

A Habsburg Thalassocracy: Habsburgs and Hospitallers in the Early Modern Mediterranean, c. 1690–1750*

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Introduction

Relations between Habsburgs and Hospitallers (also referred to as Knights of Malta, the Order of St John and the *Johanniterorden* in German)¹ assumed various forms in various locations and over many centuries. Indeed, it could not be otherwise since branches of the Habsburg dynasty controlled Spain and its related territories which included Sicily and Malta between 1516 and 1700, as well as Austria, the family hereditary lands, and the title of Holy Roman Emperors from the late fifteenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, Naples was under direct Austrian Habsburg rule between 1713 and 1733, and Sicily—Malta’s mainland—from 1718 to 1733.² Hospitallers were present at Emperor Charles V’s (1500–58) triumph in Tunis in 1535; they were also present at Emperor Charles VI’s (1685–1740) failed Danube campaign of 1739.³ For centuries, elite families from Habsburg territories, Iberia, the German lands and central Europe, enrolled their sons into the ranks of the Order. The Habsburg landscape was dotted with Hospitaller properties (commanderies), ranging from the estate of Cizur Menor in Navarre to the *Malteserkirche* in Vienna. Innumerable Habsburg subjects went through Hospitaller Malta’s harbours.

* I am grateful to Mary Laven, Victor Mallia-Milanes, Adrian Scerri, Valeria Vanesio, Sarah Azzopardi-Ljubibratic, Joan Abela, Anton Caruana Galizia and Francesco Russo for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Thanks are also due to the following who helped with ideas and references: Daniel Gullo, Fleur Brincat, Cláudia Garradas, Liam Gauci, Vanessa Buhagiar and Maroma Camilleri. Victor Bonnici was immensely helpful when it came to translating particular notarial texts from Latin into English. Patricia Micallef patiently translated a long document from French into English.

¹ Michael Galea, *German Knights of Malta: A Gallery of Portraits* (Malta: Bugelli Publication, 1986), 5.

² Cf. Robert L. Dauber, *The Navy of the Order of Malta at the Danube in the War against the Turks 1736–39* (Vienna: Dauber, 2011), 13.

³ Idem, “Strategic and Personal Cooperation Between the Knights of Malta and the Emperor in His Wars Against the Ottomans (1523–1798)”, *Sacra Militia* 3 (2004): 2–12.

This chapter endeavours to draw the contours within which relations and movement occurred within a Habsburg-Hospitaller Mediterranean framework in the first half of the eighteenth century. The decision to focus on the years c.1690 to c.1750 was determined by the absence of studies that look at interactions between Habsburgs and Hospitallers during this period, as well as by the long reign of Charles VI (r. 1711–40). The latter does not adhere neatly to these dates, but Charles VI's imperial ambitions in Spain and the Mediterranean provides a relatively coherent, yet flexible political context within which to observe these social interactions unfold. The presence and activity of Austrian Habsburg Hospitallers in the Order is also considered to peak in the first half of the eighteenth century.⁴ The terms Habsburg and Hospitaller will be looked at here as porous and mutable identities which overlapped significantly, but which remained distinct. A Habsburg Mediterranean was shaped by the administrative and communicative acts of such individuals and others they interacted with. The contact zones thus formed between central Europe and the central Mediterranean enable one to speak of a Habsburg thalassocracy defined by the regular movement at sea of people, goods and ideas.

A Habsburg Mediterranean, a Habsburg Thalassocracy

On 16 April 1739, two letters were dispatched from Vienna to Malta, both signed by Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor, King of Germany, Spain, Hungary and Bohemia and Archduke of Austria. As noted in one of the letters, by that time he had been emperor for 28 years, king of Spain for 36 (in his mind at least),⁵ and king of Hungary and Bohemia for 29.⁶ One letter, in Latin, was addressed to the Grand Master of the Order of St John, Fra Ramon Despuig (r. 1736–41). The other letter, in Italian, was for “Dear Baron Stadl”, that is, Fra Ferdinand Ernst von Stadl (1684–1743), Knight of Malta and representative of the emperor on the island.⁷ The subject of the letters was the ongoing Habsburg-Ottoman conflict

⁴ Idem and Michael Galea, *Austrian Knights of Malta: Relations Malta-Austria 1530–1798* (Malta: PEG, 2006), 69–70.

⁵ Following his sojourn in Spain between 1704 and 1711, the end of the Spanish War of Succession (1701–14), and the confirmation of Philip of Anjou as King Philip V of Spain, Charles continued styling himself as king of Spain even though he was not internationally recognised as such. See, for instance, Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Habsburgs: Embodying Empire* (London: Viking, 1995), 210–11.

⁶ National Library of Malta (NLM), Archive of the Order of Malta (AOM) 269, fol. 142r, 31 May 1739.

⁷ NLM, AOM 60, fol. 215r, 16 April 1739: *Caro Barone di Stadl*.

along the Danube (the Austro-Turkish War of 1737–39) and the request of the emperor to the Order to assist him with ships and men. Fra von Stadl was to thank the Grand Master for agreeing to help, and to ensure that things moved forward. This represented a culmination in the official political relationship between the Habsburg Monarchy and Hospitaller Malta, one that was particularly close in the 1720s and 1730s.

Just under a decade after these letters, in 1747, the Maltese priest Don Paschale Zammit appeared in front of Notary Bernardo Maria Callus in Valletta. He was doing so on behalf of the nun Sister Maria Joseph of Jesus of the Monastery of St Mary Magdalene. The purpose was to copy and register in the acts a notarial deed drawn up on 3 November 1747 in front of Notary Adolph Schütte in Münster. In this document, the knight Fra Theodor Hermann Baron de Schade ex Anzfeld, resident in Münster, assigned a significant income to Sister Maria in Malta to be derived from sources in Livorno, Florence, Viterbo and Rome.⁸ No reason is specified for this arrangement, although the fact that Sister Maria's convent was a place for repentant prostitutes,⁹ may be indicative of a close relationship that the two once had, and which they still maintained, in a less physical form, because of the distance between them.

