GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN:

SOLDIER, ENTREPRENEUR, RACONTEUR

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the life and times of Götz von Berlichingen (1480-1562), a German nobleman known for his iron fist and his legendary feuds. It argues that three identities defined Götz: a soldier, an entrepreneur, and a raconteur. The different layers of Götz's identity emerged in response to the challenges in his life that sprang from the changes of the sixteenth century. These changes included the growth of the state, the decline of the nobility, the divisiveness of the Reformation, and the advent of a world view based on measurement. Despite some costly missteps, Götz responded well to new circumstances, so that by the end of his life he was more prosperous than many of his noble peers. Through a close reading of Götz's autobiography, a social network analysis, and a comparative spatial study, the thesis elucidates the means of and the mentality behind Götz's success.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1731, Adam Jonathan Felßecker, a publisher in Nuremberg who operated under the pseudonym Veronus Franck von Steigerwald, printed the first edition of the autobiography of Götz von Berlichingen (1480-1562), a sixteenth-century German knight known for his iron fist and legendary feuds.[1] The memoir failed to generate much interest at the time of its publication despite the enthusiasm of its editor, Georg Tobias Pistorius, who had brought the memoir to Felßecker's attention after stumbling across one of the few manuscript copies of the autobiography. Forty years later, Götz became the most famous knight of the sixteenth century when a young playwright by the name of Johann Wolfgang Goethe used the memoir as the inspiration for his first successful drama, *Götz von Berlichingen of the Iron Hand*. Goethe's Götz was a proto-nationalist German hero who died with freedom on his lips.[2] This characterization could not have been more different from that of Johannes Müllner, author of the *Annals of the Imperial City of Nuremberg,* who described Götz as a robber and a bandit.[3]

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[1] On Götz von Berlichingen, see Helgard Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen: Ein adeliges Leben der deutschen Renaissance* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1974); Henry J. Cohn, "Götz von Berlichingen and the Art of Military Autobiography," in *War, Literature and the Arts in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, ed. J.R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 22-40; Volker Press, "Götz Von Berlichingen (ca. 1480-1562) - vom 'Raubritter' zum Reichsritter," *Zeitschrift für Württembergische Landesgeschichte* 40 (1981): 305-326; Frank Göttmann, "Götz Von Berlichingen - überlebter Strauchritter oder moderner Raubunternehmer?," *Jahrbuch für Fränkische Landesforschung* 46 (1986): 83-98. Older literature with good information about Götz's includes Johann Kamann, *Die Fehde des Götz von Berlichingen mit der Reichsstadt Nürnberg und dem Hochstifte Bamberg, 1512-1514: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der öffentlichen Zustände Frankens nach dem ewigen Landfrieden und zur Characteristik des Ritters mit der eisernen Hand* (Nuremberg: Verlag John. Leonh. Schrag, 1893); Wilhelm Nestle, "Götz von Berlichingen," *Württembergische Vierteljahrshefte für Landesgeschichte*, Neue Folge 18 (1909): 373-397.

[2] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Götz von Berlichingen mit der eisernen Hand: Ein Schauspiel* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2002), 119.

[3] Johannes Müllner, *Die Annalen der Reichsstadt Nürnberg von 1623. Teil III, 1470-1544*, ed. Michael Diefenbacher (Nuremberg: Selbstverlag des Stadtarchiv Nürnberg, 2003), 419. Müllner also used the term "Placker" to describe Götz, similar to the English phrase robber baron.

The characterization of Götz as either a hero or a villain has continued unabetted into the present, with his most recent biographer, Helgard Ulmschneider, describing him as a "robber entrepreneur." [4] So who was Götz von Berlichingen?

This thesis argues that Götz von Berlichingen was a soldier, an entrepreneur, and a raconteur. By emphasizing the dynamic nature of his identity, it moves beyond the hero-villain dichotomy that predominates in both the scholarly literature and popular representations of Götz. Like the times in which he lived, Götz is best understood in terms of a both / and rather than an either / or proposition: he was a soldier driven by both honor and profit, an entrepreneur with both an appetite for risk and a desire for steady reward, and a raconteur who sought to both entertain audiences and to justify a life of dubious deeds in his autobiography. Because of the contradictions that he embodied, Götz, at first glance, appears utterly incomprehensible to a twenty-first century audience. By placing him in the context of his times and approaching him as a human first and a historical actor second, however, Götz becomes less foreign and more familiar despite the 500-year gap that separates him from today's world.

Like many driven individuals, Götz, from a young age, had a clear idea of his goals and how to achieve them. More than anything, he wanted to make his living by the sword. There were two reasons for this. First, the life of a soldier was better suited to his

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[4] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 94. Ulmschneider used the term *Raubunternehmer*, which does not have a direct English translation but carries notions of both robbery and entrepreneurship. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. At present, there is not a scholarly translation of the autobiography available in English. For some passages, I have used Dirk Rottgardt's translation of the autobiography for assistance (see bibliography for publication details), but I do so sparingly because of the strange syntax Rottgardt employs. Thomas A. Brady Jr. has translated a small portion of the autobiography for the German Historical Institute. When possible, I use Brady's translations. For the passages translated by Brady, I do not include the original German text in the footnotes.

natural temperament than that of a scholar. Second, he considered the sword rather than the pen his most likely means to social, economic, and political advancement. If Götz had been told as a young man that his most enduring legacy would be his autobiography, he undoubtedly would have scoffed.

It was with the intention of advancing by the sword that Götz entered imperial service as a teenager through his first patron, Margrave Friedrich of Brandenburg-Ansbach. Because of the bellicosity of Emperor Maximilian I, there was no shortage of armed conflicts in and around the German-speaking lands of the Holy Roman Empire at the turn of the sixteenth century. By about 1510, however, Götz's relationship to Friedrich had soured and Maximilian had shifted his martial attention from Germany to Italy. Had Götz wished to continue in imperial service, it would have required him to venture far from home. For an adventuresome soul like Götz, this would not have been a problem, but Götz was not interested in adventure for adventure's sake. Rather, he calculated that the martial skill, strategic acumen, and far-reaching social network that he had developed in the service of the margrave and the emperor could be put to better use at home than abroad.

Between 1508 and 1518, therefore, Götz fought in successive feuds with Cologne, Nuremberg, and the archbishop of Mainz. Götz's decision to pursue the feud rather than princely or imperial service was a risky one considering that feuding had been outlawed at the imperial diet at Worms in 1495, but it was a decision that paid tremendous dividends both monetarily and socially, as powerful patrons–especially Duke Ulrich of Württemberg and Count Palatine Ludwig V–protected Götz from his enemies and his feuds became a cause célèbre for many of his peers in the Franconian nobility.

In 1517, Götz used some of the profits from his feuds to purchase a castle, the *Hornberg*, the ultimate status symbol of the sixteenth century. Only thirty-seven years old, he had achieved all that he hoped to by the sword: social prominence, economic security, and political clout. Götz then shifted his attention to managing and diversifying the fruits of his violent labor through the acquisition of land, the extension of loans, and office holding. Götz soon discovered, however, that rising to the top was easier than staying at the top, and less than two years after he purchased his castle, he found himself in a prison cell.

Throughout the 1510s, Götz had managed to maintain a delicate balancing act between the nobility, who provided the manpower and moral support necessary for his feuds, and his princely patrons, who, in addition to providing him with protection from his enemies, often aided him with material support in his feuds. By the late 1510s, however, Götz had become overly dependent on his patrons, particularly Duke Ulrich of Württemberg. Thus, when Ulrich was ousted from power following a disastrous war with the Swabian League in 1519, Götz, too, lost much of what he had gained from a decade of feuding.

Following a three-and-a-half-year imprisonment at Heilbronn, Götz was sucked into the Peasants' War in 1525. He served as the captain of a rag-tag peasant army for one month, but this was enough to seal his fate for the next fifteen years, as an agreement he signed with the Swabian League in the aftermath of the rebellion confined him to his castle for the entirety of the 1530s. During his imprisonment and castle arrest, Götz turned form the sword to the pen, engaging in a series of letter writing campaigns and lawsuits in hopes of rebuilding his reputation and regaining a position of prominence

among his peers, the princes, and the emperor. His efforts came to fruition in 1542, when Charles V–Götz's last and greatest patron–released him from castle confinement and enlisted his help in imperial campaigns against the Ottomans and the French. Unwilling to leave his legacy to chance, Götz penned the autobiography at the end of his life, "as a heartfelt warning and example to all loyal, dear, pious and honest men, whether fighters or others of estates high and low, to emperors, kings, electors and princes, to counts, barons, knights, and squires, to cities and to others, of whatever estate, spiritual or temporal, who participated in feuds and wars."[5]

Historiography

Götz's reference to "feuds and wars" at the conclusion of the autobiography raises the question of what the difference was, if any, between these two forms of violence. To answer this question, it is necessary to place Götz in the context of his times. Götz lived during a liminal period in European history. Historians have unhelpfully dubbed this period–from roughly 1500 to 1800–the early modern period. During this time, movements like the Renaissance, the Reformation, and, later, the Enlightenment, laid the groundwork for much that is considered normal, even natural, today, such as a state-based system of international politics, a mania for scientific measurement, and a plurality of religious beliefs. Götz, like all his peers, felt the early tremors of these shifts, but none more acutely than the consolidation of power and territory in the hands of the princes of Germany.

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[5] Götz von Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure - Götz von Berlichingen (1480-1562)," in *German History in Documents and Images*, trans. Thomas A. Brady, Jr. (Washington DC: German Historical Institute, n.d.), 11, accessed May 12, 2020, https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3706.

Violence was a key ingredient in the process of territorial and political consolidation. German sociologist Max Weber captured the end result of this process when he famously defined the modern state as a "human community that (successfully) claims *the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory."[6] In the nineteenth century, European states achieved something approaching Weber's monopoly on violence, but in the early sixteenth century, who had a "legitimate" right to use physical force was an open question. It was in this context that feud and war coexisted as forms of organized violence, and why Götz could write of feuds and wars interchangeably in the autobiography. It was not until the publication of Austrian historian Otto Brunner's 1939 classic, *Land and Lordship*, however, that a compelling argument was made for the legitimacy of the feud.

In *Land and Lordship*, Brunner used the feud as an entry point into a larger discussion of the "constitutional history" of the Middle Ages.[7] By "constitutional history," Brunner was not simply referring to legal or political history, but rather what he described as a "structural history *(Strukturgeschichte)* directed toward a genuine understanding of political action."[8] According to Brunner, such a history was a necessary corrective to a "disjunctive mode of thought"[9] (*Trennungsdenken*) prevalent in German scholarship that falsely separated state and society in the Middle Ages. The primary culprits of this disjunction were nineteenth-century German jurists who uncritically

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[6] Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Routledge, 2009), 78; Weber's italics.
[7] Otto Brunner, *Land and Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria*, trans. Howard Kaminsky and James Van Horn Melton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 14.
[8] Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, 138.
[9] Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, 99.

applied modern concepts to the medieval past. This anachronistic thinking was most obvious in their treatment of the state. As Brunner explained, "'State' is a concept of the modern political world. But in the nineteenth century it became 'the universal normative concept for political forms of organization, for all peoples, for all periods,' hence the master concept for all enduringly ordered collective life in political association."[10] For Brunner, the feud was the example par excellence of why the modern concept of the state, based on positive law and a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, was ill-suited to describing the medieval past. As such, Brunner devoted the first chapter of *Land and Lordship* to a detailed discussion of the feud. In the process, Brunner set the terms of debate for German feud studies.

Three key points emerged from Brunner's discussion of the feud. First, the feud was grounded in a medieval sense of *Recht*. There is not a direct English translation for *Recht* in the medieval, German meaning of the term, but it encompassed ideas of law, justice, and rights all at once. Second, connected to the concept of *Recht* was the idea of *Herrschaft*, or lordship. As Peter Wilson, a leading authority on early modern Germany, noted, "lordship is a highly contentious term with almost as many definitions as there are historians,"[11] but, for Brunner, lordship was rooted in the defense of *Recht*. Individuals or groups who held lordship over a *Land*–the territory of a lordship–had a right implicit in lordship to defend themselves and their subjects from abuses of *Recht*. Brunner

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[10] Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, 95.

[11] Peter Wilson, *Heart of Europe: A History of the Holy Roman Empire* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 486.

frequently described this relationship between *Recht* and *Herrschaft* in terms of self-help, which he viewed as a distinctive element of pre-modern European society.[12]

Third, in order for a feud to be considered legitimate, it had to follow a set protocol. All "legal" feuds started with a formal challenge known as an *Absage*. The *Absage* most often took the form of a letter read aloud to an opponent and it functioned as a public notice that declared the feud instigator's rights had been violated by the party or individual he was proclaiming a feud against. Once hostilities commenced, feud violence was restricted to damaging an opponent's property rather than his person. Of course, this was often ignored in practice, and it was most often the subjects of the feuding parties–peasants, farmers, merchants, and the like–who suffered most from feud violence. Nonetheless, the unwritten rules of the feud generally curtailed excessive violence and deaths were uncommon. A feud ended when the letter of challenge, that is, the *Absage*, was returned to the sender. This was followed by an *Urphed*, an act of reconciliation between the parties, often in the form of an oath, that precluded future hostilities between the parties and imposed severe penalties should the oath be broken.[13]

Feuds that were neither waged to rectify a violation of *Recht* nor that followed the proper protocol of a feud were not feuds at all but brigandage. Crucially, the feud did not gain its legitimacy from the state, which, after all, did not exist in the modern sense of the term, but rather from *Recht*, succinctly described by the translators of *Land and Lordship*

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[12] Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, 14-35.
[13] Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, 36-90; Howard Kaminsky, "The Noble Feud in the Later Middle Ages," *Past and Present*, no. 177 (November 2002): 63.

as "a transcendent order of divine justice."[14] As such, the feud stood above and separate from the state and therefore could not be comprehended in terms of the state. As Brunner summarized, "Historians . . . stand peculiarly helpless before these facts [of the feud], because they approach them presupposing the modern state."[15]

Building on Brunner, the historian who has done the most to integrate the feud into the study of state and society in early modern Germany is Hillay Zmora. In *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, Zmora argued, based on a prosopographic study of 278 feuds in Franconia between 1440 and 1567, that the feud both contributed to and resulted from the interplay of princely state building and social stratification among the nobility. In the prosopography, Zmora determined the social and economic status of individual feuders by collecting data about the offices they held, their financial transactions, and their marriage partners. Based on this information, Zmora determined that the wealthiest, best-connected nobles–that is, those who held high office, extended loans to and served as guarantors for princes and other nobles, and secured high-quality marriages–were the most likely to feud.[16] Zmora's finding ran counter to the robber-knighthood (*Raubritter*) thesis, most famously articulated in 1982 by Werner Rösener, that argued nobles increasingly turned to the feud in the late Middle Ages as a result of their declining social and economic fortunes.[17]

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[14] Howard Kaminsky and James Van Horn Melton, translators' introduction to *Land and Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria*, by Otto Brunner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), xix.

[15] Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, 3-4.

[16] Hillay Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany: The Knightly Feud in Franconia, 1440-1567* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 78.

[17] Werner Rösener, "Zur Problematik des spätmittelalterlichen Raubrittertums," in *Festschrift für Berent Schwinekorper zu seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Helmut Maurer and Hans Patze (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1982), 469-488. For a thorough criticism of the "robber knighthood" thesis, see Kurt

The surprising findings of the prosopography led Zmora to ask why top-tier nobles were the most likely to feud. The answer, put simply, was that nobles and princes needed one another to advance their respective interests. The nexus of the relationship between nobles and the princes was lordship, understood in this case as the control of land and people in a particular area by a noble (land-lordship) or a prince (territorial lordship). The granting of fiefs and the sale of pledges (*Pfandschaften*), especially pledge-lordships (*Pfandherrschaften*), were the most common means by which the princes financed the growth of their respective territorial states. Through the acquisition of fiefs and pledges, the purchasing noble gained more power than he would have been able to on his own, and the selling prince gained a client.[18] But just as noble demand for fiefs and pledge-lordships was greater than the supply–a major cause of feuds between nobles–the princes competed with one another to attract the most promising noble clients. This created a situation in which top-tier nobles could play princes off one another while retaining a high degree of autonomy through practices such as multiple vassalage and simultaneous office-holding, even as the princes used these same nobles as sources of capital and coercion to consolidate power and territory.[19]

While both Brunner and Zmora considered the feud a legal and legitimate form of dispute resolution that served a higher purpose than robbery–the defense of *Recht* in Brunner's case and the cornerstone of early modern state formation in Zmora's–they also both acknowledged that the feud did not always serve a higher purpose and that it was

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Andermann, ed. *'Raubritter' oder 'Rechtschaffene vom Adel'?: Aspekte von Politik, Friede und Recht im späten Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1997).
[18] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 44-50.
[19] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 118-120.

often subject to abuse. As Brunner wrote, "Ostensibly a struggle for Right . . . a feud could be used as a pretext for plunder that aimed at self-enrichment, not at securing justice."[20] Likewise, as Zmora noted, "that there was an element of brigandage in the feud cannot be disproved."[21] But whereas Brunner couched the violence of the feud primarily in terms of protection and safeguard (*Schutz und Schirm*)–the idea implicit in lordship that a lord was obligated to protect his subjects from violations of *Recht* through feuds and other means–Zmora viewed the feud as a protection racket because feuds generated the very violence that lords claimed to be protecting their subjects from. In other words, if nobles had stopped feuding, there would have been no need for *Schutz und Schirm* in the first place.[22]

Brunner and Zmora also both addressed the difference, or lack thereof, between feud and war. Brunner saw no legal difference between a feud and a war, and he did not believe feud and war could be differentiated until the sixteenth century, when warfare reached a hitherto unprecedented scale. He cited as evidence the autobiography of Götz von Berlichingen, writing, "The memoirs of Götz von Berlichingen, for example, tell us of numerous feuds in which he took part, but also of three 'wars' . . . Here it was clearly the scale of the military action that required the term 'war.'"[23] Like Brunner, Zmora found it almost impossible to differentiate between feud and war, but unlike Brunner, he

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[20] Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, 92.

[21] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 85.

[22] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 108. On the feud as a protection racket, see Gadi Algazi, *Herrengewalt und Gewalt der Herren im späten Mittelalter: Herrschaft, Gegenseitigkeit und Sprachgebrauch* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1996). Zmora expressed more reservations about the idea of the feud as a protection racket in *The Feud in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9-14.

[23] Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, 34.

did not consider scale an effective litmus test for differentiating between feud and war.[24]

This is because the scale of warfare did not increase in Germany as quickly as it did in

places like Italy. Although large battles took place on German soil during the sixteenth

century, they were the exception rather than the rule. More often, wars resembled feuds

in the sense that they took the form of drawn-out affairs punctuated by raiding and

looting rather than decisive battles fought by large armies.[25]

In his second book about the feud, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany*, Zmora

returned to the question of the relationship between feud and war. Whereas *State and

Nobility in Early Modern Germany* divided its attention between princely state building

and noble social stratification as they related to the feud, *The Feud in Early Modern

Germany* focused almost exclusively on the social implications of the feud. The driving

question of the work was why nobles feuded most often with individuals they knew well,

a situation that Zmora described as "inimical intimacy."[26] His answer, in brief, was that

reputation was everything and that the feud was one of the most effective means for an

individual to prove his worth to his peers. If an affront or insult went unchallenged it

could make an individual appear weak, which, in turn, could have a detrimental impact

on, for example, his access to credit or arranging a marriage for his daughter, thus hurting

the long term prospects of his family. There was therefore a strong incentive for the

nobility to feud over seemingly trivial matters. This, in turn, contributed to the endemic

violence of the period.[27] Zmora connected his theory of inimical intimacy to war by

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[24] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 100.
[25] Zmora, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany*, 47-49.
[26] Zmora, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany*, 50.
[27] Zmora, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany*, 67-76.

arguing that one of the primary differences between feud and war was that in feuds, unlike wars, "the rivals were more often than not part of the same local or regional social setting, and were regularly linked to each other by multi-stranded social and economic ties."[28] In other words, Zmora argued that relationships of inimical intimacy applied to feuds but not wars.

The problem that both Brunner and Zmora ran up against in their respective theories about the relationship between feud and war was that their terms of differentiation–scale and inimical intimacy–were subjective to the point of becoming meaningless. At what point does a big feud become a small war, and when does a relationship become one of inimical intimacy? Although wars tended to be larger than feuds, and relations of inimical intimacy may have been more common in feuds than in wars, these facts in and of themselves do not differentiate between feud and war.

Rather than try to differentiate between feud and war, it is better to scrutinize how individuals acted in feuds and wars. Only in this way can the relationship between feud and war begin to be understood. Although the autobiography of Götz von Berlichingen cannot provide a definitive answer about what this relationship was, it does provide valuable insights into one man's perspective about feud and war at a time when the distinction between them was fuzzy at best. What is at stake in understanding the relationship between feud and war is not just Götz's legacy–if Götz's contemporaries considered the feud a legitimate expression of violence it becomes more difficult to dismiss him as a robber and a bandit–but also the degree to which non-state actors shaped

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[28] Zmora, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany*, 49.

the emergence of the state. Men like Götz were an important part of the state building

process even though they were not formally part of the state because they could exercise

force, often in the form of feuds, in situations where the state could not due to either

political circumstances or practical considerations. By paying careful attention to Götz's

attitude toward feud and war in the autobiography, a more precise understanding of the

role non-state actors played in the construction of the state is gained.

Sources, Methods, Structure

This thesis makes no claim to be an exhaustive, or even perfunctory, biography of

Götz von Berlichingen. This is for two reasons. First, there is already a satisfactory

biography available in Ulmschneider's work. Second, Götz is an unreliable narrator.

Although his general descriptions of events are accurate,[29] the devil is in the details,

especially when it comes to feuds and wars that by their nature were shrouded in

confusion and contradiction. The sources most likely to confirm or contradict the

minutiae of the autobiography–primarily correspondence between Götz and other parties

involved in his feuds and wars–are, for the most part, not available outside their

respective archives. Ulmschneider reviewed these sources and from them he constructed

a remarkably detailed narrative of Götz's life that I rely on for the what but not the why

of my interpretation of Götz. As I did not have access to the archival sources, I mostly

limit my focus to the parts of Götz's life that he covered in the autobiography.

The autobiography is divided into three sections arranged in loose chronological

order. The first section discusses Götz's upbringing, his participation in several wars,

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[29] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 19.

most of his feuds, and his imprisonment at Heilbronn. It is the longest section of the autobiography and the most detailed. The second section covers Götz's participation in the Peasants' War, his subsequent trial, and his twelve-year castle arrest. The third section, by far the shortest, recounts some of Götz's miscellaneous feuds from earlier in his life and his service to the emperor in the campaigns against the Ottomans and the French. In the autobiography, Götz makes almost no mention of his castle arrest in the 1530s or the last eighteen years of his life. The version of the autobiography I use in this thesis is Ulmschneider's edited and annotated edition published in 1981. In this form, the autobiography is eighty-nine pages.[30]

  I analyze the autobiography through a traditional close reading, a social network analysis, and a spatial analysis. Combining these methods helps clarify the often-confusing narrative of the autobiography and raises new avenues of inquiry. In particular, the social network analysis raises questions about how patron-client relationships contributed to state formation, while the spatial analysis highlights the need to bring textual representations of space more fully into the discussion of early modern cartography. More generally, the social network analysis and the spatial analysis allow Götz's life to be explored and conceptualized in new ways. Using digital tools, the myriad relationships to people and places that shaped Götz's life are not only described but visualized. These visualizations complement a traditional close reading of the text because they allow the viewer to step outside the words on the page and to place Götz in his larger social and spatial context in a way that can be grasped at a glance.

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[30] Götz von Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, ed. Helgard Ulmschneider (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1981).

The social network analysis and part of the spatial analysis was made with Palladio, a mapping, data visualization, and social network analysis tool created by Stanford's Humanities + Design lab. A major challenge I encountered in using digital tools to study Götz's life is that computational analysis is built on zeros and ones while humanistic inquiry assumes ambiguity. As a result, I have had to define two terms that Götz used interchangeably: feud and war. My working definition of feud was an armed conflict characterized by raiding, looting, arson, and prisoner-taking but that did not include pitched battles between standing armies. Conversely, my working definition of war was an armed conflict characterized by raiding, looting, arson, and prisoner-taking *in addition to* pitched battles between standing armies. These definitions are, of course, splitting-hairs, but such hair-splitting is necessary for digital analysis.

In terms of style, my guiding principal in the writing of this thesis has been to show rather than tell what made Götz tick. I believe the best way to do this is by following the narrative arc of his life while striking an appropriate balance between story and analysis. With this in mind, chapters one, two, and three are organized chronologically, while chapters four and five are organized thematically.

Chapter One, "Soldier," charts Götz's life from his birth in 1480 until his departure from princely and imperial service in 1505. During this time, he made the connections and developed the martial skills that laid the groundwork for his successful transition into full-time feuding.

Chapter Two, "Entrepreneur," follows Götz's rise between 1506 and 1518 from a feuding nobleman to a feud entrepreneur. More than anyone of his generation, Götz learned how to make the feud pay, as successive feuds with Cologne, Nuremberg, and

Mainz demonstrated. A savvy entrepreneur, Götz used the winnings from his feuds to diversify his wealth and increase his social status. As a result, he was pulled closer to the princes and further from his peers.

Chapter Three, "Raconteur," studies Götz's life from his first imprisonment starting in 1519 until his death in 1562. This period saw Götz's primary weapon switch from the sword to the pen. Prevented from feuding and other martial activities as a result of either imprisonment or infirmity, he fought his battles and sought to rehabilitate his reputation through an endless stream of litigation and letter writing campaigns. At the end of his life, he composed the autobiography in an attempt to shape his image for his peers and posterity.

Chapter Four, "The Social Network of Götz von Berlichingen," uses visualizations of Götz's social network made with Palladio to demonstrate the important role that his patrons played in his feuds and wars. At least one patron, defined as an individual connected to Götz through land, loans, or office-holding, was involved in almost all of the violent encounters–feuds, wars, and imprisonments–described in the autobiography. Götz's patrons were his gateway into the martial world and key supporters in his feuds. In return for their support, Götz's patrons gained access to his extensive social network that could be used in their own efforts at political and territorial consolidation.

Chapter Five, "From People to Places," compares Götz's spatial consciousness with that of Sebastian von Rotenhan (1478-1532), a humanist cartographer who created the first map of Franconia. Whereas Götz's sense of space was relational, Rotenhan's sense of space was based on the coordinate grid. The "objective" depiction of space in

Rotenhan's map foreshadowed the future of cartography, but Götz's autobiography stands as a testament to the great diversity of spatial representation in the early sixteenth century.

So who was Götz von Berlichingen? In addition to a soldier, an entrepreneur, and a raconteur, he was a shapeshifter who adapted to his surrounding as circumstances demanded. Despite occasional missteps, he adjusted well to the changes of the sixteenth century, and by the end of his life he was in a better position socially, economically, and politically then he had been at the beginning of his life. He was not a "Renaissance Man" in the Burckhardtian sense of the term–honor and chivalry were too important to him for this to be the case–but he did share certain attributes with the Italian condottieri of the fifteenth century–a ruthless acquisitiveness, an independent spirit, and a boldness of action–that Burckhardt identified as the defining characteristics of modern man.[31] These characteristics were a crucial aspect of Götz's identity, but so were his myriad relationships to people and places that are so clearly on display in the autobiography. By firmly placing Götz in his social and spatial context while still acknowledging his capacity for individual agency, a window is opened not only into the life of Götz von Berlichingen, but into the sixteenth century itself.

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[31] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S.G.C. Middlemore (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 98-119.

CHAPTER I: SOLDIER, 1480-1505

The first chapter recounts Götz's life from birth to age twenty-five. From a young age, Götz dreamed of making a living by the sword. Through his social network and a natural proclivity for the martial arts this dream became a reality. Between 1495 and 1505, Götz fought in four wars–the Burgundy Campaign, the Swiss War, the Affalterbach Dispute, and the Landshut War of Succession–and he participated in his first feuds with the notorious Hans Thalacker. Through these conflicts, Götz not only gained experience in combat and a formidable reputation as a man-of-war, but also expanded his social network and his geographic scope. By the time he was twenty-five, Götz was well-respected, well-connected, and well-traveled, but he remained grounded in his primary identity, that of a soldier.

Upbringing and Early Education

Götz von Berlichingen was born in 1480 to Kilian von Berlichingen and Margaretha von Thüngen at his family's castle in Jagsthausen, a town about twenty miles northeast of Heilbronn in what is now southwestern Germany. Both Kilian and Margaretha came from distinguished noble families. The Berlichingens traced their lineage to the twelfth century, when an ancestor helped found *Schöntal an der Jagst*, the third oldest Cistercian monastery in Württemberg. The extensive Berlichingen landholdings centered on the Kocher and Jagst rivers, right tributaries of the Neckar River, which flows into the Rhine. Like the Berlichingens, the Thüngens were an old and propertied noble family, and they had the reputation of being rabble-rousers.[1]

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[1] Helgard Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen: Ein adeliges Leben der deutschen Renaissance* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1974), 30-32.

