

The Confusion of the Battlefield. A New Perspective on the Tapestries of the Battle of Pavia (c. 1525-1531)

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Abstract

This contribution is devoted to the tapestry cycle of the Battle of Pavia conserved at the Museo Capodimonte in Naples. Seven tapestries compose this prestigious tapestry set that commemorates the first military success of Charles V: the battle held in Pavia on 24 February 1525. Up to now the tapestries have been interpreted as independent panels representing different episodes of the battle. In this contribution we will show that the seven panels actually originated in one single design, which we rediscovered by assembling them in a different sequence. In fact, the panels provide a description of the battle in a fabulous and unique panoramic landscape: the most monumental siege city view ever conceived in the sixteenth century. This discovery not only changes our lecture of the tapestries, but also raises numerous questions that should be addressed in future studies.

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Introduction

[1] On the upper floor of the Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, located on the heights of Naples, the visitor can lose himself for hours in the contemplation of the seven tapestries that are on permanent display in the "Sala dell' Arazzi":¹ the tapestry set of the Battle of Pavia. This masterpiece is one of the finest tapestry cycles produced by the Brussels weavers during the sixteenth century. The set was woven after 1528 and before 1531 in the workshop of Willem and Jan Dermoyen. Its design has traditionally been attributed to Bernard Van Orley (1488-1541).

[2] Upon looking at these precious sixteenth-century hangings, one will be first captivated by the swarming of the armies, the contrasted and constant moves of the troops from the foreground to the background, from one side to the other. A vivid impression of chaos and horror emerges out of simultaneous confrontations depicted in bright colors all over the walls: assaults of cavalries, skirmishes between enemy infantries, soldiers against

¹ I would like to thank Alessandra Rullo, Linda Martino and Marina Santucci for their kind support for my research during my visit to the Capodimonte Museum in March 2012. My thanks also go to Flore Mayvial, who helped me find my way in the Chevalier Conservation Archives (Paris, Courbevoie).

riders, close-quarter struggles, as well as retreats, military debacles or the flight of the army baggage train. The narrative luxuriance of the precious wall hangings, "mobile frescoes from the north", as they have been called, usually makes such an overwhelming impression that it is difficult at first sight to find your way in the battle.

- [3] In this contribution, we propose to stand back from past analyses and observe the tapestries from a new perspective. Up to now the tapestries have been interpreted as independent panels representing different episodes of the battle. We will show that the seven panels actually originated in one single design. They in fact provide a description of the battle in a fabulous and unique panoramic landscape which we rediscovered by assembling the pieces in a different sequence.

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The Battle of Pavia and the tapestries

- [4] The Battle of Pavia held on 24 February 1525 was a decisive episode of the Italian Wars in the climax of the conflicts between Charles V and Francis I as they vied for hegemony in Europe.² French and Imperial armed forces fought each other in the north of Italy. At the time, Pavia, which supported the Imperial side, had taken in a Spanish garrison led by the Duke of Leyva. The city had been besieged by the French army for almost four months when the besiegers were in turn assailed by a large formation of the Imperial army sent to the rescue. The battle only lasted a couple of hours and ended with unexpected and major consequences: the arrest of the King of France and the slaughter of a large part of the French nobility. The event was perceived as a military disaster by the French. On the Habsburgs' side, the battle – Charles V's first military victory – was praised in all kinds of media, principally engravings and a few paintings.³ As a component of magnificent princely displays, the tapestries of the Battle of Pavia contributed to the praise of the Imperial victory to a social elite: the imperial courtly audience. The tapestry cycle of the Museo di Capodimonte was formerly part of the Imperial Habsburg collections.⁴ It was likely the set presented and offered by the States General to the Emperor Charles V on 2 March 1531 in his royal palace in Brussels.⁵ Handed down

² For a detailed description of the Battle of Pavia, first see Luigi Casali and Marco Galandra, "Pavia nelle vicende militari d'Italia dalla fine del secolo XV e la battaglia del 24 febbraio 1525," in: *Storia di Pavia, Banca Regionale Europea*, Pavia 1994, II, 40-70. Also see Angus Konstam, *Pavia 1525, The Climax of Italian Wars (= Osprey military campaign series 44)*, Oxford 1996.

³ On contemporary representations of the Battle of Pavia in its cultural context, see: Pia F. Cuneo, *Art and politics in early modern Germany: Jörg Breu the Elder and the fashioning of political identity, ca. 1475-1536*, Leiden 1998, 131-133. A list of the major depictions of the battle can be drawn up on the basis of the following contributions: Timothy Wilson, *The Battle of Pavia*, Oxford 2003, 6-7; Ian Buchanan, "The 'Battle of Pavia' and the tapestry collection of Don Carlos: new documentation," in: *Burlington Magazine* 144, 1191 (June 2002), 321; John R. Hale, *Artists and Warfare in the Renaissance*, Yale 1990, 184-191.

⁴ Buchanan, "The 'Battle of Pavia' and the tapestry collection of Don Carlos: new documentation", 345-351.