What these two examples highlight is the existence of an intensive and varied network of relationships involving Habsburg subjects—mostly, but not only, Hospitallers—that operated between Habsburg territories in central Europe and Malta. Through various kinds of letters and notarial documents it is possible to reconstruct a little-known Mediterranean contact zone that linked together places like Vienna, Trieste, Florence, Livorno, Naples, Sicily and Malta, via the Order of St John, its members and its associates. This study is based on sources in two archives in Valletta, Malta: the Archive of the Order of Malta (housed in the National Library of Malta) and the Notarial Archive of Valletta. The Archive of the Order is the official archive of the Knights of St John. Here, minutes from meetings of the Council of the Order, official correspondence, inventories by individual Hospitallers (*dispropriamenti*) and by treasury agents for deceased Hospitallers (*spogli*) were consulted.¹⁰ The next trove, ideal for throwing more light on material culture, was the Notarial Archive. Here I collected a sample of documents involving German Habsburg Hospitallers from the acts of three related

⁸ Notarial Archive Valletta, Malta (NAV), R124/2, notary Bernardo Maria Callus, 23 December 1747, fol. 97v–100r.

⁹ Cf. Christine Muscat, *Magdalene Nuns and Penitent Prostitutes Valletta* (Malta: BDL, 2013).

¹⁰ Giovanni M. Caravita, *Statuti della Sacra Religione di San Giovanni Gerosolimitano* (Borgo Novo: s.n., 1718).

Maltese notaries.¹¹ Many Hospitallers made regular use of these three notaries for various reasons, including the managing of property held in Habsburg territories. These sources present certain challenges, in particular when it comes to the issue of how notaries and scribes in Malta, used to a Latinate culture, transcribed German names of people and places. Beyond such challenges, these sources help to transform the Mediterranean into an imaginative and actual space that bound together Habsburg subjects through some form of link to the Order and Malta. The perspective that emerges here is one where the relations between centre and periphery were very dynamic and in flux, depending on the participants and the issues involved.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers a surgically precise definition of the Mediterranean Sea: “the almost landlocked sea separating southern Europe from Africa, connected with the Atlantic Ocean by the Strait of Gibraltar, with the Black Sea by the Bosphorus, and (since 1869) with the Red Sea by the Suez Canal”.¹² A more emotive definition states that the Mediterranean “is not just a geographical reality, but a symbolic space, a place overloaded with representations”.¹³ For David Abulafia, the “‘Mediterranean’ is resolutely the surface of the sea itself, its shores and its islands, particularly the port cities that provided the main departure and arrival points for those crossing it”,¹⁴ thus offering a more consciously sea rather than land focussed definition than that of Fernand Braudel (“the Mediterranean region stretches from the northern limit of the olive tree to the northern limit of the palm tree”),¹⁵ and Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell. Their 2000 publication of *The Corrupting Sea* is acknowledged as marking a rekindling of interest in Mediterranean studies that emphasizes the Mediterranean as a category of analysis in itself, a middle intellectual ground that helps link up, and possibly even break down, other categories such as Europe, Africa, the Middle East and so on.¹⁶ Yet the extent to which the Mediterranean informs particular fields of historical inquiry varies. In the historiography of eighteenth-century Habsburg

¹¹ Notaries Gaspare Domenico Chircop (1702–36), Giuseppe Callus (1710–40) and Bernardo Maria Callus (1747–64).

¹² “Mediterranean Sea”, in *Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com, accessed 13 November 2012.

¹³ Jean-Claude Izzo and Thierry Fabre, *Rappresentare il Mediterraneo: Lo Sguardo Francese* (Messina: Mesogea, 2000), 7, preface.

¹⁴ David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), xvii.

¹⁵ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), vol. 1, 168.

¹⁶ Catlos, “Why the Mediterranean?”, 1.

Austria, it barely features. As an empire that is generally associated more with the land than the sea, there hardly seems to be scope for a discussion about Habsburg maritime history, a ‘Habsburg thalassocracy’.¹⁷ Maps in books about eighteenth-century Austria generally fail to include Naples and Sicily as Habsburg possessions.¹⁸ Admittedly, this relationship only lasted around twenty years, but the incorporation of Naples and Sicily in, and their subsequent detachment from, the Habsburg *monarchia* had repercussions at the local, regional and international level (not to mention for the Order and its members).

The Mediterranean was and continues to be at the heart of a variety of crossways, including those of the imagination. The term Habsburg Mediterranean can hold the potential to cut across normative terms of thinking such as Europe, Africa, Middle East, Christianity and Islam. This is not to say that there are no works where Habsburg and Mediterranean in the eighteenth century come together. There are surveys of Habsburg Sicily,¹⁹ increasing numbers of works on the Adriatic-Dalmatian dimension of Habsburg activity,²⁰ and a greater awareness of how Central Europe, along with the Mediterranean, was central rather than peripheral in the relationship between Europe and the Ottoman Empire.²¹ Nevertheless, accounts from the periphery have yet to influence the narrative in the centre.

The Mediterranean in the eighteenth century was one where Braudel’s late sixteenth-century Northern Invaders—the English, the Dutch and the French—

¹⁷ Cf. David Abulafia, “Thalassocracies”, in *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, eds. Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 139–53.

¹⁸ See, for example, Edward Crankshaw, *The Habsburgs* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), 264; Charles W. Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1618–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 109; Benjamin Curtis, *The Habsburgs: The History of a Dynasty* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 14.

¹⁹ Marcello Verga, “Il ‘sogno spagnolo’ di Carlo VI: Alcune considerazioni sulla monarchia asburgica e i domini Italiani nella prima metà del Settecento”, in *Il Trentino nel Settecento fra Sacro Romano Impero e antichi stati italiani*, eds. Cesare Mozzarelli and Giuseppe Olmi (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1985), 203–61; Francesca Gallo, *L’Alba dei Gattopardi: La formazione della classe dirigente nella Sicilia austriaca (1719–34)* (Catanzaro: Meridiana Libri, 1996); Cetty Bella, *Sicilia asburgica: Un’isola al centro dei conflitti europei* (Acireale: Bonanno, 2014); Anton Caruana Galizia, “Royal Office and Private Ventures: The Fortunes of a Maltese Nobleman in Sicily, 1725–50”, *Historical Research* 90 (2017): 1–22.

²⁰ John Deak, “Habsburg Studies within Central European History: The State of the Field”, *Central European History* 51 (2018): 55.

