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THE ARCHITECTURE OF ATTRITION

Monumental prints of sixteenth-century siege warfare defy easy categorization, as they picture the complex dynamics of mobile military societies. The sprawling encampments that surrounded city walls during extended sieges constituted a novel form of social organization, one that was reflected in the innovative responses of artists. Siege encampment prints connect architectural history to a constellation of related disciplines, including military history, urbanism, technology, and cartography. Monumental prints depicting the late military campaigns of Charles V, which saw the creation of some of the largest encampments ever assembled, provide a case study for considering the pervasive impact of siege warfare on all aspects of life. The goal of attrition was at the heart of all sieges, a strategy that relied on architecture to succeed. Examining encampment prints through the lens of architectural history demonstrates one of the many ways in which the field operates at the intersection of multiple disciplines.

A monumental early modern print of a military siege encampment does not immediately present as a subject for architectural history. Yet sixteenth-century siege warfare produced a particular form of temporary sociability that was, at its core, a response to a specific urban condition. The encampments that massed outside fortified city walls during prolonged sieges constituted a complex new experiment in social living. Large-format depictions of them were, by necessity, an experimental artistic response. These depictions, which flourished in the middle decades of the century, resemble topographical prints but do not conform to the more familiar and common category of city views. In fact, they do not fit neatly into any category, which is why they have fallen through the fissure that divides military history and architectural history, a fissure that is usually bridged only by the study of fortification design. Attrition – which was the goal of all sieges – required architecture.

Views of Charles V's military encampments depict stalemates as a form of settlement. Thus they offer an ideal subject to surface the various disciplines that converge within the current practice of architectural history. While siege warfare was by no means unique to the early modern period, the technological and architectural advancements during that time brought the condition of standoff to a peak. Several features of Charles's military strategy distinguish the enormous encampments of his siege campaigns, especially those of the 1540s, as a singular subject for artists. The emperor was famous for personally engag-

ing in combat rather than retreating to the relative safety of a distant command post. His presence on the battlefield meant that he was readily identified with the encampments of his troops, which is why commemorative portraits of his army in the field became a new type of imperial portraiture.

Moreover, these encampments also became temporary substitutes for capital cities. Born in Ghent, crowned in Bologna in 1530, and with aspirations of universal monarchy, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500-1558) had no fixed home base. Itinerancy was central to his political and military strategy, allowing him to conduct diplomacy wherever he needed to be – including on the battlefield. Charles's battles against Protestant resistance consumed him in the late 1540s and early 1550s, and an unusual concentration of large-format, multi-sheet woodcut depictions of his encampments survive from this era. Many extraordinary examples are extant, including Hans Mielich's *Siege of Ingolstadt* (1546), the *Siege of Wittenberg* (1547) that will be discussed here, Hans Rentz's *Siege of Magdeburg* (1550/1), and a *Siege of Metz* attributed to Monogrammist CS (1552)[1]. Each of these works survives in only one or two known impressions, with the exception of the *Siege of Ingolstadt*, of which three impressions exist. Due to their rarity, these monumental prints have received little scholarly attention. While there is a substantial body of literature on military camp engravings, it primarily focuses on periods from the Thirty Years War onward. Together, these earli-

er prints constitute a significant corpus devoted to a defining feature of this historical period: the pervasive impact of siege warfare on all aspects of life. The prints have not previously been examined through the lens of architectural history – an oversight this paper seeks to address, demonstrating one of the many ways in which the field operates at the intersection of multiple disciplines.

The Field Encampment near Wittenberg of the Most Illustrious, Most Powerful, Invincible Lord Charles V, Roman Emperor, 1547, once attributed to Monogrammist MS, serves as a brief case study in how these mid-sixteenth-century works defy categorization (fig. 2)[2]. It shares formal qualities with the hundreds of topographical maps of cities and their surroundings produced during the period, such as those that Sebastian Münster began publishing in his *Cosmographia* in 1544. Yet, the landscape and habitation it depicts were, by definition, ephemeral. While the print had a commemorative function, formally it has little in common with a famous print that commemorates Charles V's related victory at Mühlberg: Enea Vico's 1551 engraving of the emperor crossing the Elbe (fig. 1). The tone of the *Field Encampment near Wittenberg* is more curious than celebratory, making it easy to miss the fact that it, too, commemorates a victory of sorts. In contrast to Mühlberg, the victory at Wittenberg was political rather than military, ambiguous rather than dominant. The print addresses these circumstances in allusive ways.