⁵ "Ten selven tyde is oock in deliberatie gestelt, ende gelyck het schynt oock geconsenteert, dat men den keyser soude beschinck met sekere tapisserye die te Bruessel was gemaectt op den slach van Pavia, [...]" (Archives générales du Royaume, *Registre des Résolutions des Etats de Brabants*,

through the subsequent generations – including through donations and sales –, by the end of the nineteenth century the tapestries became the property of the heirs of the Marquis d'Avalos, one of the protagonists of the battle. From then on, the tapestry set has been traced until its entrance into the collection of the National Museum of Naples at the end of the nineteenth century.

- [5] The set is composed of seven pieces which measure from eight to nine meters in width and are around four meters thirty high. Archive documents indicate that two sets of the Battle of Pavia were presumably made by 1533.⁶ The designs must have been conducted between 1525 and 1528.⁷ At the time, the tapestry workshops of Brussels were internationally renowned and Flemish artists were specialized in conferring their skills as portraitists or landscape painters to the monumental scale of the medium. Bernard Van Orley was then the leader of a prolific cartoon workshop established in Brussels and which employed numerous specialists. At the time he was involved in this commission, the Flemish master was a court painter for Margaret of Austria, aunt of the young Charles V and governess of the Low Countries who died in 1530.⁸ Seven large-scale drawings related to the series are conserved in the Louvre.⁹

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From disorder to order

- [6] Since the rediscovery of the pieces in the collection of Marquis Tommaso d'Avalos, soon followed by their entrance in the collection of the National Museum of Naples in 1862, the tapestries have captivated the attention of scholars. While the first major contributions were mainly concerned with style study for attributing the compositions, the aim of the tapestries as political propaganda and the origin of the pieces have been discussed more recently.¹⁰ As the tapestries do not carry the captions that usually explain the subject

intitulé Root-boeck, 119/16, fol. 99), quoted from Louis Prosper Gachard, "Articles originaux des anciennes assemblées nationales en Belgique," in: *Revue de Bruxelles* 3 (October 1839), 33-34.

⁶ The mark of the weaver that appears in one of the tapestries has been identified as Willem and Jan Dermoyen's. For more information on this topic, see Ian Buchanan's notice in: Thomas Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence*, exh. cat., New York 2002, 328 and Guy Delmarcel in: Arnout Balis et al., *Les Chasses de Maximilien*, Paris 1993, 39-43. A duplicate of at least one of the tapestries must have existed since, in a 1533 document, Willem Dermoyen agreed to supply merchants Jan van der Walle and Jacob Rehlinger with pieces of the Battle of Pavia and the Hunts of Maximilian, which were to be offered for sale to Sultan Süleyman.

⁷ Thus, after the battle and before the start of the weaving. See Ian Buchanan's notice in Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, 328.

⁸ For a recent synthesis on the attribution issue, see Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, 296-297. For a further bibliography of scholarly works devoted to the Flemish artist, see Marian Ainsworth in: *Grove, The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, London 1996, 23, 423-528. By the time the tapestries of the Battle of Pavia were achieved, the artist had been attached to the court of Mary of Hungary.

⁹ The preparatory drawings are conserved in Paris (Musée du Louvre, département des Arts graphiques, inv. no. 20163-20169). For a brief comment on the drawings and a related bibliography, see Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, 297 and 321.

¹⁰ The main recent studies devoted to the Battle of Pavia tapestries are: Luigi Casali, Cristina Fraccaro and Vittorio Prina, *Gli arazzi della battaglia di Pavia nel Museo di Capodimonte a Napoli*,

depicted, the identification of the scenes proceeds from a close analysis of the military details of the pictures. Furthermore, flags, armors and costumes allowed the identification of all army units. A few inscriptions disseminated in the ornaments of costumes, horse garments and weapons provide additional precisions on some of the protagonists.¹¹ Despite the identification of the main subject of each tapestry, the sequence of the set remains an outstanding crux among scholars.¹² Traditionally, the seven pieces are presented according to the supposed chronological sequence of events as it has been established (Fig. 1):¹³ 1) Advance of the Imperial army and counter-attack of the French cavalry led by Francis I; 2) Imperial attack on the French cavalry, led by the Marquis of Pescara, and on the French artillery by the Landsknechts under Georg von Frundsberg; 3) Advance of the Imperial baggage train and desertion of the Swiss pikemen in the French army; 4) Surrender of King Francis I; 5) Invasion of the French camp and flight of the women and civilians; 6) Flight of the French army and retreat of the French rearguard under the Duke of Alençon; 7) Sortie of the besieged Imperial troops and rout of the Swiss guard.



1 Bernard Van Orley, *The Battle of Pavia*, tapestry set woven in the Dermoyen workshop, Brussels, c. 1525-1531, c. 60 x 4.30 m. Museo Capodimonte, Naples, inv. nos. IGMN 144483, -4, -9, -6, -5, -7 and -8. Traditional sequence corresponding to the current presentation in the museum (© Fototeca della Soprintendenza Speciale, Polo Museale della città di Napoli) (click for [enlarged view](#))

[7] We wish to suggest here a new sequence for the tapestry set based on a careful reading of the landscape as a whole (Fig. 2). Once reassembled according to the new sequence, the seven pieces of the tapestry set reveal a wide and all-encompassing view of the battlefield. Thus recovered, the monumental landscapes may be fully perceived in the panorama recomposed here using the photographs which were taken after the restoration of the tapestries in 1999 by Chevalier Conservation.¹⁴ This restoration, the

Pavia 1993; Nicola Spinosa et al., *La Bataille de Pavie*, Paris 1999; Ian Buchanan's notice in Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, 321-328; Buchanan, "The 'Battle of Pavia' and the tapestry collection of Don Carlos: new documentation", 345-351.