²¹ David Do Paço, “The Ottoman Empire in Early Modern Austrian History: Assessment and Perspectives”, *EUI Working Papers* 7 (2014): 1.

were firmly established.²² Yet for all the activities of the northerners, Mediterranean people were still active in shipping in the inland sea.²³ Although there was continued rivalry and episodes of conflict in our period, the Peace of Karlovitz (1699) and the Treaty of Passarovitz (1718) marked the beginning of a normalization of Austro-Ottoman relations, which opened up opportunities for trade across the Balkans.²⁴ Thus, across the first half of the eighteenth century, there is a reconfiguration of the political and economic realities of the Mediterranean, perhaps most clearly so in the Habsburg and quasi-Habsburg contact zones of Central Europe, the Balkans, the Adriatic and the central Mediterranean where goods circulated and people interconnected. To paraphrase Cecily J. Hilsdale, “circulation” is key to understanding relations and movement among Habsburgs and Hospitallers throughout the Mediterranean.²⁵

In the Mediterranean canvas drawn here, there is room to consider the operations of the Habsburgs and their imperial subjects. The Austrian Habsburg Empire certainly fits the definition of empire, which in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is defined as an “extensive territory under the control of a supreme ruler (typically an emperor) or an oligarchy, often consisting of an aggregate of many separate states or territories”.²⁶ Typically, it is thought of as a land-based empire since its littoral was limited, yet during Charles VI’s reign there was a sustained effort “to develop a second export outlet through the Mediterranean”,²⁷ which would provide an alternative to north-bound river routes that passed through Prussian territory. Infrastructure projects like the Brenner Pass into northern Italy, the Semmering Pass to Trieste and the Via Carolina from Hungary to Fiume connected the heart of the empire to its Mediterranean coast better than ever before. The physical initiatives were accompanied by legal measures such as the declaration of Trieste and Fiume as free ports in 1719.²⁸ Despite these efforts, it is legitimate to

²² Braudel, *The Mediterranean* (1972), vol. 1, 615–42.

²³ Greene, “The Early Modern Mediterranean”, 94.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 96; Do Paço, “Ottoman Empire”, 6.

²⁵ Cecily J. Hilsdale, “The Thalassal Optic”, in *Can We Talk Mediterranean? Conversations on an Emerging Field in Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, eds. Brian A. Catlos and Sharon Kinoshita (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 24.

²⁶ ‘Empire’, in *Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com, accessed 29 September 2017.

²⁷ Ingraio, *Habsburg Monarchy*, 140.

²⁸ David Do Paço, “Trieste: les horizons d’une ville centre-européenne, 1690–1820”, *Monde(s)* 2, no. 14 (2018): 71–96; Klemens Kaps, “Looking West: Transnational Merchant Networks Between Trieste and Barcelona, 1750–1820”, in *Proceedings of the 4th Mediterranean Maritime History Network Conference 7, 8, 9 May 2014*, eds. Jordi Ibarz Gelabert et al. (Barcelona: Museu Marítim de Barcelona, 2017), 893–914.

question whether one can speak of a Habsburg thalassocracy. Abulafia's definition of thalassocracy is an empire "that not merely crosses the sea but uses the sea to tie together scattered dominions, exercising some degree of control over the sea".²⁹ In such an equation, the Habsburg Empire of Charles VI, even when it controlled Naples and Sicily, can at best be described as a limited thalassocracy because of the absence of a significant navy. On the other hand, there was a thalassocratic dimension to the empire in the form of its imperial subjects who under the Habsburg banner or others, sailed across the Mediterranean for various reasons. One might describe this as a form of soft power. Such considerations feed into the wider debate about the concept of empire.³⁰

L'affaire de Vienne

The dynamics created by the activities of Habsburg subjects sailing in the Mediterranean can be discerned from an episode that is referred to as "the Vienna affair" (1733–40) in the records of the Order.³¹ It began when the knight Fra Pascual Borrás y Arnal (1691–1781?)³² of the Spanish *Langue* of Aragon-Catalunya-Navarre, and captain Giovanni Pietro Santori of Corsica, captured some vessels and dragged them into Malta's harbour. Fra Borrás and Santori were operating under a corsairing licence (which typically specified where and when its holder could operate in the Mediterranean in his pursuit for prey and profit) issued by Philip V, the Bourbon King of Spain, His Catholic Majesty; the vessels they captured were flying the flag of His Imperial and Catholic Majesty.³³ His Catholic Majesty was the traditional title of Spanish monarchs; Charles VI, by using the title His Imperial and Catholic Majesty, was reminding everyone that he still believed he was the real, lawful king of Spain. The use of these titles in the

²⁹ Abulafia, "Thalassocracies", 139, 151; Elizabeth A. Pollard, "The Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean", in *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, eds. Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 457–58.

³⁰ Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 4–5; Julia Torrie, "Forum: An Imperial Dynamo? CEH Forum on Pieter Judson's *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*", *Central European History* 50 (2017): 245, 249; Deak, "Habsburg Studies", 54.

³¹ NLM, AOM 1223, 656, 28 March 1740, *L'affaire de Vienne*.

³² "Borrás Borrás Arnal y la Torre, Pascual", pares: portal de archivos españoles, accessed 19 March 2021, <http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/1579704?nm>.

³³ NLM, AOM 269, fol. 208v–09r, 28 September 1741, *per le prede sopra di essei rispettivamente fatte dal Com^{re} fr D Pasquale Borrás Cav^{re} della Ven Castellanìa d'Emposta, e dal Capitano Gio Pietro Santori nativo dell'Isola di Corsica, entrambi armati in corso con Bandiera, e lettere patenti di Sua M^{te} Cattolica, che detti depredati navigassero co i loro Bastimenti sotto Bandiera della M^{te} Sua Ces^a e Catt^a.*

documentation of the Order shows an attempt by the Order to steer a politically neutral course among competing political ideas at this time. From the perspective of Fra Borrás and Santori, these were legitimate prey because their captains were Greek (therefore Ottoman subjects) and their cargo was Ottoman.³⁴ The Greek captains protested against these actions arguing that since they were flying the Imperial flag and they had a passport from the imperial minister in Istanbul, Leopold Freiherr von Tallmann (res. 1728–37), their vessels and their cargoes could not be subjected to such treatment. Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena (r. 1722–36) at first stopped Fra Borrás from entering Malta with his prey because of the ongoing war (of the Polish Succession, 1733–38) between Spain and the emperor. The imperial minister in Malta, Fra Eschaldam,³⁵ asked Vilhena to allow the captured vessels into Malta fearing that if Fra Borrás went elsewhere it would become impossible to recover the looted goods. The minister for the Spanish crown in Malta, the knight Fra Jaime Togores Valenzuela (b. 1665),³⁶ agreed with this proposed approach, provided that the contested goods were kept somewhere safe until the dispute was resolved, though in his opinion Fra Borrás was operating perfectly within the spirit of his Spanish licence.³⁷

