Lepanto in the Americas: Global Storytelling and Mediterranean History

Stefan Hanss | ORCID: 0000-0002-7597-6599
The University of Manchester, Manchester, UK
stefan.hanss@manchester.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper reveals the voices, logics, and consequences of sixteenth-century American storytelling about the Battle of Lepanto; an approach that decenters our perspective on the history of that battle. Central and South American storytelling about Lepanto, I argue, should prompt a reconsideration of historians' Mediterranean-centered storytelling about Lepanto—the event—by studying the social dynamics of its event-making in light of early modern global connections. Studying the circulation of news, the symbolic power of festivities, indigenous responses to Lepanto, and the autobiographical storytelling of global protagonists participating at that battle, this paper reveals how storytelling about Lepanto burgeoned in the Spanish overseas territories.

Keywords

Battle of Lepanto – connected histories – production of history – global history – Mediterranean – Ottoman Empire – Spanish Empire – storytelling

Connecting Lepanto

On October 7, 1571, an allied Spanish, Papal, and Venetian fleet—supported by several smaller Catholic principalities and military entrepreneurs—achieved a major victory over the Ottoman navy in the Ionian Sea. Between four hundred and five hundred galleys and up to 140,000 people were involved in one of the largest naval battles in history, fighting each other on the west coast of Greece.1

1 Alessandro Barbero, Lepanto: la battaglia dei tre imperi, 3rd ed. (Rome, 2010), 623-634; Hugh Bicheno, Crescent and Cross: the Battle of Lepanto 1571 (London, 2003), 300-318; Peter Pierson,
Since then, historians remembered Lepanto as a Christian victory over Islam, a “victory of the West,” and a decisive event in European history. Confronting this kind of historians’ storytelling with the actual stories crafted by sixteenth-century contemporaries of that battle, this article charts the connected history of Lepanto in an age of ever greater global flows of people, things, and ideas. An abundance of early modern archival documents informs historians about the contemporary repercussions of this event. At the Mediterranean’s central western shores, in Naples, Barcelona, Valencia, and Seville for instance, news of the defeat of the Ottomans gave rise to enthusiasm that manifested in a series of festivities celebrating the victory all over the Iberian Peninsula. Such archival records built the sediment layers of the stories that historians used to tell about Lepanto.

One of these archives, the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, however, holds a thus far forgotten paper trail that links the sixteenth-century Mediterranean story of Lepanto with the broader world. Two months after the Battle of Lepanto, and just weeks after the arrival of the first confirmed news in Madrid, Philip II issued a letter on December 26, 1571, informing the Caribbean archbishop of Santo Domingo, Francisco Andrés de Carvajal, about the battle. The monarch sent twenty-six similar letters to the major clerical authorities in Central and South America. The archbishops of Mexico City, Lima, and Santafé de Bogotá received the news just as the bishops of San Juan (Puerto Rico), Cuba, Verapaz, Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama, Venezuela, Popoyán, Cartagena, Quito, Cusco, Tucumán, Río de la Plata, Santiago de Chile, and Concepción de Chile did. The same letters were dispatched to the Mexican bishops of Michoacán, Oaxaca de Juárez, Yucatán, and Nueva Galicia as well as to the diocesan chapters of Tlaxcala and Guatemala and the deans of Chiapas and Charcas.

All in all, the Spanish monarch strategically distributed the news of this Mediterranean battle across Central and South America, covering an area of...

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“Lepanto, Battle of,” in *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*, ed. Paul F. Grendler, vol. 3 (New York, 1999), 413; Gábor Ágoston, “Lepanto, Battle of,” in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, eds. idem and Bruce Masters (New York, 2009), 331-332.

2 E.g., Arrigo Petacco, *La croce e la mezzaluna: Lepanto 7 ottobre 1571. Quando la cristianità respinse l’islam* (Milan, 2005); Niccolò Capponi, *Victory of the West: The Story of the Battle of Lepanto* (London, 2006); T.C.F. Hopkins, *Confrontation at Lepanto: Christendom vs. Islam* (New York, 2006).

3 Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, eds., *The Construction of a Global World, 1400-1800 CE*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2015).

4 Hanß, *Lepanto als Ereignis*, 84-95.

5 On the arrival of the first confirmed news of the battle in Madrid, see ibid., 490-491.

6 Archivo General de Indias [AGI], Indiferente General, 427, L.30, 225r-226v, December 26, 1571.
what is today the Caribbean, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina, and Chile (Fig. 1). On the very same day, December 26, 1571, Philip issued another series of letters about Lepanto to the main Central and South American residences of the mendicant orders: the Franciscans and Dominicans in Hispaniola, New Spain, Guatemala, Nueva Granada, and Peru, as well as the Augustinian friars in Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru. The monarch’s secretaries also composed yet another set of letters that informed the most important Spanish colonial authorities in the Americas of the victory in Lepanto—including the viceroy's of Peru and New Spain, as well as colonial residencies, the so-called audiencias, in Hispaniola, Mexico City, Guadalajara, Guatemala, Panama, Nueva Granada, Quito, Lima, La Plata (de los Charcas), and Chile. The news was furthermore disseminated to the municipal councils in Havana, San Juan (Puerto Rico), Mexico City, Guadalajara, Puebla (Mexico), Guatemala, Trujillo (Honduras), Panama, Santafé de Bogotá, Quito, Lima, Cusco, La Plata (de los Charcas), and Concepción de Chile.

These letters have neither been studied nor mentioned by historians. Building on such surprising archival findings contradicting the established “mythical framework” of Lepanto as a “European event” or “Christian victory,” this article charts the thus far unknown story of sixteenth-century American resonances of and responses to the Battle of Lepanto. Historians of colonial theatre performances have observed the overlapping imperial geographies of Spanish crusading rhetoric and also art historians emphasized “a strong relationship between early colonial visual culture and the awareness of current political events unfolding across Europe and the Mediterranean.” Víctor Mínguez in particular has pointed towards the significance of Lepanto in devotional and visual cultures of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Americas; a time when Pius’s canonization had renewed an interest in Lepanto

7  Ibid., 227v-228r, December 26, 1571.
8  Ibid., 226r-226v, December 26, 1571.
9  Ibid., 228r-229r, December 26, 1571.
10 On this “mythical framework,” see Andrew C. Hess, “The Battle of Lepanto and its Place in Mediterranean History,” Past & Present 57 (1972): 73; Fernand Braudel, “Bilan d’une bataille,” in Il Mediterraneo nella seconda metà del ’500 alla luce di Lepanto, ed. Gino Benzoni (Florence, 1974), 109-123; Hanß, Lepanto als Ereignis, 17-42.
11 María B. Aracil Varón, El teatro evangelizador: sociedad, cultura e ideología en la Nueva España del siglo XVI (Rome, 1999), 496-501; María J. Feliciano, “Picturing the Ottoman Threat in Sixteenth-Century New Spain,” in The Turk and Islam in the Western Eye, 1450-1750: Visual Imagery Before Orientalism, ed. James G. Harper (Farnham, 2011), 244-265, 245 (quote).
Figure 1 Spanish royal news of Lepanto sent to Central and South America in December 1571
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and the rosary. A history of the sixteenth-century global storytelling about Lepanto unravelling American responses to the Battle of Lepanto in its direct aftermath, as presented in this article, however, still had to be written. Serge Gruzinski’s brief but fascinating discussion of an indigenous author living in colonial Mexico City and writing about the Battle of Lepanto stirred my curiosity to dive into the archives and examine the broader global fabric and flows of this event.

“Following clues that lead to unexpected places,” this article reveals the voices, logics, and consequences of sixteenth-century American storytelling about the Battle of Lepanto. This approach, I argue, decenters our understanding of the Battle of Lepanto, which “involves the stance and the subject matter of the historian.” “The decentering historian,” Natalie Zemon Davis states, “does not tell the story of the past only from the vantage point of a single part of the world or of powerful elites, but rather widens his or her scope, socially and geographically, and introduces plural voices into the account.” When doing so, historians uncover alternative stories of Lepanto: the sixteenth-century choir of Lepanto is composed out of multiple voices responding to, adapting, and experimenting with stories about Lepanto—municipal and religious authorities, indigenous protagonists and Spanish soldiers, to name only a few—whose own storytelling interwove the globe. Hidden in the depth of archives, such stories reveal how early modern mobile protagonists could enact the affective and imaginative power of Lepanto through creative storytelling in order to relate experience(s) across the early modern globe.

Telling the familiar story of Lepanto “a different way … is already,” to adapt Judith Butler’s wording, “to complicate the question of agency.” Sixteenth-century American voices and storytelling about Lepanto, I argue, should prompt a reconsideration of historians’ traditional Mediterranean-centered

12 Víctor Mínguez, “Lepanto en los virreinatos americanos,” in América: cultura visual y relaciones artísticas, eds. Rafael López Guzmán, Yolanda Guasch Marí, and Guadalupe Romero Sánchez (Granada, 2015), 175-182; Víctor Mínguez, Infierno y gloria en el mar: Los Habsburgo y el imaginario artístico de Lepanto (1430-1700) (Castelló de la Plana, 2018), 469-470, 476-487.
13 Serge Gruzinski, Les quatre parties du monde: histoire d’une mondialisation (Paris, 2006), 142-143.
14 Quote from John-Paul A. Ghobrial, “Moving Stories and What They Tell Us: Early Modern Mobility between Microhistory and Global History,” Past & Present 242, suppl. 14 (2019): 272.
15 Natalie Z. Davis, “Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World,” History & Theory 50 (2011): 190.
16 Judith Butler, Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence (London, 2004), 6.
storytelling about Lepanto—the event—by studying the social dynamics of its event-making in the light of early modern global connections. This article therefore contributes to the broadening debate between Mediterranean studies, microhistory, and global history; a debate that stresses the importance that global trajectories might have had on early modern Mediterranean biographies and their power to shape cross-regional ties of empires.17 For such trajectories, early modern storytelling about Japan, India, and Spain could also gain significance for the Mexican colonial experience.18 Accepting microhistory “as an indispensable tool” of global history, the present article explores globally connected microhistories of the Battle of Lepanto.19 It shares microhistorians’ deep commitment to archival studies, their interest in experimenting with narratives, and their critique of coarse-cut master narratives in order to challenge established narratives of Lepanto.20 Charting global microhistories of this event makes historians reconsider the connectedness of its early modern event-making. Despite Lepanto being remembered as a “clash of civilizations,” the social power of Lepanto was not to divide but to connect the early modern world.