¹¹ Beltrami's study still provides the more complete survey of the inscriptions; cf. Luca Beltrami, *La Battaglia di Pavia, illustrata negli arazzi del marchese del Vasto al museo nazionale di Napoli: con cenni storici et descrittivi dell' arch. Luca Beltrami*, Milan 1896. This survey should be complemented by the inscriptions recovered after the restoration of the tapestries in 1999.

¹² See note 10.

¹³ The order of the tapestries had not been fully questioned until today. Different sequences were successively proposed by the following: Beltrami, *La Battaglia di Pavia*; R.-A. D'Hulst, *Tapisseries flamandes du XVe au XVIIe siècle*, Brussels 1960, 147-156. Cristina Fraccaro proposed the latest sequence: Casali, Fraccaro and Prina, *Gli arazzi della battaglia di Pavia*, 9.

¹⁴ Marina Santucci, "Quelques informations sur les précédentes restaurations," in: Spinosa et al., *La Bataille de Pavie*, 90-99. Preliminary studies for the restoration raise numerous questions concerning the original appearance of the tapestries. The appearance of the original borders of the tapestries of the Battle of Pavia still remains an outstanding question (see note below).

latest important episode of the complex material history of the set, shaped the actual presentation of the tapestry cycle. In the virtual reconstruction presented here, the remaining borders¹⁵ have been removed using digital technology.



2 New sequence as proposed in this article (former sequence in brackets). The numbers in the tapestries refer to the text (© Fototeca della Soprintendenza Speciale, Polo Museale della città di Napoli) (click for [enlarged view](#))

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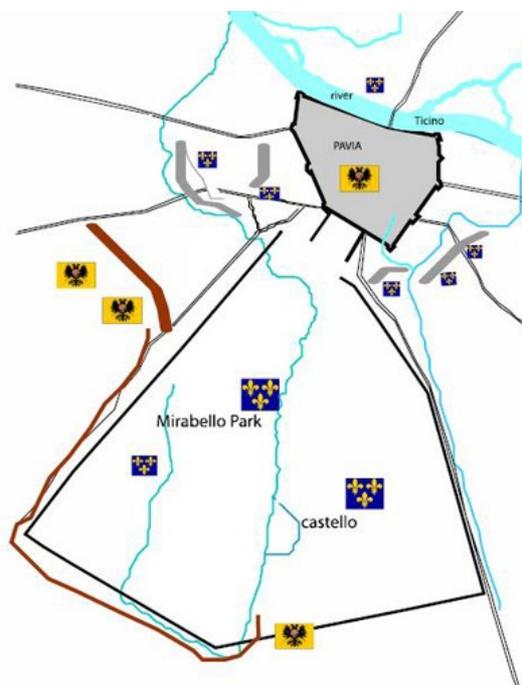
A new perspective on the tapestries

- [8] The new panorama presents the events that occurred during the battle. Before taking a closer look at the new ensemble, it is convenient to recall the complex configuration of the battlefield (Fig. 3). As mentioned above, by the morning of 24 February 1525, the French besiegers of Pavia were in turn besieged by a large formation of the Imperial army.
- [9] The forces in presence were about twenty thousand on each camp. On the Imperial side, the main commanding officers were Charles de Lannoy, Viceroy of Naples (1487-1527), general chief of the army; Charles III, Duke of Bourbon¹⁶ (1490-1527), in charge of the Imperial cavalry; Don Antonio de Leyva, Duke of Terranova (1480-1536), in command of the garrison stationed in Pavia; Fernando Francesco d'Avalos, Marquis of Pescara (1496-1525), who coordinated the charges of the Spanish arquebusiers and German pikemen; and Georg von Frundsberg (1473-1528), a famous German commander at the time, who led the Landsknechts – German mercenaries who, during the battle, distinguished themselves especially in defeating those Swiss and German mercenaries who were paid by the French. On the opposite side, the most important members of the French aristocracy fought alongside the King. They included Guillaume Gouffier, Seigneur de

¹⁵ The studies for the restoration of 1999 suggest that only three tapestries had retained parts of woven borders depicting garlands of fruits and flowers (see the report of the restoration in Archives Chevalier, Paris). The borders of the four other pieces appeared to be made out of painted fabric imitating woven borders and were removed. These painted borders were made by Italian restorer Badelli during the restoration of the tapestries in 1907, as imitation of the real fragments which were still conserved (Santucci, *Quelques informations sur les précédentes restaurations*, 97). The remaining woven borders show signs of alterations of their original state as they seem to be made out of reassembled fragments. This original state may be represented on the basis of a literary description. As noted by Nello Forti Grazzini and Guy Delmarcel, an old depiction dating from 1776 attests that each piece of the set was framed with upper and lateral tapestry borders depicting flowers and fruits, while the lower borders showed tritons and sea-horses (Guy Delmarcel in Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, 322 and note 3, referring to Nello Forti Grazzini, "Per gli arazzi del Regio Ducal Palazzo di Milano: un element degli 'Atti degli apostoli' di Mazzarino ritrovato e la battaglia di Pavia" che non fue acquistata," in: *Palazzo Reale a Milano. Il Progetto Per Il Museo Della Reggia e Contributi Alla Storia Del Palazzo*, Milan 2000, 215-43). Further material investigation needs to be conducted in order to determine if the remaining flowered borders are original or not.