Margaretha was Kilian's third wife and the second that bore him children. Primogeniture was not commonly practiced in Franconia, so Götz would have to share his father's inheritance with his four older brothers, Kilian, Philipp, Hans, and Hans Wolf.[2] Splitting an inheritance five ways was not ideal, but the extensive landholdings of the Berlichingens and the Thüngens meant that each of the brothers could still expect to receive a sizable inheritance. More importantly, by virtue of the fact that they belonged to one of the preeminent noble families in Franconia, the Berlichingen brothers carried a heavy cache of social capital with them wherever they went.[3]

Even if Götz had inherited nothing, one gets the sense from the autobiography that he still would have been successful due to his boundless confidence. Götz described himself as "a wonderous young boy"[4] who knew from a young age that he wanted to ride and fight for a living. As a young teenager, his parents sent him to live with a relative, Kunz von Neuenstein, in Niedernhall am Kocher, a town eight miles west of Jagsthausen. Götz attended school in Niedernhall am Kocher, where he learned rudimentary reading and writing, but, as he explained, "I did not have much desire for school, but rather preferred horses and riding."[5] After a year of schooling, his parents sent him to live with another relative, Konrad von Berlichingen, to be trained as a knight.

Konrad von Berlichingen was Kilian's cousin and a person of consequence in Franconia. He had held office in several princely administrations, and when Götz was

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[2] Judith J. Hurwich, "Inheritance Practices in Early Modern Germany," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 4 (Spring 1993): 718.

[3] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 32-33.

[4] "Ein wunderbarlicher junger knab." Götz von Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, ed. Helgard Ulmschneider (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1981), 53.

[5] "Alls ich aber nit vill lust zur schulenn, sonnder villmehr zu pferden und reutterey trug." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 53.

sent to live with him, he was serving as one of the top advisors to the margrave of

Brandenburg-Ansbach, Friedrich "the older" (*der Ältere*).[6] Konrad, more than Kilian,

introduced Götz to the world of high politics, and had it not been for Konrad, Götz's life

may have followed a very different trajectory.

The Diet of Worms

Shortly after joining Kilian, Götz accompanied him to the 1495 Diet of Worms.

The Diet of Worms was the first meeting of the imperial estates after Maximilian I

became the Holy Roman Emperor in 1493, and it marked the beginning of several

important reforms in the empire.[7] The diet consisted of three chambers that coincided

with the three estates of the empire. The imperial electors comprised the first estate. The

imperial princes, prelates, counts, and barons comprised the second estate, and the

imperial cities comprised the third estate. Despite the tripartite division, the first estate

was the guiding force behind most of the resolutions approved by the diet and presented

to the emperor for ratification or rejection.[8]

The architect of the reform program put forth at the Diet of Worms was

Archbishop Berthold von Henneberg, elector of Mainz, who was nicknamed "the

Nightingale" because of his beautiful singing voice.[9] A savvy politician, Henneberg

responded to Maximilian's request for money–money Maximilian needed to pay for an

imperial campaign to counter the French invasion of northern Italy and to deal with the

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[6] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 31.
[7] Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *The Holy Roman Empire: A Short History*, trans. Yair Mintzker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 48.
[8] Stollberg-Rilinger, *The Holy Roman Empire*, 55.
[9] Thomas A. Brady, Jr., *German Histories in the Age of Reformations, 1400-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 116.

ever-looming threat of the Ottomans–with the estates' wish list of reforms: the establishment of an imperial council to oversee the governance of the empire; the establishment of a "perpetual public peace" (*Ewiger Landfrieden*) abolishing the right to feud and enforced by the Swabian League;[10] the establishment of an imperial chamber court (*Reichskammergericht*); and the establishment of the "Common Penny," (*Gemeiner Pfennig*) a new, direct tax on all the subjects of the empire.[11]

Many of the reforms agreed to at the Diet of Worms were short lived. Maximilian rejected the imperial council out of hand because he feared it would undermine his authority, the Common Penny failed to collect sufficient revenue and was quickly abandoned, the perpetual public peace, as the career of Götz would demonstrate, proved impossible to enforce for at least a generation, and the authority of the imperial chamber court remained contested and uneven until the empire's dissolution in 1806. Based on this assessment, the Diet of Worms may seem like a failure, but the true significance of Worms was not the tangible results it achieved, but rather the precedent it set of the estates of the empire coming together to solve problems and the emperor respecting this process.[12]

The adoption of the perpetual public peace at the Diet of Worms would complicate Götz's future feuds, but at the time, the journey from Ansbach to Worms was

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[10] Peter Wilson, *Heart of Europe: A History of the Holy Roman Empire* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 562-563. Founded in 1488 by Emperor Frederick III, the Swabian League was a cross-estate security and strike force comprised of many of the imperial cities, knights, lords, and princes of southwestern Germany. In addition to providing troops for the emperor in "internal" conflicts like the Swiss War, and, later, the Peasants' War, one of the league's primary functions was the suppression of the feud, which for all intents and purposes was synonymous with the upholding of the eternal peace agreed to at the Diet of Worms.

[11] Brady, *German Histories*, 116.

[12] Stollberg-Rilinger, *The Holy Roman Empire*, 57.

more memorable to him than any decisions made at the diet. The journey of about 125

miles took three days to complete with overnight stops at Schrozberg, Mosbach, and

Heidelberg. This seemed like a great distance to the young Götz, who guessed that he

traveled "eight or nine miles per day . . . but since then, I have become used to it, and I

have made in a few days and nights long journeys, and ate or drank nothing, because of

necessity, and there was no other option."[13]

Although Götz had little to say about the diet itself, he did describe it as the "great

Reichstag,"[14] suggesting, at least in hindsight, that he recognized its importance

compared to prior meetings of the imperial estates. He also made note of the social

composition of the attendees, which included "all the prince electors and princes, and

others of high and low standing either in person or through their representatives."[15] Had

Götz been aware of the implications that the Diet of Worms would have for his future

feuds he undoubtedly would have paid closer attention to the proceedings, but perhaps

more importantly, the diet allowed him to rub shoulders with some of the most powerful

people in the empire. At the tender age of fifteen, Götz was already building his social

network.

After describing the Diet of Worms, Götz noted that he accompanied Konrad to

two more imperial diets and several regional diets over the next two years. These

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[13] "Vnd war sein erster außriedt von Onoltzbach an, biß ghenn Schrotzberg in sein behausung, vnd vonn Schrotzberg ann, ein tag bieß gehnn Mospach, vonn Mospach biß ghenn Haidelberg . . . das rechenn ich ein tag vff acht oder neun meil wegs, vnd daucht mich damalnn meinem thon nach, wie ich ein gesell war, weit vnd viell sein, aber seit derselbigenn zeithero, hab ich es woll gewonnt, vnd etwa inn wenigen tagenn vnnd nächtenn weite raiß volbracht, vnnd darbey nichts gessenn oder getrunckenn, welchs die notturfft also erfordert hat, dann es etwan nit annderst sein konnth." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 54.

[14] "Großen reichstag." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 53-54.

[15] "Alle churfursten und fursten, auch andere hochen und nidern standts selbs personnlich, oder aber durch ire pottschafftenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 54.

meetings kept Konrad so busy that he was at home less than two months a year, and when he was at home, he had to deal with domestic matters, so that "an old knight could have little peace."[16] Konrad found eternal peace at the imperial diet at Lindau on Lake Constance in 1497. Götz did not mention the cause of death, but it is safe to assume that Konrad's relentless schedule was a contributing factor. No less a figure than Archbishop Berthold von Henneberg, by some accounts the second most powerful figure in the empire after the emperor himself, presided over the funeral procession.[17] Götz accompanied Konrad's body from Lindau to *Schöntal an der Jagst*, the abbey near Jagsthausen his ancestor had founded, the traditional burial place of the Berlichingen family, and where Götz himself would be laid to rest sixty-five years later.

The Burgundy Campaign

Götz's time with Konrad introduced him to many powerful people as a young teenager, some of whom would continue to play an important role in his life for years to come. One of these individuals was the margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach, Friedrich der Ältere. Konrad had served as master of the household (*Hofmeister*), one of the highest positions in a princely court, for Friedrich. He was also the margrave's top delegate at the imperial diets at Worms and Lindau, so it is not surprising that Götz turned to Friedrich for employment following Konrad's death. During his reign, Friedrich embroiled himself in a continuous string of feuds and wars, which made him an ideal patron for a battle-hungry boy like Götz. Indeed, almost as soon as Friedrich took Götz into his service, a dispute in Burgundy led to Götz's first campaign as an imperial soldier.

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[16] "Ein alter ritter fur und fur wenig ruhe habenn kunth." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 54.
[17] Brady, *German Histories*, 116.

The Burgundy Campaign was meant to shore-up Habsburg control of Upper Burgundy, a territory that Maximilian had inherited from his father-in-law, Charles the Bold. Due to Burgundy's wealth and strategic location, it was an object of recurring contention between the French-Valois kings and the Habsburgs. Imperial law required Margrave Friedrich to provide the emperor with troops, which is how Götz found himself in imperial service for the first time.[18]

The Burgundy campaign began with a march from Ansbach to Freiburg im Breisgau, where an imperial diet was underway. Götz's regiment bivouacked in Freiburg im Breisgau for fourteen days until Maximilian arrived and the campaign plans were finalized. Götz's regiment was subsequently sent to Ensisheim in Upper Alsace and then to Upper Burgundy. In Upper Burgundy, the regiment "captured several houses"[19] and remained "day and night in armor"[20] until making camp outside Langres, a town and fortress perched on a mountain and held by the enemy. Götz commented that the weather was so hot that "several soldiers that were under the command of my captain fell off their horses as if they were drunk"[21] and that they experienced a storm with hail "as large as chicken eggs."[22]

While Götz and his regiment suffered from the heat and hail, the defenders of Langer remained safe behind the walls of their fortress. Götz estimated the size of the besieging army to be about 700 cavalry and 2,000 landsknecht. Numbers alone were not

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[18] Wilson, *Heart of Europe*, 173.
[19] "Namen ettlich heusser ein." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 55.
[20] "Warenn tag unnd nacht inn der rustung." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 55.
[21] "Und ettliche reutter, die unnder meins herrn hauffenn ware, die fiellenn under die geull, als ob sie trunckhenn werenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 55.
[22] "Und fiellenn stain so groß alls wie die huner ayer." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 55.

enough to capture the city, and the imperial army soon abandoned the siege. As they marched away from the city, the captains "made a wide formation, and placed the lines far apart, so that we seemed more than we were."[23] The army then moved to another town with a small castle where they found much needed provisions, but the town was set on fire, by whom Götz did not say, "so that we had to immediately move on, and neither we nor the horses had much to eat for three days and two nights."[24]

The army next rendezvoused with Maximilian near Thann in southern Alsace. The emperor was in pursuit of Rupprecht von Arenberg, a count who had treacherously sided with the French. The combined force chased Arenberg across Alsace and Lorraine but was unable to catch him. By the time the chase ended, it was mid-November and the campaign concluded with the onset of winter. Götz returned to Ansbach, where he requested permission from Margrave Friedrich to visit his family at Jagsthausen because his father had died the previous summer. Götz spent the remainder of the winter at Jagsthausen, but after his adventures with Konrad and the imperial campaign in Burgundy, his boyhood home must have seemed quite dull. By early March 1499, he was back in Ansbach, and he did not have to wait long until Maximilian found another war, this time with the Swiss, for which Margrave Friedrich was again obligated to provide the emperor with troops.

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[23] "Darumb dann unsere haubttleut die ordnung groß machten, und staltenn die glider weit vonn einannder, damit der hauff fest scheinbarlicher sein solt, dann wir warenn ghar schwach, unnd hettenn uber die sibennhundert pferddt nit, unnd zwey tausenndt lanndtsknecht." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 56.
[24] "Also das wir aldo vonn stundann wider uff sein, unnd abermalnn furt ziehenn mustenn, unnd hettenn wir und die geill inn dreyen tagen unnd zweyen nechtenn nit viell zuessenn gehabt." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 56.

The Swiss War

The Swiss War, also known as the Swabian War, was a continuation of the Swiss separation from the Holy Roman Empire that had been ongoing since the fourteenth century. The end result was the de facto independence of several Swiss cantons and imperial cities from the empire. The immediate cause of the war was the levying of new taxes on the Swiss following the Diet of Worms. Violence first erupted in the Habsburg-controlled city of Innsbruck in late 1498, and the war soon stretched from Tyrol to Alsace, with the mass of the emperor's forces clustered around Lake Constance.[25]

In mid-July 1499, the emperor met the gathering imperial forces at Konstanz. Götz had arrived a few days earlier with the third contingent of troops sent by Margrave Friedrich. The rendezvous at Konstanz was not the first time Götz had seen the emperor in person, but it was the first and only time he spoke with him. Götz described the emperor's appearance with a tinge of humor, writing that, "He wore a small, old, green gown, a big hood, and a cap over it, so that no one would have recognized him as the emperor. I, however, knew him by his nose, because I had seen him before at many diets of the empire."[26] Götz was standing near Margrave Friedrich when the emperor noticed him. He asked Götz who he was there with, to which Götz replied, "my gracious prince and lord the Margrave Friedrich."[27] Maximilian then said to Götz, "You have a long spear with a big flag on it, ride over there to that large troop, until the flag of the Empire

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[25] Brady, *German Histories*, 119.

[26] "Der hett ein kleins alts groß rocklin ann, vnnd ein groeß stutz kepplin, vnd ein grohenn hutt daruber, das inn kheiner fur ein keiser gefanngenn oder angesehenn hett. Ich aber alls ein junger kandt inn bey der nassenn, das ers wahr, dann ich hett inenn darfor wie gemelt, vff ettlichenn reichstegen." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 61.

[27] "Meinem gnedigen furstenn vnnd herrnn dem marggraff Friderichenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 61.

with the eagle comes out from Konstanz."[28] Götz complied with the emperor's request

and that was the end of the conversation. Despite its brevity, the fact that Götz

remembered the exchange in minute detail more than fifty years later suggests that

contrary to his dismissive description of the emperor, the meeting left a lifelong

impression on the headstrong nineteen-year-old.

Regarding the Swiss War itself, Götz had little to say. He stated that "I do not

know anything special about the Swiss War, other than that the Swiss defeated many

regiments."[29] He thought that one of the reasons the war turned into a debacle for the

imperial forces was because of an ambiguous chain of command. Identifying a problem

that would hinder some of his own feuds, he explained that "when one has many advisors

and many heads, then it will go like that, as it has happened to me in my own affairs."[30]

Götz's only action in the war occurred outside Schaffhausen, an imperial city that

had "turned Swiss."[31] As the imperial army–a combined force from Württemberg and

Ansbach–advanced on the rebels, Schaffhausen sent out a regiment to meet the advancing

forces of the emperor. The regiment was quickly overwhelmed and retreated to a nearby

church, "where they defended themselves and did not want to be taken as prisoners, but

rather they said they wanted to die like pious confederates."[32] The Swiss mounted a

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[28] "Du hast ein langenn spieß, vnnd ein grossenn fahnenn darann, reitt mit dorthin zu jhenem hauffenn, bis daz des reichs fannen der adler vonn Kostentz herrauß khombtt!" Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 61.

[29] "Sonnst waiß ich nichts sonnderlichs von dem Schweitzer krieg, dann das die Schweitzer vill hauffenn geschlagenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 63.

[30] "Wa man aber viell retth vnd viel kopff hatt, da geht es gern also zu, denn es ist mir selbs woll in meinen aigen hendelnn also ergangen." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 62.

[31] Thomas A. Brady, Jr., *Turning Swiss: Cities and Empire, 1450-1550* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 37.

[32] "Die wertten sich vnd woltenn sich nit gefangenn gebenn, sunder sagtenn sie wolltenn sterbenn, alls wie fromme aidtsgenossenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 62.

fierce counter-attack from the church, and they "slew and shot dead many nobles and non-nobles on horse and foot."[33] Götz's horse was killed in the melee, but Götz and some of his companions continued to advance on foot towards the church, which they set on fire with gunpowder. As Götz morbidly observed, "those who were inside must have burned."[34] With the flames engulfing the church, a Swiss soldier holding a young boy jumped from the church steeple. The fall killed the soldier but the child survived, "and one of the riders of the margrave took the little boy, I do not know what happened to him, and I have not seen him since then."[35] Underscoring the ill-disciplined nature of late-medieval warfare, it was not just the Swiss who were burned alive but also some of the imperial soldiers who rushed into the church in search of booty before it was torched.

The Burgundy Campaign and the Swiss War marked Götz's first foray in imperial service. Through Margrave Friedrich, he had been "contracted out" to the emperor, and in the process, he gained important experience as a man-of-war. Although Götz had already started to build his social network during his time with Konrad, the Burgundy campaign and the Swiss War gave him the opportunity to make a name for himself on his own account. As it turned out, there were few opportunities for heroics in either conflict, but both events provided him the opportunity to further expand his social network and his geographic scope. Götz would neither venture outside the borders of Germany nor formally serve the emperor for another forty years, but the campaign into Burgundy and

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[33] "Das sie vill vonn adell vnd vnedel zu roß vnnd zu fueß erwurffen vnnd erschossenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 62.

[34] "Da mustenn die so darinnen warenn verbrennen." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 63.

[35] "Vnd nam das bublein ein marggreuischer reutter, nit weiß ich, wo er mit hin ist khommen, ich hab es auch seidthero nit gesehenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 63.

the Swiss War gave him a taste of both the promise and the pitfalls of life as an imperial

soldier.

First Feud Experience with Hans von Thalacker

After the Swiss War, Götz returned to Jagsthausen, where he became involved in

his first feud. One day as Götz and his brother Philipp were riding home from Heilbronn,

a man named Black Hans approached them "to tell us that a good companion wanted us

to enter his service for a campaign."[36] Götz told Black Hans that "If he is a good

companion, he should come to us and speak to us himself, and we would give him a good

answer."[37] A few days later, "Old Hans Thalacker von Massenbach, who at that time lay

in feud with the duke of Württemberg,"[38] visited Götz and Philipp at Jagsthausen and

asked them to join his small band of feuders. It is not clear why Thalacker sought out

Götz and his brother–perhaps their reputation as soldiers preceded them–but in any case,

Götz but not Philipp joined the party, along with two other men Götz recruited, in

addition to Thalacker's bastard son, Henßlein Henßlinschwert, and one other unnamed

individual.[39]

Hans Thalacker was a man of ill-repute known for his frequent feuds. His feud

with Württemberg had been ongoing for years, with the most recent flare-up occurring

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[36] Götz von Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure - Götz von Berlichingen (1480-1562)," in *German History in Documents and Images*, trans. Thomas A. Brady, Jr. (Washington DC: German Historical Institute, n.d.), 5, accessed May 12, 2020, https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3706.

[37] Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure," trans. Brady, 5.

[38] Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure," trans. Brady, 5.

[39] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 40.

over a debt disagreement.[40] Götz did not provide any context about the feud in the

autobiography. Rather, he went straight to a description of the action:

> We captured eleven rich peasants–Württemberg subjects–on the Kapfenhart. The
> weekly market at Heilbronn took place the same day, and Thalacker warned the
> peasants to appear at Castle Drachenfels on St. George's Day. Then we rode on to
> Heilbronn, and we grabbed whatever belonged to Württemberg. We went into the
> city as far as the barrier, where we were met by armed gate-keepers.[41]

Despite the fact that Götz stayed with Thalacker's gang of bandits "for two years as an

apprentice,"[42] he did not provide any details about their activities. Nonetheless, many of

the hallmarks of Götz's later feuds were present in his first feud experience with

Thalacker, including ambushes on isolated roads, the capture and ransom of "rich"

prisoners, the use of friendly castles as safe houses to hide and hold prisoners, and the

calculated engagement of enemies. Moreover, Götz's description of his first feud

experience demonstrates that he approached the decision to feud in the same way he

approached the decision to go to war; it was a practical professional choice rather than a

meaningful personal decision. The feud, for Götz, was not some forbidden fruit that he

was dying to taste, but rather a business proposition, hence his negotiation with Thalacker

before joining his band and his description of his time with Thalacker as an

apprenticeship.

    As Götz would demonstrate throughout his life, one of his greatest gifts was

knowing when to make an exit. Thalacker had many enemies in southwest Germany

besides Württemberg, and shortly after Götz left the gang, the emperor placed Thalacker

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[40] Karl Klunzinger, "Thaten und Schicksale des Hans von Massenbach, genannt Thalacker," in
Württembergische Jahrbücher für Statistik und Landeskunde, ed. Verein für Vaterlandskunde (Stuttgart:
W. Kohlhammer, 1856), 165.
[41] Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure," trans. Brady, 5.
[42] Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure," trans. Brady, 5.

under an imperial ban (*Reichsacht*), which made him an outlaw and excluded him from

the normal legal protections enjoyed by the subjects of the empire.[43] What this meant, in

practice, was that Thalacker could be hunted down like a dog with impunity. Götz must

have sensed trouble, because shortly before the emperor placed the ban on Thalacker, he

went to live with his maternal uncle, Neidhart von Thüngen, at his castle, the *Sodenberg*.

As Götz acknowledged in hindsight, "I think he [Neidhart] took me in because perhaps

he was worried about me, because I rode with Thalacker, and as a result I might be

killed."[44]

Götz stayed with his uncle for the winter and in the spring he returned to Ansbach

in search of a new adventure. The timing of his arrival at Ansbach was fortuitous as

tensions between Margrave Friedrich and the imperial city of Nuremberg–neighbors and

long-standing rivals–had once again reached a boiling point after a brief reprieve. As a

result, the margrave was happy to have Götz back in his service even as he was chastised

for serving in Thalacker's gang.

Since the early fifteenth century, Nuremberg had been aggressively expanding

into the surrounding countryside, so that by the mid-fifteenth century, it controlled 442

villages and hamlets and a total area of 638 square miles.[45] By the early sixteenth

century, thirty-nine of its patrician families held lordship over 3,000 peasants in its

hinterland.[46] This, combined with Nuremberg's wealth–the city's annual revenue has

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[43] Wilson, *Heart of Europe*, 614.
[44] "Ich gedenck er hab mich darumb bey sich gehaltenn, das er villeicht sorg fur mich gehabtt, weill ich nemlichen des Thallackers reutternn annhienng, vnd mit inn riedt, das ich irgendt daruber mochte schnappenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 65.
[45] Wilson, *Heart of Europe*, 518.
[46] Hillay Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany: The Knightly Feud in Franconia, 1440-1567* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 108.

been estimated at 51,000 florins in 1500–made the surrounding princes and nobles both envious and wary of the city on the Pegnitz.[47] The Margravate of Brandenburg-Ansbach, which shared a border with Nuremberg, felt particularly threatened by the imperial city's territorial and economic expansion. As a result, Margrave Friedrich worked hard to check the city's alarming momentum through official channels, such as the courts, and unofficial channels, such as feuds.

The Schott-Nuremberg Feud

The feud between Konrad Schott and Nuremberg demonstrated how a feud could complement and enhance a prince's political goals. It is worth recounting in some detail because it foreshadowed the tactics used in Götz's larger feuds and it formed the backdrop of his first confrontation with Nuremberg.

Like Götz, Konrad Schott came from a wealthy and well-connected Franconian noble family. His father served as a marshal and district governor for the Count Palatine, and Schott was the burgrave of Rothenburg Castle, a "robbers nest" held in co-heirship (*Ganerbschaft*) by over forty noblemen and notorious for the many feuds that emanated from its stone walls.[48] The origin of the Schott-Nuremberg feud is unclear as the opposing sides presented conflicting stories about what occurred and when. Nuremberg claimed the feud started with a pair of unprovoked, coordinated attacks against individuals working for Nuremberg carried out by Schott and his primary collaborator, Christoph von Giech. Specifically, Nuremberg claimed that Giech and his men stabbed Hans Herzog to death as he traveled to nearby Gräfenberg on city business, and, on the

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[47] Ansbach's revenue, in contrast, was estimated at 30,000 florins in 1500, but the margrave was also 233,500 florins in debt. Wilson, *Heart of Europe*, 532.
[48] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 41-42.

same day, Schott, with about one-hundred riders, ambushed a Nuremberg patrol of about twenty-five riders near Eschenau, resulting in two deaths and several injuries. In contrast, Giech claimed that the Nuremberg patrol attacked his party near Eschenau, and that Schott and his riders, who happened to be in the area, came to their rescue.[49]

The feud ratcheted up after a particularly heinous act of violence. On April 6, 1499, Schott captured Wilhelm Derrer. Derrer was no ordinary citizen, but rather a member of Nuremberg's governing council, described by one historian as "a closed circle of forty-two ruling patrician families" who "highly cherished their homeland's hard-earned reputation as a bastion of law and order."[50] As if to mock this idea, Schott cut off Derrer's right hand with an axe and told him to "carry it home to your masters."[51] Nuremberg retaliated by putting a bounty on Schott and Giech's head, and in the following weeks, each side accused the other of violating the conditions of a lawful feud. It is worth noting that the right to feud in and of itself was never in question and that Nuremberg responded to Schott's feud by declaring a feud.[52]

Following the Derrer incident, the belligerents started to recruit allies. Nuremberg went straight to the top and convinced the emperor to place Schott and Giech under the

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[49] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 27.

[50] Joel F. Harrington, *The Faithful Executioner: Life and Death, Honor and Shame in the Turbulent Sixteenth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 97. Harrington's description refers to Nuremberg in the second-half of the sixteenth century and primarily within the walls of the city. Presumably, there was a similar emphasis on law and order in Nuremberg in the early sixteenth century, even if it was not as well enforced.

[51] *Die Chroniken der fränkischen Städte* Nürnberg, V, 605, quoted in Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 28.

[52] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 28-29. Schott justified his heinous act against Derrer by claiming that the city council's decision to put a price on his and Giech's head occurred immediately after the Eschenau incident and that the bounty was a drastic, unwarranted action that required the most severe response. Nuremberg claimed they did not put a bounty on Schott and Giech until after the Derrer incident.

imperial ban. This could have been a decisive moment in the conflict by making the

noblemen persona non grata, but almost as quickly as the ban came into effect, Schott

and Giech used their own imperial connections to have it repealed. With the ban lifted,

Schott and his followers burned and looted their way through Nuremberg's hinterland.

Schott's forces swelled in the wake of his success, and soon bands of horsemen fifty to a

hundred strong choked Nuremberg's commerce through constant raids on the roads

leading into and out of the city.[53]

It is not clear who, exactly, Schott's riders were or even if he had any real control

over them. Many individuals were probably just taking advantage of the situation, but it

is safe to assume that Schott's forces included a hodgepodge of disgruntled noblemen,

wandering mercenaries, and vagrant criminals, all of whom were well represented in the

region and regular participants in feuds.[54] The Franconian Knighthood, an association of

noblemen, also lent its support to Schott and Giech, adding both manpower and

legitimacy to their cause. Nuremberg, for its part, retaliated by burning down safe houses

used by Schott and Giech, building guard towers outside the city walls, and convincing

the emperor to reinstate the imperial ban on the two men.[55]

The emperor's intervention did not end the feud, but it was enough to bring both

sides to the negotiating table. Through mediation led by the bishops of Bamberg and

Würzburg, the opposing sides eventually reached a settlement. When the ink dried,

neither Schott nor Nuremburg could claim a clear victory. Besides the lifting of the

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[53] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 29-30.
[54] Harrington, *The Faithful Executioner*, 6-8. On the role mercenaries and other unsavory types played in feuds, see Otto Brunner, *Land and Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria*, trans. Howard Kaminsky and James Van Horn Melton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 50-51.
[55] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 30-31.

imperial ban, Schott did not gain any obvious advantage from the conclusion of the feud.

Similarly, the city did not receive any compensation for the damages it sustained. More

importantly, the feud exposed the city's limited capacity to project power outside its

walls, undermining its claim to lordship in the surrounding region. Although cities like

Nuremberg may have held an economic advantage over their noble rivals by the early

sixteenth century, the nobility continued to hold an edge in the effective exercise of

organized violence.[56]

As Hillay Zmora has convincingly argued, the real winner of the Schott-

Nuremberg feud was Margrave Friedrich. The feud was in Friedrich's best interest

because it weakened Nuremberg with minimal cost and effort on his part. In addition, it

made the city more likely to take actions that Friedrich could construe as acts of war,

such as the burning of safehouses on the margrave's territory and the construction of

guard towers outside the city walls of Nuremberg. If war resulted and the margrave

emerged victorious–a more likely outcome given the weakened state of his opponent–he

could potentially expand his territory and / or shore-up his control of disputed areas.

Friedrich must therefore have been disappointed when Nuremberg dismantled the towers

outside the city walls, thus removing his most immediate casus belli, but it did not take

long for the margrave to find a new casus belli in the parish fair at Affalterbach.[57]

The Affalterbach Dispute

Affalterbach was a small village located thirteen miles southeast of Nuremberg.