The news on Lepanto circulating in the Spanish overseas territories serve as a starting point for an in-depth archival study of a wide range of thus far unknown documents from and about the Spanish dominions in Central and South America. This article will first discuss circulating news on the event. It will then reconstruct American festivities celebrating the Spanish victory at Lepanto in the 1570s. Surviving sources allow for further enquiries on how authorities used such celebrations to self-fashion for the monarch and his subjects. Drawing on anthropological and ethno-historical methods, I then

17  John-Paul A. Ghobrial, “The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory,” *Past & Present* 222 (2014): 51-93; idem, “Migration from Within and Without: In the Footsteps of Eastern Christians in the Early Modern World,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 27 (2017): 153-173; Noel Malcolm, *Agents of Empire: Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean World* (London, 2015); Stephanie Mawson, “Convicts or Conquistadores? Spanish Soldiers in the Seventeenth-Century Pacific,” *Past & Present* 232 (2016): 87-125.
18  Gruzinski, *Les quatre parties du monde*.
19  Carlo Ginzburg, “Microhistory and World History,” in *The Cambridge World History*, eds. Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanym, and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, vol. 6/2 (Cambridge, 2015), 446-473; Sanjay Subrahmanym, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (1997): 735-762.
20  Hans Medick, “Turning Global? Microhistory in Extension,” *Historische Anthropologie* 24 (2016): 241-252; John-Paul A. Ghobrial, “Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian,” *Past & Present* 242, suppl. 14 (2019): 1-22; Giovanni Levi, “Frail Frontiers?,” *Past & Present* 242, suppl. 14 (2019): 37-49; Filippo de Vivo, “Microhistories of Long-Distance Information: Space, Movement and Agency in the Early Modern News,” ibid.: 179-214.
outline local indigenous responses to such celebrations. Reconsidering Central American storytelling regarding the Ottoman defeat at Lepanto, I will finally discuss the mobility of Spanish soldiers who participated at Lepanto and, later on, spoke and wrote of their experiences during the battle in cities like Guatemala, Mexico City, Quito, or Manila.

News on Lepanto in Spanish America

In his letters, Philip tried to establish a very specific interpretation of Lepanto as a Spanish victory over the enemies of Catholic faith, a victory granted to the dynasty by God. In Philip’s words, Lepanto was of “huge importance for the pacification and reassurance of the whole of Christianity.”21 The royal letters sent to the Americas outline that Lepanto as an event hinted at God’s deeds, and that God himself had chosen the Spanish monarchy to enact his overall plan of salvation.

According to this interpretation, the Holy League’s victory over the Ottomans was not a mere Mediterranean event but a manifestation of its global relevance in the Spanish monarchy’s colonial enterprises. By distributing this interpretation to the outposts of the Spanish empire, the king staged his imperial authority as the power of a monarch chosen by God. Philip considered Lepanto a heavenly sign that alluded in manifold ways to God’s favor for the Spanish crown. It was Philip’s half-brother—Don John of Austria, commander of the Holy League—who had achieved such a glorious victory in the name of Catholicism. Only a few weeks after the arrival of the very first news on Lepanto in Madrid, God had furthermore gifted the monarch with the birth of an heir to the throne: Ferdinand.

For that reason, Philip informed the most important religious and imperial authorities in the colonies, and he wanted them to celebrate the news. The audiencias and municipal councils were asked to organize festivities of pure joy (demostraciones de alegria), we read in the royal letters, and clerics all over Spanish America had to organize services and processions. In special masses, priests were to praise the soldiers fallen during the Battle of Lepanto as Catholics who had been killed in “holy service” fighting for “the conservation and augmentation of our holy Catholic faith.”22 Following such rhetoric and Pope Pius V’s reinvigoration of the cult of the rosary after the battle, friars wished to revitalize devotional practices in the Americas as well. In Mexico

21 AGI, Indiferente General, 427, L.30, 225v, December 26, 1571.
22 Ibid., 225r-227r, December 26, 1571.
City, Franciscan friar Alonso de Molina translated rosary indulgences into Nahuatl in 1572. However, they never appeared in print.23

The Spanish monarch had intended these early festivities of Lepanto in the Americas to commemorate and stage Lepanto as a Christian victory. Above all, however, these festivities were intended to establish a celebratory vocabulary that lauded Philip as a Christian ruler whose family was distinguished by the deeds of God, in response to whom the dynasty now wished to install appropriate reactions that further promoted divine benevolence. Still in April 1572, Philip commanded the audiencias in Lima and Mexico City to release convicts such as those arrested for acts of blasphemy in response to Lepanto—the ruler’s act of Christian clemency to further promote God’s actions.24 The Consejo de Indias distributed more than five hundred reales to facilitate the organization of splendid festivities on occasion of “the joyful events of the birth of the prince ... and the victory over the Turk.”25

Celebrating Lepanto and the birth of Ferdinand in festivities all over Spanish America multiplied a symbolic iconography that was well established in the Spanish Mediterranean. Soon after the birth of Ferdinand on December 4, 1571, Philip organized a splendid baptism ceremony in Madrid that restaged the symbolic vocabulary of the processions celebrating Lepanto just a few weeks earlier.26 On both occasions, foreign diplomats residing in Madrid interpreted the festivities as a means to praise God for having chosen the Spanish dynasty as the victorious leader of Catholicism.27 A Titian

23 John Carter Brown Library [JCB], Codex Ind. 7; Louise M. Burkhart, “Death and the Colonial Nahuatl,” in Nahuatl Theatre, eds. Barry D. Sell and Louise M. Burkhart, vol. 1 (Norman, 2004), 50.
24 AGI, Indiferente General, 427, L.30, 230r-232r, April 1, 1572.
25 AGI, Indiferente General, 426, L.25, 144r-145r, 146r, 179r, Madrid, December 22 and 24, 1571, May 2, 1572.
26 Archivo de Villa, Madrid [AVM], Actas 19 [Microfilm 396/87], 29r-30r, 172r-189r; Archivio di Stato, Venice [ASVe], Senato, Dispacci, Dispacci degli ambasciatori e residenti, Spagna, filza 8, Nr. 62, 2r, Lunardo Donato to Alvise Mocenigo I, Madrid, November 2, 1571; Archivio di Stato di Genoa [ASGe], Archivio Segreto, 2413, fasc. 3, Marcantonio Sauli to the Governo in Genoa, Madrid, October 31/November 7, 1571; Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna [ÖNB], Cod. 8949, 286r, Rome, December 1, 1571; Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid [BNE], MS 783, 92r-93r, Juan Luis de Alçamora to John of Austria, Madrid, November 11, 1571; Georg Khevenhüller-Metsch, ed., Hans Khevenhüller an Kaiser Maximilian II. 1571-1574: die geheime Korrespondenz des Kaiserlichen Botschafters am Königlich Spanischen Hof, vol. 1/1, unpublished typescript in Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Vienna [ÖStA], Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv [HStA], Staatenabteilung, Spanien, Diplomatische Korrespondenz, 8, 20, 12r, Hans Khevenhüller to Maximilian II, Madrid, November 7, 1571.
27 Archivio di Stato, Florence [ASFi], Archivio Mediceo del Principato, 568, 251r-251v, Clemente Pietra to Cosimo I de’ Medici, Madrid, December 19, 1571.
painting, *Philip II offering the Infante don Ferdinand to Victory*, allegorizes the unity of Lepanto and the dynasty. With Lepanto in the background, Philip is portrayed offering his son at the altar of God. An angel holds a laurel wreath and a palm leaf with the promise: “You will do better” (Fig. 2).28 Services, processions, tournaments, bonfires, shootings, and masquerade balls all over the Iberian Peninsula and Spanish Europe—for instance, in Antwerp, Brindisi, Naples, and 's-Hertogenbosch—further lashed together the celebratory triad of Lepanto, Philip, and Ferdinand.29 Spanish subjects in Florence and Venice organized similar festivities, and those residing in Genoa praised Ferdinand as the future “defender of Christendom.”30 The news of the royal birth had intensified joy about Lepanto in France as well, as reported by the Savoyard ambassador.31 In Brussels, the Duke of Alba composed a letter informing the Lutheran Prince-Elector August of Saxony that Ferdinand, with the help of God, will follow in his father’s footsteps and safeguard Christianity, just as Philip did at

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28 Erwin Panofsky, *Problems in Titian Mostly Iconographic* (New York, 1969), 72-73; Stefan Hanß, *Die materielle Kultur der Seeschlacht von Lepanto (1571): Materialität, Medialität und die historische Produktion eines Ereignisses*, 2 vols. (Würzburg, 2017), vol. 2, 616-623.

29 Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona [AHCB], Deliberacions, i.B. II-81, ii°, December 13, 1571; AHCB, Bosses de deliberacions, i.C.XI/1-7, 11, 7°-7°; Lletres closes, i.B. VI-51, 9°-9°, to Philip II, Barcelona, December 15, 1571; Arxiu de la Catedral, Barcelona [ACB], Cartes enviades, vol. 4, canon to Philip II, Barcelona, December 1571; Archivo de la Santa Catedral Metropolitana, Seville [ACS], Secretaria, Actas Capitulares (Autos Capitulares), L-31, 52°-53°, 55°-55°, November 19, 1571, December 7, 1571; Pedro de Oviedo, *Relacion de las simptvosas y ricas fiestas, que la insigne ciudad de Sevilla hizo, por el felice nascimiento del principe nuestro señor. Y por el vencimiento de la batalla naval, contra el armada del Turco* (Seville, 1572); Godevaert van Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen van 1565 tot 1574 te Antwerpen en elders*, ed. Rob van Roosbroeck (Antwerp, 1929-1932), December 21, 1571, January 6, 1572; Archivio di Stato, Naples [ASN], Castelli del Regno, b. 3, fasc. 5, 8° and fasc. 6, 9°, Brindisi, September 30, 1572; Frans de Potter, ed., *Dagboek van Cornelis en Philip van Campene* (….) (Ghent, 1870), 376-377; ASVe, Senato, Dispacci, Dispacci degli ambasciatori e residenti, Napoli, filza 2, Nr. 128, 1° [375°], Alvise Bonrizzo to Alvise Mocenigo I, Naples, December 29, 1571; Archivo General de Simancas [AGS], Estado, Nápoles, Virreinato, leg. 1061, doc. 9, Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle to Philip II, Naples, February 7, 1572; Archivio Segreto Vaticano [ASVat], Segreteria di Stato, Napoli, 1, Alessandro Simonetta to Girolamo Rusticucci, Naples, December 18, 1571, 327°; Pasquale Villani, ed., *Nunziature di Napoli*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1961), 91; R.A. van Zuijlen Jr., *Inventaris der Archieven van de Stads Hertogenbosch* (…), vol. 5 (’s Hertogenbosch, 1863), 864-865.