The issue was referred to Vienna where it became entangled in the complex world of multiple councils and jurisdictions. The emperor asked the Council of Spain (*Consejo de España, Junta de España, Spanischer Rat*)³⁸ to look into the matter. This ruled in favour of Fra Borrás. However, at a later point, the *Hofkriegsrat* (Aulic War Council, the central military administrative authority)³⁹ declared that the former body had no jurisdiction over maritime affairs and therefore its decision was null and void.⁴⁰ By this point the injured Greek captains had made their way to Vienna to present their case and they had also managed

³⁴ Cf. Molly Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants: A Maritime History of the Mediterranean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

³⁵ NLM, AOM 1223, fol. 658, 28 March 1740. Reference to this Bailiff Eschaldam would seem to indicate the presence of an Imperial Minister prior to Fra von Stadl.

³⁶ Ricardo Magdaleno Redondo, *Catálogo Archivo General de Simancas*, vol. 21: *Secretaría de estado* (Valladolid: Tip. de la Revista de archivos, bibliotecas y museos, 1956), 2, 81, 469.

³⁷ *Ibid.* Cf. Frank Theuma, “In Search of Justice: The Depredation of Christian Greeks by Maltese Corsairs”, in *Historicizing Religion: Critical Approaches to Contemporary Concerns*, eds. Bojan Borstner et al. (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2010), 132–33.

³⁸ Robert L. Dauber, *Bailiff Frá Joaquín de Portocarrero (1681–1760)* (Malta: PEG, 2003), 74–78.

³⁹ John W. Stoye, “The Austrian Habsburgs”, in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 6: *The Rise of Great Britain and Russia, 1618–1715/25*, ed. John S. Bromley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 572–75.

⁴⁰ NLM, AOM 269, fol. 159r, 1740; AOM 1223, fol. 660–65, 28 March 1740.

to get the Ottoman government to make a formal protest to the emperor about the incident, which happened at a time when there was peace between the two sides; the emperor demanded that the Order compensate the Greeks who had been flying his flag. The issue dragged on into 1739. By this time there was war between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, and the Order's intervention at the Danube may in part have been instigated by the hope that this would convince the emperor to change his mind about the compensation. He did not. In March 1739—so more or less at the same time as he was requesting the Order's assistance at the Danube—Charles VI also sent a stern note to Fra von Stadl to tell the grand master that unless the Order paid up, he would be forced to confiscate the properties of the Order throughout his dominions.⁴¹

Mindful of this situation, the Order mobilised its diplomatic network. The ambassador in France, Fra Jean-Jacques de Mesmes (served 1715–41), was asked to secure French protection.⁴² A two-man delegation made up of the knight Fra Agostino de Piolenc and the *Uditore* (legal advisor) Marc'Antonio Mombelli, was dispatched to Vienna. The emperor was convinced that he should set up a special commission to look into the case and to have among its members officials from the council of Italy. These must have been thought likely to be more sympathetic towards the Order, although their presence required all documentation to be translated from German into Italian, which slowed down proceedings considerably. Charles VI passed away on 20 October 1740 paving the way for the accession to the throne by Maria Theresa (1717–80). This finally marked a turning point, with the queen allowing the investigation to continue and showing herself favourably inclined towards the Order, so that in due course the Order was cleared of all claims by the Greeks and the case declared closed.⁴³

The Vienna affair mirrors the complexity which existed within and around the Habsburg Mediterranean. Greek-Ottoman vessels flying the imperial flag were captured by an Aragonese Knight of Malta who was operating under a Spanish Bourbon corsairing licence. The grand master and the ministers of Vienna and Madrid in Malta showed pragmatism in attempting to deal with this case and the fallout they must have anticipated. But once the issue was brought up in Vienna it became interlaced in the intricate world of multiple courtly interests and rivalries. The pleas of the Greek captains and Ottoman protests at a time of peace seem to have convinced Vienna to seek compensation from the Order. Charles VI's

⁴¹ NLM, AOM 269, fol. 159r, 1740.

⁴² NLM, AOM 1223, fol. 677, 28 March 1740.

⁴³ NLM, AOM 269, fol. 208v–12v, 28 September 1741.

lingering yearning for Spain may also have played a part here, seeing that his imperial flag should not be harassed by a licence from a regime in Spain which he only reluctantly accepted. An extraordinary case such as this reveals contacts and patterns of movement of people and goods that might otherwise have gone unnoticed in the historical record. The disruption caused by Fra Borrás shows the fluidity of the notion of a Habsburg Mediterranean at the level of high politics, but more significantly at the level of a variety of Habsburg subjects trying to negotiate their way across border zones.

Commanderies and the Langue of Germany

As evident in the Vienna affair, Charles VI's threat to confiscate the Order's properties (*sequestro* in Hospitaller terms) triggered a significant reaction by the Order. A *sequestro* represented an existential challenge to the Order since its commanderies were not only a source of income, but also symbols of its international, privileged and exempt status.⁴⁴ They were important at an institutional level, but they were also important at a personal level since, for a Hospitaller, a commandery meant financial security, an improvement in one's position within the ranks of the Order, and the possibility of patronising other brethren as well as helping one's family.⁴⁵ The framework within which the commanderies were organised and which served as an interface between Habsburg possessions and the Order was the *Langue* of Germany. This was one of the eight ethno-linguistic organisational units that constituted the Order. It covered territories governed directly by the Habsburgs, as well as the Holy Roman Empire (the *Reich*), which is an essential corollary in any discussion of Habsburg power.⁴⁶

The *Langue* of Germany was made up of a number of priories, the local seats for the Order's administration outside of the central headquarters in Malta. The German priories were: the priory of Germany, with its main seat at Heitersheim in south-west Germany; the priory of Bohemia, with its main seat in Prague

⁴⁴ On the *sequestro*, see Victor Mallia-Milanes, *Venice and Hospitaller Malta 1530–1798: Aspects of a Relationship* (Malta: PEG, 1992), 181–219. Cf. Luigi Robuschi, *La croce e il leone: Le relazioni tra Venezia e Ordine di Malta (secoli XIV–XVIII)* (Milan: Mimesis, 2015).