¹⁶ Charles III, Duc de Bourbon was a French nobleman who served Charles V after his revolts against Francis I. During the Battle of Pavia, he gained fame by rescuing Francis I from the Imperial troops that surrounded him.

Bonnivet (1488-1525), Francis I's closest military advisor; Robert III de la Marck, Seigneur of Fleurange (1491-1537), captain of the King's Swiss guard; Anne, Duke of Montmorency (1492-1567) and Charles de Valois, Duke of Alençon (1489-1525), who commanded the French rearguard.¹⁷



3 Schema of the battlefield in the surroundings of Pavia (after Konstam, *The Battle of Pavia*, p. 56)

- [10] The situation on the field was intricate: several units of the French army were distributed within a first circle around the city (Fig. 3). Most of them were deployed in the northern half of this circle. Pavia was flanked on this side by a large and fortified area, Mirabello Park, a former hunting reserve of the Visconti family, where major parts of the French troops and the King's headquarters were established. Three other French formations could be found around the city: Montmorency's forces were encamped to the south, across the river on the island of Borgo Ticino. To the west of the park was Alençon with the rearguard, while Fleurange with the Swiss vanguard was located in an area called Five Abbey, located to the east of the park. The Imperial settled their camp to the east and north of the Park, in a second row around the city.¹⁸ At the dawn of 24 February 1525, after three weeks of siege, the Imperial army initiated the decisive expedition against the French. The first clash occurred soon after a breach had been made in the wall at the north of the park, around five o'clock in the morning.

¹⁷ Most of these commanders are portrayed and identified by inscriptions in the tapestries. For references, see note 11.

¹⁸ Useful reconstructions of the Battle of Pavia are provided by drawings in recent contributions. See, for instance, Casali and Galandra, *Pavia nelle vicende militari d'Italia dalla fine del secolo XV e la battaglia del 24 febbraio 1525*, 40, 47 and 50; Konstam, *Pavia 1525*, 54, 58-59, 62, 82 and 86; and Thomas F. Arnold, *Les guerres de la Renaissance, XVe-XVIe siècles (= Atlas des guerres)*, Paris 2001, 158-159.

- [11] The tapestries offer a vision of the important moments of the battle that occurred almost simultaneously after this moment. Seen from the east, the topographical depiction of the battlefield provides unity to the whole.
- [12] The battle is more or less observed from a little above the ground in the foreground and from a bird's-eye view in the distance (see our virtual reconstruction of the panorama in Fig. 2). From the right to the left, the spectator's eyes embrace the extremely large territory occupied by Mirabello Park. The hunting place emerges from its enclosures, the walls spreading in the background of the composition from the middle of the first tapestry to the sixth, and in the foreground from the third to the sixth.¹⁹ Between the park and the city, a second area of the conflict, the French fortified camp, is clearly evoked by a double line of earthworks made of trenches protected by a sequence of gabions, deployed in a circle in the fifth and sixth panels. The cityscape of Pavia dominates the sixth tapestry. To the right of the city, the waters of Ticino River flow over to the sixth panel and invade the foreground of the plain in the last tapestry of the set.
- [13] The seven tapestries of the set form what since the eighteenth century has been called a panoramic image. As mentioned above, most of the depicted events occurred concurrently but some consecutive actions are also included. For instance, the tapestries provide successive images of the French gendarmes' retreat: Bourbon, Francis I and some of his closest gendarmes are depicted three times in the second and third panels. The general setting moreover offers a distorted view of the battlefield, allowing the painter to represent locations that could not be seen from a single point of view. The perfect perspective induced by the construction of the landscape and the reduction of the scale of the fighters from the foreground to the horizon, situates the spectator in the battlefield, a few meters away from the characters standing close to the borders of the tapestries. Walking along a wall covered with the tapestries, the spectator would be walking around the battlefield from the north angle of the park to the south flank of the city.
- [14] As a result of this new reading, the compositions appear so inextricably interspersed with each other, so strongly encapsulated as part of the set as a whole, that it is even difficult to attribute a distinct title to each panel.²⁰ Our proposal would be as follows:²¹ 1) The Swiss giving up the fight; 2) The arrest of King Francis I; 3-4) The encirclement of the

¹⁹ The continuity of the wall in the foreground is a key element of the present demonstration. It should be noted that this continuity was even more visible prior to the restoration of 1907. Back then, the tapestries were framed by pieces of fabric and the beginning of the wall could already be spotted in the second composition, more specifically in the additional painted fragments. Likewise, the beginning of the wall was fully depicted in the third composition, where it is no longer visible today. Images of the tapestries in their former appearance (i.e. before the removal of the elements painted to imitate the borders of the tapestry) are provided in Spinosa et al., *La Bataille de Pavie*, (illustration without pagination). A similar observation could be made with regard to the related drawings conserved in the Louvre.