30 AGS, Estado, Génova, leg. 1401, doc. 59, Sancho de Padilla to Philip II, Genoa, December 18, 1571, 1°; ASGe, Archivio Segreto, 2413, fasc. 3, Marcantonio Sauli al Governo in Genoa, Madrid, December 4, 1571, 1°; ASFi, Manoscritti, 128, 557°; ÖNB, Cod. 8949, 290°, 291°-291°, Venice, December 21 and 28, 1571.

31 Archivio di Stato di Torino [AST], Materie politiche per rapporto all’estero, Lettere Ministri, Francia, m. 3, Signore di S. Paolo to Emmanuel Philibert of Savoy, December 18, 1571.
Lepanto. In a polycentric and composite monarchy, staging Lepanto could become a tool to negotiate empire-level politics and competition.

32 Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden [SächHStA Dresden], 10024 Geheimer Rat (Geheimes Archiv), o63. Handschreiben, Loc. o8501/04, 104', Ferdinand Álvarez de Toledo to August of Saxony, Brussels, December 21, 1571.

33 My thanks to Pablo Hernández Sáu for emphasizing that point. Pedro Cardim et al., eds., Polycentric Monarchies: How did Early Modern Spain and Portugal Achieve and Maintain a Global Hegemony (Eastbourne, 2012); Tamar Herzog, Frontiers of Possession: Spain
The news of Ferdinand’s birth thus built on the established religious vocabulary of Lepanto, and it served the Spanish monarch to celebrate a dynasty chosen by God to successfully fight “infidels” wherever they appeared in the Mediterranean, in Central Europe, or in the Americas. Celebrating Lepanto in the Spanish colonies was thus more than symbolic. The festivities claimed, staged, legitimized, and asserted the monarchy’s power in contested imperial border zones by positioning the Spanish dynasty at the very center of God’s plan of salvation.\footnote{Geoffrey Parker, The World is Not Enough: the Imperial Vision of Philip II of Spain (Waco, 2001); Víctor Mínguez, “Iconografía de Lepanto: arte, propaganda y representación simbólica de una monarquía universal y católica”, Obradoiro de Historia Moderna 20 (2011): 251-280.}

**Celebrating Lepanto in Colonial Mexico**

The letters reveal how the monarch wished to have the Mediterranean event interpreted in the Americas. However, how was Lepanto perceived in the sixteenth-century Americas itself? Local authorities’ responses provide first answers. In April 1572, Martín Enríquez de Almansa, Viceroy of New Spain, informed the Spanish monarch about his joy (contentamiento y alegria) in response to the news of Lepanto. According to Enríquez de Almansa, plenty of processions and festivities took place in Mexico.\footnote{Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid [AHN], Colección Documentos de Indias, diversos colecciones, 25, N.12, Martín Enríquez de Almansa to Philip II., Mexico City, April 26, 1572, 1r; AGI, Audiencia de México, 19, N.74, Martín Enríquez de Almansa to Philip II, Mexico City, April 26, 1572.} It is important to note that the viceroy composed the letter a few weeks before the arrival of Philip II’s letter from December 26. After the receipt of the king’s letters in Mexico on May 28, 1572, the viceroy responded then again informing Madrid about the demostrações de alegria y contentamiento and the procesiones generales that were to be celebrated all over the viceroyalty.\footnote{AHN, Colección Documentos de Indias, diversos colecçíones, 25, N.16, Martín Enríquez de Almansa to Philip II, Mexico City, May 33, 1572, 1r.}

The actual news on Lepanto, thus, arrived earlier in Central America than the king’s official letters. As colonial authorities imagined the monarch’s preferred reactions to be splendid celebrations, the viceroy’s responses demonstrate that Lepanto allowed imperial authorities to self-fashion as the monarchy’s
obedient servants who shared joy and excitement about the Habsburg triumph.\textsuperscript{37} Exactly such self-fashioning of people like Enríquez de Almansa made Lepanto relevant to Central American contexts. Presumably the same viceroy commissioned a splendidly crafted feather-shield of ninety by eighty-six centimeters that depicts the Battle of Lepanto next to Charles V’s conquest of Tunis (1535), Ferdinand V’s conquest of Granada (1492), and Alfonso VIII’s victory at Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) (Fig. 3). The shield’s iconography and materiality translates Mediterranean aesthetics into American contexts: first, it combines arabesque motifs with depictions of jaguars and ocelots; second, the \textit{adarga} itself copies a type of shield of Moorish origin that was widely used for jousting performances and that is now crafted by applying conquered indigenous people’s intricate techniques of feather working. The shield depicts the enthroned Spanish monarch receiving the news of the victory by the Papal and Venetian commander whilst Philip's hands hold a scepter and conduct Don John of Austria’s action on the battlefield. This iconography silences the omnipresent controversies between the monarch and his illegitimate half-brother as well as between the Spanish crown and the League’s Papal and Venetian troops before and after the victory of Lepanto. Above all, however, the shield fashions Lepanto as a victory of Philip II and Ferdinand over “infidels,” both of them allegorically depicted as this age’s unique hope: two herons fighting a dragon-like snake. Using the empire’s material treasures such as exotic feathers to craft precious objects that translated Mediterranean iconography and Spanish ideology into Mesoamerican contexts allowed local authorities to self-fashion in reference to Lepanto. The feather-shield itself must have been considered both a tribute and devotional artifact as the \textit{adarga} allegorized Psalm 91, offering the Spanish monarch protection and power.\textsuperscript{38}

Asserting the monarchy’s power, celebrations were held all over the Spanish Americas. The most detailed information on American festivities celebrating Lepanto and local authorities’ correspondent self-fashioning is preserved for Guadalajara, a city of the province of Nueva Galicia in what is today Mexico. In August 1572, almost a year after the combat between the Ottoman and League’s fleet in the Gulf of Patras, the Spanish king’s letters finally arrived in Guadalajara and caused sheer excitement.\textsuperscript{39} Fulfilling the monarch’s orders, the \textit{audiencia

\textsuperscript{37}  Ibid. Cf. Alejandro Cañeque, The King’s Living Image: The Culture and Politics of Viceregal Power in Colonial Mexico (New York, 2004).

\textsuperscript{38}  Hanß, Lepanto als Ereignis, 367-379; Thomas B.F. Cummins, “Adarga D-88 or the wing of God,” in Images take Flight: Feather Art in Mexico and Europe, 1400-1700, eds. Alessandra Russo, Gerhard Wolf, and Diana Fane (Munich, 2015), 271-281.

\textsuperscript{39}  AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, 30, N.13, \textit{cabildo secular} of Guadalajara to Philip II, December 23, 1572.
organized an entire range of festivities that lasted several days and became “a finely orchestrated and multivalent expression of community.”40 An artificial castle of impressive dimensions was built on the city’s main square. In front of its colored façade and towers, local protagonists staged a skirmish between “Christians” ([christ]ianos) and “Turks” (turcos). Splendidly dressed Christian and Ottoman troops entered the square before the pseudo-Ottomans took up position in the fortification that was charged by the Christian troops. Outside and inside the castle complex, soldiers on horseback and on feet using spears,

40 Feliciano, “Picturing the Ottoman Threat,” 244.
pikes, swords, canons, and guns fought the entire day. At sunset, the spectacle ended with a humiliating procession in front of the nearby festival stage. Those pseudo-Ottomans, who had been taken captive during the skirmish, were presented to the highest members of the audiencia.\footnote{Ibid., 1r-3r.}

The second day was dedicated to the game of canes (\textit{juego de cañas}), “one of the most prominent urban spectacles in early modern Iberia.” In Spain, participants of such tournaments were “dressed as Moors” and “threw light spears at each other while riding horses in complex patterns to demonstrate their equestrian prowess.”\footnote{Javier Irigoyen-García, \textit{Moors Dressed as Moors: Clothing, Social Distinction, and Ethnicity in Early Modern Iberia} (Toronto, 2017), 8.} Often, the tournament staged a fight of \textit{moros} against \textit{cristianos} ending with the conversion of Muslims and further festivities like bullfights or balls. Such tournaments were prominently featured in Spanish Lepanto celebrations. Already in November 1571, Seville hosted a \textit{juego de cañas} of altogether sixty-four participants who were splendidly dressed in dyed silk.\footnote{Archivo Municipal de Sevilla [AMS], Sec. X. Actas Capitulares, H-1534, 337v, 338v, 339v, November 4, 1571; Oviedo, \textit{Relacion}, 47v-48v. Cf. Hilario Arenas, “Lepanto y el rosario,” \textit{ABC Sevilla} (November 19, 1971): 23; Max Harris, \textit{Aztecs, Moors, and Christians: Festivals of Reconquest in Mexico and Spain} (Austin, 2003), 54, 62, 206-215.} In January 1572, then, another one-day tournament was performed at the Plaza de San Francisco to celebrate Lepanto as well as Ferdinand Habsburg, Prince of Asturias.\footnote{Oviedo, \textit{Relacion}, 15v-8v.} Given the iconographic significance of such tournaments for Iberian Lepanto celebrations, it is no surprise to find similarly splendidly-dressed soldiers staging a \textit{juego de cañas} in Mexican Guadalajara in 1572. In Central America, Spanish \textit{conquistadores} had soon introduced the popular tournament for translating Mediterranean Christian-Muslim conflicts into the colonial settings of the New World. Already in 1496, in fact, the brother of Christopher Columbus, Bartolomeo, staged such tournaments between Caribbean indigenous people and Spaniards in Hispaniola; altogether four indigenous participants died on that occasion.\footnote{Paul A. Scolieri, \textit{Dancing the New World: Aztecs, Spaniards, and the Choreography of Conquest} (Austin, 2013), 29; Harris, \textit{Aztecs}, 151-152.} Following such traditions, the audiencia of Guadalajara built upon the Spanish monarchy’s ideology of the conflict between Muslims and Christians and translated such iconographic performances from their Mediterranean stage into Central American settings. The same translational efforts can be observed for the skirmishes staged at the first day of the celebrations in Guadalajara. The skirmish between \textit{moros} and \textit{cristianos} resembled similar performances that were popular in late
medieval and early modern Spain. Still today, the Spanish city of Villena stages an annual fight between *moros* and *cristianos* that ends with the conversion of “the Moors.”