⁴⁵ Emanuel Buttigieg, *Nobility, Faith and Masculinity: The Hospitaller Knights of Malta, c. 1580–c. 1700* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), 79.

⁴⁶ Joachim Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, vol. 2: *The Peace of Westphalia to the Dissolution of the Reich 1648–1806* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 299, 302, 620–21.

until 1420, moving to Strakonice in southern Bohemia⁴⁷ until 1684, and then reverting to Prague;⁴⁸ the priory of Dacia, which covered Scandinavia and which was suppressed during the reformation; the priory of Hungary, largely lost as a result of Ottoman expansion in the sixteenth century and somewhat reconstituted in the decades after the Siege of Vienna of 1683; and the grand bailiwick of Brandenburg, which traditionally enjoyed a considerable level of autonomy. It became protestant after 1538, but retained a form of loose association with the Order. The priories were, in turn, made up of smaller units called commanderies, the building blocks of the Order.⁴⁹ For the period under study, the two most important priories were those of Germany and of Bohemia. One should also note that aside from the territorial overlaps between the *Langue* of Germany and Habsburg possessions in central Europe—which from 1714 also included Austrian control over the southern Netherlands—there were also significant overlaps between the *Langue* of Italy and Habsburg possessions across the peninsula. It was imperative for the Order to ensure the good will of the Habsburgs.

Heitersheim was located in a territory where the Habsburgs happened to be the local overlords, an incidental but further powerful link between the Order and the Habsburgs. From 1548, the grand prior of Heitersheim was also an imperial prince, thereby acquiring a seat and a vote in the diet of the *Reich*.⁵⁰ All the priories of the German *Langue*, with the exception of the grand bailiwick of Brandenburg, answered to the grand prior in Heitersheim. The incumbents of this role generally resided there, though at times they preferred to be in Malta, particularly when it was felt that Habsburg interference was too stifling. Technically, the head of the German *Langue* was the grand bailiff, who was usually resident in Malta and managed the Maltese affairs of the *Langue*; in reality, the grand prior of Heitersheim operated independently of the grand bailiff.⁵¹ The priory of Bohemia consisted of territories spread across Bohemia, Silesia, Austria, Carinthia, Styria and Carniola. Bohemia's seniority as a kingdom within the framework of the *Reich*⁵² explains why the priory was called Bohemian rather

⁴⁷ Alena Masinova, *The Grand Priory of Bohemia: The Exile in Strakonice, 1420–1694* (Valletta: unpublished MA diss. Of the University of Malta, 2016).

⁴⁸ Valentina Burgassi, "Hospitaller Architecture in Central Europe: The Grand Prior of Bohemia", *Procedia Engineering* 161 (2016): 294–99.

⁴⁹ Henry Sire, *The Knights of Malta* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 190–91.

⁵⁰ Thomas Freller, *The German Langue of the Order of Malta: A Concise History* (Malta: Midsea Books, 2010), 104–05, 168.

⁵¹ Galea, *German Knights*, 5, 8.

⁵² Cf. Ingraio, *Habsburg Monarchy*, 10.

than Austrian, although during the early modern period the commanderies in Vienna and Mailberg⁵³ gained increasing influence. The grand prior of Bohemia generally came to reside in Vienna, close to the court and the Order's representative to it.⁵⁴ With the Kingdom of Bohemia chafing with Ottoman borders, the Priory of Bohemia became a frontier player. This enabled Hospitallers to perform their obligatory military service (their *carovana*, a prerequisite for progression in the ranks of the Order) on this contested frontier rather than on the heaving planks of the Order's galleys.⁵⁵

The importance of the frontier for the Order and the Habsburgs was not a feature relegated to just one of their component parts; it permeated their very being and is one of the most important parallels between the two. The Habsburgs were a frontier dynasty, perched on the world of Islam, in the same way that the Order from Malta, on its galleys, was constantly engaging with a Muslim maritime border.⁵⁶ This is but one feature that the two shared. Robert Dauber identified three key links between Habsburg territories and the Order. Firstly, many Hospitallers could be found spending varying amounts of time in Habsburg territories, operating from the Order's commanderies and/or playing an active part in the civilian and military affairs of the Habsburg monarchy. Secondly, Hospitallers from Habsburg countries spent varying amounts of time in Malta and serving the Order on its galleys across the Mediterranean. Thirdly, the island-order-state of Malta and the Habsburg Monarchy/*Reich* engaged with each other on various political, diplomatic and economic levels, as independent sovereign entities.⁵⁷ There were other parallels. In a fashion not dissimilar to the way the Habsburg monarchy functioned, the Order was run through a complex relationship between multiple centralised and localised structures.⁵⁸ Furthermore, both entities showed a significant ability to survive major crises.⁵⁹

⁵³ Freller, *German Langue*, 42–43.

⁵⁴ Dauber and Galea, *Austrian Knights*, 2, 19–20.

⁵⁵ Dauber, "Strategic and Personal Cooperation", 9; Freller, *German Langue*, 53.

⁵⁶ Ingrao, *Habsburg Monarchy*, 3; Dauber, "Strategic and Personal Cooperation", 2–3. Cf. William O'Reilly, "Fredrick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis, Orientalism, and the Austrian *Militärgrenze*", *Journal of Austrian-American History* 2, no.1 (2018): 1–30.

⁵⁷ Dauber, *The Navy of the Order of Malta*, 11.

⁵⁸ Cf. Curtis, *Habsburgs*, 275; Valeria Vanesio, *Un'istituzione millenaria attraverso i suoi Archivi: I processi di ammissione dell'Ordine ospedaliero di San Giovanni* (Rome: unpublished PhD dissertation of Sapienza, Università di Roma, 2018).

⁵⁹ Cf. Ingrao, *Habsburg Monarchy*, 21–22; Victor Mallia-Milanes, "Decline and Fall? The Order of the Hospital and its Surrender of Malta, 1798", *Symposia Melitensia* 12 (2016): 117–37.