Charles's troops had remained encamped at Wittenberg since their win at Mühlberg on 24 April

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Fig. 1 *E. Vico, The Battle of Mühlberg with the Army of Charles V Crossing the Elbe River, 1551 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1949.49.97.349).*

Fig. 2 *The Field Encampment near Wittenberg of the Most Illustrious, Most Powerful, Invincible Lord Charles V, Roman Emperor, 1547 (© Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm).*

[1] Hans Mielich, *The Field Encampment near Ingolstadt* [1546], 1549, Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg, HB270; other impressions are in the Historisches Museum Regensburg and the Ingolstadt Stadtmuseum. *The Field Encampment near Wittenberg*, 1547, Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm. Hans Rentz, *Siege of Magdeburg* [1550/1], 1552, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 20-1960. Christoph Stimmer (attr.), *Siege of the City of Metz*, 1552, Herzon Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, WB 2.1-2.3 and Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Collection Michel Hennin.
[2] The printed inscription reads: "Des Aller Durchleuchtigsten. Grossmechtigsten. Unüberwindlicthe Herrn Herrn Karoli des. v. Römischen Kaijsers ~ veldleger Beij Wittenberg ~ anno .MD XLVII.". Near the bottom center of the print, next to a tree stump, a black shield with three fleur-de-lys descending on the diagonal has the initials SVS printed above it.
[3] For a useful overview of these events see G. PARKER, *Emperor: A New Life of Charles V*, New Haven-London 2019, pp. 327-328.
[4] The classic study of early large-format woodcuts, with a particular emphasis on German examples, remains H. APPUHN, C. VON HEUSINGER, *Riesenholzschnitte und Papiertapeten der Renaissance*, Unterschneidheim 1976. Relatively recent studies on siege prints by these authors include M.D. POLLAK, *Cities at War in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2010; M. McDONALD, *The Print Collection of Cassiano dal Pozzo, II: Architecture, Topography and Military Maps*, I-III, London 2019; P. MARTENS, *Cities under Siege Portrayed* ad vivum *in Early Netherlandish Prints (1520-1565)*, in *Ad Vivum?: Visual Materials and the Vocabulary of Life-Likeness in Europe Before 1800*, edited by T. Balfe, J. Woodall, C. Zittel, Leiden 2019, pp. 151-199; and J. MAIER, *Cartography and Breaking News: Mapping the Great Siege of Malta*, "Renaissance Quarterly", 75, 2022, 2, pp. 459-507.
[5] I. COLLIJN, *Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie's samling af äldre stadsvyer och historiska planscher i Kungl. Bibliioteket*, Stockholm 1915, p. 64, n. 180. The de la Gardie collection in Stockholm has 187 prints, including both city views and siege prints, covering the period 1519-1621. Many of these large-format works exist only in these impressions.

1547, where they had crushed the Protestant forces of the Schmalkaldic League. During that battle, imperial soldiers had captured John Frederick I, Elector of Saxony, prompting immediate debates over what to do with the prisoner. Executing the Elector risked making him a martyr, providing further fuel for the Protestant cause; a lighter sentence meant relinquishing the chance to make an example of him to deter other rebels. Either way, Charles could not afford to prolong the war, as his remaining troops and funds dwindled. He found a halfway position by sentencing John Frederick to death on May 10, then immediately suspending the sentence[3]. The emperor recognized that he could never take Wittenberg by force, because its fortifications, emphasized in the print, were formidable, and its inhabitants were rumored to have provisions to last for a year (fig. 3). The maneuver worked: Wittenberg capitulated nine days later.

Although the imperial encampment outside Wittenberg was short-lived, the complex organization of forces required to sustain the standstill is evident in the print. *The Field Encampment near Wittenberg* investigates the logistical structure that led to capitulation through stasis rather than action. In recording the moment of the city's surrender, the print aligns with another category of large-scale print common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the siege print. This heterogeneous genre, in which the events of a long-term military conflict are consolidated into a single map or view, has been the subject of significant recent attention from historians, including Martha Pollak, Pieter Martens, Mark McDonald, and Jessica Maier[4]. As an emerging focus of multiple strands of research – with emphases as various as cartography, news dissemination, and urbanism – siege prints constitute a more legible genre than encampment prints, primarily because they survive in greater numbers. The provenance of the sole surviv-

ing impression of *The Field Encampment near Wittenberg* suggests that at least one early modern collector perceived the work as a siege print. The impression entered the National Library of Sweden as part of the map collection of Count Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie (1622-1686), a Swedish diplomat, royal advisor, and general[5]. De la Gardie included the *Field Encampment* in his albums of military and topographical maps, indicating that, in his intellectual world, the view belonged among these categories.