The third day of Guadalajara’s Lepanto celebrations copied the performances of the first day yet translated them into a Mexican setting. Indigenous Americans (*yndios naturales*), dressed as Native Americans with bows, arrows, lances, and shields, assembled at the city’s main square and hid inside the castle complex that was then conquered by Spanish soldiers. The striking parallels with the skirmishes of the first day illustrate the extent to which people could equate the Spanish-Ottoman conflicts in the Mediterranean with the Spanish-indigenous rivalry in the Americas. When, in 1571, Beatriz Álvarez submitted a petition in Medellín, Colombia, an area that soon afterwards was likewise informed about Lepanto, she asked to start a new life in Mexico. Her father, a flag-bearer killed whilst fighting indigenous Peruvians, died in *batalla*, she wrote, “in service of his majesty in war against the tyrants.” Beatriz applied the very same semantics that Spanish soldiers participating at Lepanto used to make their case for financial support. As Catholic doctrine considered both Muslims and Native Americans as “infidels,” Spanish imperial settings could replace *turcos* with *indios* when celebrating an empire victorious over non-Christians. It is therefore highly likely that actual indigenous protagonists needed to dress up as pseudo-Ottomans for Guadalajara’s Lepanto combats performed at the first day of the celebrations, just as Spaniards fought against indigenous combatants during the third day of these festivities.

Exactly that equation allowed Mexican colonial authorities to self-fashion as the Spanish king’s obedient “vassals” whilst celebrating Lepanto. In the letter sent to Philip II, high members of the *audiencia* proudly noted that Spaniards even travelled from Mexico City to Guadalajara to attend the performance. The sons of Spanish *conquistadores*, children who still went to school, participated at the *juego de cañas* dressed in dyed silk and equipped with harquebuses, spears, swords, and shields. Celebrating Lepanto and Ferdinand, such

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46 Ibid., 31-63, 216-226.
47 AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, 30, N.13, *cabildo secular* of Guadalajara to Philip II, December 23, 1572, 1r-3r.
48 AGI, Indiferente General, 1222, Beatriz Álvarez, Medellín, March 28, 1571, 2r.
49 Carina L. Johnson, *Cultural Hierarchy in Sixteenth-Century Europe: the Ottomans and Mexicans* (Cambridge, 2011), 231-267. Also, Nancy E. van Deusen, *Global Indios: The Indigenous Struggle for Justice in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Durham, 2015) highlights the ambiguity and everyday transmutability of Spanish juridical concepts of indigeneity.
50 AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, 30, N.13, *cabildo secular* of Guadalajara to Philip II, December 23, 1572, 1r.
spectacles staged both the present victory over “infidels” as well as the future military strength of those fighting at the Habsburg Empire’s Mediterranean and American border zones. The highest members of the audiencia were particularly keen to describe Guadalajara’s Lepanto celebrations in a letter to the king as it allowed them to stage and define their colonial authority: the audiencia, for instance, considered the fact that surrounding indigenous villages had paid for festival stages, market stalls, and products as a proof of this domain’s harmony. Guadalajara’s elaborate festivities did not only celebrate Lepanto, but above all the city’s authorities who had sworn a solemn oath to defend the Spanish crown “against the infidels” in likewise sumptuous festivities on the occasion of the arrival of the royal seal four months later.51

Across the sixteenth-century Americas, festivities of the victory of the Holy League at Lepanto and the birth of Ferdinand shared a broader celebratory vocabulary. Also in Cuzco in May 1572, processions and liturgical festivities took place alongside elaborated performances of jousting competitions, bullfights, bonfires, illuminations, trick fountains, and music, as well as a galley battle and the assault of an artificially constructed castle involving indigenous protagonists at the city’s plaza mayor.52 Such stories of the global perception of Lepanto, however, always took place in very specific, local contexts that generated the broader meanings of such an event.

Local contexts, regional authorities’ agendas, and empire-level politics mattered when staging Lepanto in the sixteenth-century Americas. The audiencia of Guadalajara, for instance, wished to see its Lepanto celebrations interpreted as a symbol of this local authority’s power and just rule since this area was anything but pacified. Since Guadalajara was nominated the province’s administrative center in 1548, a number of indigenous Nahua, so-called Chichimeca, had successfully contested Spanish rule by enlarging their domain over all of Northern Mexico.53 Ever more raids also affected Guadalajara, and the city’s bishop accused the audiencia of having caused such developments in several

51 Ibid., 1r-2r; Margarita Gómez Gómez, El sello y registro de Indias: imagen y representación (Cologne, 2008), 291.
52 José López de Toro, “Lepanto en América: relación de las fiestas que se hicieron en la ciudad de Cuzco por la nueva de la batalla naval,” Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos 10 (1949): 93-102.
53 José A. Rivera Villanueva and Mónica Pérez Navarro, eds., Documentos de los tlaxcaltecas en la Nueva Vizcaya, siglos XVI-XVIII, vol. 6 (Tlaxcala, 2012); Philip W. Powell, Soldiers, Indians and Silver: the Northward Advance of New Spain, 1550-1600 (Berkeley, 1952), 73-101; Alberto Carrillo Cázares, El debate sobre la guerra chichimeca, 1539-1587: derecho y política en la Nueva España, vol. 1 (Zamora, 2000), 83; Oakah L. Jones Jr., Nueva Vizcaya: Heartland of the Spanish Frontier (Albuquerque, 1988), 17; John H. Parry, The Audiencia of New Galicia in the Sixteenth Century: a Study in Spanish Colonial Government (Cambridge, 1948).
letters sent to the king of Spain in 1568 and 1569. Members of the audiencia enslave peaceful Native Americans, the bishop wrote, yet they dare to fight the revolting indigenous groups. The bishop participated in a larger theological debate about whether the Spanish-Chichimecan conflict was a guerra injusta and thus challenged the deeds of the local authority.54 In that context of inner-provincial conflicts, the festivities of Lepanto allowed the audiencia to position itself by instantiating the king’s rhetoric: “Chichimeca” dressed in feathered costumes participated at the skirmish of the third day of the celebrations, and they got defeated by Spanish conquistadores and presented to the real audiencia when celebrating Lepanto.55 Around the very same time, Guadalajara launched an intensified military campaign against Chichimeca; a military enterprise that Franciscan friars praised as a war of the “Republic of Christians” against “barbarians” and “infidels.”56 Such rhetoric allowed the audiencia to reject the bishop’s accusations and to self-fashion instead as a successful authority when describing local Lepanto celebrations in a letter to the Spanish king. When the letter finally arrived in Madrid in March 1574, around two and a half years after Lepanto and a year after the Holy League had fallen apart, news about American celebrations of Lepanto had barely any significance any longer in Madrid. There is no need to respond, a marginalia note states.57

Indigenous Perspectives on Lepanto in Colonial Mexico

An ethno-historical approach, based on anthropologists’ studies of contemporary Mexican folk culture, helps to reconstruct possible indigenous perspectives on sixteenth-century American celebrations of the Battle of Lepanto. Every year in late August, the Mexican city of Zacatecas re-enacts Lepanto as a fight between “Christians” and “Moors” in so-called morismas de Bracho. The celebrations last several days, as anthropologist Max Harris writes, and begin with a procession in honor of the Virgin Mary and the decapitation of John the Baptist. The following day, more than 2,100 actors, amongst them 450 members of confraternities, dress up as bearded Spaniards and Ottomans and stage

54 Powell, Soldiers, 73-101; Carrillo Cázares, Debate, vol. 1, 83, 247-303; Susan M. Deeds, Defiance and Defence in Mexico’s Colonial North (Austin, 2003).
55 AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, 30, N.13, cabildo secular of Guadalajara to Philip II, December 23, 1572, r°.
56 Powell, Soldiers, 105-119; Carrillo Cázares, Debate, vol. 1, 253.
57 AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, 230, L.2, real cédula of Philip II to the city of Guadalajara, Madrid, March 18, 1574; AGI, Audiencia de México, 19, N.74, Martín Enríquez de Almansa to Philip II, Mexico City, April 26, 1572, 9°.
Lepanto in a gigantic battlefield in front of an artificial castle complex. Under the leadership of Don John of Austria and Philip II, the Christian troops charge the Ottoman castle. The following day, several embassies are performed that culminate in the execution of the Ottoman sultan below the only tree of the square. The next day, a Sunday, another five thousand soldiers—some of them wearing clothing decorated with Aztec symbols—parade and dance across the field before another battle is staged between Christians and Ottomans. On Sunday afternoon, the battle ends with a remarkable performance: the Christian troops assemble on a hill; forming a gigantic cross, the protagonists then charge the battlefield, set the castle on fire, take the Ottomans captive, and decapitate their leaders. Don John prominently displays a fake Ottoman head and performs a procession together with Philip II across the main square.58

Zacateca's extremely popular festivities illustrate both the continuity and discontinuity of Mexican celebrations of the Battle of Lepanto. Thus far, the first morismas have been dated to the early seventeenth century.59 However, the similarities of the festivities celebrated in Zacatecas today and in Guadalajara in 1572 are striking and it is noteworthy that Zacatecas belonged to the very same province as Guadalajara in the early modern period.60 The longevity of Lepanto celebrations results from their identificatory power. In 1996, participants had staged the battle during numerous rehearsals that took place each Sunday in the four months before the actual event.61 Over the centuries, the Lepanto celebrations of Zacatecas incorporated a variety of narratives and symbols that further strengthened the potential identificatory power of such festivities. Next to Don John and Philip, for instance, Charlemagne is fighting on the battlefield in Zacatecas aiming to win back relics that were stolen by the “Moors.” Some of the Ottomans, in fact, even wear French uniforms and thus remember the French attacks at Puebla in 1862. Today, the morismas stage the victory over both “traditional enemies of Spanish Catholicism (Moors) and Mexican nationalism (French).”62 These adaptations of the celebratory vocabulary of Lepanto also helped to explain the most obvious contradiction of the entire spectacle: it stages a naval battle without any sea. The situation still prompted a number of jokes amongst the participants in 1996, when an actor said that “we used to have a little water for the battle of Lepanto.”63