Every year on June 19th, the date of the church's anniversary, throngs of pilgrims visited

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[56] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 30-31.
[57] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 31-33.

the village to worship at the local chapel and make merry. Nuremberg claimed lordship over Affalterbach, which meant, among other things, that the city was responsible for protecting the village. In 1502, Margrave Friedrich challenged Nuremberg's claim to lordship over Affalterbach. Nuremberg was not willing to concede its control of the village. Anticipating that a confrontation with the margrave's forces would occur on the day of the village fair, the city sent the majority of its troops to Affalterbach on the eve of the fair. Rather than engage Nuremberg's main force at Affalterbach, Kasimir, Margrave Friedrich's oldest son and the commanding officer of Brandenburg-Ansbach's army, attacked Nuremberg directly.[58]

Götz provided a lengthy description of the battle that ensued, in which the margrave's forces enjoyed the element of surprise, and, initially, superior numbers. The defenders of Nuremberg, however, maintained their discipline and were soon taking the fight to the margrave's forces with their artillery and their wagon forts, moving defensive fortifications based on the Czech war wagons used to great effect in the Hussite Wars of the early fifteenth century.[59]

As Nuremberg's forces advanced, the margrave's militia, which accounted for most of his force, fled, because, as Götz condescendingly explained, "not everyone can bear the rumble of approaching battle."[60] Those who could bear the rumble of battle included 300 Swiss mercenaries, 300 landsknecht, and about 700 cavalry, most of whom would have been members of the nobility. They faced-off against the 700 infantry, 60

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[58] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 42.
[59] Clifford J. Rogers, "The Age of the Hundred Years War," in *Medieval Warfare: A History*, ed. Maurice Keen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 158-159.
[60] Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure," trans. Brady, 6.

cavalry, and 40 wagons defending Nuremberg.[61] With more even numbers and Nuremberg's defensive advantage, what at first seemed like a sure victory for the margrave's forces was suddenly thrown into peril. It was at this point, Götz claimed, that "God put it into my mind, and my own reason saw the need,"[62] to prevent one of the wagon fort's from closing its perimeter, which Götz accomplished by "spear[ing] the leading teamster from his horse."[63] Götz judged that his action "brought our greatest advantage and was doubtless not unimportant to our victory and good fortune."[64]

Although it is impossible to know what effect Götz's actions actually had on the battle, the margrave's forces proved victorious. They did not capture Nuremberg, but, at the end of the day, 300 Nurembergers compared to 200 soldiers of the margrave were dead,[65] the margrave's forces had commandeered several artillery pieces, and, adding insult to injury, they had managed to do all this before Nuremberg's main force at Affalterbach had time to respond. As for Götz, the Affalterbach dispute was a reputational windfall. In the celebrations after the battle, Götz wrote that the praise he received from many of the elite members of the Franconian nobility "was dearer . . . than gold and silver."[66] Clearly, Götz understood the importance of reputation in the chest-thumping culture of the nobility, and in the heat of battle, he had requited himself well. Wherever his future adventures might take him, his reputation would accompany him,

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[61] Emil Reicke, *Geschichte der Reichsstadt Nürnberg von dem ersten urkundlichen Nachweis ihres Bestehens bis zu ihrem Uebergang an das Königreich Bayern 1806* (Nuremberg: Rawschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1896), 496-497, Google Books.
[62] Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure," trans. Brady, 6.
[63] Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure," trans. Brady, 6.
[64] Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure," trans. Brady, 6.
[65] Reicke, *Geschichte der Reichsstadt Nürnberg*, 500.
[66] "Ist vns auch lieber gewest, dann goldt vnnd silber." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 69.

and in the aftermath of the Affalterbach Dispute, that reputation had gained considerable stature.

Second Feud Experience with Hans Thalacker

High on praise but short on funds, Götz returned to Uncle Neidhart following the conclusion of the Affalterbach Dispute. Götz's second stay, like his first, lasted less than a year. During this time, Götz helped Neidhart manage his affairs in the villages attached to his uncle's castle. In one instance, a drunk peasant nicknamed the "ape" insulted Götz, leading to a brawl with an entire village of peasants from which Götz hardly escaped. After recounting this humorous incident that also hinted at the ever-present tension between the nobility and the peasantry, Götz abruptly shifted to a discussion of his second feud experience with Hans Thalacker.[67]

Götz did not explain how or why he became re-involved with Thalacker's bandits and he said almost nothing about what he did with them despite spending almost a year in their company. This brief section of the autobiography does, however, provide glimpses of life as a small-scale feuder. For instance, Götz described how the gang, "stayed up to fourteen days in the woods, but we had good benefactors and friends that brought us cheese and bread so that we could stay [in the woods] longer."[68] Similarly, he stated that "Thalacker's riders also had good lords, princes, and others where they could find shelter and be secure."[69] Götz must have known who some of these "good lords and princes"

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[67] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 43.

[68] "Do wir dann bey vier zehenn tagen in den holtzern hielten, aber wir hettenn gute gonner vnnd freundt, die vnns keß vnd brott brachtenn, das wir dannocht bleibenn konthen." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 72.

[69] "Darzu so hettenn des Thallackers reutter auch gute hernn vnd fursten, vnd anndere, da sie sich vnnderschleifftenn, vnnd sicher sein kunthen." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 72.

were, but the fact that he did not mention them by name suggests that they did not want

to be openly associated with a man of ill-repute like Thalacker who was probably doing

their dirty work. This section of the autobiography also makes it clear that feuding was

often an exercise in patience as the gang spent the majority of its time waiting for a target

to present itself. When an opportunity did arise, success was by no means guaranteed.

Götz alluded to this waiting game when he wrote that, "my good companions and I made

seemingly good attempts to lay the hands on it . . . but sometimes it did not work out

because we were unlucky."[70] In the few instances when they were lucky enough to find a

victim, the violence could quickly spiral out of control, as the following passage

demonstrates:

> It just so happened that we came across people that were our enemies, and the
> action started so quickly that neither we nor they had time to raise our crossbows
> . . . so we threw our crossbows at each other's throats and we came together with
> a clash. I struck my opponents sword and crossbow away from him so that he was
> disarmed. His companion, who had nothing more than a short epee that he
> defended himself with, tore away from Thalacker's riders and wounded them both
> . . . I now came upon him and he tried to escape me, but I rode on him, and I
> stabbed both him and his horse. It was then time that everyone saw where he
> would stay.[71]

It is not clear from the passage if Götz killed the second opponent, but the description

captures the petty nature of feud violence that always had the potential to turn deadly.

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[70] "Ich vnd andere gute gesellenn zimliche gute annschleg gemacht, vnd woll zu sagenn, die henndt darauff
gelegt . . . Aber es wolt etwann wenig furgangs habenn, dann sie hettenn nit allwegen gluck darzu."
Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 72.

[71] "Da begab es sich, das wir auch vf leut stießenn, die ire feind warenn, do sich dann der handel so kurtz
zutrug vnnd begab, das ich vnnd sie die feindt vnsere armbruster nit vff bringen kunthen . . . Darumb wir
dan ainander die armbruster ann halß worffen, vnd mit denn klingenn zusammen. Aber ich schlug ine vom
schwert vnnd armbrust, das er khein wehr mehr hett. Vnd als sich ein anderer von meinem gesellenn riß
vnnd will inenn enttreiten, spreng ich hin zu vnnd behillt denselbigenn auch, welcher auch nit mehr dann
ein kurtzenn tegenn hett, vnd erweret sich also darmit gegen bedenn des Thallackers knechtenn, verwundt
sie auch alle beidt . . . Do ich nun an in kham, wolt er mir endtweichenn, aber ich erreitt inn, vnd stach inn
mit dem schwerdt vnder denn gaull, also das ich sie beidt behilt. Daruff es dann zeitt ware, das ein jeglicher
sahe, wo er bleibenn wolt." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 72.

The passage also lends support to the description of the feud as brigandage. In both of Götz's stints with Thalacker, his only objective seems to have been to stave off boredom and / or to make money. Although the same reasons may have motivated Götz to go to war, by the early sixteenth century, the feud did not enjoy the façade of propriety that war did, and it therefore opened itself up to a host of criticisms that could just as easily be applied to war. Arson, pillage, and prisoner taking, for example, were just as likely to occur in the context of a war as a feud, and death was an expected rather than an exceptional outcome in the great battles that Götz participated in as a young man. It is therefore not surprising that Götz had no qualms about feuding. For him, the end result–riches, fame, and glory on a good day, death on a bad day–was the same as war.

The Landshut War of Succession

After his second stint with Thalacker, Götz, for the third time, returned to Uncle Neidhart. The Landshut War of Succession, also referred to as the Bavarian War, began shortly after Götz arrived at the *Sodenberg*. The Landshut War of Succession resulted from a dispute over the inheritance of Duke Georg "the rich" (*der Reiche*) of Bavaria-Landshut. Duke Georg had contravened Wittelsbach inheritance rules by leaving his lands to a female heir in the person of his daughter Elizabeth, the wife of Count Palatine Ruprecht, heir to the elector Palatine, Philipp "the upright" (*der Aufrichtige*). As a result, Duke Albrecht IV of Bavaria-Munich, the Wittelsbach-heir with the best claim to Duke Georg's inheritance, declared war on Elizabeth and Ruprecht. Duke Albrecht was supported, among others, by the emperor, the Swabian League, and Duke Ulrich of Württemberg. The duke's forces plundered the Palatinate around Heidelberg and then marched east, where they defeated an army raised by the recently-widowed Elizabeth in a

battle near Regensburg in September 1504. The fighting continued until February 1505, when a truce was declared. In July 1505, the sides reached a peace settlement that favored Duke Albrecht and his allies.[72]

Because it involved almost all of the powers in southern Germany, historians have described the Landshut War of Succession as a German civil war.[73] Götz's experience in the war bolsters this description. When the conflict started, Götz would have preferred to fight on the side of the Palatinate, but his association with Uncle Neidhart caused him to fight on the side of Duke Albrecht. As he explained, "when the Bavarian War started . . . I was still with my cousin, Neidhart von Thüngen, and I had no choice but to go with him to the land of Bayern, which I did not want to do, because I had two brothers that were fighting for the Palatinate, and I, too, would have preferred to fight for the Palatinate."[74]

This passage throws into question Zmora's contention that the difference between feud and war in early modern Germany was that feuds were characterized by relationships of inimical intimacy whereas wars were not. In the case of the Landshut War of Succession, Götz fought against men he knew well in a conflict that could be described as both a war and a dynastic feud. At the same time, Brunner's argument that scale was the determining factor in differentiating between feud and war, an argument that he supported by citing Götz's participation in the Landshut War of Succession, is not supported by the autobiography itself. Although it is true that Götz only used the word

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[72] Brady, *German Histories*, 120-121.

[73] Brady, *German Histories*, 120.

[74] "Darnebenn aber alls sich der Beyerrisch krieg inn berurtem jar erhub, war ich noch bey meinem vetternn herr Neidtharten vonn Thungen, vnnd must mit im hinauff inn das lanndtt zu Beyernn, das mir nun hoch zuwider wahr, dann ich hett zwenn bruder, die wahrenn pfaltzgreuisch, vnnd wehr auch gehrn vf der Pfaltz seittenn gewest." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 74.

"Krieg"[75] to describe the Landshut War of Succession, he described the feud with Cologne as both a "Krieg" and a "Phedt," and he described Ulrich's conflict with the Swabian League in 1519, which is often described as a war, as a feud.[76] Thus, there does not seem to have been much rhyme or reason to Götz's use of the terms feud and war. Rather, he used them interchangeably. He also described his experiences in feuds and wars in similar ways. Although the level of violence acceptable in a war compared to a feud may have been categorically different, Götz himself does not seem to have differentiated between categories of violence.

Götz's description of the Landshut War of Succession centered on the loss his arm at Landshut. After capturing Landau an der Isar, the defense of which was overseen by Götz's friend, Jörg von Rosenberg–once again challenging the notion that inimical intimacy was unique to the feud–Duke Albrecht's forces besieged Landshut, a major city under the control of the Palatinate. While Götz was skirmishing outside the city, soldiers from Nuremberg fired their cannons indiscriminately into the melee. One of the cannon shots hit the pommel of Götz's sword, "so that half the part [of the pommel] entered my arm and punctured through three arm scales . . . so that the arm was shattered fore and aft, and I saw that my hand hung by a thread from the skin."[77] Despite the horrendous injury, Götz had the wherewithal to stay on his horse and return to his lines.

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[75] Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 73-74.

[76] Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 84, 103. Götz more commonly spelled "feud" *vhedt* in the autobiography.

[77] "Vnd scheust mir einer denn schwertt knopff mit einer veldtschlanngenn enntzwey, das mir das halbtheil inn arm gienng, vnnd drey armschinenn darmit . . . also das der arm hindenn vnd vornn zerschmettert wahr. Vnnd wie ich so dar siehe, so hanngtt die hanndt noch ein wenig ann der hautt." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 76.

In a sign of noble solidarity, once Götz's friends and acquaintances inside

Landshut learned what had happened, they invited him into the city to recover. The

original plan was for Götz to stay at his cousin Sigmund von Thüngen's inn, but

Christoph von Giech, who also had an inn in the city, took Götz into his care instead.

Giech and Götz had served together under Margrave Friedrich, and Giech proved a

generous host. In his first few days in Landshut, Götz received a constant stream of

visitors that he described as a "pilgrimage."[78] Even Count Palatine Ruprecht planned to

visit Götz, but before he could do so, "a message came that His Princely Grace had

contracted the red dysentery, which was the truth, and that His Princely Grace had died

from it, and also Christoph von Giech and many others died from the red dysentery at

that time."[79]

That Götz did not die from his injury or the outbreak of dysentery that ravaged

Landshut was remarkable, but the days he spent recovering were some of the darkest of

his life. As Götz lamented fifty years later, "anyone can imagine the pains I suffered at

that time, and it was my prayer to god, that if it was his will, he should take me because I

was well used for a man of war."[80] In total, Götz spent seven months in Landshut, from

June 23rd, 1504, to early February 1505. As he slowly healed, his thoughts oscillated

between prayer and possibility, so that "I called to God and thought even if I had twelve

hands and his grace and help did not fall on me, it would still be in vain. And I supposed

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[78] "Es wahr gleich ein walfart zu mir." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 75.

[79] "Da kombt aber wider bottschafft die rott rhur hettenn ire fn. gn. angestoßenn, wie dann wahr gewesenn, vnd ir fn. gn. darann gestorbenn, auch Christoff vonn Giech vnnd viell anndere mehr damaln ann der rottenn rhur verschidenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 76.

[80] "Was ich die zeitt fur schmertzenn erlittenn habe, das khann ain jeglicher woll erachtenn, vnnd wahr das mein bitt zu gott, die ich thet, wann ich inn seiner gottlichenn gnadt wer, so solt er im namen gottes mit mir hinfarenn, ich wehr doch verderbtt zu einem kriegsman." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 77.

on these grounds, that if I only had a little help, with an iron hand or something like that, that I would with god's grace and help take the field again."[81]

An iron hand is exactly what Götz ended up with, but many of the details surrounding its construction and function are unclear. All that can be said with certainty is the following. First, it was for his right hand. Second, there were at least two iterations. The first hand was rudimentary with little more functionality than a metal hook whereas the second hand was a mechanical masterpiece. Using his left hand, Götz could bend the fingers into various positions allowing him to hold most objects. There was also a sort of quick-release button that caused the fingers to spring open. Whereas the first hand may have been forged by a blacksmith in a village near Jagsthausen, the second hand, given the skill that went into its construction, was almost certainly built in a large city of the empire, perhaps even Nuremberg. Finally, although Götz's hand was exceptional in its craftmanship, prosthetic hands were relatively common by the sixteenth century, as attested to by their presence in many museums and private collections. Understandably, the iron hand has been an object of fascination since its creation, but Götz himself seems to have viewed it not as a mechanical miracle, but rather as a tool that allowed him to continue doing what he did best, ride and fight.[82]

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[81] "Der lag mir im sin, das ich gott aber annrufft vnnd gedachtt, wann ich schonn zwolff henndt hett, vnnd sein gottliche gnadt vnnd hilff mir nit woll woltt, so wehr es doch alls vmb sonnst. Vnnd vermeint derrnhalbenn, wann ich doch nit mehr dann ein wenig ein behelff hett, es wehr gleich ein eisenne hanndt oder wie es wehr, so wollt ich demnach mit gottes gnadt vnnd hilff im feldt noch." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 77.

[82] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 45-46.

CHAPTER II: ENTREPRENEUR, 1506-1518

The second chapter recounts Götz's life from age twenty-five to thirty-eight.

During these years, Götz progressed from a feuding nobleman to a feud entrepreneur.

Successive feuds with Cologne, Nuremberg, and the archbishop of Mainz increased

Götz's wealth, social status, and political clout, so that by 1518, he was one of the most

feared and respected nobles in Franconia. Götz used his newfound wealth and social

status to develop relationships with powerful patrons through the extension of loans, the

acquisition of land, and office holding. In the process, he was drawn closer to his patrons

and further from his peers. The reorientation of Götz's social network from his peers to

his patrons would soon lead to trouble, but in the short run, Götz's decision to pursue the

feud for himself rather than war on the behalf of a prince or the emperor paid handsome

dividends.

The Waldstrom and Meuterer Feuds

After his convalescence at Landshut, Götz returned to Jagsthausen, where he

became involved in a series of small feuds. The first feud was between Philip Seabut and

a wealthy family from Nuremberg, the Waldstromer von Reichelsdorf. The dispute

revolved around Seabut's inheritance, which the Waldstromers contested for reasons that

Götz did not explain. Because Seabut was Neidhart von Thüngen's servant, Götz

intervened on Seabut's behalf. Götz's intervention in this case meant kidnapping two

members of the Waldstrom family as they traveled through a forest near Nuremberg and

bringing them to Jagsthausen. Presumably, Götz intended to use the prisoners as

bargaining chips in negotiations to end the feud. Shortly after the prisoners reached

Jagsthausen, Margrave Friedrich became aware of the situation and he ordered the

feuding parties to Ansbach for mediation. The margrave claimed jurisdiction in the

dispute because Ulrich Beck, another individual involved in the feud, was his vassal, and

the Waldstrom family managed several of the forests in Friedrich's territory. With the

margrave's mediation, Götz reported, "the matter was laid down and made up."[1]

Following the resolution of the dispute, Beck compensated Götz for his services,

although Götz did not specify the form or the amount of payment.[2]

About a year later, in 1506, Götz became involved in another small feud. This

feud, which Götz only dedicated one paragraph to in the autobiography, was between

"one called der Meutterer,"[3] and the city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber. As usual, Götz

did not explain the origin of the feud. He only said that he became involved after his

cousin, Wilibald von Thüngen, allowed Meuterer to stay at his castle, and that "I and

some of my good friends and associates decided that we would serve [Meuterer] for a

ride or two."[4] Götz did not specify the actions he took on behalf of Meuterer, but it led to

the intervention of Lorenz von Bibra, the bishop of Würzburg, who brokered an

agreement between the parties so that Götz and his friends "did not have to think about it

again."[5]

Despite the brief and opaque descriptions of the Waldstromer and Meuterer

feuds, both incidents reflected Götz's desire to chart his own path in the aftermath of the

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[1] "Das die sachenn hingelegt vnd vertragenn wurten." Götz von Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, ed. Helgard Ulmschneider (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1981), 82.

[2] Helgard Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen: Ein adeliges Leben der deutschen Renaissance* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1974), 58.

[3] "Vonn eins wegen der hatt der Meutterer gehaißen." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 82.

[4] "Ich vnnd anndere meine guten freundt vnnd gesellenn vnns ann, das wir im ein reiß oder zwo diennetenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 82.

[5] "Das wir weitter nachdennckenns deßhalbenn nit bedorfftenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 82.

Landshut War of Succession. Although he continued to fight on behalf of others, he was now doing so on his own terms. Götz must have relished the freedom of the feud and enjoyed being unbeholden to the whims of the princes and the emperor. At the same time, the feud allowed him to put his considerable martial and strategic skill to use and was potentially lucrative.

The Feud with Cologne

In 1508, Götz embarked on his largest feud to date against Cologne. The genesis of the feud was a shooting tournament hosted by the city in 1505. Every tournament participant paid a two florin entrance fee that became the prize money for the competition. One of the participants was Hans Sindelfinger, a tailor from Stuttgart who moonlighted as a *Buchsenmeister*, a master shooter of a pistol-like weapon. Sindelfinger was also a member of the board of shooting masters who refereed shooting competitions held throughout the empire. The Cologne tournament became embroiled in controversy after some of the tournament participants accused a shooter from Strasbourg of cheating by firing two shots at once. After review by the board of shooting masters and swearing an oath that he had not cheated, the board acquitted the Strasbourg shooter of wrongdoing. Thirty-six of the tournament contestants refused to accept this decision and subsequently withdrew themselves and their entrance fee from the competition. The tournament organizers from Cologne were unwilling to make up the difference for the lost prize money, a decision that the winning shooters, most of whom hailed from Swabia, found unacceptable. The Swabians continued to protest the decision until the Cologne city council agreed to pay Sindelfinger, the leader of the Swabian contingent,

the full prize money. Once he received the prize money, Sindelfinger was to distribute it among his fellow Swabians.[6]

Further complicating the situation, at the same time the tournament was happening, yet another feud between Württemberg and Hans von Thalacker had started. As a result, the Württemberg authorities and the Swabian League advised the Swabian shooters to delay their departure from Cologne until the roads they would be travelling on were more secure. The Swabian shooters estimated that the delay, exasperated by the negotiation over the prize money, cost them an additional 200 florins, and they insisted that Cologne pick up the tab. Although Cologne remained non-committal towards this request, they had made a clear commitment to pay Hans Sindelfinger the prize money. The city, however, was not forthcoming with the money.[7]

At the next shooting tournament, which took place in Strasbourg, some of the Swabian shooters, still expecting money from the Cologne competition, accused Sindelfinger of keeping the prize money for himself. Although these accusations were unfounded–Sindelfinger had never received the money–they had the effect of forcing Sindelfinger out of his trade as a tailor because his honor had been called into question. Sindelfinger soon found employment as a guard in the Württemberg court, and from this position he was able to make the connections that would help him restore his reputation and eventually receive his payment from Cologne.[8]

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[6] B. Ann Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany: Civic Duty and the Right of Arms* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 208.

[7] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 51-53.

[8] Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany*, 208. For a detailed description of the entire tournament incident, see August Edelmann, *Schützenwesen und Schützenfeste der deutschen Städte vom 13. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Eduard Pohl, 1890), 111-119.

The most important connection Sindelfinger made at the Württemberg court was to Götz, albeit indirectly. Götz was a frequent visitor to Stuttgart, located just fifty miles south of Jagsthausen, and as a result he was well known to the Württemberg nobility. In 1508, one of these Württemberg nobles, Reinhard von Saxenheim, whose daughter would later marry one of Götz's sons,[9] asked Götz to intervene in the Sindelfinger affair, i.e. start a feud. The fact that the Württemberg nobility so readily took up the cause of a tailor in a shooting tournament may seem surprising, but shooting tournaments were serious business as they reflected on the honor of the shooter's home region.[10] To not challenge Cologne for its treatment of Sindelfinger would have been unthinkable even if the declaration of a feud was an option of last resort.

Although the origin of the feud with Cologne was perhaps more convoluted than usual, Götz followed his typical feud playbook once he became involved. First, he publicly declared the feud with a message delivered by a subordinate to one of the Cologne city councilors. Next, around May 13th or 14th, he captured two merchants from Cologne–a father and son both named Contz Heymen[11]–near Steinau on the *Kinzigstraße*, a major thoroughfare that ran from Leipzig to Frankfurt. Despite Götz's feud declaration, the Cologne city council claimed that they were surprised by his abduction of Heymen the Older and Heymen the Younger, and they complained that he had not properly notified the city council that he was commencing hostilities. Perhaps in response to this accusation, Götz sent the city council an additional letter declaring a feud.[12]

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[9] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 240.
[10] Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany*, 208.
[11] Henceforth, I refer to them as "Heymen the Older" and "Heymen the Younger."
[12] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 50-51.

Following the capture of Heymen the Younger and Heymen the Older, Götz hid them in a castle near Steinau. Heymen the Older, however, was in ill-health, so Götz released him after he swore an oath that he would meet Götz at a designated time and place with ransom money for him and his son. In the meantime, Götz would hold Heymen the Younger as insurance. Rather than uphold his oath, Heymen the Older contacted the authorities in Bamberg, where he was supposed to meet Götz with the ransom money in a forest under the jurisdiction of Georg von Limpurg, the bishop of Bamberg. When a servant of Götz met Heymen the Older at an inn so he could lead him out to the woods to meet Götz, the Bamberg authorities arrested the servant and then sent out a party to capture Götz. Götz managed to escape, and he used the capture of his servant as an excuse to declare a feud on the bishop of Bamberg.[13]

The feud with Cologne had thus blossomed into another feud. Götz's initial plan was to capture the bishop near Göppingen after he learned that the bishop intended to visit a hot spring because of his kidney stones. To execute the plan, Götz enlisted the help of an unnamed individual who subsequently recruited a team of riders. One of the recruited riders, however, informed the bishop of Götz's intentions, ruining his carefully laid plan. Further frustrating Götz, prior to learning that his plan to capture the bishop had gone awry, he had come across the bishop's brother, Friedrich von Limpurg. Götz could have captured Friedrich in lieu of his brother, but preferring to focus on the bishop, he bypassed the opportunity to capture Friedrich. Götz eventually managed to capture two individuals that worked for the bishop. Using these individuals as leverage, Götz entered

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[13] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 54-55.

into negotiations with the bishop mediated by Duke Ulrich of Württemberg that resulted in the release of Götz's servant and the end of the feud with the bishop. Although Götz had freed his servant, he must have been disappointed that he walked away from the feud empty handed.[14]

Simultaneous with the Cologne feud that spilled into the Bamberg feud, Götz became embroiled in three other feuds. The first was on behalf of his brother, Philipp, who was feuding with another noble family, the Stumpf von Schweinberg, following what Götz claimed was an unprovoked attack on Philipp and two of his servants by two of the Stumpf brothers. Philipp and his servants thwarted the attack and captured their assailants, who swore to appear at a designated time and place to pay their ransom. Rather than honor their pledge, the Stumpfs "secretly set fire to a farm and mill"[15] owned by the Berlichingens. The arson led to Götz's grudging involvement in the feud because "I would now have rather carried out my feuds against those against those who had given me cause for it, especially those from Cologne, the bishop of Bamberg, and others."[16] Götz did not say how or if the Berlichingens and the Stumpf resolved their feud, but before it was over, Götz or one of his associates killed at least one individual on the Stumpf side in a botched capture attempt, suggesting the feud reached an unusually high level of violence.[17]

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[14] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 54-55.

[15] "Vnnd verbranndt vnns heimlich, vnd vnuer wart ein hoff vnnd ein mull." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 87.

[16] "Nun hett ich aber ghernn andernn meinen feyndenn domalnn nachgetracht, alls sunderlichen dennenn vonn Colnn, bischoff vonn Bamberg vnd andernn, die mir vrsach darzu gebenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 87.

[17] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 81.

The two other feuds Götz found himself in both stemmed directly from the Cologne feud. When Götz captured Heymen the Older and Heymen the Younger, he did so on a section of the *Kinzigstraße* that two noblemen, Reinhard von Hanau, the count of Hanau, and Frowin von Hutten, the marshal of the archbishop of Mainz, both claimed to control. As a result, Götz found himself in a feud with both noblemen at once.[18] Götz did not provide further information about the feud with Reinhard von Hanau. Concerning the feud with Frowin von Hutten, Götz recounted that he planned to capture Hutten outside his residence at Salmünster, but Hutten arrived there before Götz could organize his forces and, "I nevertheless waited two or three days in front of [Salmünster], but I could not know, when he would come out, because he was at home. So I could not wait longer in that land, and I had to move on with unfinished business."[19] Götz later claimed that he only planned to speak with Hutten but not take him captive, an assertion belied by the fact that he waited with an armed party outside Hutten's home for two days.

The domino-effect of the feud with Cologne was not lost on Götz, who vividly captured the situation when he stated that "I came into five feuds that all flowed from one."[20] Out of the five feuds, the original feud with Cologne took the longest to resolve. In addition to capturing Heymen the Older and Heymen the Younger, Götz almost captured nine wagons as they were returning to Cologne from the Frankfurt trade fair. Just before the attack commenced, the Count of Königstein, who controlled the section of

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[18] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 54.

[19] "Wie ich nun vernam, das er ghenn Sallmunster kummen wehre, hilt ich dannocht zwenn oder drey tag vohr im, aber ich khonndt nit wissenn, wann er vff wollt sein, dann ehr wahr daselbsten daheim. So khonndt ich auch nit lennger inn derselbigenn lanndtßart bleibenn, vnnd muste allso widerumb vnngeschaffter ding daruonn ziehenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 88.

[20] "Vnd kam also darmit inn funff phedt, die all auß einer hergefloßenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 87.

road where Götz planned to capture the caravan, asked him to leave the wagons alone. Surprisingly, Götz acquiesced to the count's request because "he so highly and graciously admonished me, that I let the nine wagons drive through. And his grace offered that he would make it up to me another time . . . as he later did."[21]

How, exactly, the Count of Königstein "made it up" to Götz is not clear, but it was the count who brokered the negotiations that led to the feud's resolution. The negotiations must be attributed, at least in part, to the city simply wanting to be free of the pesky nobleman with the iron hand. Thus, on November 28, 1510, at a meeting in Frankfurt, the city council agreed to pay Götz and Sindelfinger 1,000 florins.[22] This represented an almost ten-fold increase from the original tournament prize of 105 florins. Based on this huge return, it is no wonder that Götz considered feuding a viable business venture.[23]

The Feud with Nuremberg

Götz's next feud, with Nuremberg, ran from the summer of 1512 to the summer of 1514. In the autobiography, Götz bluntly stated that he was itching for a fight with the imperial city, writing that "I do not want to hide from anyone that I wanted to become the enemy of those of Nuremberg."[24] His declared reason for the feud was that Nuremberg had captured a friend and killed one of his servants. Although Götz's accusations were

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[21] "Vnnd ermant mich so hoch vnnd gnediglich, das ich die neun wegenn, die da hilltenn wider fahrenn ließ. Vnd erbotten sich ire gn., sie woltens inn einem anderm wider herrein bringenn, vnd in guttem vnd gnadenn nimmermehr gegenn mir in vergeß stellenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 84.

[22] Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany*, 208. Götz gave Sindelfinger 300 florins and kept the other 700 florins for himself.

[23] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 56. For brokering the negotiations, the Count of Königstein received 106 florins.