A view of a military encampment and a siege map are two very different things, however. Siege prints appeal to an idea of war as a story of grand strategy rather than of individual human experience. In contrast, the social world of the encampment, not of the city or of combat itself, is the main subject of *The Field Encampment near Wittenberg*. The proportion of real estate devoted to each area of inhabitation tells us as much[6]. Measuring approximately one-and-a-half meters square (155 x 156 cm), the print is composed of twelve sheets arranged in a 3 x 4 grid. Notably, the city of Wittenberg covers only one of these twelve sheets; the other eleven are reserved for the enemy outside its walls. Although we know nothing about the artist, it is clear that this person worked with deep knowledge of the events[7]. Such knowledge may have come from a written account rather than personal involvement. It is possible that a printed text was intended to accompany the woodcut, though one does not survive. Regardless, the artist designed the view to invite a vicarious lived experience of the encampment, guiding the viewer along pathways into and through it, encountering people and anecdotal interactions along the way.

The print's composition encourages the viewer to begin at the bottom edge, entering the encampment from the south. The Elbe flows across the lower quadrant, filling much of three sheets. To the west (left), a boat bridge erected across
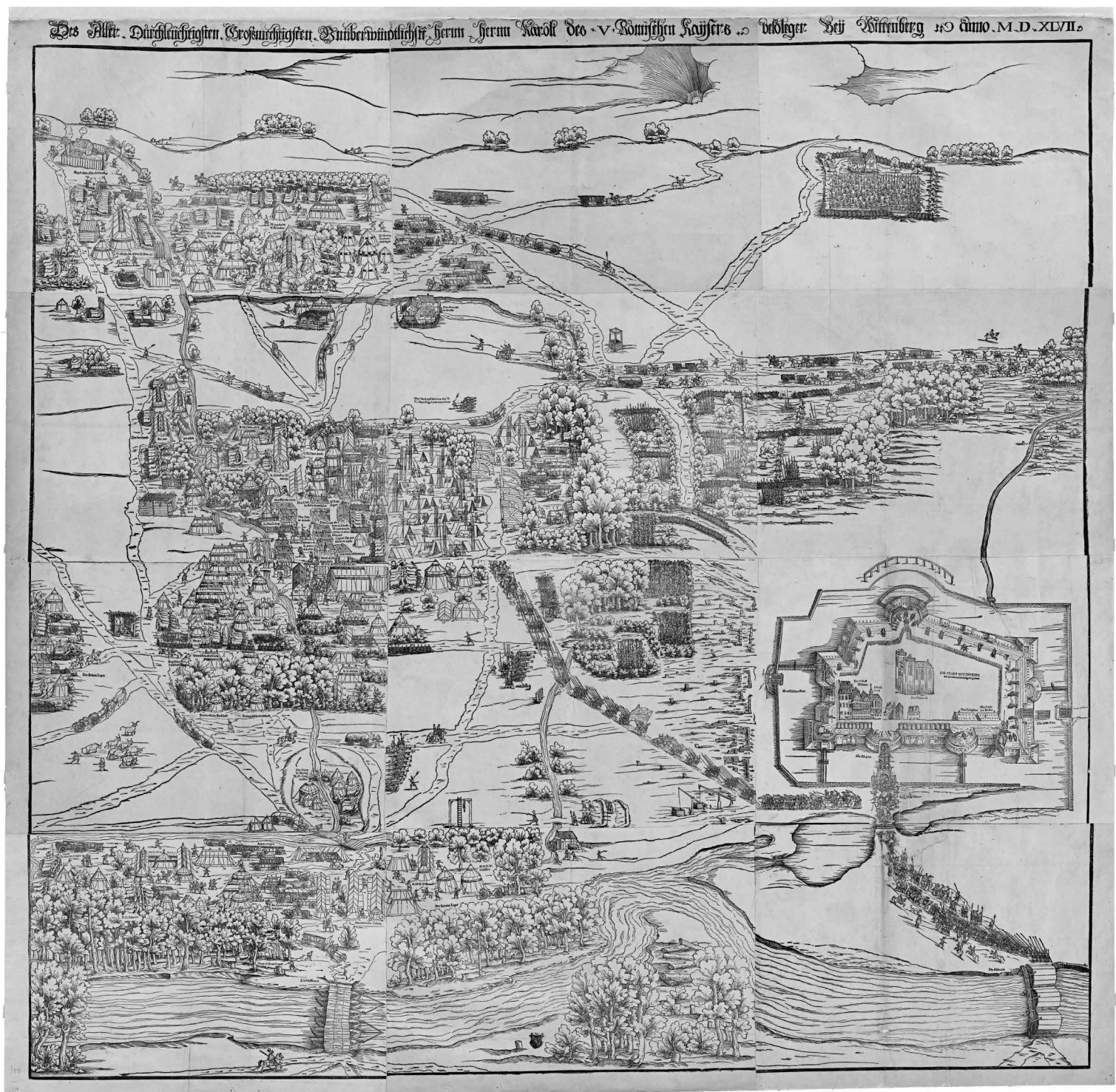
the river indicates the current's westerly direction, because its two moorings are upstream, to the east (right). A soldier rides toward the bridge, preparing to cross and encounter midstream the horse-drawn cart arriving from the opposite direction (fig. 4). Farther upstream, past a bend where a small tributary merges with the Elbe in the marshy terrain near the city, a more permanent, covered bridge with a triple-vaulted ceiling connects the main road to Wittenberg (fig. 5).