58 Harris, Aztecs, 3-17.
59 Ibid., p. 3; Arturo Warman, La danza de moros y cristianos (Mexico City, 1972).
60 Peter J. Bakewell, Silver Mining and Society in Colonial Mexico, Zacatecas 1546-1700 (Cambridge, 1971).
61 Harris, Aztecs, 5.
62 Ibid., 9.
63 Ibid., 3.
appears to be a contradiction today, however, did follow a Spanish colonial tradition. In 1524, 1528, and 1532, Spanish conquistadores installed similar festivities between moros and cristianos in Mexico City and Acla (Colombia). In 1539, the Ottoman siege of Rhodes and the imagined Christian conquest of Jerusalem got performed in front of artificially built castles in Mexico City, Oaxaca, and Tlaxcala. In Tordesillas, Spain, the Ottoman siege of Rhodes was re-enacted in a similar battle between Christians and “Moors” in 1550.64

Anthropologist Max Harris emphasizes the subversive dimension of the morismas de Bracho today that also incorporate once suppressed indigenous practices. The protagonists of the morismas mostly move counter-clockwise, replicating “the direction of the sun in Aztec cosmology”; a movement that was considered to strengthen those who performed similar Aztec processions. In consequence, Don John of Austria and Philip II present the head of the decapitated Ottoman in Zacatecas during a procession that resembles central Nahua elements.65 The decapitation of the Ottoman sultan during the morismas relies on a complex mélange of different layers of meanings. First, it alludes to the decapitation of Müezzinzade Ali Pasha, the commander of the Ottoman fleet, by Don John of Austria during the Battle of Lepanto. The story widely circulated in print and got prominently referred to during Lepanto celebrations, for instance, in Seville in 1572.66 Second, the decapitation scene in Zacatecas refers to the beheading of John the Baptist whose chapel is of central significance for the local setting. Third, the morismas also stage pre-Hispanic Aztec sacrifices of prisoners of war.67 As indigenous practices entered the celebratory grammar of the Lepanto celebrations in Zacatecas, Harris concludes that such references may become “potent symbols of resistance to present subjugation” expressed by those Mexicans “who now feel marginalized by the national government, by the rapid process of urbanization, and by market forces that seem to benefit only the wealthy.”68 Without a doubt, interpretations of Lepanto differed according to the diversity of local contexts and indigenous cultures. Harris’s observation, however, poses the question of whether it is possible that

64 Ibid., 121, 123-147; Johnson, Cultural Hierarchy, 259.
65 Harris, Aztecs, 5, 14. Also for other contexts, anthropologists stressed the performers’ awareness of the longevity and preservation of indigenous and colonial traditions: Bernardino Ramírez Bautista, “Danza de moros y cristianos en Huamantanga (Canta): tradición y teatro popular en la sierra de Lima,” Anthropologica 19 (2001): 195-210; Bernardino Ramírez Bautista, Moros y cristianos en Huamantanga—Canta: herencia colonial y tradición popular (Lima, 2000).
66 Oviedo, Relacion, 45v-46v.
67 Harris, Aztecs, 10-11.
68 Ibid., 16.
Lepanto celebrations performed in Guadalajara in 1572 could have also been interpreted as performances of colonial resistance?

An entry in an anonymous Nahua chronicle, which had been clearly intended for an indigenous readership, may help to answer that question (Fig. 4). Describing Lepanto celebrations performed in Mexico City on July 25, 1572, the Codex Aubin illustrates that the celebratory vocabulary of Lepanto was widely shared across sixteenth-century Mexico: a wooden castle complex was built in Mexico City, and Spanish soldiers, who first arrived in boats and then on horses and by feet, fought the Ottomans in front and on top of the castle. If we believe contemporary poetry from Mexico City, these “Ottomans” from Lepanto might have been insulted as “Moorish dogs” and “infidels” during such festivities. The chronicle entry then states that “they (the Ottomans) were conquered as they were in their own land,” and thus illustrates the degree to which Central American celebrations of Lepanto were able to evoke an imaginative presence of a geographically very distant event. The chronicler decided to illustrate the entry with an image displaying the castle complex. Most interestingly, the illustration resembles prominent Nahua visual traditions that unite front view and ground plan within one image. Similarly striking is the observation that neither Lepanto nor the birth of Ferdinand are mentioned in the Nahuatl text.

It is thus possible, if not plausible, that at least some indigenous spectators of festivities celebrating Lepanto in sixteenth-century Central America might have had different associations in mind than those intended by colonial authorities. Lepanto celebrations in Guadalajara and Mexico City for sure reminded indigenous spectators of pre-Hispanic rituals staging indigenous world views. Skirmishes between captives, slaves, and prisoners of war were common events of the Aztec ritual calendar (e.g. *Panquetzaliztli*). In Aztec belief, the battlefield and its representation in ritual celebrations was a sacred space that represented the social harmony of the cosmos.

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69 Fernán González de Eslava, *Coloquios espirituales y sacramentals y poesías sagradas* (Mexico, 1877), 153-161, here 157-158; Serge Gruzinski, *What Time Is It There?* (Cambridge, 2010), 138.

70 Codex Aubin, British Museum [BM], Am2006, Dr.3219, 58º; Fernando Horcasitas, *El teatro náhuatl: épocas novohispana y moderna* (Mexico, 1974), 511; Aracil Varón, *El teatro evangelizador*, 203-204; Harris, *Aztecs*, 149.

71 Patricia Lopes Don, “Carnivals, Triumphs, and Rain Gods in the New World: a Civic Festival in the City of México-Tenochtitlán in 1539,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 6 (1997): 17-40; Harris, *Aztecs*, 67-114; Inga Clendinnen, “The Cost of Courage in Aztec Society,” *Past & Present* 107 (1985): 44-89.

72 Ibid., 54, 65, 85; Harris, *Aztecs*, 85-93.

73 Clendinnen, “Cost of Courage,” 74.
FIGURE 4 Description and depiction of Lepanto celebrations in Mexico City (1572) © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM, AM2006, DRG.31219
such indigenous associations, the symbolic vocabulary of sixteenth-century Mexican Lepanto celebrations potentially subverted the colonial authorities’ claim to stage a Catholic victory and to praise a Catholic dynasty victorious over all kinds of “infidels.” On the contrary, attempts to translate the symbolic meanings of Lepanto, the Mediterranean event, into American contexts generated new interpretations that potentially challenged colonial authorities. This can also be observed in the late sixteenth-century chronicle of Domingo Francisco de San Antón Muñón Chimalpáhin Cuauhtlehuanitzin, an indigenous author who descended from the Aztec rulers of Tlailotlaca living in colonial Mexico City. Chimalpáhin inserts the Spanish word for Lepanto, la batalla naval, into the entry that is otherwise written in Nahuatl. The author made use of that denomination of Lepanto in order to inscribe into Spanish discourses—he clearly presents Lepanto as the victory of Philip II and Don John of Austria—and the author thereby also solved the problem of finding an adequate word for a naval battle in Nahuatl. Chimalpáhin faced similar problems when translating the Spanish discursive term for the defeated Ottoman sultan, the “Grand Turk,” into Nahuatl: the chosen Nahuatl term, huey Turco, in fact, referred to both the sultan’s alleged arrogance and his dignity as the same semantics were used for the honorable “Old” (huehuetque) that Chimalpáhin and fellow Nahua descended from.74 In this particular case from Mexico City, thus, the emergence of Spanish and indigenous traditions produced potentially contradictory interpretations of Lepanto. On the one hand the defeated Ottoman ruler was belittled, yet he was also esteemed on the other. As the semantic reference equated Ottomans and Aztecs, the description of Lepanto did not only praise Spaniards as victors over both Mediterranean and Mesoamerican enemies, but the text could also prompt sympathies for the defeated Ottomans amongst indigenous readers.

Such semantic snares illustrate the creative, productive, and subversive elements of translating Lepanto—the event, its idea and ideology, as well as its celebrations, emotions, and descriptions—from Mediterranean into American contexts. Lepanto celebrations in sixteenth-century Central America, in that sense, staged the Mediterranean battle as a unique victory, a moment of historical discontinuity that referred to a crucial moment in God’s world-spanning plan of salvation, yet the celebrations could also be interpreted as a repetitive ritual continuity that perpetuated indigenous practices and beliefs. It is thus

74 Domingo Chimalpáhin, Los ocho relaciones y el memorial de Colhuacan, ed. Rafael Tena (Mexico City, 2003), 10, 240-241; Gruzinski, Quatre parties, 142-143; Rodrigo Martínez Baracs, “El diario de Chimalpáhin,” Estudios de cultura náhuatl 38 (2007): 289; Frances E. Karttunen, An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl (Austin, 1983), 84-86.
not surprising that indigenous protagonists used such celebrations to mock colonial authorities. In 1586, for instance, indigenous Purépecha performed a ritual battle scene in front of Franciscan friars and indigenous spectators. The indigenous spectators started to roar with laughter when they realized that the indigenous actors mimicked and satirized Spaniards who used to dress up as Chichimeca during similar celebrations. Central American interpretations of Lepanto, thus, were not as clear as the Spanish monarch and his colonial authorities wished them to be. When the news of Lepanto travelled across the globe, local meanings, practices, and counter-interpretations merged, forging a connected as much as disconnected world.