Over time, Hospitaller commanderies became embedded in local communities and customs, serving the civic and religious needs of parishes under their jurisdiction.⁶⁰ This forged powerful links between Habsburg territories, subjects and Hospitallers. The latter were meant to reside on their commanderies, but very often their careers, duties and ambitions took them elsewhere. Extensive legal provision had thus to be made to ensure the adequate running of commanderies in the interest of subjects, local authorities, the commander and the Order's treasury in Malta. For contemporaries, notarial deeds made matters official and legally binding. For historians, they record how people organised their lives and possessions.⁶¹ The fate of Habsburg subjects and their belongings was being determined by decisions taken in Malta, with ramifications on notions of centre and periphery in a Habsburg Mediterranean. Two examples elucidate these dynamics.

Fra Karl Josef von Dietrichstein owed a significant debt to *Signor* Giuseppe Pansier, who took the knight to court and petitioned the grand master. The Order stepped in to ensure the repayment of this debt and safeguard its own institutional interest, while individual Hospitallers stepped in to mediate a friendly arrangement. Fra von Stadl acted as procurator for Fra von Dietrichstein, while Fra Poppo (Joseph) Gundacker von Dietrichstein (1672–1737) offered to cover part of the debt from his commandery of Klein-Öls (today Oleśnica Mała, Poland). For his part, Fra von Dietrichstein promised to dedicate any income from current and future commanderies, as well as income from positions offered to him by the emperor, to repay Pansier.⁶² Such instances show how a tight-knit community of German Habsburg Hospitallers in Malta came together to assist each other, and how decisions taken in Malta were determining operations in Habsburg territories. Conversely, actions in the commanderies reverberated back in Malta where it was expected that solutions to problems be found. When Fra Johann Baptist Reinhard von Schauenburg zu Herlisheim took over as Commander of Cronweisseburg (modern-day Wissembourg in north-eastern France) and Bruxall (modern-day Bruchsal in southern Germany), he found himself faced with a bill of 1,845 imperial florins for the expenses of a church constructed at Forst, close to Bruchsal. This sum of money was beyond the means of Fra von Schauenburg at that moment, and more than what his commanderies could generate at short notice. For that reason,

⁶⁰ Ivan Grech, *The Hospitaller Commandery of San Giovanni di Pre in Genoa: Aspects of its Historical Development in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Valletta: unpublished M.A. diss. of the University of Malta, 1996), 49–64.

⁶¹ Cf. Joan Abela, *Hospitaller Malta and the Mediterranean Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2018).

⁶² NAV, R126/32, notary Giuseppe Callus, 12 April 1719, fol. 431r–34v.

the treasury in Malta agreed to lend Fra von Schauenburg the required sum to pay this debt and in turn he promised to repay the treasury back over the course of three years. Should he fail for any reason to honour this debt, the Langue of Germany would be held responsible.⁶³

The Order of St John was not a monastic institution, therefore it did not require its members to live in Malta (which in Hospitaller terminology was referred to as the ‘Convent’); a Hospitaller life was often an itinerant life. German Habsburg Hospitallers spent a significant amount of time away from Malta or from their commanderies. In such scenarios, it is not surprising that many took care to appoint procurators to look after their affairs in their absence.⁶⁴ The language of such procuration documents was often repetitive, yet formulaic structures were the result of long-term trends and needs that reveal what the concerns of a particular group were and how these were addressed over the long-term.⁶⁵ In December 1725, the Teutonic knight Johann Franz Adam Zobel von Giebelstadt (d. 1734) appointed as his procurators the Bali Wolfgang Philipp von Guttenberg (1647–1733) and the Maltese chaplain of the Order Francesco Farrugia to represent him in Malta and at the Roman Curia.⁶⁶ A standard document, it does not specify Giebelstadt’s reasons for travel, yet since the late seventeenth century, an arrangement was in place whereby members of the Teutonic Order could come to Malta to gain experience in military affairs.⁶⁷ The document itself attests to how extensive and varied networks could be across the Habsburg Mediterranean and beyond. As in this case, it was normal practice to have one or two procurators, as was

⁶³ NAV, R124/3, notary Bernardo Maria Callus, 14 September 1748, fol. 12r–14v.

⁶⁴ Cf. Order of St John, *Compendio delle Materie contenute nel Codice del Sacro Militare Ordine Gerosolomitano* (Malta: no printer, 1783), 19, 115; Fabrizio D’Avenia, “Le commende gerosolimitane in Sicilia: patrimoni ecclesiastici, gestione aristocratica”, in *La Sicilia dei Cavalieri: Le istituzioni dell’Ordine di Malta in età moderna (1530–1826)*, eds. Lucia Buono and Giacomo P. Gravina (Rome: Fondazione Donna Maria Marullo di Condojanni, 2003), 54–67.

⁶⁵ Cinzio Violante, *Atti privati e storia medioevale: Problemi di metodo* (Rome: Centro di Ricerca Editore, 1982), 23.

⁶⁶ NAV, R126/35, notary Giuseppe Callus, fol. 235v–37r, 17 December 1725; the name in the document is reproduced as Francesco Adam Baron Zobel de Giebeltatt. Johann H. Zedler, *Grosses vollsta[e]ndiges Universal-Lexicon Aller Wissenschaften und Ku[e]nste [...]*, vol. 63 (Leipzig and Halle: Zedler, 1750), 34.

⁶⁷ Thomas Freller, “‘Adversus Infedele’s’: Some Notes on the Cavalier’s Tour, the Fleet of the Order of St John, and the Maltese Corsairs”, *Journal of Early Modern History* 4, no. 3/4 (2000): 405–30.

to change procurators over time.⁶⁸ German Habsburg procurators were preferred, although Portuguese, French, Maltese and other nations featured as well. This may be indicative of a tight-knit but not hermetically sealed community. These arrangements recall the network created at baptism through the appointment of godparents; such procurations created a legal framework through which informal relations coalesced and were officialised. Interconnecting networks in different contact zones were thus created or reaffirmed.

