presenda went to Africa with a Moor converted to Christianity, who at first was loyal to the Emperor but once in Tunis “that dog betrayed him”.<sup>87</sup>

Although we do not know for sure who the traitor was, we are conscious that the mission ended tragically. In that regard, all authors agree: Presenda and his followers were captured a few hours after landing on the coast of Tunis. The Genoese spy was taken to the presence of Barbarossa, who subjected him to tough questioning. The agent lied cunningly about numbers of ships and the

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turco que tenía el príncipe». AGS, *Guerra y Marina* (hereafter GyM), Legajo 6, f. 103. Luis Presenda to Charles V, Messina 19 December 1534.

84 «No ay otra cosa que deziros más de encargaros que usando de la misma diligencia sigáys vuestro camino». AGS, *E*, Legajo 1563, f. 183. Charles V to Luis Presenda, Madrid 16 February 1535.

85 «Presenda nuestro criado que esta os dará para que de nuestra parte os hable». AGS, *GyM*, Legajo 13, f. 10. Charles V to Muley Hassan, Madrid 14 November 1534.

86 Cerezeda, *Tratado*, pp. 2-4.

87 «Este perro hizo como aleve traidor». Prudencio Sandoval, *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V* (Madrid: Atlas, 1955): tomo II, libro XXI, párrafo IX, p. 482.

characteristics of the Imperial armada. When Charles V's huge fleet appeared on the Lagoon of Tunis, the corsair ordered his men to behead the Genoese spy.<sup>88</sup>

### **By way of conclusion**

The Emperor devoted much time and resources to preparing the terrain before embarking on his great Tunis enterprise, in which soldiers from all over Europe participated and were paid with “the money from the gold that came from Peru”.<sup>89</sup> The military campaign was the result of a collective effort in the advent of an Empire over which the sun never set. Advised by his councillors, Charles V dedicated considerable attention to espionage activities to gather all sorts of information about the enemy.

At the beginning of 1535, Habsburg intelligence proved to be up to the task. Thanks to the network of spies supervised by the Marquis of Atripalda, the Emperor soon found out about the difficulties that the Ottomans faced in Asia, which were not going to allow them to react in a large scale to the challenge of the Imperial armada in the Maghreb. Agents and correspondents provided news from Salonika to Mosul, where Suleiman had to flee due to the victories by the Safavids. In addition, Charles V could count on information that came directly from Tunis, under control of Barbarossa. Thus, the Emperor knew how many troops the corsair had, as well as his problems with the local population. Perhaps Arzilla's report is the best illustration of the importance of the news conveyed by spies, as he anticipated all the necessary aspects of the military campaign, which the Imperial armada was going to engage in.

In conclusion, the 1535 Tunis campaign was not just a great military enterprise of the Habsburg dynasty in Africa; the preparations made for the attack on the corsair Barbarossa represented a genuine testing ground for the organization of the Imperial intelligence that the Habsburgs had created a few years earlier. A systematic reading of the confidential information stored in the archives enables us to check and see that news from all regions of the known world arrived at the court of Charles V, as well as confirming that the Mediterranean was the biggest laboratory in early modern Europe.

88 BLL, 582 c. 4. Paolo Giovio, *Delle Istorie del suo tempo*, tradotte da M. Ludovico Domini-chi (Venezia: F. Rocco, 1565), pp. 359-360.

89 «El dinero que huviere prochedido del oro de Perú». AGS, E, Legajo 462, f. 27. Charles V to Isabella of Portugal, Battlefield of La Goulette 29 June 1535.

*The Power of the Quill: Espionage under Charles V during the Tunisian Campaign*

**Abstract** ■ The Ottoman expansion into the Western Mediterranean in the sixteenth century created an intense rivalry with the Habsburgs. This article examines this conflict from a different perspective, that of espionage. While, on the one hand, analysing the political changes in the Mare Nostrum in the 1530s, on the other, it scrutinizes Neapolitan intelligence, the most important information-gathering service of Emperor Charles V. Furthermore, the article specifically concentrates on the contribution of espionage to the Emperor's campaign in Tunis against Khayr al-din Barbarossa.

**Keywords:** Mediterranean studies, early modern espionage, Habsburg-Ottoman rivalry, Kingdom of Naples, North Africa.

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