Sixteenth-Century Global Storytelling about a Mediterranean Battle

Seven years after the Battle of Lepanto had taken place, in 1578, Hernando de Bazán, a Spaniard noble family’s son born and raised in Mexico (vezino y natural de Mexco, thus, a criollo) submitted a petition to the Spanish king in Madrid. According to this document composed in Madrid, de Bazán was expelled from Mexico more than a decade ago. He now wished to receive a royal license allowing him to return and to purchase estates in Central America. The king got suspicious and asked for a summary of the Mexican case record of almost six hundred folios: de Bazán had been found guilty of having supported a rebellion against Marqués del Valle against whom de Bazán had also testified at court. Though he denied such accusations, de Bazán had to pay five hundred ducats and he got expelled from the Americas for ten years. During his exile, de Bazán emphasized, he had faithfully served his majesty on various “occasions.” Only one single occasion, however, was worth being explicitly mentioned in the petition: “the naval battle” fought “against the Turkish armada” in 1571. By emphasizing his virtuous deeds during the batalla naval, de Bazán translated the circulating heroic stories about the battle into a biographical narrative that made Lepanto symbolize his previously challenged yet now undeniably proven personal loyalty to the crown. De Bazán’s petition did
not fail: Philip II issued a license allowing the Mexican *criollo* to return to New Spain together with three servants and one page.⁷⁹

How shall we treat this source of a Mexican *criollo* combatant who partook at the Battle of Lepanto? How can historians approach the presumably blurring boundaries between event and memory, history and personal interests? I would like to center my analysis on the fictional character of such documents, following Natalie Zemon Davis’s approach when being confronted with similar questions whilst studying sixteenth-century French petitions. “By ‘fictional’ I do not mean their feigned elements, but rather, using the other and broader sense of the root word *fingere*, their forming, shaping, and molding elements: the crafting of a narrative.”⁸⁰ In exactly that sense, Hernando de Bazán’s Mexican-Mediterranean storytelling about Lepanto crafted the social relevance and global significance that the Battle of Lepanto could achieve. He carefully crafted autobiographical narratives about Lepanto in order to shape his biographical future on the other side of the globe.⁸¹

Only six years after he had composed his petition in Madrid, Hernando de Bazán enacted Lepanto yet another time as a reference and resource for his autobiographical storytelling. This time, in Mexico City: In 1584, de Bazán issued another petition stating that his father, Pedro, had been amongst the earliest *conquistadores* who had conquered Michoacán, Colima, Zacatula, and Pánuco. This time, Hernando is not mentioning the exile, yet he explicitly refers to his participation at the Battle of Lepanto. De Bazán explains that he fought the Ottomans together with his father on the Spanish galley of Marqués de Santa Cruz, Álvaro de Bazán—presumably a relative. De Bazán presented Lepanto certificates issued by the marqués as well as by Don John of Austria to the scribe in Mexico City. On the other side of the globe thirteen years after the Battle of Lepanto, such documents were held in high esteem especially as both commanders acknowledged de Bazán’s “valour and courage.” Later on, de Bazán continued to fight the Ottomans in the Mediterranean and the British privateer Francis Drake on the coast of Acapulco, the city that

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⁷⁹ AGI, Indiferente General, 739, N.56, Madrid, March 11, 1578; AGI, Indiferente General, 1969, L.22, 130⁴, 137⁴, May 20 and 23, 1578.

⁸⁰ Natalie Z. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 1987), 3.

⁸¹ On storytelling in Spain, see James S. Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus: Artisan Autobiography in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford, 1998); James S. Amelang, “Tracing Lives: The Spanish Inquisition and the Act of Autobiography,” in *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self: Developments in Autobiographical Writing Since the Sixteenth Century*, eds. Arianne Baggerman, Rudolf Dekker, and Michael Mascuch (Leiden, 2011), 33-48; Miguel Martínez, *Front Lines: Soldiers’ Writing in the Early Modern Hispanic World* (Philadelphia, 2016).
appointed de Bazán a mayor. Now, de Bazán asked the king to become the next governor of Nueva Vizcaya.82

Responding to that petition, the Real Audiencia of Mexico City questioned altogether eleven witnesses about de Bazán's life for almost four weeks in March 1584. De Bazán had carefully assembled a number of supporters, amongst them also a local procurator, who all confirmed the petitioner's narrative and elaborated on the significance of the Battle of Lepanto for de Bazán's life and character.83 In Mexico City, the witnesses stated that Lepanto had proven that de Bazán is a “good knight” and a hombre prinçipal y de la calidad who had served “His Majesty very well.” Thirteen years after the Mediterranean battle had taken place, a scribe from the very administrative heart of the colonial authority of New Spain recorded that Lepanto illustrates the honor of de Bazán's person, household, and family.84 The files were sent to Madrid where Central American storytelling about Lepanto unfolded its consequences for a person's biographical trajectory in the Americas: Philip II nominated de Bazán governor of Nueva Vizcaya.85

Lepanto served as a reference for royal loyalty, military bravery, and success against “infidels,” as well as familial honor, and it did not fail to have its desired effects due to the very special conditions in Nueva Vizcaya. Soon after the first Spanish conquests in 1531, its considerable silver deposits made the area a prime focus of colonial desires. Despite the fact that Nueva Vizcaya soon became “one of the leading silver producers in all of New Spain,” the young province faced serious problems.86 Founded in the 1560s, Nueva Vizcaya constituted what researchers called the “heartland of the Spanish frontier” with the Chichimeca.87 The diocese of Nueva Vizcaya, in fact, was associated with the bishopric of Guadalajara where both Lepanto and Chichimeca featured prominently in the celebrations of 1572.88 Still in 1575, the province's capital, Durango, counted only three hundred inhabitants, amongst them not more than twenty-five to thirty citizens. Altogether five hundred to six hundred Spanish subjects lived in the entire province that was under the control of a...
single *conquistadores* family, the Ibarra. When being appointed the next governor in 1584, thus, the crown wished de Bazán to implement the administrative, mercantile, political, and religious structures of Spain's imperial power. Hence, it is not surprising that de Bazán informed Philip II in March 1585 that he was eager to enforce the monarchy’s interests as a newly appointed governor. Still in the seventeenth century, Jesuits praised de Bazán’s combat against the native indigenous. His fight against the “enemies of Christ’s name” had “brought great honor to the Spanish nation.” Lepanto embodied such rhetoric of imperial power, military success, and Christian virtue, which turned storytelling about Lepanto into a crucial tool to achieve de Bazán’s ambitions.

The story of de Bazán is not a mere exception. On the contrary, it is exemplary for how sixteenth-century protagonists made Lepanto relevant for contested imperial geographies in the Spanish overseas territories. The Augustinian monk Antonio Flores, for instance, fought the Ottomans at Lepanto and then founded a convent in the Spanish Philippines. Diego de Guevara, a fellow friar in Malacca, travelled to Spain after having heard the news of Lepanto. This journey lasted two years. I am not aware of any documents that refer to Lepanto festivities in the Philippines in the 1570s, however, it is highly likely that the Franciscan and Dominican *provinciales* of New Spain also ordered such celebrations to take place in their South East Asian dominions. In fact, a number of festivities are known to have celebrated the birth of Habsburg heirs and Spanish victories over *bárbaros* and the Dutch and the English alike in the seventeenth-century Philippines. Already in the 1580s, however, the Battle

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89 Jones, *Nueva Vizcaya*, 27-28, 61-63.
90 Deeds, *Defiance*, 12-55; Jones, *Nueva Vizcaya*, 62-63, 237; Porras Muñoz, *Iglesia*, 96.
91 AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, 28, R.12, N.61, Hernando de Bazán to Philip II., San Andrés, March 12, 1585, 1v.
92 Andrés Pérez de Ribas, *History of the Triumphs of our Holy Faith amongst the most Barbarous and Fierce Peoples of the New World*, ed. by Daniel T. Reff (Tucson, 1999), 109.
93 Vicente Barrantes y Moreno, *Apuntes interesantes sobre las Islas Filipinas que pueden ser útiles para hacer las reformas convenientes y productivas para el país y para nación* (Madrid, 1869), 111; José Castro Seoane, "Aviamiento y catálogo de las misiones que en el siglo XVI pasaron de España a Indias y Filipinas según los libros de Contratación," *Missionalia Hispanica* 13 (1956): 83-140.
94 AGI, Indiferente General, 427, L.30, 227v-228r, December 26, 1571.
95 AGI, Filipinas, 77, N.21, *cabildo eclesiástico* of Manila, June 28, 1606; AGI, Filipinas, 84, N.145, Franciscan friar Juan de Garrovillas, June 28, 1606; AGI, Filipinas, 76, N.57, Diego de Soria, bishop of Nueva Segovia, June 30, 1606; AGI, Filipinas, 79, N.59, Augustinian friars Lorenzo de León, Juan Bautista de Montoya, Esteban Carrillo, Pedro de Aguirre, and Roque de Barrionueva, Manila, July 5, 1606; AGI, Filipinas, 19, R.7, N.104, *Real Audiencia* of Manila, July 8, 1606; AGI, Filipinas, 76, N.15, Pedro Arce, bishop of Cebú, July 20, 1631; AGI, Filipinas, 8, R.1, N.19, Juan Niño de Távora, governor of the Philippines, July 11, 1632;
of Lepanto must have been well-known in Spanish administrative circles in the empire's Asian territories. In 1585, the same year that Hernando de Bazán wrote as newly appointed governor of Nueva Vizcaya to Madrid, Melchor Dávalos wrote about Lepanto in Manila. The oidor licenciado of the audiencia tried to convince the king to expel all Muslims from the Philippines. By then, Dávalos states, Arabic, Egyptian, and Ottoman Muslims would be engaged in proselytizing locals. Amongst the Ottomans active in Sumatra, Brunei, and Ternate, Dávalos continues, are even those defeated by Don John of Austria at Lepanto. Especially after the Ottoman sultans had sent troops to support South East Asian Muslim territories, the Mediterranean battle could be made relevant to the local realities of the Spanish Empire's overseas territories as the monarchy's imperial enterprises had established a rhetoric of Spain fighting over local "infidels." In July 1579, one year before the Battle of Lepanto, Philip II received information on victories over moros living in Manila and friar Juan de Alva had fashioned the Spaniards' arrival at the island of Panay as a Christian monarch's act of conquest: the monk had immediately informed Philipp, the "newly arrived 'Conqueror' of Christ." In such an atmosphere, stories about Lepanto started to circulate as they could be used on a global scale for storytelling with personal purposes. Also, the Malay-Portuguese author Manuel Godinho de Erédia (1563-1623) used established Lepanto narratives to describe the naval battle fought between the sultan of Aceh and the Portuguese for Malacca in the 1580s. This South East Asian Lepanto-centered storytelling helped the author to classify the sultan of this territory in Sumatra as being "Turkish" and it also allowed the author to praise the Portuguese commander as a miles christianus. Above all, the geographically translated narrative...
embodied the author’s *mestiço* identity.\(^9^9\) As a consequence of such widely circulating narratives, Lepanto could be still made relevant for South East Asian imperial realities in the middle of the nineteenth century, when Spaniards named a Philippine military district after the Mediterranean battle.\(^1^0^0\)