[24] "Nun will ich niemandt bergenn, ich hett willenn auch derenn vonn Nurnnberg feindt zu werdenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 91.

loosely based on events that had actually transpired, both situations had been resolved several years prior to Götz's feud declaration.[25]

Why Götz included such an easily discredited casus belli in the autobiography is unclear, but it is not hard to identify what the real reasons behind the feud were. First, as the Schott-Nuremberg feud laid bare, there was a deep-seated animosity in southern Germany between the country-dwelling landed nobility and city-dwelling merchants of cities like Nuremberg. Second, Nuremberg was one of the richest cities in the empire and therefore an appealing target. Götz even speculated that had the feud gone as planned, he could have made 200,000 florins.[26] Although this number was probably hyperbole, it nonetheless underscores the great wealth of the city. Third, it was a Nuremberg cannonball that had taken off Götz's hand, which made him want to take revenge on the city that caused him so much suffering. Fourth, the Cologne feud bolstered Götz's reputation as a feud entrepreneur, making it easier to attract support for his next business venture. Without strong support from the nobility, the feud with Nuremberg would have been untenable, but with it, Götz calculated that he had a high chance of success.

Götz's opening attack occurred on May 18th, 1512, as fifty-five merchants, the majority of whom were from Nuremberg, were returning from the Leipzig trade fair. As they crossed a ford on the Regnitz River between Neuses and Forchheim under the escort of the bishop of Bamberg, who controlled the ford crossing, they were ambushed by 130

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[25] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 59. For a detailed description of the feud with Nuremberg, see Johann Kamann, *Die Fehde des Götz von Berlichingen mit der Reichsstadt Nürnberg und dem Hochstifte Bamberg, 1512-1514: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der öffentlichen Zustände Frankens nach dem ewigen Landfrieden und zur Characteristik des Ritters mit der eisernen Hand* (Nuremberg: Verlag John. Leonh. Schrag, 1893).
[26] Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 95.

disguised riders commanded by Götz and Hans von Selbitz, a Franconian knight with one leg to match Götz's one arm. Some of Götz's kin participated in the attack, including two of his brothers, Philipp and Wolf, and all three of his maternal uncles. Many other distinguished people were also involved in the attack and its aftermath, either by supplying riders, selling stolen goods, or hiding prisoners. The raid was over in a matter of minutes, with the riders disappearing into the forest with their prisoners and booty as quickly as they had appeared.[27] When Emperor Maximillian learned what had happened, he wryly commented, "Holy God, Holy God, what is that? The one has one hand and other one leg, if they had both had two legs and two hands, what then would they have done?" [28]

The emperor's grudging admiration for the audacity of the one-armed and one-legged leaders of the raid on the Regnitz did not prevent him from placing both men under the imperial ban. In October 1512, the Swabian League, the enforcers of the perpetual public peace, made their first major strike on Götz's supporters by destroying a castle, the *Hohenkrähen*, a noble stronghold, followed by the capture of Hans von Selbitz's castle, the *Frauenstein*.[29]

After the emperor placed Götz under the imperial ban, his goods and property were slated to be condemned, confiscated, and sold with the proceeds used to compensate the merchants he had attacked. Before the confiscation went into effect, however, the

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[27] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 61-63. Prior to Götz's feud declaration and first attack, he had several meetings with Nuremberg that failed to produce any results. The fact that Nuremberg was even willing to negotiate with Götz reflected his growing reputation.

[28] "Heilliger gott, heilliger gott, was ist das? Der ein hatt ein hanndt, so hat der annder ein bein, wann sie dann erst zwo henndt hettenn, und zwey bein, wie wollt ir dann thun?" Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 95.

[29] Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 95 fn 239.

emperor revoked the order to confiscate Götz's goods and property. The emperor's about-face had more to with realpolitik than any friendly feelings towards Götz. The Swabian League was not a perpetual union, but rather a confederation that was renewed every twelve years through negotiation. In 1512, the league was up for renegotiation, and although most of its members had agreed to renew their membership for another twelve years, there were several key holdouts, including the bishop of Würzburg, the duke of Württemberg, and the Count Palatine. Confiscating Götz's property would require a large and potentially unwelcome war party to cross the territory of the bishop, the duke, and the count, all of whom the emperor still hoped to convince to rejoin the Swabian League. As a result, Maximilian called off the confiscation of Götz's property but kept the imperial ban on him in place.[30]

The imperial ban did not prevent Götz from pursuing his feud with Nuremberg with a vengeance. After the raid at the Regnitz, Götz led at least seven more raids over the next two years.[31] These raids were similar to those undertaken in Götz's previous feuds and usually involved some combination of looting, burning, and prisoner-taking. What is especially interesting, however, is the near-panic the raids caused in Nuremberg. Most notably, in March 1513, a caravan of merchants from Nuremberg was slated to travel to the Frankfurt trade fair. On the outgoing journey, they were accompanied by 420 foot soldiers and 120 riders. On the return journey, they were accompanied by 800 foot soldiers and 207 riders. Nuremberg calculated the cost of the escort at 3,237 florins,[32] or

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[30] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 69-71.
[31] Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 94 fn 297.
[32] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 73.

about 6% of the city's annual revenue.[33] The massive escort had the desired effect of deterring Götz from attacking the caravan, but it also underscored the potentially huge economic impact of a successful raid and the lengths to which the great merchant cities of southern Germany would go to protect the flow of commerce.

In May 1513, Götz attacked a group of merchants from Augsburg near Zuckmantel bei Öhringen that he mistook for merchants from Nuremberg. This attack incurred the wrath of the powerful banker Anton Welser of Augsburg, who had an interest in the caravan. Then, in July 1514, Götz attacked merchants from Nuremberg travelling under the escort of his old patron and ally, Margrave Friedrich, near Bad Mergentheim. Götz made no mention of the attack at Bad Mergentheim in the autobiography, but, not surprisingly, the margrave felt betrayed by his actions. In a letter he sent to Götz a week after the attack, the margrave stated that "We don't understand, as we raised you and all our days showed no malice towards you, but rather have demonstrated graciousness and goodness [towards you]."[34] In subsequent letters Götz sent to Friedrich and his son Kasimir, he tried to shift the blame to the margrave's escort that had accompanied the merchant train, but neither Ansbach nor Nuremberg, for once on the same page, believed Götz. Why Götz attacked the merchant train at Bad Mergentheim is not clear, but greed and hubris seem likely culprits. Nuremberg estimated that the attack netted Götz 2,445 florins worth of stolen goods, but it came at the loss of

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[33] Peter Wilson, *Heart of Europe: A History of the Holy Roman Empire* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 532. The 6% is based on Peter Wilson's estimate that Nuremberg's annual revenue c.1500 was about 51,000 florins. Even if Ulmschneider and Wilson valued florins differently, it was still a huge amount of money.

[34] "So hetten wir uns das zu dir nit verstehen, [wo] wir dich erzogen und dir all unser tag kain args, sonder gnad und guts bewiesen haben." Quoted in Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 73.

an erstwhile ally in the margrave. At the same time, Götz's attack on the Augsburg merchant train the year before created a new, powerful enemy in the person of Anton Wesler.[35]

Götz did not suffer immediate retaliation for his actions at Zuckmantel and Bad Mergentheim as infighting among the major powers of southern Germany about a host of issues prevented them from taking collective action against Götz or anyone else. As the powers bickered, Götz led three additional attacks against merchant parties from Nuremberg, one in December 1513, and two more in early 1514. None of these attacks were particularly lucrative, but the December 1513 attack was important because Duke Ulrich of Württemberg not only allowed the attack to occur on his territory but also provided shelter for Goetz and the stolen goods, a fact that that would be remembered when the negotiations to end the feud began.[36]

Götz undoubtedly would have preferred the feud to drag on for as long as it remained profitable, but by 1514, the princes and powers of southern Germany were ready for the feud to end. As a result, Götz had little choice but to acquiesce to the decisions they made. When the parties reached a resolution in June 1514, there was not a clear winner but there were some clear losers. Nuremberg agreed to a 14,000 florin settlement even though the city's losses were probably much higher. The bishop of Würzburg, Lorenz von Bibra, contributed 7,000 florins to the settlement, Count Palatine Ludwig and Duke Ulrich of Württemberg each contributed 2,000 florins, and the commander of Bad Mergentheim, who was responsible for the escort that had been

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[35] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 72-74.
[36] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 74-75.

attacked outside the city, contributed 1,000 florins. Götz, the feud's instigator, contributed just 2,000 florins.[37]

Lorenz von Bibra paid the highest price because he was Götz's most active princely collaborator. His officials oversaw the trafficking of stolen goods, the payment of ransoms, and provided shelter for Götz and his supporters. In addition, Lorenz von Bibra himself was old and sick, a fact that the other participants in the negotiations unabashedly took advantage of. Bibra was also wealthy, and just like lawyers today are trained to follow the money, the representatives at Augsburg considered the bishop a lucrative and easy target. Count Palatine Ludwig and Duke Ulrich were culpable for the same reasons as Bibra, but they had not supported Götz to the same extent as the bishop and they were more capable of defending themselves. The commander of Bad Mergentheim, in contrast, was a scape goat. His only crime was that he did not pursue Götz as aggressively as some officials thought he should have in the immediate aftermath of the attack on the merchants near Bad Mergentheim.[38]

What is most remarkable about the resolution of the Nuremberg feud is that Götz walked away from it largely unscathed. Despite starting the feud and causing most of the damage associated with it, the 2,000 florin fine was a fraction of what he probably earned from the feud.[39] What accounts for this lax punishment?

By the time the parties involved in the feud were ready to negotiate, the issue at question was not so much one of justice but rather who could pay. Clearly, Nuremberg

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[37] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 75-76. The total settlement, including negotiation fees, was 15,000 florins.
[38] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 75.
[39] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 77.

needed to be compensated for their losses, but getting Götz to pay for more or even most of the damages was not an option for at least three reasons. First, many powerful people benefitted from the feud and were therefore unlikely to demand harsh punishment for its instigator. These powerful people not only benefitted monetarily through the sale of stolen goods and taking cuts from ransom payments, but more importantly, and much like the Schott-Nuremberg feud a decade earlier, they were happy to see Nuremberg undermined politically. Second, constant infighting among the powers of southern Germany made it difficult to take collective action against Götz and other well-connected troublemakers. Once again, Götz's social network was a crucial part of his success, as he was able to draw on the support of both his patrons and his peers, a rare alignment that made him almost untouchable, if only for a short time. Third, Götz enjoyed strong moral support from the nobility. Through the feud with Nuremberg, Götz inadvertently became a hero to many of his peers by virtue of the fact that he was standing up to–and succeeding against–a city, and, more generally, a way of life, that many of them despised. It was not so much that Götz actively sought to become a moral leader of the nobility by standing up for their "traditional" rights, but rather that his interest and theirs overlapped in the feud. Götz was savvy enough to realize this, and he used it to his great advantage.

The Feud with Mainz

Götz's last major feud, from the summer of 1514 to the summer of 1516, was with the archbishop of Mainz, Albrecht von Brandenburg. The feud resulted from a dispute between one of Götz's peasants and some villagers from a nearby town about who had the right to use a local field. After Götz's peasant planted some crops in the

disputed field, the villagers, described by Götz as "those of Buchen,"[40] allowed their livestock to graze in the field, destroying the crops that had been planted.

In June 1514, Götz sent the first of several letters to Albrecht demanding compensation for the harm inflicted on him and his peasant because "those of Buchen" were under the archbishop's jurisdiction. When nothing came of these requests and subsequent meetings between representatives of the parties at Adelsheim and Tauberbishofsheim, Götz sent an *Absage* to Albrecht, thus morphing a small property dispute into a full-fledged armed conflict that Götz executed with his usual enthusiasm.[41]

The first attack occurred on September 8th, 1515, on the east side of the Main River about fifteen miles north of Miltenberg. Götz and 150 riders[42] ambushed a merchant caravan travelling to the Frankfurt trade fair under the archbishop's escort. Götz had hoped to capture between "four and five tons of gold"[43] from the caravan, but a scout mistook the advance guard of the caravan for the main body. Götz commenced the attack based on the scout's information, but by the time he realized he was attacking the vanguard of wagons rather than the main caravan, it was too late to pull back. Ever the opportunist, Götz thought to himself, "something is better than nothing, you will still get 8,000 gulden out of it, so with that let the war get started."[44]

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[40] "Die vonn Buchenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 106.

[41] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 80.

[42] Götz stated in the autobiography that there were 152 riders. In a letter to the Swabian League requesting assistance, Albrecht claimed there were 226 riders. Nuremberg sources listed the number at only 60 riders. Regardless, it was a large number of riders. Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 81.

[43] "So woldt ich vmb die 4 oder 5 thunen goldts vff denn tag erlanngt." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 107-108.

[44] "Vnnd dacht ich, es ist dannocht besser etwas dann gar nichts, du wöllt dannocht ein guldern oder 8000 herrauß bringenn, mit welchenn dem krieg ein annfanng mag gemacht werdenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 108.

The next attack in the "war" occurred on December 12th, 1515, when Götz captured a high-ranking official in Archbishop Albrecht's administration, Dr. Johann Küchenmeister, as he travelled to the imperial diet at Ulm. Shortly after his capture, the doctor escaped with the help of Marx Stumpf, the bailiff of Krautheim, a town near Jagsthausen under Albrecht's jurisdiction. Götz retaliated by setting fires in Krautheim and two other nearby villages controlled by the bishop, Ballenberg and Oberndorf. Götz claimed he committed the arson because he wanted to force Stumpf out of his castle and into a face-to-face confrontation, but Stumpf did not take the bait and instead mocked Götz from a window. Götz's response to Stumpf's taunting became the most famous line of the autobiography, "er soldt mich hinden leckhenn," translation, kiss my ass.[45]

After the incident with Stumpf, Götz departed Franconia for a "distant foreign land."[46] From this location–he did not specify where– Götz coordinated a tripartite surveillance campaign with subordinates stationed in Thuringia, Franconia, and the Buchenwald. Götz had "good information"[47] that a caravan would be travelling from Halle to Frankfurt carrying 34,000 florins to repay the Fugger banking firm for a loan they had extended to Albrecht for the purchase of his pallium.[48] In order to reach Frankfurt, the caravan would have to follow a route that passed through one of the three areas Götz's men were watching. Götz issued strict instructions to his subordinates that if

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[45] The literal translation is "He should lick my ass," commonly referred to as the Swabian salute. For an entertaining and informative discussion of the long afterlife of Götz's infamous insult, see Paul M. Malone, "Who is Götz von Berlichingen, and Why Is He Saying Those Terrible Things?," *Germans* make comics, too! . . . And Austrians, Swiss, Luxembourgers – German Speakers Of All Kinds!!* (blog), June 3, 2018, accessed May 15, 2020, https://germansmakecomicstoo.hcommons.org/2018/02/17/who-is-gotz-von-berlichingen-and-why-is-he-saying-those-terrible-things/.

[46] "Inn ein weitt frembdt landt." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 110.

[47] "Nun macht ich gutte kundtschafft vber sie, die nit mehr dann recht vnnd gewiß war." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 110.

[48] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 84.

the caravan passed through their surveillance sphere, "they should not undertake anything, whatever it was, but should wait for the action and order."[49] Instead of following the instructions, one of the surveillance parties grew impatient waiting for the caravan and "pillaged and sacked"[50] two villages in Amöneburg, a district under Albrecht's jurisdiction in Hesse. When the councilors travelling with the caravan learned about the attack, which occurred close to where they were staying, "they got up again in the night, hitched rested horses to the wagons, and hurried away,"[51] thus escaping Götz's carefully laid trap. Götz, who understood the fickle nature of the feud better than anyone, was still bitter about the incident 45 years later, ruminating in the autobiography that "it went very poorly, that in such a short time so many attempts failed and were ruined by sloppy, faithless people."[52]

Although Götz's helpers may indeed have been "sloppy, faithless people," matters were made more difficult by the fact that Archbishop Albrecht took a more proactive approach to the feud after the torching of Ballenberg, Oberndorf, and Krautheim. The initial attack outside Miltenberg had not only harmed the merchants of Mainz, but also merchants from Nuremberg, Augsburg, Ulm, and Salzburg. As a result, the archbishop tried to recruit these cities for a campaign against Götz, but they were wary of another direct confrontation with the one-armed knight so soon after the conclusion of the

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[49] "Vnnd befall inn auch sie sollten nichts furnemmen, es wehr was es wollt, sonnder soltenn des hanndels vnnd beschaidts erwarttenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 110.

[50] "Blundertenn vnnd brandtschatztenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 110.

[51] "Warren sie inn der nacht wider vff, namen geruhete geull inn die wegenn vnd eillten mit vort." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 111.

[52] "Vnd ging mir allso seher vbell, das mir also inn der kurtzen zeitt souil groß annschleg zu ruck schlugenn, vnnd durch liederlich heilloß leutt verwarlost wurdenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 111.

feud with Nuremberg.[53] The archbishop even had difficulty rallying support among his own vassals, many of whom were nobles sympathetic to Götz.[54] Despite these challenges, the archbishop continued to pressure the Swabian League to take aggressive action against Götz. At the same time, Albrecht put his own forces on high alert and made repairs and improvements on the castles and fortresses scattered throughout his territory.[55]

Although the feud with Mainz is usually described as just that–a feud–the actions undertaken by the archbishop to prepare for the conflict were indistinguishable from what would have been done in preparation for war, once again underscoring the difficulty of distinguishing between feud and war as categories of violence and pointing to the need to describe how individuals experienced these forms of conflict rather than try to define them. For Götz, as previously discussed, there did not seem to be a difference between how he approached feud and war, and the same seems to have been true of Archbishop Albrecht. If two men from such different walks of life–one a feuding nobleman, the other a prince of the church–did not approach feud and war differently, it is difficult to imagine that anyone did. Certainly, jurists and other learned people liked to make technical distinctions between feud and war, but when iron met iron, such distinctions quickly fell by the wayside.

In April 1516, Götz captured Philipp II, the count of Waldeck, an important ally of the archbishop, as he was travelling with a small escort in Westphalia. The count's capture reflected both the geographic scope of Götz's social network–Westphalia is well

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[53] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 82.
[54] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 83.
[55] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 83-84.

north of Franconia–and the overlapping nature of feuds. Götz captured the count with the assistance of several riders lent to him by Georg von Bischofsrode, who at the time was in his own feud with the abbot of Fulda and who Götz had taken as a prisoner in the feud with Nuremberg. Apparently, this had not created any longstanding animosity between the men.[56] Despite the fortuitous capture of the count, by mid-April 1516, Albrecht had finally convinced the Swabian League to approve an overwhelming show of force against Götz. On July 25th, 1516, 400 cavalry and 4,000 infantry were scheduled to rendezvous for a summer campaign against the one-armed knight. When Götz learned about the plan, he decided that he was ready to negotiate.[57]

Negotiations to end the feud with Mainz commenced in Schweinfurt on July 8th, 1516. By August 27th, the parties had reached an agreement. Albrecht's chief objective was to not be held liable for the prisoners and goods that had been captured by Götz under the archbishop's escort. The original cause of the feud, the disputed field farmed by Götz's peasant and grazed by the livestock of "those of Buchen," received scant attention and was delegated to a third-party arbitrator, suggesting that this had been an excuse rather than a reason for Götz to declare a feud. At the same time, Götz had a reputation to protect, and allowing the incident to go unchallenged would have reflected poorly on his character. Once again demonstrating that he had learned how to make the feud pay, Götz was allowed to keep the money he had extorted from merchants during the feud. In

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[56] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 84-86. Nuremberg suspected that Bischofsrode had arranged for his capture by Berlichingen so that they could split the ransom money.
[57] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 87-88.

return, Götz promised to free his remaining captives at no cost, with the critical exception of the count of Waldeck.[58]

Albrecht was unwilling to pay the ransom for the count of Waldeck, and as a result, the negotiations to free the count were separate from the negotiations to end the feud with the archbishop. Götz finally released the count of Waldeck for the whopping sum of 8,400 florins on September 2nd, 1516. The duke of Cleves, Johann II, agreed to pay the majority of the ransom–5,400 florins–because Götz captured the count as he was travelling to Ravensberg, a territory of the Duchy of Cleves, to oversee his duties as district governor. Relatives of the count pitched in 700 florins and, in the end, the archbishop contributed 2,000 florins.[59] Götz rightly considered the feud with the archbishop of Mainz a great success, bragging in the autobiography that "I have brought such a powerful prince in so short a time to the point where he begged me for peace."[60]

The Hornberg

In February 1517, Götz used some of the proceeds from his feuds with Cologne, Nuremberg, and the archbishop of Mainz to purchase a castle, the *Hornberg*, from Konrad Schott for 6,500 florins.[61] The *Hornberg* was the ultimate symbol of Götz's rise from the fifth son of a Franconian noble to a leading figure of the nobility because it quite literally signaled lordship.[62] In addition to buying the *Hornberg*, by 1517, Götz was an office holder of Duke Ulrich of Württemberg, Count Palatine Ludwig, and the Count of

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[58] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 89, 95. Ulmschneider estimated that the total amount Götz earned from the feud with Mainz was, at minimum, 13,800 florins.

[59] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 89-90.

[60] "Vnd ein solchenn mechtigenn furstenn inn so kurtzer zeit dahin gebrachtt, das er meins fridens begert hatt." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 114.

[61] Ulmschneider, 96. The castle came with two villages attached to it, Zimmern and Steinbach.

[62] Hillay Zmora, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 83.

Hohenlohe.[63] Office holding was not necessarily as lucrative as a successful feud, but it provided the holder with steady income at minimal risk and it created a concrete connection to a patron. In addition, Götz continued to diversify his sources of revenue through the acquisition of land and marriage. In January 1518, Götz married Dorothea Gailing von Illesheim, the only child of a wealthy nobleman, Arnold Gailing von Illesheim. With the marriage, Götz gained a substantial dowry and a claim on Arnold's inheritance that was realized in 1521.[64] He was also in line to receive portions of inheritances from relatives whose primary heirs died prematurely, such as Konrad von Berlichingen, or who had no heirs, such as Fritz von Thüngen.[65] A final source of revenue for Götz was income derived from loans he extended to other members of the nobility and even some princes.[66] Loans in early modern Germany were not simply financial transactions, but rather instruments with political and social import that "linked nobles to each other and to princes in a dense web of reciprocal relations."[67] As a result, loans were a crucial component not only in the accumulation of wealth, but also in the expansion of one's social network, a fact that Götz was undoubtedly aware of. Even Götz's wealth and social network, however, could not prepare him for or protect him from the troubles that he was soon to encounter.

[63] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 97.

[64] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 98.

[65] For a map of Götz's landholdings at the end of his life, see Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 200-201.

[66] For a list of the princes and nobles Goetz extended credit to between 1512 and 1557, see Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 204.

[67] Zmora, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany*, 57.

CHAPTER III: RACONTEUR, 1519-1562

The third chapter recounts Götz's life from age thirty-eight until his death at eighty-two. The autobiography has the least to say about the last forty-four years of Götz's life, suggesting that he preferred to focus on his "glory days" as a feuding nobleman. Starting in 1519, multiple imprisonments, a twelve-year castle arrest, and old age limited Götz's opportunities for martial combat. Denied the sword, Götz continued to fight his battles with the pen. In the process, a third layer of Götz's identity emerged, that of a raconteur. The autobiography was not only a defense of a life of dubious deeds, but also the pièce de résistance of Götz's progression from soldier, to feud entrepreneur, to raconteur.

The Feud with Konrad Schott

A year after the purchase of the Hornberg, Götz became involved in a feud with the castle's former owner, Konrad Schott, that severely damaged his reputation among the Franconian nobility and that foreshadowed the troubles Götz experienced in the 1520s.[1] The feud with Schott stemmed from a debt disagreement. Schott had borrowed money from the Bödigheim family, but when they demanded Schott repay his debt, Schott abducted a member of the family, Georg von Bödigheim. Georg von Bödigheim was a vassal of Count Palatine Ludwig V, so the attack was as much an act of aggression against the Count Palatine as it was the Bödigheim family.[2] Ludwig asked Götz and

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[1] Helgard Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen: Ein adeliges Leben der deutschen Renaissance* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1974), 100-101.

[2] Ludwig V, nicknamed "the peaceful," (*der Friedfertige*), was also the elector Palatine. He was the son of Philipp "the upright" (*der Aufrichtige*), who died in 1508, and the brother of Count Palatine Ruprecht, who died in 1504 of dysentery during the Landshut War of Succession.

another nobleman, Wilhelm von Habern, to handle the feud on his behalf. As an

officeholder of the Count Palatine, Götz had little choice but to accept Ludwig's request.

Götz recognized that a feud with Schott would put him in an awkward position

vis-à-vis the nobility. As he wrote in the autobiography, "I have had many feuds and

enmities, also my lords and friends have struggled and been used on my behalf and have

experienced great trouble and danger. If now the same good companions were brought

into this trouble, it would be difficult for me to capture them and keep my honor."[3] The

best way to keep his honor, Götz judged, was to follow the proper protocol of a feud. He

asked Count Palatine Ludwig to make a writ explaining why the feud was necessary and

for it to be disseminated throughout southern Germany. As an experienced feuder, Götz

understood that the battle for hearts and minds would be just as important as physical

confrontation in the feud with Schott, who, like Götz, was a leader among the nobility.

By highlighting Schott's dishonorable actions that led to the feud, Götz hoped the

nobility would rally to his cause; feuds were as much propaganda battles as they were

physical battles.[4]

After Ludwig sent the requested writ to princes and nobles throughout southern

Germany, Götz went about the normal business of a feud. Schott, however, was just as

savvy of a feuder as Götz, and he frustrated all attempts at capture. Indeed, Schott even

one-upped Götz by kidnapping his nephew, Hans Georg von Thüngen. Götz retaliated by

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[3] "Mein gesell du hast gutt wißenn, das ich viell vhedt vnnd feindtschafft gehabt hab, auch meine hern vnnd freundt bemhüt vnnd gebraucht, die sich meinthalbenn inn große sorg vnnd geuerlichkeit begebenn. Sollt nun derselbigenn guttenn gesellenn einer im hanndell verdechtlich sein oder werdenn, das wer mir beschwerlich inn nider zuwerffenn, sonnderlich so vnuerwartt meiner ehrnn." Götz von Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, ed. Helgard Ulmschneider (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1981), 116.

[4] Hillay Zmora, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 64-65.

capturing a relative of Schott, Valtin Schott von Eichelsdorf, who had assisted in Hans

Georg's capture. With the bargaining chip of Valtin Schott, Götz was able to secure the

release of both Georg von Bödigheim and Hans Georg. Further mediation led by the

bishop of Bamberg resulted in a peace agreement between Götz and Schott that took

effect in October 1518.[5]

The formal settlement of the feud could not disguise the fact that Götz had sided

with a prince against one of his peers, and a popular one at that. Regardless of the validity

of the feud itself, much of the Franconian nobility were put-off by Götz's work for the

Count Palatine and other princes, who they viewed as threatening their autonomy and

traditional rights.[6] In previous feuds, Götz's interests had aligned with those of the

nobility, but this was no longer the case. As a wealthy man with extensive land holdings,

he now had more in common with the princes than he did with many of his less

successful peers. Some of these men may have envied Götz's success, and the feud with

Schott would have only furthered their resentment. The autobiography made it clear that

this resentment was widespread, with the most telling incident occurring when Götz

mistakenly ran into a party of nobles who had sided with Schott. Götz knew many of the

men, including his brother-in-law, Sigmund Truchseß von Wetzhausen.[7] Although the

party did not harm Götz, "they said many bad things"[8] about him. In this context, it is not

surprising that Götz increasingly pivoted towards powerful patrons in the late 1510s, the

most consequential of whom was Duke Ulrich of Württemberg.

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[5] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 100.

[6] Zmora, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany*, 142.

[7] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 236. Sigmund was the husband of Götz's sister, Amalia.

[8] "Hettenn sie eintheill vill boser red vnnd wortt getribenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 121.

Duke Ulrich of Württemberg

Ulrich became the duke of Württemberg in 1498, but a regency ruled in Stuttgart until he came of age in 1503.[9] It was during Ulrich's regency that Götz joined Hans von Thalacker's feuding gang and "grabbed whatever belonged to Württemberg."[10] Ulrich, like Götz, fought on the side of Duke Albrecht of Bavaria-Munich in the Landshut War of Succession. Ulrich gained a considerable amount of territory for the duchy as a result of the war, which he energetically executed by invading the Palatinate with a 20,000-man army at the tender age of seventeen. As one historian commented, "The young duke appears to have made his greatest mark in the acquisition of land, particularly through war."[11]

If Ulrich did not already know Götz as a result of his stint with Thalacker or the Landshut War of Succession, the two men must have become acquainted, at the very latest, during Götz's feud with Cologne that started in 1508. Ulrich, it will be recalled, mediated the end of Götz's offshoot feud with the bishop of Bamberg, Georg von Limpurg, in 1510. In 1511, Götz and 16,000 other people attended Ulrich's wedding.[12] Ulrich also lent material support to Götz during the feud with Nuremberg before

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[9] Kenneth H. Marcus, *The Politics of Power: Elites of an Early Modern State in Germany* (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 2000), 42. Emperor Maximilian declared Ulrich fit to rule at age sixteen. Normally, rulers came of age at twenty.

[10] Götz von Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure - Götz von Berlichingen (1480-1562)," in *German History in Documents and Images*, trans. Thomas A. Brady, Jr. (Washington DC: German Historical Institute, n.d.), 5, accessed May 12, 2020, https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3706.