²⁰ In the bibliography related to the tapestries, individual titles are usually given to each panel, see above and note 10.

²¹ The numbering corresponds to the new sequence as proposed in this article.

French by the Imperial cavalry and the infantry led by the Marquis of Pescara, and the taking of the French artillery by the Landsknechts under Georg von Frundsberg; 5) Flight of the French army train; 6-7) The rout of the Swiss guard; The flight of the French army and retreat of the French rearguard under the Duke of Alençon.

[15] As we will see, the reconstructed landscape allows a new interpretation of this battlefield, as lost features of the battle settings reappear out of this new ordering. In the foreground as well as in the background, the first tapestry shows groups of Swiss soldiers who refuse to fight [1]²² while being attacked by a detachment of Imperial cavalry. The ground is littered with weapons. In the left part of the tapestry, civilians – probably part of the Imperial baggage army train – are entering the battle area [2].²³ The positioning of the first piece could be deduced by the completion that its general features bring to the general structure: in this case, that of the wall of the park [3]. At the intersection of the first and second tapestries, the setting of the scene, an enclosed area circumscribed by the walls of the park and a light garden fence, can be reconstructed in the background [5]. There, two Swiss detachments with opposed allegiances [4] are facing each other. The edge of the wood depicted at the limit of the second and third tapestries [7] offers a common departure location for simultaneous key maneuvers conducted in opposite directions which will culminate successfully for the Imperial troops. Emerging from the left-hand side of the wood in the second tapestry, Bourbon [7], in charge of a small detachment of the Imperial light cavalry, leads the attack on the French gendarmes. In the same panel, the arrest of the French King is depicted in the foreground [6].

[16] One can observe, starting in the third tapestry, an impressive and complex display of a key moment of the battle: the encirclement of the French cavalry by the Imperial mixed forces [8]. This scene, depicted on the third and fourth tapestries, takes up the whole height of the composition. Coming out of the woods, a first detachment of the Imperial cavalry, escorted by arquebusiers and Landsknechts, progresses in front of the French gendarmes [9]. The death of the Marquis of San Angelo, one of the Imperial leaders, involved in a personal fight with Francis I, is portrayed in the upper right corner of the third tapestry. Still, putting compositions nos. 3 and 4 side by side sets the struggle between the enemy cavalries into a broader perspective. It allows us to observe the French surrounded on their right flank by another unit of the Imperial infantry, led by Pescara and Del Vasto. Under their command, the Spanish arquebusiers are shooting toward the French, turning their back to the foreground of the tapestry [10]. This decisive move divides the French regiment into two parts and makes it impossible for the French artillery to fire without hitting their own cavalry.

²² The numbers in brackets in the following lines help to locate the depiction of the events in Fig. 2.

²³ Even if the position of the first tapestry in the sequence is certain, we still do not understand why these civilians, who seem to be part of the Imperial army train, are depicted going into the battlefield. Their camps do not seem to be attacked.

- [17] On the foreground of the third panel, the French King followed by a small detachment of his gendarmes escapes from the battle scenery. At the same time, the Landsknecht sections of the French infantry, led by François de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk and by François de Lorraine, try to cross the French artillery lines to bring support to the King [11]. They are shown being met at this point by Frundsberg's Landsknechts [12]. The scene testifies to the violence of the struggle between the Landsknechts of the two sides. Suffolk and Lorraine are killed and the French artillery is taken. Both assaults overflow into the fifth tapestry, where one can follow the fight being ruthlessly waged between the Landsknechts in the foreground [13], while the background depicts scenes of flight of the French army. The French gendarmes are knocked off their horses and hacked and stabbed to death in the surrounding of Castello Mirabello [14]. In the background, the hunting house located in the center of the park is depicted as it is being stormed by the Spanish arquebusiers. We are now at the limit of the fortified French camp, located in-between the park and the city [15], in an area delimited between two lanes of gabions. The camp is attacked on both sides by the Imperial army and Leyva's garrison running out of Pavia, seen on the sixth tapestry [16 and 17]. A group of civilians, mixed with some Swiss guards, routs out of the French camp in front of the tapestry and from the right [18], towards the river to the west of the city. They were presumably camp followers. Often soldiers wife's and families, but also merchants followed and provided the armies with all kinds of services and supplies. They are depicted here carrying animals and provisions or riding heavily-laden mules. Also note the richly dressed female figures. Further study must be conducted in order to fully understand their appearance among this group.
- [18] Scenes of the escape of the army train, exiting the circular earthworks, are also depicted in the middle ground [19]. The flight of the Swiss is the main subject of the sixth and seventh tapestries. From the reconstruction of the landscape as a whole, the Borgo Ticino emerges in between the Ticino River winding [22]. This disposition allows us to witness the agony of the Swiss guard drowning [21] in the river from the Ponte Copperto [20] to the pontoon bridge [23]. Bernard Van Orley has emphasized the retreat of the Duke of Alençon's troops that are portrayed routing to the west. The scene is combined with the representation of a famous anecdotic episode of the battle, the destruction of the pontoon bridge by the French.