On a more practical level, documents specifying procurations involving commanderies went into great detail in terms of their management, revealing the intricacies of life therein. To take one representative example, in April 1707 Fra Francesco Alberto Baron de Rosembach selected Francesco Berens as procurator for the commandery of Basilea (Basel) and Reinfelt (modern-day Rheinfelden in Switzerland),⁶⁹ bestowing upon Berens his legal rights as far as governing the commandery was concerned, but always within the spirit of the statutes of the Order. Running a commandery involved various aspects including seeing to spiritual and temporal matters; appointing and removing judges, notaries, officials, as well as clergy; leasing properties to reputable individuals; taking care of any legal proceedings; protecting the privileges of the commander and the Order; recovering money owed to the commander; issuing receipts of payments; ensuring that all paperwork was handled by a notary; imprisoning those indebted to the commander and seeking compensation from them; subduing crime and revolts; and in general administering all such things in the same manner as if the commander himself were present.⁷⁰ Armed with a copy of the notarial deed drawn up in Malta, the procurator appointed by a Hospitaller would present himself at the commandery to assert his authority on behalf of the commander residing in Malta or elsewhere. The notarial profession effectively allowed and sustained the network of relationships that kept together Habsburg-Hospitaller contact zones across the waters of the Mediterranean. Moreover, through such documents it becomes possible to write the history of places in the Habsburg monarchy and the *Reich* as seen and experienced from Malta, in this way contributing to the particularity of the centre-periphery relationship in this equation.

⁶⁸ Inter alia NAV, R126/34, notary Giuseppe Callus, fol. 557r–58r, 6 August 1724; fol. 560v–61v, 7 August 1724; R126/35, notary Giuseppe Callus, fol. 4v–7v, 6 September 1724; fol. 18r–21v, 11 September 1724; fol. 223v–29r, 19 December 1724; fol. 364r–68r, 21 February 1725; fol. 524v–28r, 14 May 1725.

⁶⁹ Cécile-René Delhorbe, “Les commanderies de Saint-Jean”, *La Patrie suisse* 23 (1952): 16–17.

⁷⁰ NAV, R182/4, notary Gaspare Domenico Chircop, fol. 927r–31r, 20 April 1702.

Material Culture

The way in which German Habsburg Hospitallers related to objects reflected their level of integration and commitment to Malta as a place, as well as the ways in which they sought to maintain links with people and locations across the Habsburg monarchy and the *Reich*. Material culture

encapsulates not just the physical attributes of an object, but the myriad and shifting contexts through which it acquires meaning. Material culture is not simply objects that people make, use and throw away; it is an integral part of—and indeed shapes—human experience.⁷¹

In the buildings of the grand priory of Austria in Vienna, and of the grand priory of Bohemia in Prague, one can still see many portraits of grand masters, bailiffs of Malta, views of Malta and in particular of its harbour, as well as paintings depicting important naval events. Furthermore, in castles across Austria there are held numerous portraits of family members who were Hospitallers.⁷² These images can be classified as what Peter Burke defines as “souvenirs”, artefacts that are intended to evoke certain memories.⁷³ In the case of paintings in priory buildings, members of the Order surrounded themselves with pictures to remind themselves of Malta and the Mediterranean world, while in the case of private residences, the family of a Hospitaller could proclaim its connection and contribution to that prestigious Order defending the frontier of Christendom on land and at sea.

Through a study of a series of inventories and wills, it is possible to get a sense of how particular Hospitallers navigated the Habsburg Mediterranean, and of the networks developed and sustained across different contact zones. Inventories list objects that shed light on the lives of Hospitallers, men who belonged to a socially exclusive category, but who were also deeply embedded within the societies they inhabited. It is useful to look at objects not only in terms of consumption (that is, sale, purchase, retail and monetary value), but also in terms of use, possession and transmission to family, friends and charity.⁷⁴ Transmission is, in fact, the key

⁷¹ Karen Harvey, “Introduction: Practical Matters”, in *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. Karen Harvey (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 3.

⁷² Dauber and Galea, *Austrian Knights*, 35.

⁷³ Peter Burke, “The Meaning of Things in the Early Modern World”, in *Treasured Possessions from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, eds. Vicki Avery, Melissa Calaresu and Mary Laven (Cambridge: The Fitzwilliam Museum, 2015), 5–9.

⁷⁴ Sara Pennell, “Mundane Materiality, Or, Should Small Things Still Be Forgotten? Material Culture, Micro-Histories and the Problem of Scale”, in *History and Material Culture: A*

feature of Hospitaller wills since through them they negotiated their loyalties to the Order, family and others. Two broad patterns can be detected in the wills of German Habsburg Hospitallers: one where the emphasis was on connections with home and commanderies, the other where connections to Malta predominated, though the distinction is not always clear cut.

An example of the first pattern can be seen in the case of Fra Franz Sigismund von Thun-Hohenstein (1639–1702), who passed away at the Lazzaretto of St Roque in Livorno. He was on his way back from England where he had been on a mission for the emperor.⁷⁵ He had drawn up his will in Prague in June 1700 proclaiming that he was a lord of the *Reich*, a bailiff and commander of the Order, and a close adviser to Leopold I. He then proceeded to recommend his soul to God, the Virgin Mary and the saints, and to set out his wishes. He bequeathed the sum of 500 florins to “my Hospitals of Klein-Öls and Gröbnik”, 500 florins to churches in the same localities, and a further 500 florins for the celebration of masses for the repose of his soul.⁷⁶ Having obtained the necessary permission from the chancery in Malta, Fra von Thun-Hohenstein nominated his nephew as heir to the *quinto*, that is, the one-fifth of his possessions which, with the permission of the grand master, a Hospitaller was at liberty to dispose of at his pleasure.⁷⁷ Another example of the same pattern was the will of Fra Poppo von Dietrichstein.⁷⁸ Here again we have someone who was of a high rank not only within the Order, but also within the Habsburg monarchy, being close to Charles VI, who even appointed him governor of Bohemia. He died in 1737 and was buried in Prague.⁷⁹ Fra von Dietrichstein left 2,000 florins to the Order and instituted his nephew as heir to his *quinto*. He then stipulated various local bequests: 1,000 florins for masses to be said for the repose of his soul in Prague and in the churches of the Priory of Bohemia, and a further 2,000 florins to the priory church in Prague; 500 florins to be distributed to the poor of Prague; money to the church and hospital at Klein-Öls; various donations to his servants in Prague, ranging from 1,000 florins to his secretary Giovanni Anton Schöler, to 3,000 florins together with half

Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources, ed. Karen Harvey (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 188; Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things: How we Became a World of Consumers* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), 4.

⁷⁵ Dauber and Galea, *Austrian Knights*, 86–96.