[11] Marcus, *The Politics of Power*, 42. The duchy acquired the following from the Palatinate as result of the Bavarian War: Cloister Maulbronn, the county (*Grafschaft*) of Löwenstein, the districts (*Ämter*) of Weinsberg, Neuenstadt am Kocher, and Möckmühl. In addition, Bavaria ceded the district of Heidenheim and the cloisters Königsbronn, Anhausen, and Herbrechtingen to Ulrich.

[12] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 97. Ulmschneider speculated that Götz recruited helpers for the feud with Nuremburg during the wedding celebrations.

distancing himself from Götz during the feud with Mainz.[13] Even then, the men must

have remained in close contact, because in 1517, Ulrich named Götz the *Amtmann*, a

position to similar to a bailiff, of Möckmühl and the commander of its accompanying

fortress. Located about twenty miles northeast of Heilbronn, Möckmühl was one of the

northernmost districts of Württemberg. For Götz, Möckmühl was strategically significant

because it ran between his lands on the Jagst and Neckar Rivers. In addition, the office

guaranteed Götz 200 florins a year and payment in kind of corn, wheat, and other

staples.[14]

Despite his success on the battlefield, Ulrich had trouble managing his domestic

affairs. In 1511, Ulrich married Sabina of Bavaria, the daughter of Duke Albrecht and the

niece of Emperor Maximilian.[15] At the insistence of the emperor, who hoped to expand

the Habsburg's influence in southwestern Germany, Sabina had been promised to Ulrich

when she was just six years old and Ulrich was only eleven. The young age of betrothal

combined with Ulrich's volatile temper and womanizing all but ensured that the marriage

would be an unhappy one. To make matters worse, Ulrich was a spendthrift. His

perpetual shortage of money resulted in excessive taxation of his subjects, who revolted

in 1514, in an uprising known as the Poor Konrad rebellion, a precursor to the Peasants'

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[13] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 88.

[14] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 97.

[15] Ulrich Maier, "'Württemberg ließ fliegen sein Fahn': Herzog Ulrichs Sieg über die Pfalz im Jahre 1504," *Momente: Beiträge zur Landeskunde von Baden-Württemberg* 1 (2004), accessed May 16, 2020, https://web.archive.org/web/20041210133145/http://www.momente-bw.de/cgi-bin/archiv/bzl/text.pl?id=719&J=2004&A=1&XAT=ALL. Sabina's mother, Kunigunde of Austria, was the sister of emperor Maximilian. One of the main reasons Maximilian wanted Sabina and Ulrich to marry was to increase the influence of the Habsburgs in southwestern Germany. Württemberg shared a border with the Rhineland Palatinate, ruled by the elector Palatine, Maximilian's chief rival for the leadership of Germany. The rivalry with the Palatinate also explains why Maximilian supported Duke Albrecht in the Landshut War of Succession when he should have served as mediator between the two sides.

War eleven years later. Götz helped Ulrich put down the revolt, a fact that should put pause to any notion that he was sympathetic to the peasantry.[16]

In May 1515, Ulrich murdered Hans von Hutten, a member of the Württemberg court, after Hutten married Ursula von Neuburg, the daughter of one of the most powerful officials in the duchy and the object of Ulrich's unrequited(?) love. The murder made Duke Ulrich the enemy of the influential von Hutten family and of the southwestern nobility writ large. Ulrich von Hutten, a well-known humanist and knight, put his pen to work against the duke, further contributing to his bad reputation among the nobility. In November 1515, Ulrich's wife, Sabina, fled to her family in Bavaria. The murder also cut off Ulrich from the support of the emperor, who placed him under the imperial ban in October 1516.[17] The ban convinced Ulrich to come to the negotiating table, where he agreed to compensate the von Hutten family for the death of Hans and to rearrange the duchy's government in a way that limited his power. In return, the emperor lifted the imperial ban. Shortly thereafter, however, Ulrich violated the terms of the agreement by executing several officials he accused of treason. The executions caused the emperor to reinstate the imperial ban on Ulrich in July 1518, but it was a dead letter because the political will no longer existed in Württemberg to dethrone the duke.[18]

Shortly after emperor Maximilian's death in January 1519, Ulrich invaded and annexed the imperial city of Reutlingen, on the pretense of avenging the murder of a ducal official and his wife that had occurred in the city. In reality, the invasion was an ill-

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[16] Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 98; Peter Wilson, *Heart of Europe: A History of the Holy Roman Empire* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 591.

[17] Werner Frasch, *Ulrich von Württemberg: Herzog und Henker* (Erfurt: Sutton Verlag, 2011), 59-65.

[18] Frasch, *Ulrich von Württemberg*, 65-68; Marcus, *The Politics of Power*, 46.

disguised power grab. The Swabian League responded swiftly and forcefully to Ulrich's aggression in a campaign led by Sabina's brother, Duke Wilhelm IV of Bavaria. By May, the Swabian League occupied Württemberg, Ulrich had fled, and Götz was a prisoner in Heilbronn.[19]

Capture at Reutlingen

When Ulrich annexed Reutlingen, Götz was serving as the *Amtmann* and commander of Möckmühl. Like many in Württemberg, Ulrich's seizure of Reutlingen took Götz by surprise. About six months before the invasion, Götz had informed the duke that he was planning on becoming an imperial knight after Franz von Sickingen, a close friend and feud collaborator, recruited Götz for imperial service. Before he could become an imperial knight, however, Götz had to see out his contract with the duke. With the details of the imperial contract settled, in which he "reserved that I would not be used against the duke or the Palatinate," Götz was ready to sign on the dotted-line, but before he could do so, Ulrich invaded Reutlingen, "at which point his princely grace and my misfortune began, and they [the Swabian League] chased him [Duke Ulrich] away, and I was ruined, and more damage was done to me than I have ever experienced on this earth."[20] As usual, Götz provided almost no context for the invasion other than the few

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[19] Marcus, *The Politics of Power*, 46.

[20] "So must ich denn dinst ein halb jar daruor ehe das jar auß wahr vffschreibenn, vnd riet daruff heim, vnnd schrieb denn dinst von stundt ann vff. Ich hett mir aber doch beuor behaltenn, das ich mich nit wider denn hertzogenn vonn Wurttennberg, vnnd die Pfaltz wollt brauchen lassenn . . . Vnnd vber ein kurtze zeit, do zog der hertzog fur Reuttlingenn, vnnd gewann es auch, darumb sich dann irer fn. gn. vnd mein vnngluck annhebenn thett, das ire fn. gn. verjagt worden vnd ich darob zu scheitternn ging, das mir dann mehr schadt, dann ich vff diesem erdtreich hab, wie ich dann woll wuste vrsach anzuzaigen." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 100.

lines quoted above and instead focused almost exclusively on his role in the ensuing war and the calamities it caused him.

Ulrich's invasion of Reutlingen provided the Swabian League with the perfect excuse to kill two troublesome birds with one stone, or, at the very least, clip their wings. In the retaliatory campaign against Ulrich, the forces of the Swabian League tore through Württemberg in a matter of weeks. The army marched out from Ulm on March 28th, and by April 7th, Stuttgart had capitulated. The capture of Stuttgart resulted in almost all of Württemberg's surrender. Götz at Möckmühl was one of the few exceptions. Further adding to Götz's trouble, Möckmühl itself (as opposed to the fortress), as well as the neighboring districts of Weinsberg and Neuenstadt, switched their allegiance to the Swabian League after the fall of Stuttgart and started to besiege Möckmühl fortress two days before the Swabian League reached the city.[21] As Götz lamented, "they neither held to their lord nor me, as, in my opinion, faithful and loyal servants should."[22] Trapped in Möckmühl without adequate food, water, or supplies, the siege reduced Götz and his entourage to the point that "we had no more bullets to shoot, other than what I made from the window and door hinges."[23] With the arrival of the Swabian League–1,000 landsknechts in the pay of Bavaria–Götz's situation deteriorated from critical to hopeless, or, as he put it, "the cats were already at the mousetrap, and waited for the little mouse, so

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[21] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 104-105.

[22] "Vnd hiltenn irem herrnn, vnnd mir nit, wie sie dann meins bedenckhenns vnnd erachtenns billich gethann solltenn habenn, alls wie frommen leuttenn vnnd hindersessenn geburt." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 101.

[23] "So hettenn wir auch khein kugelnn mehr zuschiessenn, dann was ich auß denn fensternn, thur enngelnn, zin vnnd was es war, zuwegen bracht." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 102.

that they could devour it."[24] Götz and sixty of his fellow defenders made a last-ditch attempt to escape the fortress in the early hours of the morning on May 11th, but a patrol of landsknecht captured Götz and killed many of his companions.[25] As Götz matter-of-factly concluded, "and so because I was defeated at Möckmühl, I was imprisoned for four and a half years by the confederation at Heilbronn."[26]

Imprisonment at Heilbronn

Götz's imprisonment at Heilbronn lasted from May 11th, 1519, to October 7th, 1522, a total of 1,245 days, or just shy of three and a half years. He could have reduced his imprisonment by 1,216 days, or 98%, if he had signed the original *Urphed* the Swabian League offered him on June 5th, 1519.[27] Götz found the terms of the *Urphed* unacceptable because, as he explained to his captors, "I told them I had entered into an honorable feud, and I had stayed true to my gracious prince and lord, like a pious and honorable nobleman and knight."[28] The fact that Götz described Ulrich's conflict with the Swabian League as a "feud" once again demonstrates that scale is not a particularly helpful form of differentiation between feud and war and the passage adds further support to the argument that Götz saw little if any difference between feud and war. Götz was probably sincere in his belief that the punishment doled out to him by the Swabian League did not fit the crime, which, after all, he did not really view as a crime at all but

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[24] "Wie dann schonn die katzenn fur der meußfallenn wahrenn, vnnd warttenn vff das meußlin, das sie es fressenn wollten." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 101.

[25] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 106.

[26] "Vnnd bin also, wie ich zu Meckmulnn nider lag, vierthalb jar inn des bundts verhafft zu Hailbronn gelegennn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 100-101.

[27] For a detailed list of the different peace agreements Götz was offered, see Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 126-127.

[28] "Darzu so zaigtt ich hingegenn ann, ich wer inn einer ehrlichenn vhedt betrettenn, vnd hett mich auch bey meinem gnedigen fursten vnd herrn, wie einem frumen ehrlichenn vom adell vnnd ritterman woll annstundt, gehalten." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 103.

rather loyal, contractually-obligated service to his lord and patron, Duke Ulrich. Even more fundamental to Götz's refusal to sign the *Urphed*, however, was the belief that he could get a better deal.[29]

Götz's belief that he could get a better deal was not unreasonable considering that he had proven himself a skillful negotiator many times before. His stance was further bolstered by the fact that the Swabian League, as usual, was divided amongst itself about how to handle their famous prisoner. Götz's supporters included Franz von Sickingen and George von Frundsberg, both of whom enjoyed positions of authority in the Swabian League. Frundsberg was the chief commander of the landsknecht contracted to the Swabian League and a friend of Götz. The men had known each other since the Landshut War of Succession fifteen years earlier. After the war, Emperor Maximilian knighted Frundsberg, who went on to serve Maximilian and his successor, Charles V, in almost all of their Italian campaigns until his death in 1528.[30] Franz von Sickingen was a close friend of Götz and a regular feud collaborator. Sickingen, through his feuds, had become more powerful than some princes and commanded a loyal following among the south German nobility.[31]

Frundsberg and Sickingen used their considerable clout to lobby on Götz's behalf. Opposite them were the many enemies Götz had made in more than a decades-worth of feuds. Nuremberg and Augsburg were particularly hostile towards Götz; they wanted him handed over to them and executed. Between Götz's friends and foes stood the city

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[29] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 109.

[30] Friedrich Zoepfl, "Frundsberg, Georg von," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 5 (1961), accessed May 16, 2020, https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118536524.html#ndbcontent.

[31] Hillay Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany: The Knightly Feud in Franconia, 1440-1567* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 119-120, 138.

council of Heilbronn, who had the unenviable task of overseeing Götz's imprisonment. Götz grew up just twenty miles outside Heilbronn, and several members of the city council knew him personally. Some of them had even attended his wedding a year before. Although Götz had alienated much of the Franconian nobility through his service to the princes, most of his peers did not want to see one of their own thrown to the wolves in Nuremberg or Augsburg. With many of these same nobles prowling the countryside around Heilbronn, the city council did not want to take any action that might incur their wrath.[32]

Götz's biggest mistake and the main reason he continued to push for better terms of release was that he believed Duke Ulrich would intervene on his behalf. During his imprisonment, Götz sent numerous letters to the duke, who was residing just outside the reach of the Swabian League at his castles in Montbéliard and Hohentwiel. Ulrich ignored the letters until Götz proposed a plan that could benefit the duke. Götz offered to arrange the capture of Thomas von Ehingen, a nobleman who had served the duke before switching sides and supporting the Swabian League. After Götz's associates captured Ehingen, Ulrich could exchange him for Götz and, presumably, pocket the negotiation fee. The plan lacked imagination, but given Götz's past success with similar schemes, there was a chance it could work. One of Götz's associates did, indeed, capture Ehingen, but once Ulrich had the prisoner, he ransomed Ehingen back to his family for 3,000 florins without any mention of Götz.[33]

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[32] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 108-112.
[33] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 117-122.

Betrayed by Ulrich and having no chance of receiving a better deal from the Swabian League, Götz signed an *Urphed* on October 7th, 1522. The terms were almost identical to those he had been offered three and a half years before: he was to pay 2,000 florins for his release plus the cost of room and board during his imprisonment;[34] he promised not to commit any violence against the members of the Swabian League for the rest of his life, even if the Swabian League itself dissolved; and, if a dispute did arise with a member of the Swabian League, it was to be settled in court. The terms of the *Urphed* were tantamount to Götz quitting the feud, which had been his lifeblood for more than a decade, the source of his fame and fortune, and, now, his misfortune.[35]

For all the hardship it caused him, the timing of Götz's imprisonment proved fortuitous. Beginning in the early 1520s, the Swabian League, having overcome internal strife, started to more rigorously enforce the perpetual public peace. Around the same time, much of the nobility started to question the efficacy of the feud for advancing their corporate interests.[36] That is not to say, however, that the feud disappeared quietly into the night. Rather, three significant conflicts occurred during or shortly after Götz's imprisonment that resulted in the death, incarceration, or pacification of many of Götz's erstwhile collaborators. The first was the feud of Mangold von Eberstein with Nuremberg that resulted in the capture of the notorious *Burg Brandenstein*, a refuge of the feuding

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[34] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 125. He spent the duration of his imprisonment in a "knightly prison," which meant the inn of Diez Wagenmann in Heilbronn. Although Götz was more or less confined to the inn, his family lived with him and he was allowed to attend church. During the imprisonment, Götz's wife Dorothea bore him at least one child. Dorothea was also Götz's primary contact point to the outside world as she could move freely to and from the inn.

[35] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 124.

[36] Zmora, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany*, 164-166.

nobility.[37] The second was the feud of Hans Thomas von Absberg that forced many of

Götz's closest friends and family members, including his brother Philipp, into peace

agreements with the Swabian League.[38] The third event was the so-called Knights' War

of 1523, in which Franz von Sickingen and Ulrich von Hutten lost their lives after leading

an uprising of the nobility against the princes of southern Germany that was brutally

suppressed by the Swabian League.[39]

The Peasants' War

Like many nobles, Götz was an early supporter of the Reformation.[40] Johann

Lachmann, the reformed preacher of St. Kilian's in Heilbronn, the church Götz attended

while imprisoned, introduced him to the reformed faith, and almost immediately upon his

release from prison, Götz arranged for a Lutheran preacher to replace the Catholic priest

in Neckarzimmern, one of the villages attached to the Hornberg. The autobiography,

however, makes no mention of this or any other incident directly related to the

Reformation with the exception of the Peasants' War. The archival record of Götz's

relationship to the Reformation is similarly sparse. As a result, Götz's religious life can

only be painted in the broadest of brushstrokes, but it can be assumed that the personal

piety Götz demonstrated in difficult moments as a young man–his desperate prayer after

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[37] On the Mangold von Eberstein feud, see Louis Ferdinand Freiherrn von Eberstein, ed., *Fehde Mangold's von Eberstein zum Brandenstein gegen die Reichsstadt Nürnberg, 1516-1522: Charakterbild der rechtlichen und wirtschaftlichen Zustände im deutschen Reiche unmittelbar vor dem grossen Bauernkriege* (Dresden: Wilhelm Baensch, 1879), Google Books.

[38] On the Hans Thomas von Absberg feud, see Joseph Baader, ed., *Verhandlungen über Thomas von Absberg und seine Fehden gegen den Schwäbischen Bund, 1519 bis 1530* (Tübingen: L.F. Fues, 1873), Google Books.

[39] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 138-140.

[40] On the role Franz von Sickingen and Ulrich von Hutten played in the early years of the Reformation, see Miriam Usher Chrisman, *Conflicting Visions of Reform: German Lay Propaganda Pamphlets, 1519-1530* (Boston: Humanities Press, 1996), 65-90.

the loss of his arm at Landshut comes most readily to mind–remained with him throughout his life, even if slightly altered in form as a result of the teachings of Luther.[41]

Although Götz had little to say about the Reformation–it was, after all, outside his purview of feud and war–many historians consider the autobiography to be one of the best accounts of the Peasants' War. Indeed, most modern scholars who have written about Götz have done so in the context of the Peasants' War, to the point that the story of Götz himself is often lost in the larger story of the revolt. The excessive focus on Götz's involvement in the Peasants' War, which lasted for approximately one month, to the exclusion of almost everything else that happened in his eighty-two years of life, has helped perpetuate the myth that the Peasants' War was the defining event of Götz life.[42] Without question, the Peasants' War had a significant impact on Götz, but so did many other events. For example, Götz himself stated that, "more damage was done to me than I have ever experienced on this earth"[43] as a result of his capture at Möckmühl, including, presumably, the Peasants' War. Thus, while the impact of the Peasants' War on Götz's life trajectory should not be underestimated, it should also not be overstated.

The central question about Götz's role in the Peasants' War is if his support of the peasants was forced or voluntary. In the autobiography, Götz strenuously denied

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[41] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 221-226.

[42] For example, Tom Scott and Bob Scribner write that "[Götz's autobiography] is colored by his desire to justify his own dubious role in the war, but contains much valuable information about the deliberations and divisions within the Franconian peasant bands." Tom Scott and Bob Scribner, eds. and trans., *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1991), 201. Likewise, Thomas A. Brady Jr., in a note on his translation of the autobiography's account of the Peasants' War, stated that "The memoir's conclusion is a vigorous, completely unabashed apology for the author's life in general, but above all his actions in 1525." Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure," trans. Brady, 9. Similarly, Ulmschneider wrote that "It [the Peasants' War] remains the central problem around which all of his thoughts circle. Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 134.

[43] Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 100.

accusations made by his enemies in the trials that occurred after the Peasants' War that he tried to use the revolt to his advantage. Rather, he claimed that the peasants forced him to serve as the captain of the Odenwald Band, a peasant army of about 5,000 men, shortly after the peasants captured Heilbronn on April 17th, because they needed an experienced soldier to lead their untrained army.[44] Having no choice, Götz agreed, on April 28th, to serve as the captain of the band for one month. Around the same time, the Odenwald Band joined forces with the Tauber Valley Band to create a combined force of about 15,000 men that marched on the bishopric of Würzburg. The combined army laid siege to the *Marienburg*, a formidable fortress perched above the city of Würzburg, for about two weeks. Due to the disorganized and ill-disciplined nature of the besieging army, the siege proved unsuccessful. On May 28th, his one-month contract having expired, Götz relinquished his captaincy and returned home to the Hornberg, narrowly avoiding the Swabian League's slaughter of the remaining peasant armies in Franconia.[45]

Götz argued in the autobiography that he made the best of a bad situation when he became the captain of the Odenwald Band by serving as a moderating influence on the peasants. As Götz put it, "I am not conscious of having done other than to prevent, to the extent I was able, great and noteworthy harm to many electors and princes, spiritual and temporal, also counts, barons, knights, and squires of estates higher and lower."[46] He also rejected the notion that he felt any sense of solidarity with the peasantry, writing "their nature and mine were as different from one another as heaven from earth."[47]

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[44] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 147.
[45] Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 122-129.
[46] Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure," trans. Brady, 9.
[47] Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure," trans. Brady, 8.

Because of the chaos that engulfed Franconia during the Peasants' War and the highly politicized nature of the sources produced during this time, it is difficult to confirm or refute Götz's claims of innocence. Ulmschneider, the only historian who has thoroughly reviewed the archival sources relating to Götz's actions in the Peasants' War, believed that Götz's account was basically credible, an assessment that is bolstered by the fact that the Odenwald Band was less radical than many of the other bands.[48] As Peter Blickle, the leading historian of the Peasants' War, wrote, "the armies of the Neckar Valley and the Odenwald confined themselves to programs more moderate than that of the men of the Tauber Valley."[49] Although it is true that a subgroup of the Odenwald Band under the radical leadership of Jäcklein Rohrbach was responsible for the murder of several nobles–some of whom were Götz's friends–at Weinsberg Castle on April 16th – the massacre that led Luther to publish his famous pamphlet, "Against the Murdering and Robbing Hordes of Peasants," the leadership of the Odenwald Band exiled Rohrbach and his followers as soon as they learned about the incident. Götz, too, was disgusted by the massacre at Weinsberg, and he made the leadership of the Odenwald Band promise that a similar incident would not be repeated if he accepted the captaincy, writing "Then I said that before I would be their commander and act as tyrannically as they had at Weinsberg, or even counsel or aid in such an act, they would have to kill me like a mad dog."[50]

Once he agreed to lead the army, Götz himself became a member of the Odenwald Band's leadership, a position that should have allowed him to exert some

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[48] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 155.
[49] Peter Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525: The German Peasants' War from a new Perspective*, trans. Thomas A. Brady, Jr. and Erik Midelfort (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 131.
[50] Berlichingen, "A Nobleman Lives for War, Plunder, and Adventure," trans. Brady, 8.

degree of influence over the band's behavior and political trajectory. The overall leader

of the band, Wendel Hipler, a lawyer and the former chancellor of the count of

Hohenlohe, was also a moderate who was more interested in reform than revolution.[51]

Crucially, from the perspective of Götz and other nobles, Hipler did not want to revoke

the rights of lordship but rather to introduce a reform program in Franconia based on the

Twelve Articles, the blueprint for most of the peasant reform programs introduced during

the Peasants' War. The most radical element of Hipler's proposal was to dissolve and

redistribute ecclesiastical lands.[52]

Given Götz's recent evangelical turn and his frequent quarrels with ecclesiastic

powers, he must have seen much to like in Hipler's program. Thus, it is not surprising

that Götz and one of his liege lords, Count Georg von Wertheim, helped Hipler draft the

Amorbach Declaration, "a watered down version of the Twelve Articles."[53] The problem

was that much of the army did not support the Amorbach Declaration because it was too

conservative, a situation that was exasperated once the Odenwald Band joined forces

with the more radical Tauber Band. As a result, the army that marched on the

Marienburg was divided amongst itself, making the already difficult task of capturing a

well-defended fortress even more difficult. Before the siege began, Götz tried to broker

an agreement with the defenders of the *Marienburg*, but his efforts at negotiation failed

due to mistrust on both sides. Following the failed negotiations and a half-hearted siege

of the fortress, Götz became persona non grata to many of the peasants, who suspected

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[51] Thomas Robisheaux, *Rural Society and the Search for Order in Early Modern Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 63-64.

[52] Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525*, 131-133.

[53] Joachim Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire,* vol. 1, *Maximilian to the Peace of Westphalia, 1493-1648* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 227.

that his real sympathies were with the defenders of the *Marienburg*. On May 23rd, the

peasants having made no headway and the army of the Swabian League marching in their

direction, Götz and the Odenwald Band departed Würzburg, and on May 28th, Götz left

the band for good. In the autobiography, Götz claimed that he left because his contract

had expired, but many of the Odenwalders viewed his departure as an abandonment of

the army that he had sworn to lead. In either case, Götz, as he so often did, timed his exit

well. On June 2nd, Götz enjoyed a peaceful day at home while the Swabian League

slaughtered the remnants of the Odenwald Band–2,000 men–in nearby Königshofen.[54]

Imprisonment at Augsburg and House Arrest

Götz escaped bodily harm in the Peasants' War, but he continued to deal with its

repercussions long after the suppression of the revolt. Although the autobiography is not,

as some have claimed, first and foremost an excuse for his actions in the war, there is no

question that one of the many reasons Götz wrote the autobiography was to present his

version of the events that transpired in the six weeks between the peasant army's seizure

of Heilbronn in mid-April and their slaughter at the hands of the Swabian League in early

June. The notion that the autobiography is an excuse for Götz's actions in the Peasants'

War is at once a truism–this could be said about any of the events Götz recounted in the

autobiography–and at the same time reflects the extent to which later accusations that

Götz willing and eagerly aided and abetted the peasant uprising became entangled with

the facts of what actually occurred. Of course, what actually occurred is not entirely

clear, but the preponderance of evidence supports Götz's claims that the peasants coerced

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[54] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 155-170.

his participation in their revolt and that he attempted to be a moderating influence on their actions. Many of Götz's contemporaries, including Count Palatine Ludwig, Margrave Kasimir, and the Franconian knighthood, found Götz's account credible and as a result they were sympathetic to Götz's protests of innocence in his post-war trials.[55] Powerful members of the Swabian League, however, most notably the bishops of Mainz and Würzburg, as well as the imperial cities of Nuremberg and Augsburg, took advantage of his vulnerable position in the aftermath of the Peasants' War to settle old scores with the one-armed knight.[56]

The primary accusation against Götz was that by joining the peasants he had violated the *Urphed* of 1522, in which he swore to never again feud or war with the Swabian League and / or its members. Götz himself had pointed to the *Urphed* as a reason why he could not serve as the captain of the peasant army when he was first recruited for the position, but the peasants were not swayed by his breach of contract argument. Between April and May 1525, Götz attempted on several occasions to inform the Swabian League that he was serving as captain of the peasants under duress so that he would not be charged with breaking the *Urphed*, but these messages either never reached the league or were ignored.[57]

On May 7th, 1528, riders from the Swabian League captured Götz and made him swear to appear before the league's tribunal when summoned. It is not clear why the Swabian League waited so long to apprehend Götz, but in November 1528, he arrived in

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[55] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 175.
[56] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 182-183. By 1523, Ansbach, Bamberg, and Würzburg had all joined the Swabian League, making it more difficult for Götz to play members and potential members of the Swabian League off each other.
[57] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 167-168.

Augsburg to stand trial. The chief plaintiffs were the bishops of Mainz and Würzburg and the abbot of Amorbach, all of whom sued Götz for damages suffered during the Peasants' War. The trial dragged on for a year and a half while Götz remained imprisoned in Augsburg, but the result–a ruling against Götz–was never in question. Thus, in March 1530, Götz agreed to a new *Urphed*. The terms were similar to those of the 1522 *Urphed*, with the added conditions that he would stay within the boundaries of the Hornberg for the rest of his life, and, to add insult to injury, that he would never again mount a horse.[58]

In the Service of the Emperor

Götz remained under castle arrest until 1542, when Emperor Charles V released him from the *Urphed*. The Swabian League ceased to exist in 1534 as a result of the centrifugal force of the Reformation, but since the *Urphed* was binding on Götz regardless of the status of the Swabian League, the dissolution of the league did not release him from his oath to its former members. In some respects, the end of the Swabian League complicated matters for Götz because he now had to deal with the former members of the league individually rather than as a group, a fact that may help account for the increase in litigation Götz experienced during the 1530s.[59]

In the autobiography, Götz said nothing about his twelve-year castle arrest, a stark contrast to the detailed accounts of his war and feuding years. Instead of feuding, Götz devoted most of his energy from the 1530s onward to letter writing, legal disputes, land acquisitions, and making loans, all of which required the use of the pen rather than the

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[58] For a detailed description of the trial at Augsburg, see Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 179-190.

[59] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 195-196. In 1534, Götz was found not liable for most of the damages that he had been accused of causing during the Peasants' War, saving him a great deal of money.

sword.[60] He also had more time to focus on his domestic affairs. His wife Dorothea died

in 1531, having born him five children–two boys and three girls–none of whom Götz

mentioned by name in the autobiography. Three of the children, Hans Jacob, Margaretha,

and Apollonia, continued Götz's line with children of their own. In addition, Götz had at

least three illegitimate children–all girls–with two maids. In the late 1540s, Götz married

again, but the name of his second wife is unknown and she did not bear him any

children.[61]

Götz was sixty-two years old when the Charles released him from his *Urphed* in

1542. The emperor's decision was the result of lobbying by powerful supporters of Götz

including Count Palatine Friedrich (Ludwig V's brother), Margrave Georg of Ansbach

(Kasimir's brother), and Landgrave Philipp of Hesse. All three men were committed

evangelicals which may have created a bond of solidarity with Götz. In addition, Götz

held land in fief from and / or had loaned money to the Count Palatine and the

Margrave.[62] More importantly, the emperor was in desperate need of experienced

soldiers for ongoing wars with the French, the Ottomans, and religious disputes within

the *Reich*.[63]

Following his release, Götz quickly proved his worth and the continued vitality of

his social network by raising one-hundred riders in less than two weeks for an impending

imperial campaign against the Ottomans. In the campaign, Götz travelled as far as the

outskirts of Vienna but saw no military action. In a familiar refrain, disease, rather than

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[60] For a detailed discussion of Götz's legal disputes after 1530, see Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*,, 191-214.

[61] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 234-239.

[62] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 204, 234-235.