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The landscape in the related drawings

- [19] By considering the depiction of a single landscape through all the compositions instead of seven independent settings, we argue that the seven compositions derived from a single, common design. The visual examination of the tapestry indubitably reveals a peculiar aspect of the original artistic design project. Further research must be conducted in order to understand if the princely display was supposed to reflect the monumental design

made of contiguous and continuous landscapes or if the design was modified before the making of the cartoons. At this point, it is therefore necessary to confront our hypothesis with the seven drawings related to the tapestries. From this new perspective, the role of the drawings in the process of elaborating the tapestries may be reconsidered.

- [20] A tapestry results from a complex process. Studies of workshop practices have demonstrated that in a first stage, the development of a tapestry's design implies the execution of a larger number of workshop drawings, from rapid sketches and preliminary partial studies to drawings that provide a fuller synthesis of the whole composition.²⁴ This necessarily precedes the execution of the full-size cartoons, which are used as a direct model during the weaving of the tapestry. The Louvre sheets, which depict the episode of the Battle of Pavia with the same structure as the tapestries, can be linked to the penultimate stage of the design process.²⁵
- [21] The magnificent drawings distinguish themselves among contemporary examples by their large dimensions (c. 40 x 70 cm). Made with black chalk, brown ink, blue or gray wash on paper and also showing later pentimenti (reworkings), the drawings were recognized as the work of Bernard Van Orley and his workshop.²⁶ The drawings were usually considered to be compositional studies with some minor differences with the tapestries. Indeed, a close look at the drawings reveals several pentimenti. On the other hand, the almost fully worked-up composition and the subtle touches of lavish, which bring light and shadow to parts of the compositions, lead one to believe that the drawings may have been intended as presentation material at an intermediary stage of the elaboration process.
- [22] This can be illustrated through a comparison between the drawings and the tapestries.²⁷ The compositions of the drawings (see the three drawings reproduced here in, Figs. 4-6) are similar but not identical to the tapestries. Compared to the latter the drawings reflect a higher point of view on the battlefield. The scale of the characters and of the buildings is smaller. More precisely, once the design was adapted for the tapestries the horizon line was inclined, which modifies our perception of the scenes. As a result, it seems closer to the spectator, while in the foreground, the personages are close to life-size.²⁸ One can also notice that a strip of composition visible in the bottom of the drawings is missing in the tapestries in their current conservation state.

²⁴ See for instance, the studies on Raphael's workshop designs for tapestries (1517-1530), Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, 225-245 (and bibliography).

²⁵ On the drawings of the Battle of Pavia, see Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, 321-323 (and bibliography); Hugo Soly and Johan Van de Wiele, eds., *Carolus Charles Quint 1500-1558*, exh.cat., Ghent 2000, 252-254.

²⁶ However, the drawings should not be viewed as stylistically homogeneous in terms of handling and technique.

²⁷ It has been noted that for instance, the drawings lack several details such as the costumes and arm ornaments or the accuracy of the depiction of the portraits – details which are usually added at a later stage.

²⁸ This change could be observed in all the compositions but the two last.



4 Bernard Van Orley, *The Surrender of King Francis I*, c.1525-1528, drawing, pen and wash on paper, 39.5 x 75.5 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Arts Graphiques, inv. no. 20166 (© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)/René-Gabriel)



5 Bernard Van Orley, *Attack on the French cavalry by the Imperial cavalry and the infantry led by the Marquis of Pescara*, c. 1525-1528, drawing, pen and wash on paper, 37.2 x 77.2 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Arts Graphiques, inv. no. 20164 (© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)/Michèle Belot)



6 Bernard Van Orley, *Flight of the French army and retreat of the French rear guard under the Duke of Alençon*, c. 1525-1528, drawing, pen and wash on paper, 38 x 57.8 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Arts Graphiques, inv. no. 20163 (© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)/Thierry Le Mage)

- [23] In fine, the continuity of the landscape through the seven compositions reveals itself less clearly in the drawings than in the tapestries. Their heterogeneous character points to a fragmented vision of the whole setting. The missing strip on the left-hand side of the last drawing adds to the impression of discontinuity (Fig. 6). But, on the other hand, some details of the drawings confirm our proposal for a new sequence of the compositions. For instance, attention should be paid to the progressive emergence of significant portions of the wall – part of the Mirabello Park fortifications – from the lower front of the second composition to the third one (Figs. 4 and 5). These elements, which appear in the tapestries' photographs taken prior to their last restoration, confirm the sequence of these compositions.²⁹
- [24] Positioning the wall in the foreground seems to have been an issue in the elaboration of the final design. As shown by the pentimento that is still visible in the lower part of the drawing (Fig. 5), a much larger portion of the wall was first sketched in the third composition. While comparing the drawing and the tapestry of the fourth composition, one can notice that the wall has been located higher up, cutting the legs of the German group in the center.

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The tapestries of Pavia and the iconography of the battle

- [25] The monumental "siege view" recovered in the tapestries finally allows us to better compare the composition of the tapestries with contemporary depictions of the battle. As recalled earlier, the Habsburg triumph of Pavia was celebrated immediately through all kinds of media. Beside the description of the major event of the battle, the capture of the French King, and sometimes a few words about the historical context of the Italian wars, the emphasis of the records, be it in the form of texts or images, differs from medium to medium.³⁰
- [26] While some depictions among the iconographical production can be considered to be generic war representations, a few images attempted to reproduce the features of the terrain with some degree of accuracy.³¹ Four paintings and four engravings belong to this last category. These images can be classified into two groups according to their angle of view on the battlefield and the major features of their compositions. A first iconographical group can be formed by a painting located at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna,³²

²⁹ See for instance the photographs of the tapestries published in Spinosa et al., *La Bataille de Pavie*, (illustrations without pagination).