The connecting element of the above-outlined imperial geographies was the mobility of people that made stories about Lepanto circulate across the sixteenth-century globe. One of the many witnesses questioned about Hernando de Bazán in Mexico City in March 1584 was Juan Pérez de Herrera, who said he participated at Lepanto himself.\(^1^0^1\) After this battle, in fact, quite a number of soldiers had left the Mediterranean for the Spanish overseas territories. Amongst them also was Antonio Mirón, a scribe in Guatemala City, who declared he had been fighting the *moriscos* during the rebellion of the Alpujarras, the Ottomans at Lepanto, and the English troops of Francis Drake in Central America. Lepanto, again, features prominently into Mirón’s autobiographical storytelling in Central America. The “famous victory” over the “Grand Turk” had proven him to be a “good soldier.” During the *batalla nabal* [sic], Mirón explains, he entered an Ottoman galley and fought with the support of God and four Spanish soldiers against two hundred Ottomans, amongst them many janissaries.\(^1^0^2\) As quixotic this story may sound, various testimonies confirmed Mirón’s story in the *audiencia* of Guatemala in 1584. Put differently, their statements reveal the success of Mirón’s global storytelling. In fact, the scribe had proudly shown a sealed certificate to a number of people during the previous years in Guatemala City, in which Don John of Austria attested that Mirón fought with bravery at Lepanto. Two witnesses remembered having seen the certificate of the Neapolitan-Spanish commander Pedro de Padilla, and another Central American deponent even called the document a *cosa p[ublica]*.\(^1^0^3\) Furthermore, the soldier and scribe had shown three scars to people in Guatemala in order to talk about his heroic deeds at Lepanto. One person stated in 1584 that he knew Mirón’s wounds very well: one scar on his right arm and another two scars on his legs resulted from Ottoman arrows that injured Mirón during the Battle of Lepanto.\(^1^0^4\) In the very same year in Mexico

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99 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), 103-153, 253.

100 Boxer, “Portuguese and Spanish Projects”; Eduardo Masferré, *A Tribute to the Philippine Cordillera* (Makati City, 1999), 10.

101 AGI, Patronato Real, 78B, N.3, R.13, 2r, 3r.

102 AGI, Patronato Real, 78B, N.2, R.13, 1r. Before becoming a scribe in Guatemala, Mirón had served Don John of Austria as a scribe.

103 Ibid., 2r-2v.

104 Ibid., 1r, 2v, 3r-3v, 6r.
City, Hernando de Bazán had likewise shown his Lepanto certificates to people like Alonso de Sonates and Luis de Castillas.105 As de Bazán and Mirón had fought at Lepanto and against Francis Drake in Acapulco and as both soldiers drafted their petitions in similar ways and at the same time, we are left wondering to what extent these two authors had exchanged ideas about how to narrate a Mediterranean event in Central America.

Both petitions highlight sixteenth-century protagonists’ impressive proficiency in global storytelling about Lepanto as discursive elements could have been used to unfold auto-biographical stories that made Lepanto relevant in Central and South American contexts. Whilst sixteenth-century American petitioners only briefly referred to other battles, Lepanto became a crucial reference that was outlined in detail as stories about that particular Mediterranean battle helped to frame global auto-biographies. In Quito, Ecuador, in 1582, Francisco Paniagua wrote a similar petition stating that he had fought at Lepanto before combatting indigenous Omagua in the Peruvian Amazonas. After witnesses had been interviewed, the audiencia’s scribe stated that Lepanto had shown that Paniagua was a brave “soldier” and a “good Christian man.”106 Capitán Francisco Arias de Herrera did not only fight the Ottomans at the Battle of Lepanto, but he also fought in Peru, Mexico, and the Philippines, from where he travelled to China several times.107 The Lepanto combatant Diego de Aranda Pineda journeyed the Mediterranean Sea and the Pacific Ocean.108 Alonso García Romero had been fighting in Flanders, Italy, Tunis, and Lepanto before leading a Spanish mercenary troop in the Río de la Plata region in what is today Argentina and Uruguay.109 When the dissolution of the Holy League abruptly ended the war in the Mediterranean in 1573, many soldiers travelled the Spanish world as “both agents and subjects of empire” that were willing to use the victory of Lepanto, by then a rather legendary reference of crusade-like character, as a resource to shape their own biographies.110

We can hardly overestimate the social and financial profits that could be made by engaging in global storytelling about Lepanto as the case of Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga (1533-1594), a Spanish aristocrat and esquire of Philip II who left Spain for Chile in 1555, vividly illustrates. After his return to Madrid in 1563,
de Ercilla fictionalized his experience of fighting as a Spanish soldier against indigenous Reche-Mapuche in Chile by composing *La Araucana*, an epic poem published in three parts in 1569, 1578, and 1589. The huge popularity of the volumes that openly praised the indigenous for their bravery granted de Ercilla a considerable income and the membership of the Order of Santiago.\(^{111}\) Published seven years after Lepanto, an entire *canto* of the text is dedicated to that battle. De Ercilla follows the widespread narrative of the “Mahommedan fury” that got defeated by the “valour of the Christian sword.” De Ercilla’s *Araucana* grants Lepanto a global significance as the fate of the entire world’s Christianity was at stake when the Ottoman commander, in de Ercilla’s text, wished to defeat Christianity “from the Ganges to Chile and from the North to the South Pole.” De Ercilla praises the Spanish soldiers, above all, the deeds of “the good Marqués de Santa Cruz,” the same nobleman who had testified to the bravery of the Mexican soldier Hernando de Bazán. One year before Lepanto, de Ercilla had married María, a noblewoman who belonged to the very same family as the marqués. Just like de Bazán, de Ercilla made Lepanto relevant to a South American story in order to convince readers of the honor of his family.\(^{112}\) In literature, however, de Ercilla went even further: he made Lepanto constitute a mutual dependency between Spanish America and the Mediterranean when stating that the magician Fitón predicted the Battle of Lepanto in a Chilean cave: “an extraordinary naval battle” will be fought, the Chilean sorcerer deduced from a crystal ball, “in which the supreme valor of your Spain will be seen well manifested.”\(^{113}\) This element not only parallels Mediterranean and American events, but it establishes a causality based on *Hispania triumphans* as the common ground of this geographical comparison. Lepanto serves de Ercilla as the *explanans* that narrates the shifting power constellation in Chile when Spaniards all of a sudden defeated brave Mapuche warriors—at least in de Ercilla’s text. Here, Lepanto explains and legitimizes the Spanish conquest of the Americas and it allows the author to self-fashion as the true “Spanish imperial poet or new Virgil.”\(^{114}\)

111 Werner Huber, “Ercilla y Zúñiga, Alonso de,” in *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon*, ed. Walter Jens, vol. 5 (Munich, 1989), 248-249; Alonso de Ercilla, *La Araucana*, ed. Concha de Salamanca, 6th ed. (Madrid, 1968), 15-36; William Mejías Lópe, *Las ideas de la guerra justa en Ercilla y en La Araucana* (Santiago de Chile, 1992), 73-108.

112 Huber, “Ercilla y Zúñiga,” 248; Ercilla y Zúñiga, *Araucana*, 583-612, here 593, 601, 608; Frank Pierce, *Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga* (Amsterdam, 1984), 3. 9. 24.

113 Ercilla y Zúñiga, *Araucana*, 557-582, 610-612, here 580; James Nicolopulos, *The Poetics of Empire in the Indies: Prophecy and Imitation in La Araucana and Os Lusíadas* (University Park, PA, 2000), 14-15.

114 Elizabeth B. Davis, *Myth and Identity in the Epic of Imperial Spain* (Columbia, MO, 2000), 76-77; Nicolopulos, *Poetics*, 175-269. In reality, of course, Spanish dominance had never
The storytelling of de Ercilla, the author and soldier, was deeply embedded in the global auto-biographical narratives that soldiers experimented with in order to make Lepanto embody honor and maneuver personal promotion. Soldiers fighting at Lepanto and those living at the time of the battle, as Miguel Martinez put it more generally, “reinvented classical genres such as the epic, produced new regimes of truth for historical writing, experimented with innovative poetic idioms and objects for the lyric, and created new autobiographical subjectivities.”

Some of them—like Cervantes, Corte Real, de Ercilla, or Rufo—produced famous “gunpowder epics” that made Lepanto a central reference for heroism and chivalry. Others told stories in taverns or petitions imitating, adapting, appropriating, reinforcing, and experimenting with the narratives of gunpowder epics. Their focus on the bravery of officers and soldiers was echoed in colonial theatre performances, for example, in a brave Spanish soldier’s storytelling about Lepanto staged in a Mexican celebratory poetry composed by the Augustinian friar Fernán González de Eslava. In sixteenth-century theatre performances commemorating Lepanto in Mexico City, “a soldier from the House of Fame” entered the stage in order to praise “the triumphs and trophies” of Castile:

With a thousand hands I wrote
And with a thousand tongues I narrated
What was not a tall tale.
Below a baldachin of glory
Placed the Excellent Prince
Don John of Austria and his victory
Eternally consecrated
To the temple of memory.
(...)
I myself have been a Captain
In the dangerous deed

been fully established in Chilean borderlands: Beatriz Marín-Aguilera, Leonor Adán Alfaro, and Simón Urbina Araya, “Challenging Colonial Discourses: The Spanish Imperial Borderland in Chile from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century,” in Transnational Perspectives on the Conquest and Colonization of Latin America, eds. Jenny Mander, David Midgley, and Christine Beaule (New York, 2019), 85-97.