[63] Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany*, 141.

the Ottomans, proved the deadliest enemy. As Götz recounted, "the greatest adventure, that I and my troop experienced, that occurred in Bavaria and into Austria, was the aggressive death, and the death came upon my troop also, and both nobles and non-nobles died. That is the adventure I experienced in the war."[64]

Götz's final imperial campaign occurred in 1544 against the French and it resembled his first imperial campaign forty-six years before in Burgundy. Indeed, the reason Charles led a campaign into France was the same as that of Maximilian: to secure the Habsburg's Burgundian inheritance. The campaign was short lived and there were only a handful of pitched battles and sieges. Götz took part in the siege of St. Dizier, a fortified town on the Marne River about sixty-five miles east of Nancy. He was impressed by the fighting spirit of the defenders, who held out for several months, but who eventually surrendered because of hunger and lack of munitions, a feeling Götz knew all too well. After the fall of St. Dizier, the emperor's forces entered French territory "and burned everything that was in our way,"[65] until both sides were exhausted and signed the Peace of Crépy in September 1544.[66] Like the Ottoman campaign, the greatest threat to Götz and his companions during the French campaign was disease. During the siege of St. Dizier, Götz contracted dysentery, "which lasted until I reached

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[64] "Vnd die groste abenntheur, die ich vnnd mein hauff bestanndenn, das ist der gewest, das es im lanndts Beiern biß inn Osterreich feinttlich starb, vnnd kham der sterbenndt vnnder mein hauffenn auch, vnnd sturbenn ettliche edel vnnd vnedel, das ist die abenntheur, die ich inn dem krieg bestanden hab." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 138.

[65] "Und brannttenn alles das vnns im weg lag." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 138.

[66] James D. Tracy, *Emperor Charles V, Impresario of War: Campaign Strategy, International Finance, and Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 194.

my home, and it lasted nine weeks, but I did not take off my armor for as long as we campaigned against the enemy, until peace was proclaimed."[67]

The Autobiography

When the French campaign ended Götz was sixty-four years old. Too old to continue campaigning, he spent the last eighteen years of his life in much the same way as he had spent the 1530s: focused on domestic affairs and involved in a parade of legal disputes, land acquisitions, and loan making.[68] Götz approached his court battles with the same mixture of tenacity and calculation that characterized his feuds and wars. Although he did not win every legal battle, he always gave a good fight, a fact that is all the more impressive considering that he had less than one year of formal education. Of course, Götz himself was not the one writing the briefs and appearing in court, but his willingness to work with the lawyers who so many of his noble peers despised was a reflection of Götz's ability to adapt as the circumstances demanded in order to further his interests.[69]

By the late 1550s, Götz had gone blind, and around 1559, he made an arrangement with a local pastor, Georg Gottfried, to serve him as a permanent attendant. It was most likely Gottfried that recorded Götz's autobiography, but beyond this little is known about its composition. The original manuscript has since been lost, and the earliest

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[67] "Vnd ging mir auch sehr vbell fur Sanct Desier, da stieß mich mit vrlaub vnd gunst zuschreibenn die rhur ann, die wertt biß in mein behausung, das wahrenn neun wochenn, noch thett ich mein harnisch, dieweill wir gegenn denn feindenn zogenn, nit vonn mir, so lang vnd viell biß man denn friden außschriehe." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 139.

[68] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 202-204. At the end of his life, Götz held land in fief from ten different liege lords and the outstanding loans due to him were valued at 17,400 florins. He earned 5% interest from his loans per year.

[69] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 207.

copy was made in 1567 by Götz's son, Hans Jacob, suggesting that the manuscript was already in circulation prior to Götz's death on July 23rd, 1562. Never a man of letters, the autobiography would prove Götz's most enduring legacy.[70]

Götz's decision to write an autobiography may at first seem surprising, but it becomes more understandable when one considers that for more than half of his life–essentially from his imprisonment at Heilbronn forward–Götz was prevented from bearing arms as a result of either imprisonment or infirmity. Doing nothing and letting his reputation rot in the eyes of his peers and posterity was not an option, so Götz turned to the pen to continue pursuing his interests. The autobiography is far from a literary tour de force, but Götz nonetheless captured life in the sixteenth century in a way that is more vivid, and certainly more entertaining, than the tracts of learned humanists who had read far more but experienced far less than one-armed knight. Despite himself, Götz had become a raconteur.

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[70] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 243-244, 268-269.

CHAPTER IV: THE SOCIAL NETWORK OF GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN

The visualization of Götz's social network helps clarify how his relationships shaped the trajectory of his life. In particular, it highlights the important role Götz's patrons–defined as an individual connected to Götz through land, loans, or offices–played in both connecting him to and supporting him in his feuds and wars. Seven of Götz's patrons were involved in eighteen of the twenty-four violent encounters (wars, feuds, imprisonments) described in the autobiography. As Götz fell out of favor with one patron, he would look to another for support in his next endeavor. Over time, leapfrogging from patron to patron became less tenable as the "supply" of patrons who could connect him to the "demand" of feuds and wars diminished. By the end of his career, Götz only had one patron he could turn to for martial employment, the Holy Roman Emperor. The interplay between feuds, wars, and patronage illustrated by the visualization of Götz's social network supports Hillay Zmora's argument that feud and war were inextricably intertwined in early modern Germany and that feuds as much as wars were part and parcel of the process of state building. The remainder of this chapter will explain these findings in greater detail.

Process

I collected the data for the social network analysis through a close reading of the autobiography. Every time that Götz mentioned a name, I entered the name into a spreadsheet. I only included individuals who I could identify by first and last name and with a high degree of confidence. Götz himself identified the first and last name of some individuals and Ulmschneider identified others in the footnotes of the annotated autobiography and in his biography about Götz. After I entered a name into the

spreadsheet, I checked if there was an entry for the person in the *Deutsche Biographie*[1] (DB) for additional biographical information and to see if the person went by any other names. Altogether, I was able to identify 147 individuals in the autobiography.

After I identified the individuals in the autobiography, I created four more columns in the spreadsheet with the labels "position," "family," "mentions," and "conflict or event of interaction." Within the "position" column, I assigned each individual one of four classifications. These classifications were "Titled Noble," "Untitled Noble," "Commoner," and "Dame." "Titled Noble" refers to individuals identified by Götz, Ulmschneider, or the DB as a margrave (*Markgraf*), bishop (*Bischof*), emperor (*Kaiser*), elector (*Kurfürst*), count (*Graf*), duke (*Herzog*), landgrave (*Landgraf*), Count Palatine (*Pfalzgraf*), king (*König*), prince-bishop (*Fürstbischof*), archbishop (*Erzbischof*), or cardinal (*Kardinal*). "Untitled Noble" refers to individuals identified by Götz, Ulmschneider, or the DB as a member of the nobility who did not have one of the titles mentioned above. Some of the positions commonly associated with these individuals included bailiff (*Amtmann / Schultheiß / Vogt),* knight (*Ritter*), imperial knight (*Reichsritter*), and marshal (*Marshal*). "Commoner" refers to individuals who were not part of the nobility. Some of the positions commonly associated with these individuals included peasant (*Bauer / Hintersassen*), servant (*Knecht / Bub*), merchant (*Kaufmann*), and burgher (*Bürger*). "Dame" refers to the women named in the autobiography. Of the

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[1] "Deutsche Biographie," Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, accessed May 18, 2020, https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/.

147 individuals named in the autobiography, forty-two were titled nobles, eighty were untitled nobles, twenty were commoners, and five were women.[2]

In the "family" column, I listed the family name of the individuals in the autobiography. In the "mentions" column, I recorded the total number of pages on which Götz named an individual. In the "conflict or event of interaction" column, I listed each event associated with an individual. Altogether, I identified twenty-nine unique events in the autobiography, spanning chronologically from Götz's "Upbringing and Early Education" through the "Writing of the Autobiography."

In a second spreadsheet linked to the first spreadsheet, I listed out these twenty-nine unique events along with their start date, end date, and the type of event. In most cases, the dates are approximate but always accurate to within a year. This is because some of the events recorded in the autobiography are not referenced elsewhere and / or Götz provided no indication of when, exactly, they occurred.[3]

The twenty-nine events are broken-down into four types: social life, war, feud, imprisonment. Since most of the autobiography focuses on Götz's feuds, wars, and imprisonments, the "social life" group is a catch-all for any event described in the autobiography that did not involve violence. Still, all of the events included in this group can reasonably be described as social in nature, ranging, for example, from the time that he spent as a teenager with his relative Konrad to his attendance at an important wedding.

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[2] The fact that Götz only mentioned five females that could be identified by name in the autobiography–his wife, his mother, his mother-in-law, the wife of Konrad Schott, and the wife of Count Palatine Ludwig–underscores the highly gendered nature of the autobiography.

[3] For a copy of this list, see Appendix B.

For the purposes of data entry, it was necessary to differentiate between feud and war despite the fact that Götz's autobiography suggests that he saw little if any difference between these two forms of conflict. I classified events as "wars" in which large, pitched-battles occurred in addition to the forms of violence usually associated with a feud, such as raiding, looting, arson, and prisoner-taking. I classified events as "feuds" in which no large, pitched battles occurred but in which raiding, looting, arson, and prisoner-taking are known to have occurred.

Once I had collected the information described above, I uploaded my spreadsheets to Palladio, a spatial and social network analysis tool developed by Stanford University's Humanities + Design lab.[4] Using Palladio's filter feature, which allows the user to manipulate the information contained in the uploaded spreadsheets in a variety of ways, I explored different visualizations of Götz's social network. I then selected five of these visualizations, downloaded them, and edited them for visual clarity using Inkscape, an open source vector graphics editor.[5]

In the visualizations, each circle (or node) represents a person or an event. Each event node is sized according to the number of people named in the autobiography associated with that event. Each person node is sized according to the number of pages on which that person is named in the autobiography. Thus, the larger nodes represent either the events with the most people associated with them or the people named most often. The lines (or edges) between nodes indicates a connection between an event and a person and vice versa. The length of a line does not have any meaning. The visualizations have

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[4] "Palladio," Stanford Humanities + Design, accessed May 18, 2020, https://hdlab.stanford.edu/.
[5] "Inkscape," accessed May 19, 2020, https://inkscape.org/.

also been color coded for clarity. Purple circles indicate a person with a kin relationship

to Götz. Yellow circles indicate an individual who was a patron of Götz. Red circles

indicate that I classified the event as a feud. Maroon circles indicate that I classified the

event as a war. Olive circles indicate that I classified the event as an imprisonment. The

five visualizations are included in the appendices at the end of this thesis.[6]

<div align="center">

Analyzing Götz's Social Network

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When Götz's social network is viewed without any filters, it is a chaotic mess, but

the eye is quickly drawn to the largest nodes, in other words, the people that were

mentioned in the autobiography the most times and the events that had the most people

associated with them.

In figure 1, to get a better sense of which people featured most prominently in the

autobiography and, presumably, Götz's life, I filtered the data to only include individuals

Götz mentioned three or more times in the autobiography. This reduced the total number

of people from 147 to 29. Of these 29 individuals, 16 were untitled nobles, 12 were titled

nobles, and 1 was a commoner. Of the 16 untitled nobles, 4 were relatives of Götz from

the von Thüngen family, while only 1 member of the von Berlichingen family, Philipp,

Götz's brother, was mentioned three or more times.[7]

As figure 2 demonstrates, out of the five feuds the von Thüngens were involved in

and the four feuds Philipp von Berlichingen was involved in, there was only one feud that

a von Thüngen and Philipp were both involved in, the second feud experience with Hans

Thalacker. Thus, out of the fourteen feuds described in the autobiography, at least 1 of

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[6] For the social network visualizations, see Appendix A.

[7] For clarity, when referring to a person or people in my analysis, I use numerals rather than spell out the numbers. For example, "16" untitled nobles rather than "sixteen" untitled nobles.

Götz's family members mentioned three or more times in the auotbiography were involved in eight of Götz's feuds. In other words, Götz's kin were involved in at least 57% of his feuds. In contrast, Götz's kin were involved in only three of the eight wars described in the autobiography. Taken together, this data suggests that kinship networks were more significant in feuds than in wars.

In figure 3, I filtered the data to only show the 12 titled nobles mentioned three or more times in the autobiography and that were involved in Götz's feuds, wars, and imprisonments. This visualization highlights the prominent role played by the titled nobility in Götz's affairs. The 12 titled nobles were involved in eight of Götz's fourteen feuds, all eight of Götz's wars, and both of his imprisonments. Out of the 12 titled nobles, 7–Friedrich der Ältere, Philipp der Aufrichtige, Ulrich von Württemberg, Michael II von Wertheim, Ludwig V der Friedfertige, Georg II von Wertheim, and Karl V[8]–had a relationship of patronage with Götz in the form of office holding, land holding, and / or loans.[9] Of the 5 remaining titled nobles, 4 were enemies of Götz in at least one feud and 3 either fought with or against Götz in at least one war.

In figure 4, I filtered the data to only show titled nobles mentioned three or more times in the autobiography and that were patrons of Götz. The visualization that resulted from this filter provides a snapshot of Götz's progression of wars, feuds, and imprisonments over his forty-six year career as a man-of-war.

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[8] I consider Götz's status as an imperial knight under Karl V (Charles V) a form of office holding. I do not consider Maximilian I to be a patron of Götz because Götz served emperor Maximilian indirectly through Friedrich der Ältere.

[9] Loans, in this case, indicates situations in which Götz lent money to a patron.

Figure 4 clearly demonstrates that Margrave Friedrich der Ältere of Brandenburg-Ansbach and Duke Ulrich of Württemberg were very important players in Götz's life. Götz named Friedrich on fifteen pages–more than anyone else in the entire autobiography–a fact that is not surprising considering that Friedrich was the entry point to four of the eight wars Götz participated in and that he was involved in two of Götz's fourteen feuds. Two of these wars–the Burgundy Campaign and the Affalterbach Dispute–were dead-ends in the sense that they did not connect Götz to any conflicts that his other patrons also took part in. Although Philipp der Aufrichtige was involved in both the Swiss War and the Landshut War of Succession, in the Swiss War, Götz's primary warlord–in other words, the individual who most direclty connected him to the conflict–was Friedrich, and in the Landshut War of Sucession, Götz fought against Philipp, who was the elector Palatine, and for Friedrich, who sided with Philipp's opponent, Duke Albrecht of Bavaria-Munich. The fact that Philipp and Friedrich were both feudal lords of Götz but fought on opposing sides in the Landshut War of Succession, combined with the fact that Götz had two brothers fighting for the Palatinate in the war, helps explain why Götz expressed so little enthusiasm for the Landshut War of Succession in the autobiography. Philipp and Friedrich were also both involved in the Waldstrom Feud, but this was a small conflict that did not seem to have any long-term implications for Götz's career as a man-of-war.

The feud with Nuremberg marked a crucial break with Margrave Friedrich and his successor, Kasimir. This was the feud in which Götz inexplicaby attacked a merchant caravan under the margrave's protection outside Bad Mergentheim. Why Götz attacked the caravan is not clear from the autobiography–in fact, Götz does not even mention the

attack–but figure 4 offers some clues that may help explain Götz's rationale for the attack in addition to the ever-present motives of hubris and greed. First, Friedrich had not been involved in any of Götz's feuds and wars for more than a decade at the time of the attack. Second, the last war that Götz had been involved in with Friedrich, the Landshut War of Succession, was a war that Götz did not want to be involved in in the first place. Third, it was the good graces of the Palatinate, rather than Ansbach, that was most responsible for Götz's recovery after he lost his arm in a skirmish outside Landshut; it was Ruprecht, the son of Philipp, who allowed Götz to convalesce at Christoph von Giech's inn in Landshut despite the fact that Götz had been fighting for the opposing side when he was injured. Thus, by the time of the feud with Nuremberg, Götz's relationship to the margrave had already been severed for all intents and purposes, hence the rationale behind and half-hearted apologies for the attack at Bad Mergentheim.

Götz menionted Duke Ulrich on eight pages, placing him in the top-five of most mentioned names in the autobiography, and Ulrich was involved in five of Götz's fourteen feuds, one of Götz's eight wars, and one of Götz's two imprisonments. Clearly, then, Ulrich's relationship to Götz was closer to that of a feudlord than a warlord. At the same time, Ulrich was never the direct cause of any of Götz's feuds, but rather an important supporting actor. For example, the feud with Cologne started when one of Ulrich's subjects, Hans Sindelfinger, did not receive the prize money he was owed from Cologne for being one of the winners of the shooting tournament hosted by the city. Even though Ulrich did not instigate the feud with Cologne, Götz could not have started the feud without Ulrich's implicit support. And, indeed, Ulrich benefitted from the feud by mediating the end to the offshoot feud with Bamberg in which Götz's servant was

captured by the men of Georg von Limpurg, the bishop of Bamberg. Ulrich probably

received material compensation for leading the negotiations between Götz and the bishop

and his role as mediator would have bolstered the young duke's political stature.

Likewise, Ulrich played an important role in Götz's feud with Nuremberg, as evidenced

by the 2,000 florin fine he had to pay at the end of the feud. Finally, even though Ulrich

distanced himself from Götz during his feud with Mainz, less than two years later, Götz

was a high office holder in Ulrich's administration, serving as the *Amtmann* and

commander of Mockmühl, the fort Götz described as a "mousetrap" and that was

captured by the Swabian League after Ulrich's invasion of Reutlingen. Götz's subsequent

imprisonment at Heilbronn severed his relationship with Duke Ulrich, who refused to

help Götz despite the loyalty that he had shown to the duke. It is probably not a

coincidence that Götz only mentioned Ulrich one more time in the autobiography after

his description of the imprisonment at Heilbronn; writing Ulrich out of the autobiography

was one of the few ways Götz could get back at Ulrich for his betrayal.

 In summary, the feud with Nuremberg severed Götz's relationship with Margrave

Friedrich and the imprisonment at Heilbronn severed Götz's relationship with Duke

Ulrich. Collectively, Friedrich and Ulrich were involved in seven of Götz's feuds, five of

Götz's wars, and one of his imprisonments. Put differently, the margrave and the duke

were involved in 13 of the 24 violent encounters recounted in the autobiography.

Whereas Friedrich was Götz's entry point into the martial world, Ulrich was the shadowy

figure who supported Götz in the feuds that he climbed like the rungs of a ladder to the

social and economic heights of the south German nobility.

In 1511, shortly after the conclusion of the feud with Cologne, Götz attended the wedding of Ludwig V der Friedfertige to Sybille, the daughter of Duke Albrecht of Bavaria-Munich. Ludwig had become the elector Palatine in 1508, following the death of his father, Philipp der Aufrichtige, who had been one of Götz's liege lords. One of the reasons Ludwig and Sybille married was to mend the rifts among the German nobility caused by the Landshut War of Succession. Many important people attended the wedding, including Georg von Limpurg, the bishop of Bamberg and Götz's enemy. The bishop did not recognize Götz when he saw him at the wedding and shook his hand. After Götz "spoke loudly"[10] so that everyone in the room–including Count Palatine Ludwig and Lorenz von Bibra, the bishop of Würzburg–would know that the bishop had mistakenly shaken his hand, the bishop "turned as red as a crab."[11] In addition to providing the setting for this funny and memorable incident, the wedding, so far as can be discerned from the autobiography, marked the beginning of Götz's relationship with Ludwig.

Ludwig, like Duke Ulrich, supported Götz in the feud with Nuremberg, and also, like Duke Ulrich, had to pay a 2,000 florin fine at its conclusion. Götz did not mention Ludwig in reference to the feud with Mainz, but Ludwig was the driving force behind the feud with Konrad Schott in 1517 that marked Götz's decisive break with his noble peers.

Figure 5 throws the social importance of the feud with Konrad Schott into sharp relief. In his description of the feud with Schott, Götz named 22 individuals, more than any other event described in the autobiography. This reflects how large Götz's social

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[10] "Ich radt lautt." Götz von Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, ed. Helgard Ulmschneider (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1981), 91.

[11] "Vnd wahr alls rott am halß, als wie ein krepß." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 91.

network had grown by 1517, while at the same time underscoring Götz's alienation from his peers. Of the 22 individuals named, 14 were untitled nobles, 4 were titled nobles, 3 were commoners, and 1 was a dame. A close reading of the description of the feud reveals all 4 titled nobles mentioned in the description were allied with Götz in some way during the feud and that 3 of the 4 titled nobles were also patrons of Götz. In contrast, of the 14 untitled nobles named in the description of the feud, 7 opposed Götz–including 1 kin by blood and 1 kin by marriage–6 supported him, and 1 was neutral. Thus, the feud with Konrad Schott reflected the realignment of Götz's social network away from the untitled nobility and towards the titled nobility, and, more specifically, towards his patrons. Further evidence for the realignment of Götz's social network from his peers to his patrons is found in the fact that even some of Götz's most frequent feud allies opposed him in the feud with Schott. The best example is Hans von Selbitz, the one-legged knight who Götz named on five pages of the autobiography and who was involved in five of Götz's feuds. Of these five feuds, the only feud that von Selbitz did not support Götz in was the feud with Schott.

The Peasants' War was the last event in the autobiography in which Götz mentioned Count Palatine Ludwig. This suggests that the Peasants' War was the breaking point of Götz's working relationship with Ludwig, an assertion which is largely borne out by the facts. In the frantic weeks of April 1525, when the peasant revolt was spreading like wildfire in Franconia, Götz had reached out to Ludwig–one of the few lords in the region who had not been overrun by the peasants–multiple times for instructions about how to proceed. It was only in the absence of instructions from Ludwig, Götz claimed, that he agreed to become the military leader of the Odenwald Band in hopes of being a

moderating influence on the peasants' actions. Shortly after he agreed to lead the Odenwald Band, Götz learned that Ludwig had sent instructions that he should not negotiate with the peasants. Perplexingly, Götz blamed his mother-in-law for destroying the letter containing these instructions, although he did not explain why she would have done such a thing.[12] Regardless, the fact of the matter was that Götz and Ludwig were on opposite sides during the Peasants' War, and that Götz did not mention Ludwig again in the autobiography. Although their relationship may have remained amiable–Ludwig was sympathetic to Götz's plight in the trials that occurred after the war and he remained one of Götz's liege lords–Götz had lost yet another patron.

The last two patrons outside the Holy Roman Emperor that Götz mentioned three or more times in the autobiography were Count Michael II von Wertheim and his son, Georg II von Wertheim. Götz's relationship with the counts of Wertheim was unique because he was good friends with both men.[13] As counts, they would have been closer in social status to Götz than most of his other patrons, which may help account for this friendship. The Wertheim's connection to Götz spanned all the way from the Landshut War of Succession through his imprisonment at Augsburg and house arrest. Georg was also the only individual Götz explicitly named in the conclusion of the autobiography, further highlighting the close connection between the two men. With the exception of the Peasants' War,[14] the Wertheims played only minor roles in Götz's feuds and wars. Thus,

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[12] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 145. Ulmschneider argued that Götz's wife destroyed the letter from Heidelberg at the behest of her mother (Götz's mother-in-law), who feared that if Götz resisted the peasants, the nobles at the *Hornberg* would suffer the same fate as the nobles at Weinsberg.

[13] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 233. For example, Count Michael and Götz enjoyed exchanging Schnapps recipes.

[14] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 181. Georg was a co-signer of the Amorbach Declaration. In the trials after the Peasants' War, Georg was a constant supporter of Götz.

longstanding friendship more than anything else seems to have underscored the relationship between Götz and the Wertheims.

Patrons, Clients, and State Building

Even before the Peasants' War, the feud had declined considerably in the early 1520s as a result of the Swabian League's more robust enforcement of the perpetual public peace and growing doubt among the nobility that the feud advanced their corporate interests.[15] Götz's imprisonment at Heilbronn coincided with this decline, so that upon his release from prison there were fewer opportunities to feud than there had been before. This, combined with the fact that the *Urphed* Götz signed with the Swabian League after the Peasants' War prohibited him from feuding, meant that his last best hope for martial employment was the emperor. This hope almost came to fruition shortly after the Peasants' War, when, for the second time, Ferdinand, the future Holy Roman Emperor, offered Götz a position as an imperial knight. Just as he had been eager to accept Ferdinand's offer of employment in 1518, prior to Duke Ulrich's ill-fated invasion of Reutlingen, Götz was again eager to accept Ferdinand's offer. As he wrote in the autobiography, "After [the Peasants' War], I spoke at the request of some people with Georg Truchess at Stuttgart[16] . . . and he asked me if I wanted to become the servant of Ferdinand, who is now the Holy Roman Emperor. I replied…that I would serve no other lord while I waited for [Ferdinand's] decision."[17] Before he could formally accept a

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[15] Hillay Zmora, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 164-166.

[16] Georg Truchseß von Waldburg, nicknamed "the peasant torturer" (*Bauernjörg*) for the role he played as the captain of the Swabian League in overseeing the massacre of peasants after the Peasants' War, was the Habsburg-appointed governor of Württemberg beginning in the summer of 1525.

[17] "Nun khan vnnd will ich meiner großenn notturfft nach, auch eim jedenn nit verhalten, das ich vff etlicher leutt annsuchenn, die meinethalbenn mit herr Jorg Thruchssaßenn geredt, zu ime ghenn

position with Ferdinand, however, the Swabian League captured Götz and made him swear to appear at Augsburg when summoned. This, in turn, led to his imprisonment and twelve-year castle arrest.

Götz's openness to working with the emperor from 1518 forward stood in stark contrast to his earlier attitude toward imperial service. After the Landshut War of Succession, Götz chose to pursue a career as a feud-entrepreneur despite ample opportunities for imperial service resulting from the bellicose foreign policy pursued by Emperor Maximilian in Italy and elsewhere in the 1510s. The feud proved lucrative for about a decade, but by the late 1510s, Götz, calculating operator that he was, would have seen the writing on the wall that the days of the feud were numbered, thus his pivot back towards imperial service. What Götz did not anticipate was the degree to which the chaos of the 1520s would interfere with his plans to secure his status among the upper echelon of the Franconian nobility. The trouble started with his capture at Möckmühl and did not end until twenty-three years later, in 1542, when the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, released him from his *Urphed* with the remnants of the Swabian League.

By 1542, the feud was in terminal decline and Götz had exhausted all of his connections to the martial world save the Holy Roman Emperor. As a result, if Götz was to serve again as a man-of-war, imperial service was not only his last best hope, it was his only hope, hence his participation in the campaigns against the Ottomans and the French. The fact that a man in his sixties who had ample resources to spend the rest of his life at home considered it necessary to participate in two foreign campaigns appears odd until

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Stuckgarten gerittenn . . . trug sich zu das er mich zu letzt annsprach, ich soltt kon. mt. der itzundter keiser ist, Ferdinandus dhienner werdenn . . . vnnd sagts ime derhalbenn zue, das ich khein andernn herrnn wollt annemmen, sonder seines beschaidts warttenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 129.

one considers the importance of reputation among the nobility in early modern Germany. By serving the emperor, Götz hoped to restore his reputation among his peers, which, in turn, would assist his ongoing efforts to expand his patrimony. The underlying point was that violence, no matter what shape it took, was as much a social act as it was a physical act, but one that had to be conducted under the auspice of a patron for it to be considered legitimate.[18] Götz understood both of these realities and used them to his advantage in his service to the emperor, his last and greatest patron.

Like most of Götz's other patrons, the Holy Roman Emperor was an aggressive state builder who needed men like Götz–men with martial experience and extensive social networks–to expand his hegemony. Although the emperor operated on a scale that far surpassed that of Margrave Friedrich, Duke Ulrich, or Count Palatine Ludwig, the underlying mechanism of territoral expansion and poltical consolidation was the same for Götz's patrons: they all relied on extensive networks of clientage to further their ambitions. The visualizations of Götz's social network underscore why Götz was always in demand: for as good of a soldier as he was, he was an even better social networker. This, more than anything else, distinguished Götz from his peers and explains why he was so successful in his feuds and also why he could always find another war despite operating outside the traditional boundaries of princely and imperial service.

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[18] Hillay Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany: The Knightly Feud in Franconia, 1440-1567* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 119; Otto Brunner, *Land and Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria*, trans. Howard Kaminsky and James Van Horn Melton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 50.

CHAPTER V: FROM PEOPLE TO PLACES

Chapter five analyzes the autobiography from a spatial perspective by comparing

Götz's representation of space on display in the autobiography with that of Sebastian von

Rotenhan, a well-known humanist and contemporary of Götz. Through this comparison,

the diversity of spatial representation in the early sixteenth century is highlighted.