⁷⁶ NLM, AOM 931(43) No. 8, fol. 28r, *alli miei Ospitali di Kleinöls, et Gröbnig*, today Oleśnica Mała, and Grobniki, both in southern Poland, 3 May 1702.

⁷⁷ Louis de Boisgelin, *Ancient and Modern Malta* (London: Richard Phillips, 1805), 298.

⁷⁸ NLM, AOM 931(43) No. 23, fol. 85r, 1737.

⁷⁹ Dauber and Galea, *Austrian Knights*, 126.

his clothes to his senior servant Martino Radler. At his death, all his servants in Prague were to be provided with funerary outfits to mark his passing away.⁸⁰ These two case-studies are representative of German Habsburg Hospitallers whose wills illustrate how they had spent substantial parts of their lives away from Malta, on the commanderies, and in the service of the emperor. While there is some reference to the Order in Malta—not least in obtaining the necessary permission to draw up their will and having a copy deposited in the chancery in Valletta—their focal points were grounded in their family and home country.

Examples of the second pattern, where more of a Maltese focus was evident, include the will of Fra Federico Brauman, a chaplain of the German *Langue* and commander of Ratisbonne (modern-day Regensburg in Germany) and Rotheviande (modern-day Rottweil in Germany). Through his *quinto* he ordained masses for his soul to be said in several churches in Malta. Among the beneficiaries of his will in Malta was his Muslim slave Mihamet, who was to be freed in recognition of his service and loyalty. Brauman was owed money by some German Habsburg Hospitallers and had links to others, again providing evidence of a tight-knit network among this group.⁸¹ Another example is the will of Fra Philip Moritz von Cappel. He begins by explaining that the income from his commanderies was managed on his behalf by a certain Maltese *Signor* Abela. This is followed by a significant list of gold and silver items, including buttons, crosses, a sword and a coffee pot. With regards to his *quinto*, he distributed it between the grand master, his servants, his favourite priests and the Church of Our Lady of Mellieħa in Malta.⁸² This was one of the most prominent Marian sanctuaries on the island, attracting devotion from locals and Hospitallers alike. Another Hospitaller whose name is still associated with this church was von Guttenberg, who left a votive painting and two statues of angels. He also patronised the Marian shrine at Ħaż Żabbar, and a number of other churches across Malta, offering statues, paintings and money.⁸³ Von Guttenberg left resources—mostly in the form of lands in the Maltese islands—to set up a Guttenberg Foundation, its purpose being to draw upon the income from the leases of these lands and use it to celebrate masses for the repose of his soul. Notarial documents show the active operations of this foundation and its engagement in a variety of ways with the local community.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ NLM, AOM 931(43) No. 23, fol. 86r–87r, 1737.

⁸¹ NLM, AOM 931(43) No. 18, fol. 60r–62r, 31 August 1728.

⁸² NLM, AOM 931(43) No. 19, fol. 66r–67r, 10 February 175?.

⁸³ Freller, *German Langue*, 228–29.

⁸⁴ Inter alia, NAV, R126/41, notary Giuseppe Callus, fol. 228v–30v, 5 February 1737; R126/42, fol. 378v–80v, 16 April 1739.

These cases, by contrast with the previous examples, provide evidence that these Hospitallers had deep roots in Malta. The wish to be buried and remembered there showed the strength of their link to the island, its people and places, and the sea.

Conclusion

This study has been characterised by a circumscribed time frame, which made it possible to observe the movements of a range of characters, as well as by an expansive geographical framework. The latter sees the Mediterranean as being far wider than its littoral, since people and places across the Habsburg monarchy, the *Reich* and Malta were bound together in a variety of ways and with varying levels of intensity. The Habsburg Mediterranean is a category of analysis that represents an attempt to frame and make sense of a particular reality, including how the Hospitallers fitted in that reality. It is in fact possible to think of the Knights of Malta in a Habsburg Mediterranean framework because it helps to make sense of how Habsburg subjects (Hospitallers and others) tried to negotiate their way across the many border zones of the Mediterranean. The terms Habsburg and Hospitaller overlap conceptually, and their protagonists also overlapped territorially and economically via the commanderies, militarily via their shared anti-Muslim frontier identity, politically via the familial-dynastic links between them, and culturally via the ways in which they created and sustained links between their places of origin and Malta, not least via material culture.

In *The Habsburg Empire* (2016), Pieter M. Judson has produced a picture of “national, regional, and imperial identities in a constant state of mutual redefinition, informing each other in complex ways, with empire as one factor involved in characterizing the whole”.⁸⁵ This paper argues that a Hospitaller-Habsburg identity can be considered as one more identity within the wide range to be found in the Habsburg monarchy, as well as the *Reich*. Hospitallers belonged to an international organisation, but had firm roots in their Habsburg place of origin and a strong sense of loyalty to the dynasty. Equally the volume *Can we Talk Mediterranean?* (2017) highlights the complexity of studying the Mediterranean and problematizing it as a category of analysis in its own right.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Torrie, “Forum”, 246.

⁸⁶ Peregrine Horden, “The Maritime, the Ecological, the Cultural – and the Fig Leaf: Prospects for Medieval Mediterranean Studies”, in *Can We Talk Mediterranean? Conversations on an Emerging Field in Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, eds. Brian A. Catlos and Sharon Kinoshita (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 65.

The category 'Habsburg Mediterranean – Habsburg thalassocracy' can be seen as a further facet to this discussion, complicating and enriching the discussion about the Mediterranean.

Vienna represented the centre, while Malta was a peripheral place in the grand European picture. Nevertheless, the relations and movements of German Habsburg Hospitallers did, at least in some instances, cause a switch in the centre-periphery equation when the affairs of people and places in the Habsburg Monarchy and the *Reich* were determined from Malta. There was an ongoing circulation among Habsburg subjects and Hospitallers focused on an area ranging between Malta and Vienna, but also spilling over into adjacent areas. A German-speaking circle in Hospitaller Malta and Hospitallers dispersed across the Habsburg Monarchy and the *Reich*, constituted a vibrant link with the Habsburg court and with a wider politico-economic-cultural milieu. It may not always have been easy for everyone to negotiate their multiple identities within the Habsburg Mediterranean, but it was a space, both actual and imaginative, where personal and institutional relationships could be negotiated, cultivated and disputed.