115 Martinez, Front Lines, 2.
116 Martinez, Front Lines, 7.
117 Michael Murrin, History and Warfare in Renaissance Epic (Chicago, 1994), 179-196; Elizabeth B. Davis, Myth and Identity in the Epic of Imperial Spain (Columbia, 2000), 61-97.
In which illustrious Don John
Of Austria, the famous Prince,
Won over those of the Qur'an.\footnote{González de Eslava, \textit{Coloquios}, 157-158. Warm thanks to Beatriz Marín-Aguilera for her help with translating this poem.}

And then, the Spanish soldier on stage told his story about Lepanto in Mexico City, and so did Spanish soldiers listening to similar performances by actors and Lepanto participants alike. “I myself have been captain”—or soldier—at Lepanto, Hernando de Bazán, Juan Pérez de Herrera, Antonio Flores, Antonio Mirón, Francisco Paniagua, Francisco Arias de Herrera, and Alonso García Romero insisted in Mexico, the Philippines, in Guatemala, in Ecuador, Peru, and Argentina. By making such claims in their own storytelling, mobile soldiers wrote themselves into “the Temple of Memory.” No matter whether in poems or in petitions, presenting life stories with a focus on the \textit{momentum} of Lepanto allowed people all over the sixteenth-century globe to mold their day-to-day business and itineraries.\footnote{Ghobrial, “Migration,” 158, 166.} These soldiers’ experiments with narratives about Lepanto aimed at making their own experience significant and relate their own life to the world of the reader. By doing so, these authors established Lepanto itself as an event of significance. The Spanish Empire, thus, constituted a world-spanning space that rendered global biographies possible which made Lepanto relevant on a world-wide scale.\footnote{Sanjay Subrahmanyam, \textit{Empires Between Islam and Christianity, 1500-1800} (Albany, 2019), 113-148.} However, it needs to be emphasized that historians can trace similarly connected histories of global storytelling about Lepanto without any connection to the Spanish Empire in places as far-flung as Ethiopia, Japan, Persia, and Russia.\footnote{Hanß, \textit{Lepanto als Ereignis}.}

Stories of Lepanto traversed the sixteenth-century globe as they travelled alongside mobile protagonists.

\textbf{Historians’ Storytelling about Lepanto}

By reconstructing early modern global stories about Lepanto, this article charts unfamiliar territory in Mediterranean Studies. It reveals how storytelling about Lepanto burgeoned in the Spanish overseas territories. The empire’s connected spaces engendered the flows of news, people, and things related to the Battle of Lepanto. Together with the symbolic universe staged during
celebrations of Lepanto, these flows shaped the sixteenth-century global fabrics of this event. By doing so, however, Lepanto also enacted, sedimented, and reinforced imperial geographies. Crafting and translating narratives about this Mediterranean battle in such contested terrain was an ambiguous enterprise: it could help people framing their global auto-biographies and shaping their own lives in an age of global connections; yet it also potentially subverted imperial claims. When the news of Lepanto travelled across the globe, local practices and contexts renegotiated their meanings. As such, this article exemplifies “how exactly connections worked or failed to work in local contexts, and how, in some instances, they paved the way for disconnection and colonial endeavour.”

Connecting Lepanto across a polycentric empire constituted a relational space whose relations were constantly in question.

Given early modern global trajectories, the mobility and diversity of protagonists granted Lepanto relevance across the entire globe; a relevance that was enacted and negotiated in texts, celebrations, and stories in very specific social and local contexts. Crafting global narratives about Lepanto meant negotiating the social relevance of Lepanto in local contexts across the globe. These narratological enterprises prospered as global protagonists successfully experimented with drafting convincing stories about Lepanto.

A storyteller’s gift, according to Walter Benjamin, is “his ability to relate his life.” Mediterranean and non-Mediterranean protagonists’ storytelling about Lepanto gained such global resonances in the sixteenth century since they succeeded in “a quintessentially social activity.” Their storytelling created “a sense of immediacy” that related experiences and lives, and that made Lepanto unfold its power not to divide but rather to connect the early modern world. These early modern stories about Lepanto “reveal complexities of human experience that challenge the categories with which we are accustomed to thinking about the world.”

This observation, however, has serious consequences for what Marc Bloch called “the historian’s craft.” In which kind of storytelling do historians want to engage when writing about Lepanto? How can we capture the polyphony of

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122 Zoltán Biedermann, (Dis)Connected Empires: Imperial Portugal, Sri Lankan Diplomacy, and the Making of a Habsburg Conquest in Asia (Oxford, 2018), 1.
123 Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, intro. Hannah Arendt (London, 2015), 107.
124 Joan W. Scott, “Storytelling,” History & Theory 50 (2011): 203-209, here 205; Adriana Cavarero, Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood (London, 2003).
125 Scott, “Storytelling,” 207.
126 Marc Bloch, The Historian’s Craft (Manchester, 1992).
sixteenth-century voices who engaged in telling stories about Lepanto? In Benjamin's words, how do we wish to relate stories about Lepanto to life? Put differently, we need to reflect on the stories that we (do not) tell about Lepanto and how historians' storytelling itself silences and produces specific notions of history: in this case, of Lepanto as a “European event” and “Christian victory” whose history is bound to Mediterranean geographies. The biographical, cultural, and geographical diversity of the combatants, however, were far higher than historians generally assume: Christians fought on the allegedly “Muslim” side and Muslims supported the “Christian” troops. Jews and Orthodox Greeks fought on both sides, and some of the protagonists of this Mediterranean battle either already had or were going to have a non-Mediterranean background in their biographies. As this article shows, storytelling about Lepanto could span the globe connecting Spanish imperial domains in the Americas and Asia. Local authorities, travelling Spanish soldiers, and indigenous subjects engaged in making Lepanto relevant for their own purposes, thereby producing the “mythical framework” of Lepanto.

Relating Mediterranean Studies with global history and microhistory, this article is a call for a greater need for such stories to be brought into a conversation about the production of history. It is likewise a plea for reflective, microhistorical storytelling, grounded in in-depth archival research, in an historiographical age of global history. Historians' traditional choice of sources and storytelling when writing about the Battle of Lepanto still prioritizes the stories that male, Catholic, white commanders have written about “a Christian victory,” which made historians for far too long turn a blind eye to indigenous or mestizo protagonists, as well as to women or non-Christians writing about Lepanto in the sixteenth-century world. Historians still too often tend to follow trodden archival paths; in other words, I just wanted to know what was

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127 I adapt a wording of Giuseppe Marcocci, *Indios, cinesi, falsari: le storie del mondo nel Rinascimento* (Bari, 2016), vi.
128 Based on Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995), see Hanß, *Lepanto als Ereignis*. On how historians' studies of Lepanto may relate to modern-day xenophobia, see Stefan Hanß, “Felix Hartlaub, Don Juan d’Austria [sic!] und die Schlacht bei Lepanto, hg. von Wolfram Pyta und Wolfgang Matthias Schwiedrzik, Neckargemünd (Edition Mnemosyne) 2017 (GegenSatz 8), 292 S., Abb., ISBN 978393412301, € 24,” *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 98 (2019): 644-647.
129 Hanß, *Lepanto als Ereignis*; idem, *Die materielle Kultur der Seeschlacht von Lepanto*.
130 Hess, “The Battle of Lepanto and its Place in Mediterranean History,” 73.
131 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; Hanß, *Lepanto als Ereignis*.
132 Francesca Trivellato, “Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History,” *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011), https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0z9.qnh.gq.
happening in Central and South America at the time of the Battle of Lepanto. If I had not had that desire, these stories would have remained uncovered and unknown, and we would have continued to read—almost exclusively—about the Mediterranean story of Lepanto, the event at which “Christianity pushed back Islam.” When commemorating Lepanto as a “victory of Christian Europe,” however, we only read about acts of violence which are justified by a “noble” cause; we hear the stories of people who have killed people of a different faith. For exactly that reason, fascists and terrorists continue to make Lepanto relevant in their stories when humiliating, or even killing, people of different faiths today. Questioning the cultural values of the traditional memory of Lepanto, thus, how that battle is “talked about over and over again” also prompts questions about the implicit valences of lives. The 450th anniversary of this battle is a chance to engage in a different debate about Lepanto and the implicit politics of the production of history.

We have to think Lepanto in different ways, and narrating the history of this battle differently is an important step in doing so. Uncovering the multiple stories of Lepanto “confound(s) our sense of order.” Engaging then in a historiographical exercise of testing such different possible stories helps to challenge l'évidence trompeuse of Lepanto, the event, and “bring(s) to historical study a deeply felt ethical concern.” Historians of Lepanto should not “refuse to engage with the novelty of the old, the strangeness of the new, or the irreducible difference of the other” when reading such and other early modern global and local stories about Lepanto. We should rather let archival traces lead our research on the past, and not common assumptions that perpetuate traditional narratives. Getting involved with this decentering approach means exploring new stories about Lepanto: Instead of interpreting Lepanto as a “European” or “Mediterranean event,” we should examine geographies of connected histories that shaped the event-making of Lepanto in very particular local settings across the sixteenth-century globe. Lepanto was not important as an event per se, but it was made relevant for very specific purposes in very particular contexts. Exploring such connected histories of the early modern event-making of Lepanto will decenter our understanding of Lepanto, the event.

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133 Petacco, La croce e la mezzaluna.
134 Stefan Hanß, “Lepanto neu denken,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung no. 76 (March 30, 2019): 8.
135 Hannah Arendt, On Revolution (London, 2016), 9, 222 (quote); Butler, Precarious Life, 6-8.
136 Scott, “Storytelling,” 238; Paul Ricœur, Temps et récit, 3 vols. (Paris, 1983-1985), vol. 1, 138.
137 Scott, “Storytelling,” 205.
138 Hanß, Lepanto als Ereignis; idem, Die materielle Kultur der Seeschlacht von Lepanto; idem, “Objects that Made History: a Material Microhistory of the Sant Crist de Lepant
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(Barcelona, 1571-2017); *Forum Kritische Archäologie* 7 (2018): 18-46; Sanjay Subrahmanyan, “Connected Histories”; idem, *From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Oxford, 2005); idem, *Mughals and Franks* (Oxford, 2005); Gruzinski, *Quatre parties*; Davis, “Decentering History.”