Mapping the Autobiography

In addition to the 147 individuals Götz named in the autobiography, he visited or

referenced 119 places that can be identified with coordinates. Using Palladio's spatial

analysis feature, figure 6 shows each of these places on a map sized according to the

number of pages on which Götz mentioned the place in the autobiography.
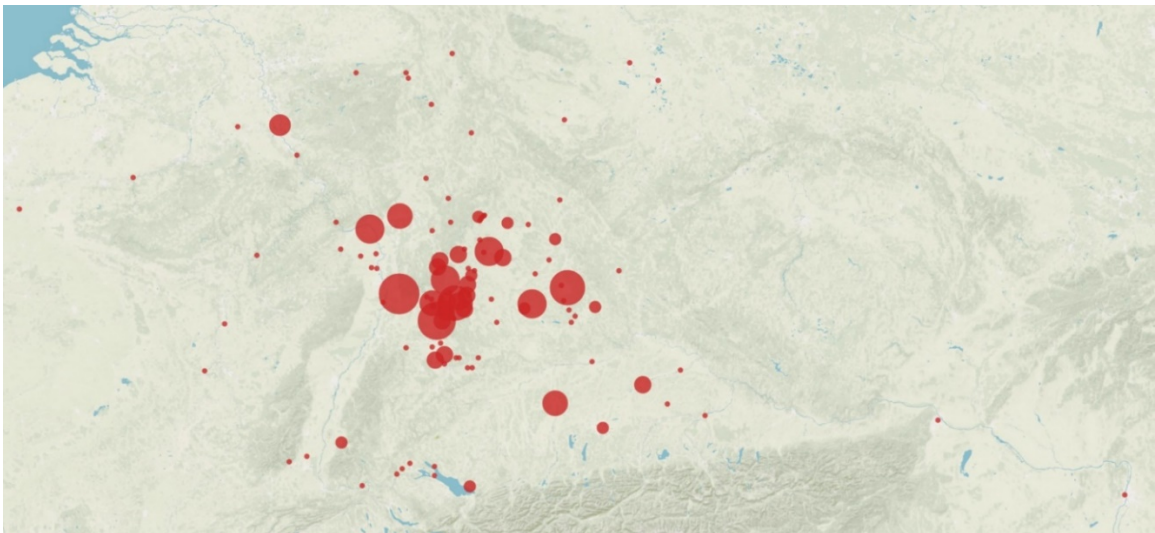

Figure 6. Map of Places in the Autobiography. This map shows every place Götz mentioned in the autobiography that could be identified with coordinates. The red dots are sized according to the number of times Götz mentioned the place in the autobiography.

As one would expect, the majority of Götz's activity centered on what is now southern Germany, but his travels took him as far south as Lindau, as far north as Hahn, as far west as Cambrai, and as far east as Vienna.[1] As figure 7 illustrates, when the map is filtered to only show the places Götz referenced on three or more pages of the autobiography, the number drops from 119 to 26.
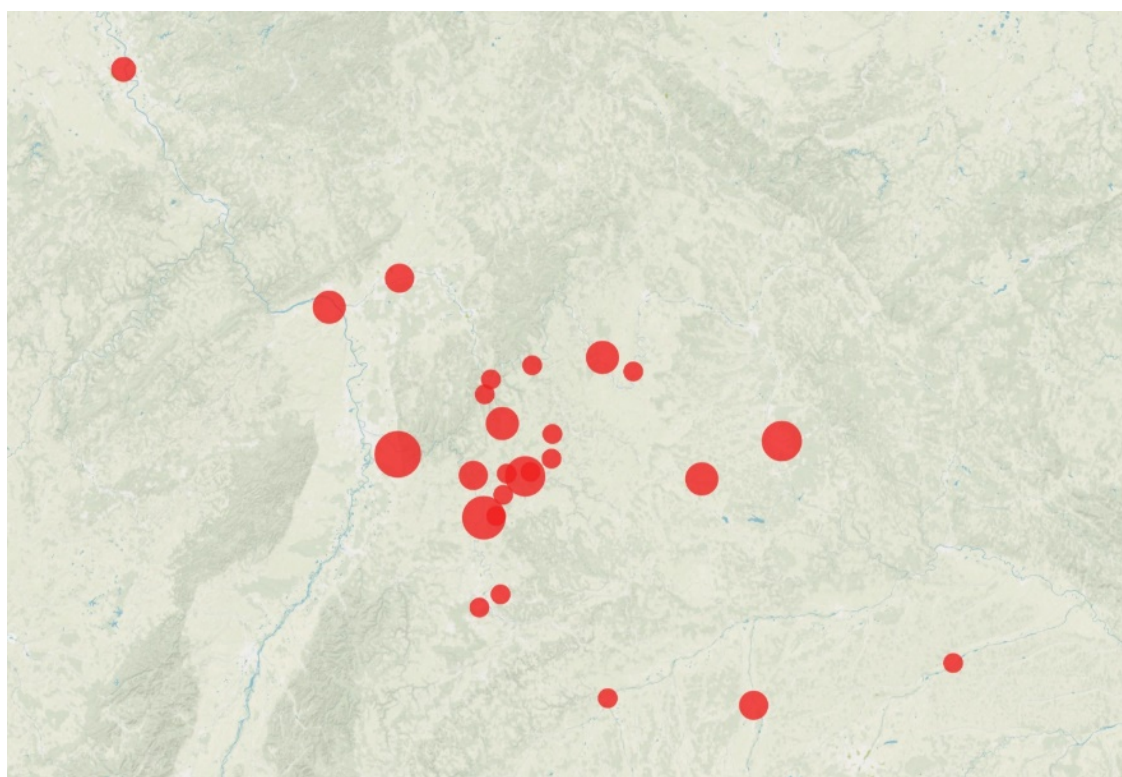

Figure 7. Map of Most Mentioned Places in the Autobiography. This map shows places Götz mentioned three or more times in the autobiography. The red dots are sized according to the number of times Götz mentioned the place in the autobiography.

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[1] The red dot furthest to the east is Budapest, which Götz referenced in his description of the Ottoman Campaign but did not visit.

Of these 26 places, 9 were located in territory controlled by one of Götz's patrons mentioned three or more times in the autobiography, 8 were ecclesiastic territories, 6 were cities with imperial immediacy (*Reichsunmittelbarkeit*), 2 were properties of the Berlichingens, and 1 was controlled by the Duke of Bavaria. Some of these places, however, frequently traded hands among territorial rulers. For example, Götz mentioned Landshut three times in the autobiography. In the period that he referred to the city, it was controlled by the Palatinate, but after the Landshut War of Succession, it reverted to the control of the duke of Bavaria.[2] The point is that absolute location alone reveals very little about Götz's relationship to a place. In order to understand place as Götz understood it, it is therefore necessary to step outside the logic of the coordinate grid. Only when places are associated with people and events rather than absolute location–which would have meant nothing to Götz–does Götz's spatial conscious emerge from the autobiography and become comprehensible. To further illustrate and explain this point, the remainder of the chapter compares Götz's spatial consciousness with Sebastian von Rotenhan, a humanist contemporary who created the first "modern" map of Franconia.

Sebastian von Rotenhan

Sebastian von Rotenhan (1478-1532), "the most famous Rotenhan" (*der bekannteste Rotenhan*),[3] was born in 1478, at his family's castle in Rentweinsdorf, a village fifteen miles northwest of Bamberg. Sebastian's uncle, Anton von Rotenhan, served as the bishop of Bamberg from 1432 to 1459, which helped to cement the

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[2] Helgard Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen: Ein adeliges Leben der deutschen Renaissance* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1974), 44.

[3] Rudolf Endres, "Rotenhan," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 22 (2005), accessed May 20, 2020, https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz108347.html.

Rotenhan's status as one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in Franconia.[4]

After attending the University of Erfurt and the University of Ingolstadt, Rotenhan

continued his studies at the University of Bologna. In 1503, he received his law degree

from Sienna. Following his father's death in 1505, Rotenhan returned to Germany. He

worked at the imperial chamber court in Speyer, and, from 1512 to 1515, he toured

Europe and made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, reaching Jerusalem in September 1514.

In 1519, he entered the service of the archbishop of Mainz, Albrecht von Brandenburg. In

1521, he became court steward for the prince-bishop of Würzburg, Konrad von

Thüngen.[5] Rotenhan was one of the commanders of the Marienberg when it was besieged

by the peasant army under Götz's command. It seems highly likely that Götz and

Rotenhan met each other in person during the negotiations that took place before the

siege began, but Götz did not name or make reference to Rotenhan in the autobiography.

After the defense of the *Marienberg*, Rotenhan spent the last seven years of his life as an

advisor to Charles V, who honored him with the title of Imperial Counsellor in 1530.[6]

Rotenhan died in July 1532, at the age of fifty-four.

Shortly before he died, Rotenhan gave Peter Apian, a professor of mathematics at

Ingolstadt, a printer, and the author of several important treatises on cartography, a map

he had drawn of Franconia. Apian printed the map for the first time in January 1533, at

the request of Duke George of Saxony.[7] Apian identified Rotenhan as the creator of the

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[4] Walter M. Brod, "Sebastian von Rotenhan, the Founder of Franconian Cartography; and a Contemporary of Nicholas Copernicus," *Imago Mundi* 27 (1975): 10.

[5] Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 211. Konrad von Thüngen was a distant relative f Götz's drelative.

[6] Brod, "Sebastian von Rotenhan, the Founder of Franconian Cartography; and a Contemporary of Nicholas Copernicus," 11.

[7] Robert W. Karrow, *Mapmakers of the Sixteenth Century and Their Maps: Bio-Bibliographies of the Cartographers of Abraham Ortelius, 1570* (Chicago: Speculum Orbis Press, 1993), 58.

original map when he made the first printed copy for Duke George. Had Apian not done so, there would be no direct evidence linking Rotenhan with the map of Franconia.[8] This is indicative of a larger problem when studying Rotenhan: the documentary record of his life is sparse. Despite his status as one of the preeminent German humanists of the early sixteenth century, his only known works are a description of his travels in Europe and the Holy Land that has been lost, an annotated edition of Regino of Prüm's ninth century chronicles of the Carolingian Empire, and a list of German place names translated into Latin.[9]

After the first printing in 1533, the map next appeared in Sebastian Münster's 1541 atlas, *Geographia universalis vetus et nova*. The map also featured in numerous editions of Münster's famous *Cosmographia*. Despite corresponding with Rotenhan in the 1520s and encouraging Rotenhan to map his home region, Münster failed to attribute the map of Franconia to Rotenhan in either the *Geographia* or the *Cosmographia*, but a side-by-side comparison makes it clear that Münster's map of Franconia used Rotenhan's map as its source.[10] Despite Rotenhan's anonymity, Münster's atlas and cosmography provided Rotenhan's map with greater exposure than it otherwise would have received. In 1570, Antwerp-based cartographer and printer Abraham Ortelius printed Rotenhan's map in his atlas, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*. Because Ortelius's version of Rotenhan's

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[8] Walter M. Brod, "Frankens älteste Landkarte, ein Werk Sebastians Von Rotenhan," *Mainfränkisches Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Kunst* 11 (1959): 130.

[9] Karrow, *Mapmakers of the Sixteenth Century and Their Maps*, 453-454.

[10] Karrow, *Mapmakers of the Sixteenth Century and Their Maps*, 454.

map enjoyed much wider circulation than Apian's 1533 print but is still a close copy of

the original, it is the version of the map analyzed in this chapter.[11]

The First Map of Franconia

As figure 8 demonstrates, Rotenhan's map as printed in Ortelius's atlas is

dichromatic, and the iconography is simple and direct: rivers, trees, towns, or some

combination thereof. Towns are differentiated by their relative size. Larger cities tend to

straddle both sides of rivers that pass through them and usually include bridges and

numerous spires. Smaller towns feature fewer spires and are not always labelled with a

name. The Main River is the centerpiece of the map with tributaries protruding from it

like appendages. The rivers are identified with the abbreviation *fl.* for "Fluss," the

German word for river. Forests are drawn as large clusters of trees, and the bigger forests

are named. There is no depiction of elevation change on the map, with one exception.

Directly across the river from Würzburg, labelled as "Wirtzburg," there are several small

hills with structures on top of them, perhaps a subtle nod to Rotenhan's successful

defense of the *Marienberg*. The ornamentation of the map, like the map itself, is sparse.

The title, description, and maker, "A depiction of East Francia, vulgarly called

Frankenland, by Sebastian A. Rotenhan" *(FRANCIAE ORIENTALIS (VVLGO*

FRANCKENLANT) DESCRIPTIO, AVCTORE, SEBAST.A ROTENHAN), are displayed

within a rectangular cartouche in the bottom-right corner of the map. The map scale is at

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[11] Brod, "Frankens älteste Landkarte, ein Werk Sebastians von Rotenhan," 122-127. There are only two surviving copies of Apian's 1533 print of Rotenhan's map. They are at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and the University of Jena. The major differences between Apian's and Ortelius's respective printings of Rotenhan's map are that the former is in color, oriented to the south, and the cardinal directions and title of the map are in German. The latter is dichromatic, oriented to the east, and the cardinal directions and the title of the map are in Latin.

the bottom-left corner. It includes the numbers one through six and the explanation *Scala*

miliarium. The cardinal directions, in Latin, adorn each side of the map, but the

orientation is to the east. Frankfurt am Main, for example, is at the bottom of the map

rather than the left where it would appear in a north-oriented map. Despite its

idiosyncrasies, mapmakers continued to use Rotenhan's map for more than a century

after its first printing as a base for maps of Franconia, presumably because of its accurate

representation of the region by sixteenth-century cartographic standards and because it

saved them from the laborious work of surveying.[12]

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[12] Brod, "Sebastian von Rotenhan, the Founder of Franconian Cartography; and a Contemporary of Nicholas Copernicus," 12.
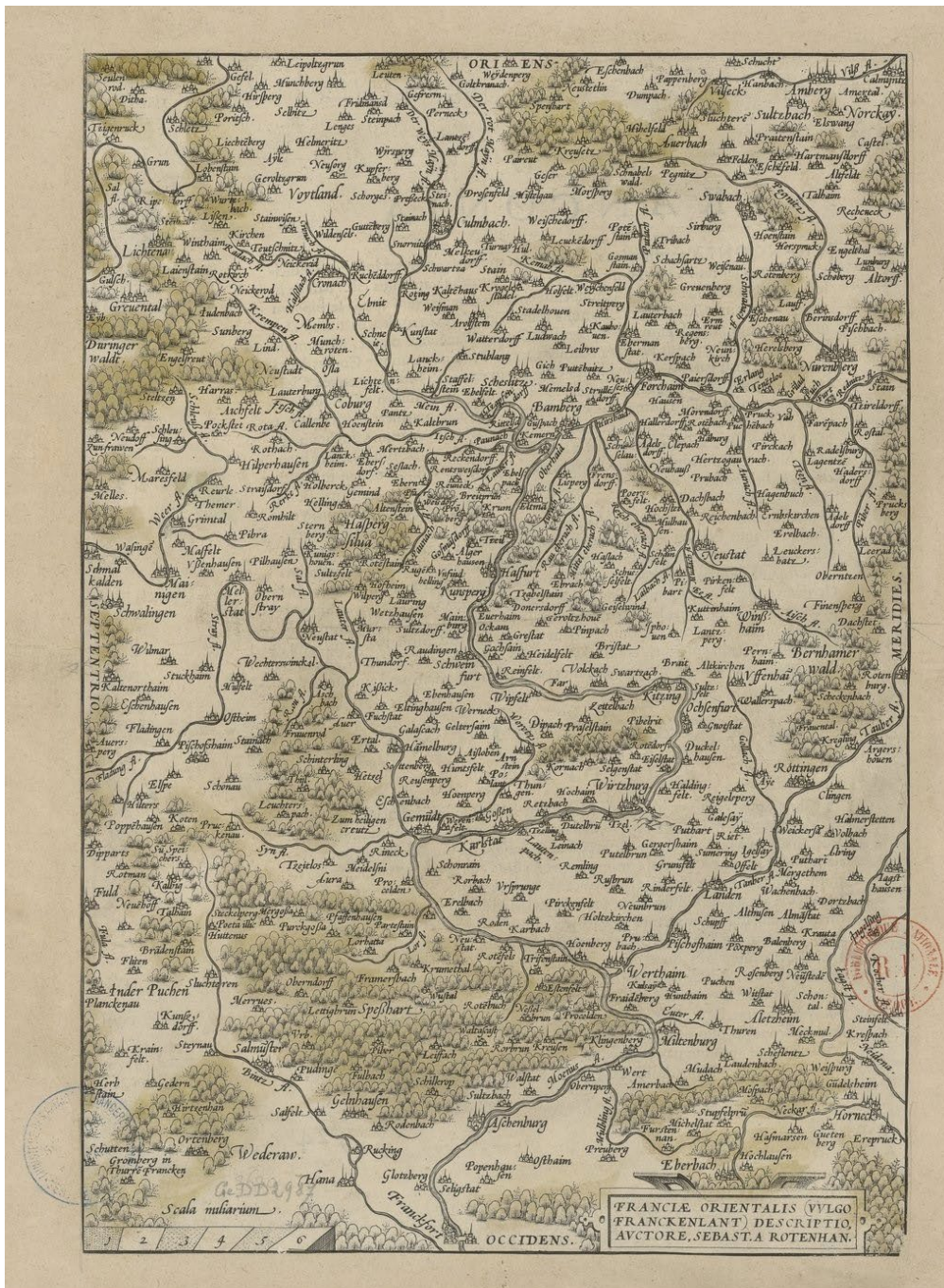
Figure 8. The First Map of Franconia. Rotenhan's map of Franconia, Franciae Orientalis, as reprinted in Ortelius's 1570 atlas.[13]

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[13] Sebastian von Rotenhan, *Franciae orientalis vulgo Franckenlant descriptio*, 1570, Bibliothèque nationale de France, accessed May 20, 2020, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b59046978/f1.item.zoom.

The instrumentation available to Rotenhan when he surveyed Franconia performed four basic functions: measuring time, measuring distance, measuring angles, and determining the bearings of a position. Tools used to measure time included astral clocks, mechanical clocks, water and sand clocks, and sundials. Distance was measured by paces or with ropes, chains, and even odometers mounted on wagons. The most common instruments used to measure angles included the quadrant, the cross staff, and the geometrical quadrat. To determine the bearings of a position, surveyors used the magnetic compass, the *Dreistab*, and the theodolite. Peter Apian's *Instrument Buch*, first published in 1533, provided illustrations and explanations for many of these instruments, as did a number of other manuals printed in the 1520s. Although the details of Rotenhan's survey of Franconia are unknown, he undoubtedly used some combination of the tools and texts mentioned above to obtain the data that became *Franciae Orientalis*.[14]

Rotenhan's university training provided him with the prerequisite skills for surveying and mapmaking. The basic curriculum of most universities was the *Quadrivium*, which included instruction in arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Since sixteenth century surveying and mapping techniques were based on triangulation obtained through a combination of terrestrial and astronomical observations, Rotenhan would have been exposed to the basic principles underlying surveying and mapmaking through the curriculum of the *Quadrivium*.[15] Attending university also allowed Rotenhan to further develop a network of fellow humanists that he could turn to for advice and

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[14] Uta Lindgren, "Land Surveys, Instruments, and Practitioners in the Renaissance," in *The History of Cartography*, ed. David Woodward and J.B. Harley, vol. 3, *Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 477-508.

[15] Lindgren, "Land Surveys, Instruments, and Practitioners in the Renaissance," 500.

feedback in his various intellectual endeavors. By the 1520s, Rotenhan had become a highly respected member of this network. To cite just one example of the reputation Rotenhan enjoyed among the German humanists, in a 1528 appeal to potential contributors to the *Cosmographia*, Sebastian Münster stated that he was seeking help from "highly learned men and lovers of knowledge." Münster went on to name "Sebastian von Rotenhan in Franconia," along with a handful of other prominent scholars such as Peter Apian and Johannes Aventinus, to illustrate the caliber of individual he hoped would contribute to his ambitious project.[16]

Ptolemy's *Geography* and the Logic of the Coordinate Grid

Humanist cartographers such as Rotenhan, Münster, Apian, and Aventinus could not have revolutionized mapmaking without the reintroduction of Ptolemy's *Geography* to western Europe in the early fifteenth century.[17] In the *Geography*, compiled around 150 C.E. in Alexandria, Ptolemy provided detailed instructions for making geometric projections of the earth based on measurements of latitude and longitude. In addition, the *Geography* listed the coordinates of all the known places in the world. It is not clear if Ptolemy included maps with the original *Geography*, but later copies of the book incorporated maps of the world and individual regions drawn according to Ptolemy's instructions. Like other classical works, the *Geography* disappeared in Western Europe

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[16] Quoted in Matthew McLean, *The Cosmographia of Sebastian Münster: Describing the World in the Reformation* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 147. On the social network of Sebastian Münster, see Jasper van Putten, *Networked Nation: Mapping German Cities in Sebastian Münsters 'Cosmographia'* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

[17] The best overview of Renaissance cartography in the German-speaking lands of the Holy Roman Empire is Peter H. Meurer, "Cartography in the German Lands, 1450-1650," in *The History of Cartography*, ed. David Woodward and J.B. Harley, vol. 3, *Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1172-1245.

during the Middle Ages until Byzantine scholars brought copies of it to Italy at the

beginning of the Renaissance. Following its translation into Latin and its first printing in

1477, the *Geography* quickly spread throughout Europe.[18] As maps drawn according to

Ptolemaic principles progressed from rare to common to ubiquitous over the course of the

sixteenth century, Europeans increasingly conceptualized the world according to the logic

of the coordinate grid.[19]

There are several features of Rotenhan's map that demonstrate a Ptolemaic

influence. First, Rotenhan grounds his map in math. This is most clear from the map

scale, which suggests a preoccupation with measurement. Second, it appears that

Rotenhan drew his map based on a coordinate grid even though no coordinates are

visible. The rectangular shape of the map suggests this, as does the accurate positioning

of places on the map. In other words, cities, rivers, and forests are more or less where

they are supposed to be. The importance of orientation is also clear from the labelling of

cardinal directions on the map, even if the east-orientation appears odd to modern

viewers. Third and most important, by attempting to accurately represent distance,

position, and orientation, Rotenhan's map, like all maps drawn according to Ptolemaic

principles, homogenizes space.[20] Put differently, the map as a whole is more important

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[18] O.A.W. Dilke, "The Culmination of Greek Cartography in Ptolemy," in *The History of Cartography*, ed. David Woodward and J.B. Harley, vol. 1, *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, ed. David Woodward and J.B. Harley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 177-199.

[19] Jordan Branch, *The Cartographic State: Maps, Territory, and the Origins of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 50-55.

[20] Branch, *The Cartographic State*, 55. For a critique of the idea that the *Geography* resulted in the homogenization of space, see Patrick Gautier Dalché, "The Reception of Ptolemy's *Geography* (End of the Fourteenth Century to Beginning of the Sixteenth Century)," in *The History of Cartography*, ed. David Woodward and J.B. Harley, vol. 3, *Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 285-364.

than its constituent parts, which are reduced to indistinguishable points on a grid with nominal iconographic differences: Würzburg looks the same as Wertheim, the Thuringian Forest looks the same as the *Spessart*, and even the Main River looks the same as all the other rivers, barring a slight difference in the thickness of the lines that represent it. Thus, Rotenhan's map aligns with Ptolemy's statement in the *Geography* that "the aim of geography is a consideration of the whole."[21]

Rotenhan drew his map according to the Ptolemaic principles that would come to define modern maps, but the scientific character of the map itself should not be overstated. Several of the features of *Franciae Orientalis* are more characteristic of medieval rather than modern mapping practices. For instance, the cities, rivers, and forests depicted on the map are disproportionate to their actual size and there are many blank spaces on the map, suggesting nothing where there was certainly something.[22] This is similar to medieval spatial practices, which tended to emphasize known place over empty space.[23] Also, like medieval spatial representations, Rotenhan's map does not depict any political borders. Based on the map, Franconia appears to be a unified political space when it most certainly was not. Finally, although the map does not appear to be embedded within a larger religious message comparable to medieval *mappemundi*, the map communicates a message of a different sort: the advent of a world view based on measurement and observation, the building blocks of science, rather than belief. Although

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[21] Dilke, "The Culmination of Greek Cartography in Ptolemy," 183.

[22] On "silences" in maps, see J.B. Harley and P. Laxton, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 83-107.

[23] Branch, *The Cartographic State*, 43-50. For an overview of medieval mapping practices, see Victoria Morse, "The Role of Maps in Later Medieval Society: Twelfth to Fourteenth Century," in *The History of Cartography*, ed. David Woodward and J.B. Harley, vol. 3, *Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 25-52.

cartographic practice would not catch up with cartographic theory until the Enlightenment, Rotenhan's attempt to map his home region according to Ptolemaic principles suggests a subtle but fundamental shift away from the spatial consciousness on display in the autobiography of Götz von Berlichingen.

The Spatial Consciousness of Götz von Berlichingen

In the 1731 edition of the autobiography, the editor, Georg Pistorius, curiously dedicated the work to young men "for the encouragement of the useful study of geography."[24] To support the use of the autobiography as geographic aide, Pistorius, much like Ulmschneider 250 years later, included extensive annotations identifying the names of the places Götz referenced in the autobiography. Beyond these basic place annotations, however, scholars have not studied the autobiography as an important document in the history of cartography. This is unfortunate and surprising. In the autobiography, Götz demonstrated an incredible knowledge of place and space, with almost every page containing detailed geographic information about Franconia and the surrounding region. Götz's conception of space is on fullest display in his narration of the feud with Albrecht, the archbishop of Mainz. As figure 9 demonstrates, the feud with Mainz had an impressive geographic scope.

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[24] "Zu ihrer Aufmunterung zu dem so nützlichen Studio geographico." Quoted in Ulmschneider, *Götz von Berlichingen*, 11-12.

Figure 9. Geographic Scope of the Feud with Mainz. Each red dot indicates the approximate location of an incident associated with the feud with the archbishop of Mainz.

Götz's detailed knowledge of place was on display from the beginning of his

description of the feud with Mainz:

> Further, for an eleventh, I want to explain how I came into war and feud with the
> bishopric of Mainz. It happened in the following way. When I returned to
> Würzburg, just having made peace with those from Nuremberg, I rode from
> Würzburg to Grünßfeld, where there was a nobleman named Bartholomäus von
> Hund. He had a house there, and he was my good brother-in-law and friend. He
> asked me whether I knew what had happened to my peasant at Heimstat. I said
> "no", which was the truth, I did not know. Then he said those from Buchen had
> driven my peasant from a large, planted field with ten or twelve *Morgen* of fruit
> (that is called *In der Lappen,* and there is also an adjoining forest called *In der
> Lappen* that was full of mature plants, so that it should have been harvested),
> pretending the field was theirs and maliciously permitting their livestock to graze
> on it, claiming my peasant had illegally cultivated the land. Both then and now,
> the land belonged to me and my peasant. And I said to Bartholomäus von Hund,
> "just as one war ends another begins; yesterday I made peace with those from
> Nuremberg, and now this."[25]

In this passage, Götz mentioned eight distinct places–Mainz, Nuremberg, Würzburg,

Grünßfeld, Heimstat, Buchen, in der Laffen (field), in der Laffen (forest)–and provided a

ground-level description of the people and plants in the vicinity of Buchen and Heimstat.

Götz explained that it was a productive agricultural area, containing "ten or twelve

Morgen of fruit."[26] Presumably, the productivity of the land was one of the reasons it

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[25] "Nun weitter vnnd zum ailfftenn, will ich antzaigen, wie ich mit dem stifft Meintz inn krieg vnnd
vhedenn khommen bin, vnnd ist dem nemlich allso. Alls ich zu Wurtzburg mit dennen vonn Nurnnberg
vertragenn vnd gericht wurt, reit ich zu Wurtzburg herrauß ghenn Grinßfeldt, do wahr ein edellman mit
namen Barthollomeus Hundt, der het ein hauß da, vnnd war mein gar gutter schwager vnnd freundt. Der
fragt mich, ob ich nit wust, wie es mit meinem baurnn zu Heimstat ging. Sagt ich: "Nein", wie dann wahr
war, ich wust es nit. Da sagt er die vonn Buchenn hettenn im ein grossenn gebauttenn ackher, ein morgenn,
zehenn oder zwolff, mit frucht (das heist inn der Lappenn vnnd stost ein holtz darann heist auch inn der
Lappenn, der inn allem gewechs schonn erwachssenn wehr, das man schier schneidenn hett sollenn) mit
allem viech zu Buchenn freuennlicher mutwilliger weiß darein getriebenn, vnnd hettenn ghernn furgebenn,
der ackher wer ir, vnd als soldt inn der baur vnnbillich gebaut habenn. Das wahr nun nit, wie er dann noch
vff diesenn tag mein vnnd meiner hindersassenn ist. Vnd ich sagt zum Bartholmess Hundt: „Es annth mich
ebenn, alls sollt ich vonn einem krieg inn andernn wachssenn. Bin erst gesternn mit dennen vonn
Nurnnberg gericht wordenn, so kombt mir nun das auch." Götz von Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und
Handlungen*, ed. Helgard Ulmschneider (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1981), 106.
[26] A "Morgen" (literally, morning) was the amount of land an individual could plow in one morning, or
approximately 0.6 acre. Thomas A. Brady, Jr., *German Histories in the Age of Reformations, 1400-1650*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 30.

became an object of contention between Götz's peasant at Heimstat and "those of Buchen." By allowing their livestock to graze the land in question, "those of Buchen" were not only doing economic harm to Götz's peasant, they were challenging Götz's claim of lordship over the land itself. By carefully describing the land in the autobiography, Götz was laying claim to it, a necessary prerequisite for a rightful feud.

Götz's detailed description of this forgotten corner of Franconia stands in stark contrast to Rotenhan's map. Rotenhan included Buchen on his map, but the map reveals almost nothing about the place itself. For example, there is little to differentiate Buchen from the surrounding areas, there is no indication that Heimstat even existed, and the area around Buchen is devoid of natural features with the exception of a river. Looking at the map, it is hard to imagine why a feud started over seemingly blank space. In contrast, Götz's autobiography vividly illustrates the myriad connections that linked the points of the map together, and as a result it becomes easier to understand why this space was worth fighting and even dying for.