³⁰ For a survey of texts about the battle, see: Angelo Cerri, "La battaglia di Pavia nella letteratura contemporanea," in: *Storia di Pavia*, Banca Regionale Europea, Pavia 1994, II, 71-157. The author also mentions some images pertaining to the event (idem, 76-77).

³¹ The more complete syntheses of the iconographical corpus on the *Battle of Pavia* are given by Wilson, *The Battle of Pavia*, 6-7 and Cuneo, *Art and politics in early modern Germany*, 131-133.

³² Anonymous, *The Battle of Pavia*, c. 1525, oil on panel, 32 x 41 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. no. GG_5660.

a painting in Brussels (Fig. 7)³³ and an engraving which seems to have circulated as a single sheet or was included in proceedings of the battle (Fig. 8).³⁴ All these images give an almost planimetric view of the battlefield and the surroundings of Pavia, from a vantage point situated north of Mirabello Park, in the axis of Castello Mirabello and behind it, with Castello Visconti backed to the north walls of the city. The second group encompasses the depictions of the battle that give a perspective view of the battlefield from the northeastern or northwestern flanks.³⁵ These images offer more heterogeneous aspects than those from the previous group. Among them, we find one of the most famous representations of the battle in an engraving by Jörg Breu (Fig. 9).³⁶ The depiction of the battle in the tapestries can now be added to this group. The monumental landscapes recovered in the tapestries now offer a general scheme which includes the representation of the major benchmarks of the battlefield of Pavia at a monumental scale: the walls, the fortified park, Castello Mirabello, the capture of the French King, the French fortification around Pavia, the city and Ticino River from the northwestern flanks of the city.



7 Anonymous (attributed to Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen), *Pavia*, oil on panel with inscription "Pavie 1525", 53 x 68 cm. Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels, inv. no. 1300 (© Royal Museums of Fine Arts)

³³ Anonymous (attributed to Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen), *Pavia*, oil on panel with inscription "Pavie 1525", 53 x 68 cm. Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels, inv. no. 1300. Cf. Soly and Van de Wiele, eds., *Carolus Charles Quint 1500-1558*, 252.

³⁴ Georg von Frundsberg, *Ro. Keiserliche Schlacht mit dem König von Frankreich, beschehen vor Pavia, uff sant Mathis tag im jar 1525 [...]*, f. 152. Consulted copy: University Library Dresden.

³⁵ See the Battle of Pavia paintings conserved in: 1) Leeds, Royal Armouries Museum, WYL.I.142; 2) London, Ashmolean Museum, F664; 3) a painting by Rupprecht Heller, (dated and signed, "Pavie 1529"), Stockholm, National Museum, inv. no. 605; 4) Unknown Flemish artist, Alabama, Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, inv. no. 1961.12; and 5) an engraving by Jörg Breu, London, British Museum inv. no. 1895, 0122.79.

³⁶ Jörg Breu, woodcut, 527 x 397 mm, London, British museum, inv. no. 1895, 0122.79 (signed with a monogram on the reverse, with an inscription).



8 Anonymous, *The Battle of Pavia*, engraving published in Frundsberg's account of the battle (Reprod. from: Georg Von Frundsberg, *Ro. Keiserliche Schlacht mit dem König von Frankreich, beschehen vor Pavia, uff sant Mathis tag im jar 1525, [...]*, f. 152, exemplar: University Library Dresden)



9 Jörg Breu, *Pavia*, woodcut, 527 x 397 mm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1895, 0122.79, signed with a monogram on the reverse, with an inscription: "Ain verzeichnug der belegereten stat Pavia von Francisco dem König zu Franckreich, mit erlegung allda seines gantzen høre und aigner person, des Königs defencknus von Kayser Karoli kriegsvolck geschehen Freytag morgens den vierundzwaintzigsten Februarij Anno M.D. xxv" (a diagrammatic representation of the city of Pavia, besieged by Francis, King of France, showing the defeat there of his entire armies and his own person, with the capture of the King by the Emperor Charles' troops, on Friday morning the 24th of February 1525)" (© Trustees of the British Museum)