The next passage of geographic note occurred during Götz's infamous encounter with Marx Stumpf at Krautheim:

> I decided to take my leave of the land, but first I wanted some revenge. In one night, I burned three places, even though I only had seven riders. These places were Ballenberg, Oberndorf, and the sheep house at Krautheim below the castle, so that we [Götz and Stumpf] could speak to each other back and forth from the castle walls. I did not want to burn these places, but I thought that it would cause the bailiff to come out. I waited an hour or two between Krautheim and Neunstetten, and it was growing light and there was snow on the ground, and I would have liked to take care of business with him [Stumpf]. And as I burned down the sheep house, the bailiff yelled out towards me in the direction of Klepsau, and I shouted back at him that he should kiss my ass.[27]

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[27] "Nun wahr ich des sins, das ich die landtsart ein weill gesegnenn, vnd wolt weitter mein heill versuchen. Vnd nam mir doch fur, ich wollt mich vor ein wenig regenn, vnd branndt in einer nacht ann dreien orttenn, hett nit mehr dann nur siebenn pferdt, das wahr Ballennberg, zu Obernndorff vnnd das schaffhauß zu

In the passage, Götz situated the incident within a framework of space, time, and story. In terms of space, it is clear that Krautheim, Ballenberg, and Obendorf are near to each other because Götz set fire to all three places in one night hoping that Stumpf would see the fires and come out of his castle to challenge him. Moreover, Götz provided a sense of relative position when he stated that he waited between Krautheim and Neunstetten, and that Stumpf shouted out from the castle towards Klepsau. In terms of time, it is clear that the incident took place during the winter and in the early hours of the morning based on the mention of snow and the arrival of the dawn. Narrative is the glue that holds space and time together in the passage, similar to the way the coordinate grid holds space and time together in Ptolemaic maps. Narrative, however, provides a more liberal medium through which to express space and time precisely because it does not function according to the rules of the coordinate grid. Although Götz's description of Krautheim and the surrounding area lacks mathematical rigor, its emphasis on personal experience and the relationships between places is indicative of an understanding of space fundamentally different from that displayed by Rotenhan in his map of Franconia.

Götz's geographic coup de grace came with the capture of the count of Waldeck in Westphalia. Goetz recounted the incident with pride, writing in the autobiography that he moved the count through twelve different territories before he brought the count "to

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Krautheim vnnder dem schloß herrab, do wir auch hinuff inn das schloß vonn der maurn herrab mit ein annder redenn kunthen. Vnd hab gleichwoll nit ghernn gebrenndt, aber es geschahe vff dißmall darumb, das ich gedacht, der amptman solt vber das feuer ruckhenn. Vnd hilt woll ein stundt oder zwo zwischenn Krautheim vnnd Neunstettenn, dann es war gar hell, vnnd lag ein schnee darzu, ob ich mocht mit im zu hanndlung khomenn sein. Vnnd wie ich allso hernider branndt, da schriehe er der ambtman obenn herrauß, vornnen fur Klepssenn zu. Da schriehe ich wider zu ime hinauff, er soldt mich hinden leckhenn." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 110.

where he belonged."[28] Although Götz listed each of the places through which he carried the count, he did not provide further information about any of these places. Why, after providing detailed descriptions of the places and people involved in the feud with Mainz, did Götz describe his pièce de résistance in such a perfunctory fashion? One possible explanation is that Götz wanted to demonstrate his geographic knowledge of Franconia and the surrounding regions. Although he may have been an uneducated soldier, he not only knew the geography of Franconia, but of southern Germany, better than any man. The fact that he was able to transport a prominent prisoner through twelve principalities without discovery or capture was proof positive not only of his martial but also his geographic prowess. If this was Götz's motivation for the detailed geographic and ethnographic descriptions included in the autobiography, Georg Pistorius's dedication of the first printed edition of the autobiography to young men, "for the encouragement of the useful study of geography" starts to make sense.

The Production of Space

Götz's representation of space in textual rather than visual terms is not surprising when mapping practices are considered over the longue durée. The visual representation of the earth in Ptolemy's *Geography* was less important than its textual descriptions of places and projections, and even after Renaissance cartographers rediscovered the *Geography* and started to draw maps according to its principles, non-visual

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[28] "Ich hab irn boden vnnd lanndt gebraucht, mit dem gefanngennen biß ich inn bracht da er hingehort." Berlichingen, *Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, 114.

representations of space ranging from cosmography to cadaster continued to predominate

in Europe for much if not most of the sixteenth century.[29]

Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, often described as the first modern atlas,

placed equal emphasis on textual and visual representations of space. For every map,

there was an accompanying written description of the place depicted in the map.

Rotenhan's map of Franconia, for instance, included the following description:

> FRANKENLAND is partly flat and partly mountainous. The mountains
> themselves are not very steep, nor the plains very fruitful, sandy as they are. In
> many places the hills, covered with vines, yield tasteful wine, especially around
> Herbipolis, vulgarly Würzburg. There is plenty of wood and much hunting. The
> country is subject to many governors, yet they call the bishop of Würtzburg also
> duke of Frankenland. The bishops of Mainz and of Bamberg have many places
> here. And the count Palatine enjoys a great part of it. Here the marquises Orantes
> are located. And here are also many imperial cities. As regards Nürnberg, it is
> doubtful whether it belongs to Frankenland or to Bavaria. By its name, Boiaria
> should seem to claim it. For Nürnberg means as much as Mons Noricus, from
> which it appears that there was also the city of the Norici. And after the Norici
> came the Boiari. And nw, that portion of the country that lies between the Danube
> and Nürnberg is called Noricum. Whatever the case may be, the city is in the
> diocese of Bamberg, which belongs to Frankenland. The inhabitants of Nürnberg
> will neither be considered as Bavarians nor as Franks, but as a third nation
> differing from both. It is a stately city, adorned with churches, castles and houses,
> most sumptuously built. It lies on the river Pegnitz in a barren and sandy place,
> which increases the people's zeal, for they are all either craftsmen or merchants,
> so that they are exceedingly rich and have a great reputation in Germany. It is a
> place most fit for the emperor's court, a free city and located almost in the middle
> of Germany.[30]

The most striking feature of Ortelius's description of Franconia is its heterogeneous

spatiality. Like Rotenhan's map, the first half of the passage focuses on the region as a

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[29] David Woodward, "Cartography in the European Renaissance: Continuity and Change," in *The History of Cartography: Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward, The History of Cartography (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 7.

[30] Quoted in Marcel van den Broecke and Deborah van den Broecke-Günzburger, trans., "Cartographica Neerlandica Map Text for Ortelius Map No. 100," Cartographica Neerlandica, accessed May 20, 2020, http://www.orteliusmaps.com/book/ort_text100.html.

whole rather than its constituent parts. The third-person voice of the passage supports this veneer of objectivity, which, like the coordinate grid, has the effect of distancing the writer from the space he describes. Then, reminiscent of Götz's autobiography, the second half of the passage abruptly switches to an extended discussion of a particular place, Nuremberg, and includes quirky details that only a local would be privy to.

The capacity of textual descriptions of space to move between divergent spatial impulses–traditional and proto-scientific, empirical and cartographic, pre-Renaissance and post-Enlightenment–helps explain why writing remained an important form of spatial expression long after the rediscovery of Ptolemy's *Geography.* Also contributing to the continued use of textual descriptions of space was the fact that prior to the Enlightenment, maps were simply too inaccurate to be of much use to most individuals.[31] Although a ruler might display a map on his wall depicting his territory, these maps only loosely resembled the division of space on the ground, and only in a limited political context. Götz's description of the incident "with those of Buchen" vividly illustrated this discrepancy between real and imagined borders.[32] As a soldier, Götz operated in the realm of reality rather than theory, and as a result he saw little value in maps that depicted space in a way that could not readily be translated into action. If Götz needed to go from point A to point B, he was better off using the tried and true methods of asking someone, using an itinerary, or relying on personal experience. The autobiography reflects this reality.

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[31] Lindgren, "Land Surveys, Instruments, and Practitioners in the Renaissance," 508.

[32] On the relationship between maps and the early modern state, see Richard L. Kagan and Benjamin Schmidt, "Maps and the Early Modern State: Official Cartography," in *The History of Cartography*, ed. David Woodward and J.B. Harley, vol. 3, *Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 661-679.

Rotenhan, in contrast, was a humanist first and a soldier second, and therefore his raison d'être was the life of the mind rather than the survival of the body. Because of this mentality, Rotenhan stepped more easily and more willing into a world mediated through the coordinate grid. At the same time, the ways in which Götz and Rotenhan made sense of the world, one textual and personal, the other mathematical and impersonal, are not as far apart as they first appear: the autobiography and the map portray the world as their creators wanted it to be seen and not as it actually was. Put simply, both men engaged in the production of space. Rotenhan's "style and signature" of spatial production is one that modern audiences find familiar. It reduces space to points on a coordinate grid that collectively form a map but individually have no meaning. Götz's production of space in the autobiography forces the reader to consider alternative conceptions of space, to reconsider what constitutes a map, and to ask why maps, in the modern sense of the term, became the dominant form of spatial representation when so many other options were available.

CONCLUSION

So who was Götz von Berlichingen? This thesis has argued that Götz was a soldier, an entrepreneur, and a raconteur. Over the course of his life, these three aspects of Götz's identity emerged, converged, and helped him adapt to the many changes of the sixteenth century. Because Götz was constantly adapting, he is best described as a shapeshifter who changed form as the circumstances demanded.

Götz's primary identity was that of a soldier. From a young age, Götz dreamed of making his living by the sword, and when he went to live with his relative Konrad, that dream became a reality. Under the patronage of Margrave Friedrich of Brandenburg-Ansbach, Götz received his baptism by fire when he fought in the service of Emperor Maximilian in the Burgundy Campaign and the Swiss War. Two more wars–the Affalterbach Dispute and the Landshut War of Succession–cemented Gotz's reputation as a man of considerable martial worth. Rather than continue in the service of Friedrich or the emperor, however, Götz struck out on his own and a second layer of his identity emerged, than of an entrepreneur. Successive feuds with Cologne, Nuremberg, and Mainz netted Götz a fortune. He used the funds earned in his feuds to purchase a castle, the *Hornberg*, the ultimate status symbol of the sixteenth century. At the same time, he expanded and diversified his new-found wealth through the extension of loans, office holding, and land acquisitions. Having just reached the social and economic pinnacle of the south German nobility, Götz's world came crashing down in 1519, as a result of Duke Ulrich of Württemberg's disastrous war with the Swabian League that saw Götz captured at the "mousetrap" of Möckmühl and imprisoned for three and a half years at Heilbronn where he accepted the reformed faith. Two years later, the Peasants' War caused further

upheaval in Götz's life and led to his twelve-year castle arrest that prevented him from so much as mounting a horse for the entirety of the 1530s. In 1542, Charles V released Götz from his *Urphed* with the defunct Swabian League. In return and in an effort to rebuild his reputation, Götz drew on his extensive social network to recruit men for imperial campaigns against the Ottomans and the French. Following the French campaign, Götz retired to the *Hornberg*, but he continued to actively pursue his interests through the pen rather than the sword. Although blood was Götz's preferred medium of communication, he found that ink could be just as effective. With this realization, the third layer of Götz's identity emerged, that of a raconteur. The autobiography is the clearest expression of Götz as raconteur, but it was an aspect of his identity that had been developing ever since his imprisonment at Heilbronn some forty years earlier, as attested to by the strings of letters and the stacks of litigation scattered throughout the archives of Germany that bear his name and await further study.

In the autobiography, Götz provided tantalizing glimpses of the wider world in which he operated. This world was one rocked by constant change that demanded continuous adaptation in order to survive and thrive. Götz responded to change by adapting old forms to new circumstances. This was clear in Götz's approach to war, which he did not distinguish from the feud, his social relationships, which remained rooted in patronage, and his spatial practices, which relied on personal experience rather than an impersonal grid. In summary, Götz's life was one of constant change floating on currents of continuity. Although he occasionally sunk beneath the surface, he always bounced back up.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: VISUALIZATIONS OF GÖTZ'S SOCIAL NETWORK

Christoph von Giech

Konrad Schott von Schottenstein

George von Limpurg

Georg von Bödigheim

Michael II von Wertheim

Friedrich von Limpurg

Wilhelm von Habern

Götz von Thüngen

Karl V

Philipp II von Waldeck

Marx Stumpf von Schweinberg

Ulrich von Württemberg

Paul von Absberg

Philipp von Berlichingen der Ältere

Friedrich der Ältere

Sigmund von Thüngen

Franz von Sickingen

Albrecht von Brandenburg

Veit von Lentersheim

Eustachius von Thüngen

Philipp der Aufrichtige

Hans von Selbitz

Ludwig V der Friedfertige

Georg II von Wertheim

Maximilian I

Jorg von Gebsattel

Hans Thalacker von Massenbach

Contz Heymen

Neidhart von Thüngen

Figure 1. Significant Individuals Network. This visualization illustrates individuals who were mentioned by Götz three or more times in the autobiography. Götz mentioned 29 individuals three or more times in the autobiography, including 16 untitled nobles, 12 titled nobles, and 1 commoner. Purple dots indicate Götz's kin. Yellow dots indicate Götz's patrons.
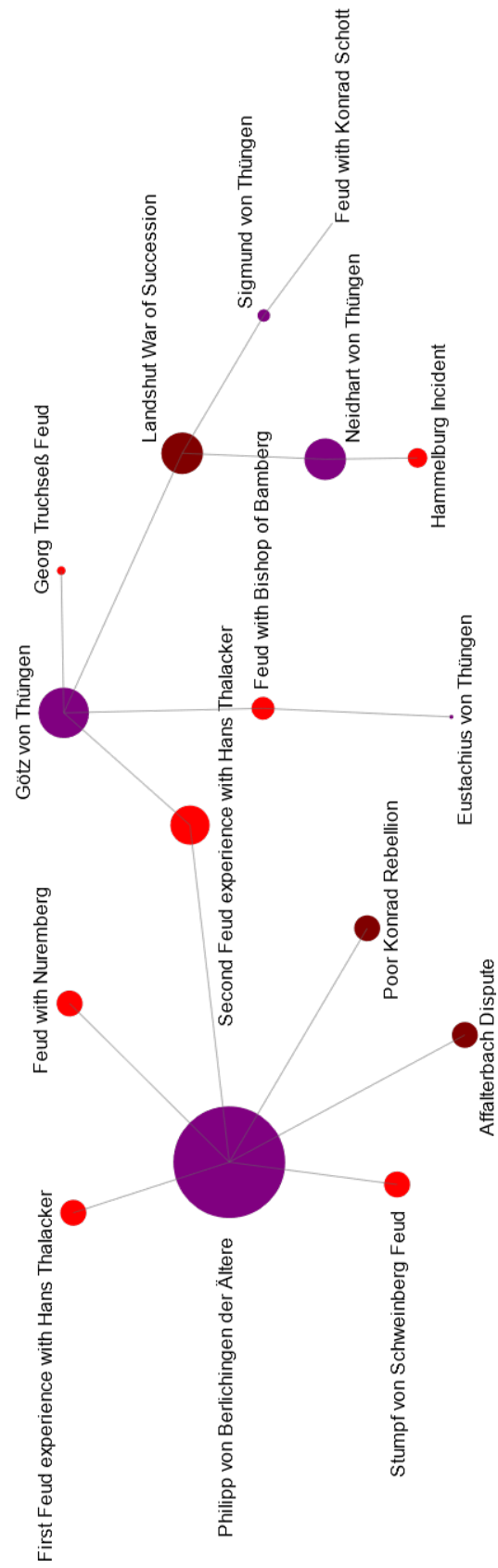
Figure 2. Kin Network. This visualization illustrates kin mentioned three or more times in the autobiography who were involved in Götz's feuds and wars. The visualization suggests that kin networks were more active in feuds than in wars. Red dots indicate feuds. Maroon dots indicate wars.
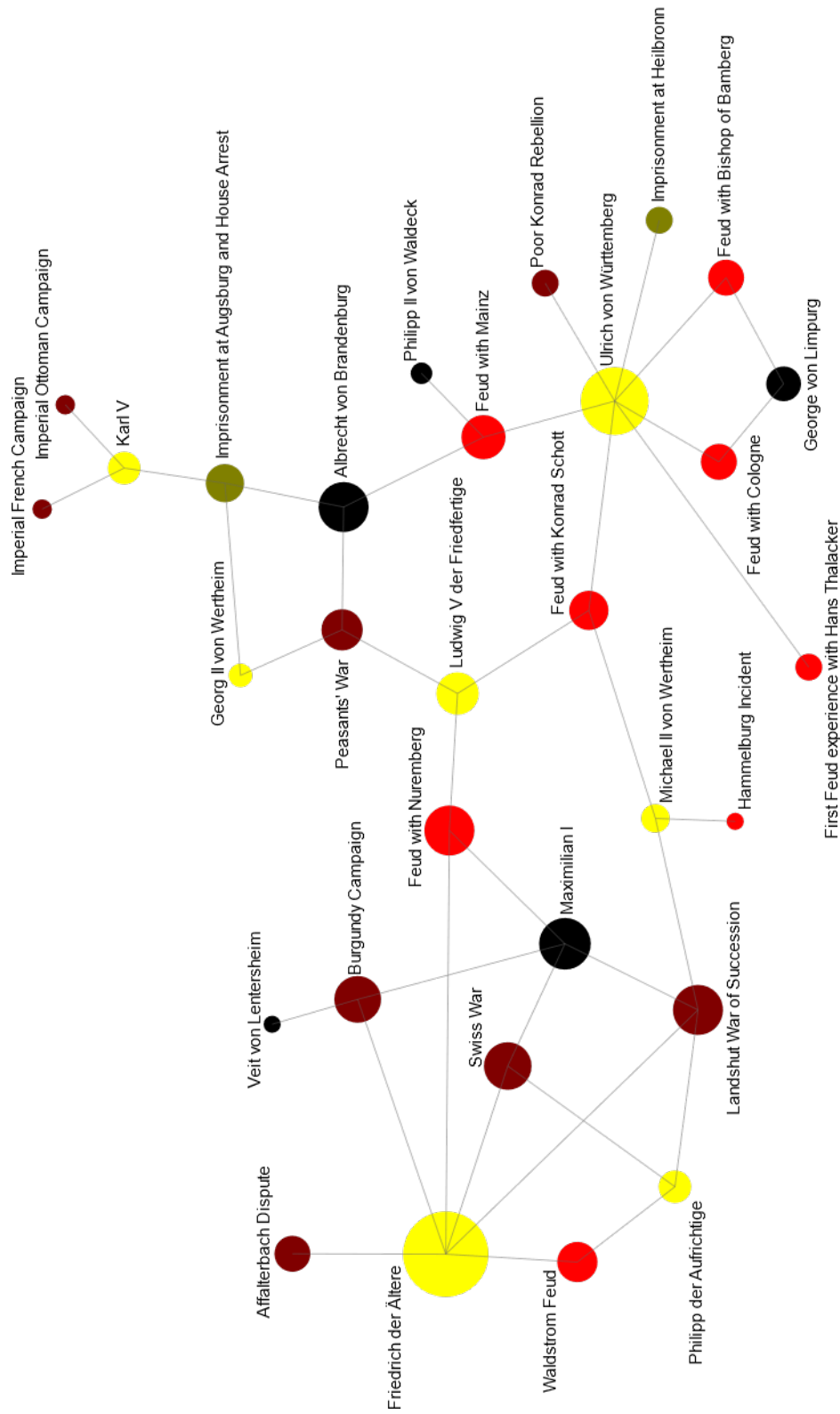
Figure 3. Titled Nobility Network. This visualization illustrates titled nobles mentioned three or more times in the autobiography who were involved in Götz's feuds, wars, and imprisonments. Götz mentioned 12 titled nobles three or more times in the autobiography. Red dots indicate feuds. Maroon dots indicate feuds. Olive dots indicate imprisonments. Yellow dots indicate Götz's patrons.
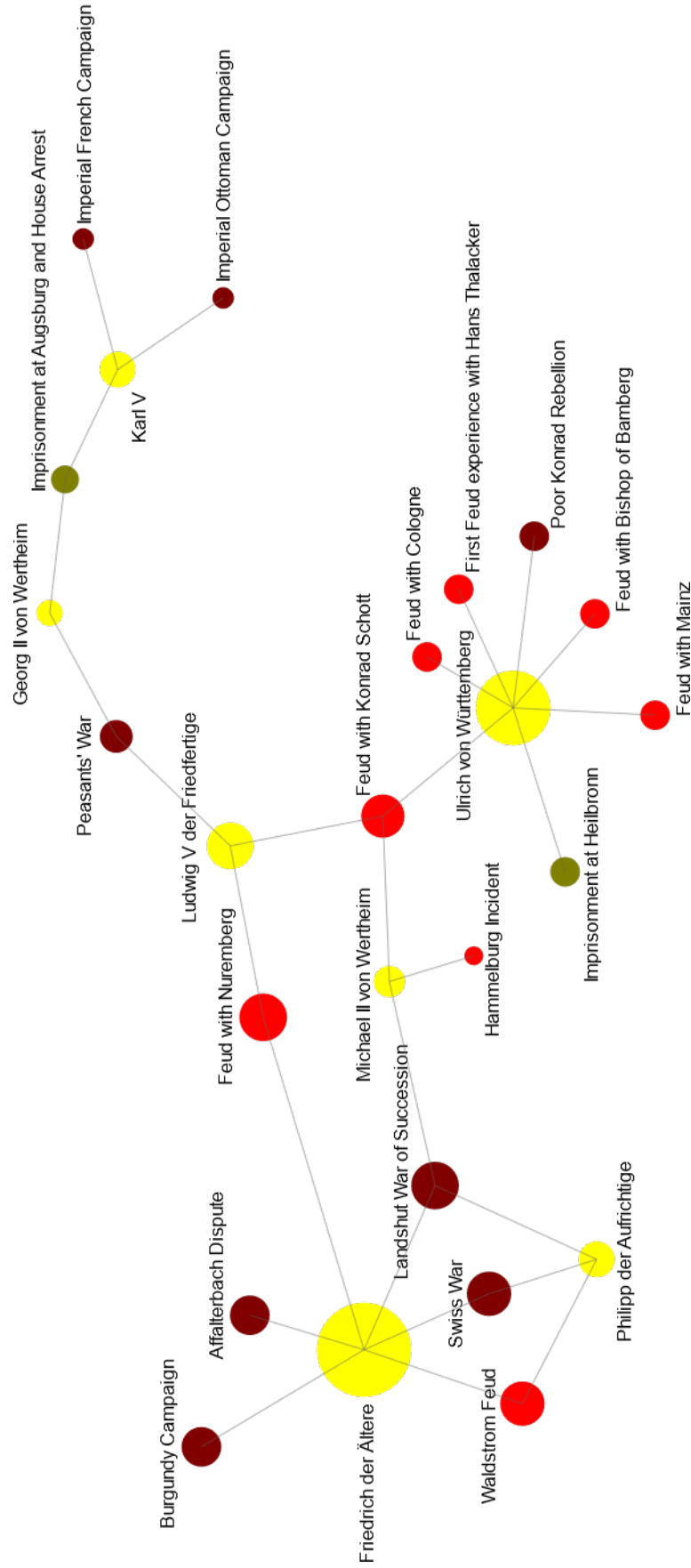
Figure 4. Patron Network. This visualization illustrates Götz's relationship to his patrons, defined as titled nobles mentioned three or more times in the autobiography who Götz made loans to, held land in fief from, and / or held office in their administration. The visualization highlights the important role Götz's patrons played throughout his life. Red dots indicate feuds. Maroon dots indicate wars. Olive dots indicate imprisonments. Yellow dots indicate Götz's patrons.
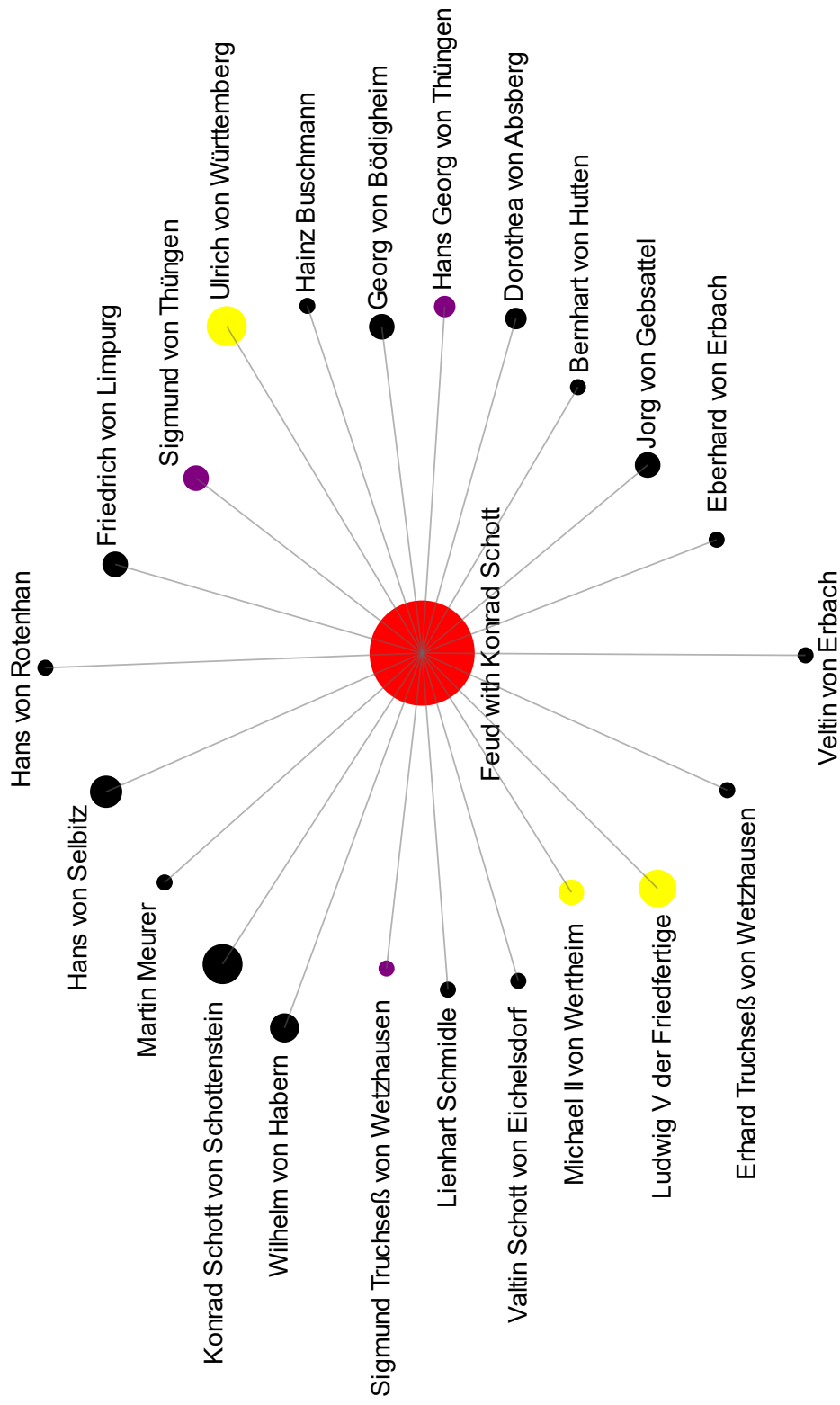
Figure 5. Feud with Konrad Schott Network. This visualization illustrates all the individuals Götz referenced in his description of the feud with Konrad Schott. It includes 14 untitled nobles, 4 titled nobles, 3 commoners, and 1 dame. The visualization demonstrates how large Götz's network had grown by 1517, when he was at the pinnacle of his power. Purple dots indicate Götz's kin. Yellow dots indicate Götz's patrons.

APPENDIX B: TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENTS IN GÖTZ'S LIFE

Event	Date Start	Date End	Type
Upbringing and Early Education	1480-01-01	1495-01-01	Social Life
Lives with Konrad	1495-01-01	1498-01-01	Social Life
Ansbach Court	1498-06-01	1499-10-01	Social Life
Burgundy Campaign	1498-06-01	1498-12-01	War
Swiss War	1499-07-01	1499-10-01	War
First Feud experience with Hans Thalacker	1500-01-01	1502-01-01	Feud
Affalterbach Dispute	1502-02-01	1502-08-01	War
Hammelburg Incident	1502-09-15	1502-09-15	Feud
Second Feud experience with Hans Thalacker	1503-01-01	1504-01-01	Feud
Landshut War of Succession	1504-02-01	1505-02-01	War
Bohemian Feud	1505-04-01	1505-06-01	Feud
Waldstrom Feud	1505-06-01	1505-10-01	Feud
Meuter Feud	1505-11-01	1506-05-01	Feud
Georg Truchseß Feud	1506-06-01	1506-12-01	Feud
Feud with Cologne	1508-05-01	1510-11-28	Feud
Feud with Bishop of Bamberg	1509-05-01	1509-10-01	Feud
Stumpf von Schweinberg Feud	1509-06-01	1509-09-01	Feud
Wedding of Ludwig V der Friedfertige	1511-02-23	1511-02-23	Social Life
Feud with Nuremberg	1512-05-18	1514-06-01	Feud
Poor Konrad Rebellion	1514-05-01	1514-10-01	War
Feud with Mainz	1514-07-01	1516-08-27	Feud
Feuds of Franz von Sickingen	1515-01-01	1518-01-01	Feud
Feud with Konrad Schott	1517-02-01	1518-10-01	Feud
Imprisonment at Heilbronn	1519-05-01	1522-10-07	Imprisonment
Peasants' War	1525-04-01	1525-06-01	War
Imprisonment at Augsburg and House Arrest	1528-11-24	1542-01-01	Imprisonment
Imperial Ottoman Campaign	1542-09-01	1542-12-01	War
Imperial French Campaign	1544-09-01	1544-12-01	War
Writing of Autobiography	1559-01-01	1562-07-23	Social Life