[27] Furthermore, it has to be noted that the tapestry design presents close affinity with a "German" manner of depicting military scenes found in prints spread from the second

decade of the sixteenth century onwards.³⁷ Embodied through numerous engraved broadsheets depicting martial aspects of the time, horrors from the battlefield, city sieges and also offensive technical and strategical studies, this manner of depicting warfare has been first explored by J. Hale in his *Artists and Warfare* and was later more deeply studied by Pia Cuneo. Breu's engraving of the Battle of Pavia is typical of this peculiar visual expression of war, explored also by numerous court artists of the Emperor Maximilian – Albrecht Dürer, Jörg Breu, Albrecht Altdorfer, Leonhard Beck, Hans Burgkmair, Hans Schäufelein, Hans Sebald Beham, Erhard Schoen. Beyond their realistic appearance, these warfare scenes exalted the German military power as a means of political propaganda. The praise of the Landsknechts, new elite corps of foot soldiers easily recognizable through their costumes, weapons and way of fighting, was the main support of this publicity.³⁸ In the tapestries, the careful attention paid to the strategic maneuvers and military aspects of the event can be linked to German tradition of warfare representation.³⁹ But, if the depiction of the German mercenary skill is indeed laudatory, as reflected by the clearly labeled portrait of Frundsberg,⁴⁰ what really emerges from the depiction of the battle in the tapestries is the expression of the cosmopolitan character of the Imperial army as a display of the universal power of the Habsburgs. Soldiers of all nations, German pikemen and landsknechts, Spanish arquebusiers, Swiss mercenaries, Italian and Spanish riders, even stradiotes (oriental light cavalry) as well as their weapons and fighting methods are faithfully portrayed in the tapestries.

[28] As demonstrated by Pia Cuneo, these representations of warfare were used by the German Habsburgs to shape political identity. Depicting the Battle of Pavia with such military emphasis in the tapestries may support a close political discourse and reveals the influence of Maximilian's political media discourse at the court of his daughter Margaret of Austria and around the young Charles V.

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³⁷ The specific nature of warfare representation in these German images was first revealed by John Hale in his *Artists and Warfare in the Renaissance*. The author revealed crucial divergences – two contrasted artistic visions – between artistic depictions of warfare in northern and southern Europe. The Italians tend to favour warlike images filtered through Antique pictorial models while northern artists prefer realistic depictions of military facts. More recent scholarly works indicate that there was much to be gained from examining such visual production about warfare within a large cultural approach; considering not only the artists but also the commissioners and public of the images. In Pia Cuneo's studies, the visual production of warfare is analyzed more widely as a cultural production in a political context. See Pia F. Cuneo, *Artful Armies, Beautiful Battles: Art and Warfare in Early Modern Europe*, Boston 2002, 3-4. Cuneo, *Art and politics in early modern Germany: Jörg Breu the Elder and the fashioning of political identity*, ca. 1475-1536, Leiden 1998, 88-99.

³⁸ Cuneo, *Art and politics in early modern Germany*, 98-99.

³⁹ The most detailed description of the battle and its military insofar as it relates to the tapestries as depictions of the battle is given by Casali, Fraccaro and Prina, *Gli arazzi della battaglia di Pavia nel Museo di Capodimonte a Napoli*, 1-46.

⁴⁰ According to the new order suggested here, the fourth tapestry (which includes the labeled portraits of Frundsberg among those of Fernando Francesco d'Avalos, Marquis of Pescara and the portrait of his nephew Del Vasto), now occupies the central position.

Conclusions

- [29] The present contribution reveals that the seven compositions of the tapestries of the Battle of Pavia derive from one single design, which depicts a fabulous and unique war landscape. The pre-existence of this concept may definitively determine the order in which the tapestries should be considered today. By assembling the pieces in a precise new order, it appears that the representation of the first military success of Charles V forms in fact the most monumental panoramic landscape conceived in the sixteenth century. As this contribution has shown, this discovery changes our reading of the tapestries. Beside this aspect, numerous questions could be raised in further studies.
- [30] Among the pictorial tradition of tapestry, the set of the Battle of Pavia appears as a major innovation in the realms of design and style. In the first place, one should question the originality of the concept design revealed here in the tradition of Flemish tapestry design, more specifically with regard to the artistic production of Bernard Van Orley and his workshop. Indeed, other Flemish tapestry designs of the first half of the sixteenth century should be studied in relation to such a concept. Regarding this point, attention should be paid, for example, to the *Hunting of Maximilian* and to the *Moeurs et Fachons des Turcs* – two tapestry designs produced the same year within a shared artistic milieu. In light of this, as the design of the battle appears at first sight quite exceptional among the tapestry designs produced by Van Orley, its reliance on the German war prints production of the time should be investigated further.
- [31] Similarly, the accurate transcription of the Battle of Pavia, especially the construction of the fabulous and continuous landscape in the tapestry, grants the set a special place in warfare tapestry tradition. The scenic interpretation of the *Siege of Tunis* in the famous set of the *Conquest of Tunis* by Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen, which is shaped by the juxtaposition of two tapestries, should be linked to the legacy of Pavia.
- [32] Last but not least, on the basis of a more global cultural approach, the tapestries of the Battle of Pavia need to be considered very carefully among Renaissance visual representations of warfare. The panoramic battlefield of Pavia belongs to a peculiar sort of representation related to warfare and city sieges that create a typical and specific way of depicting such events through the centuries. In a way, the production of images of this scale in the sixteenth century could even be related to the panoramic settings produced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to show spectacular war disasters.⁴¹ Thus, the position of the tapestries of the Battle of Pavia must be reconsidered within the iconographical tradition of battle and siege views.

⁴¹ For more on siege views during the sixteenth century see Martha Pollak, "Representations of the City in Siege Views of the Seventeenth Century: The War of Military Images and Their Production," in: *Cities at War in Early Modern Europe*, New York and Cambridge 2010, 109-153. I thank Pieter Martens for bringing this reference to my attention.

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