These two bridges – one temporary, one permanent – mirror the forms of settlement direct-

ly above them. North of the Elbe, roads and streams crisscross the landscape. Details suggest the ways in which armies on the march depend on their local environment for sustenance. Horses and cattle drink from the streams, while soldiers gather around a watermill. Clusters of trees dot the landscape, except where they have been chopped to their stumps. Logs lie on the riverbank, ready to be turned into planks or firewood, while the forest near the city has been cleared to open sightlines for the defensive artillery. Screening walls of stakes woven with vines dot

[6] POLLAK, *Cities at War…* cit., p. 320, note 32.
[7] M. GEISBERG, *Der Deutsche Einblatt-Holzschnitt in der ersten Hälfte des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, München 1923-1929, plate XXXVIII. Although the print does appear in M. GEISBERG, *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut: 1500-1550*, revised and edited by W.L. Strauss, New York 1974, nrs. 947-952, only the original edition identifies its location in the Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm. I am grateful to Armin Kunz for pointing out this essential point. See also M. GEISBERG, *Bilder-Katalog zu Max Geisberg: Der Deutsche Einblatt-Holzschnitt in der ersten Hälfte des XVI. Jahrhunderts; 1600 verkleinerte Wiedergaben*, herausgegeben von H. Schmidt, München 1930, p. 165. This reduced-size version of the prints also includes bibliography.
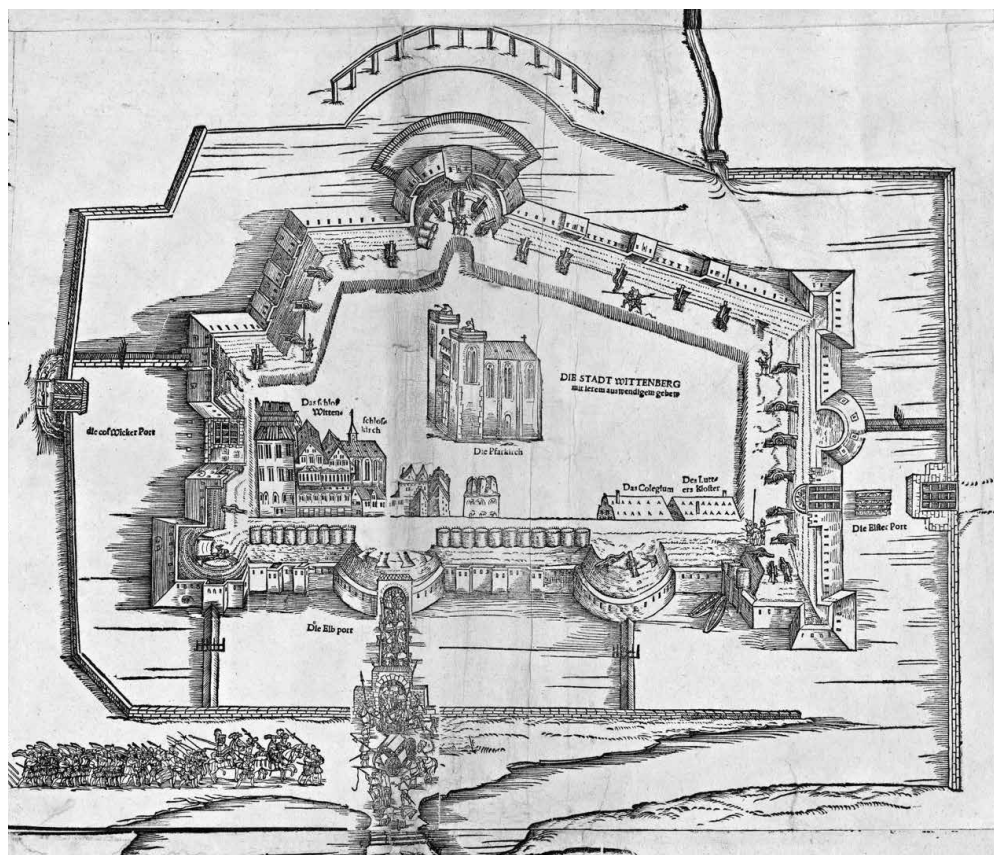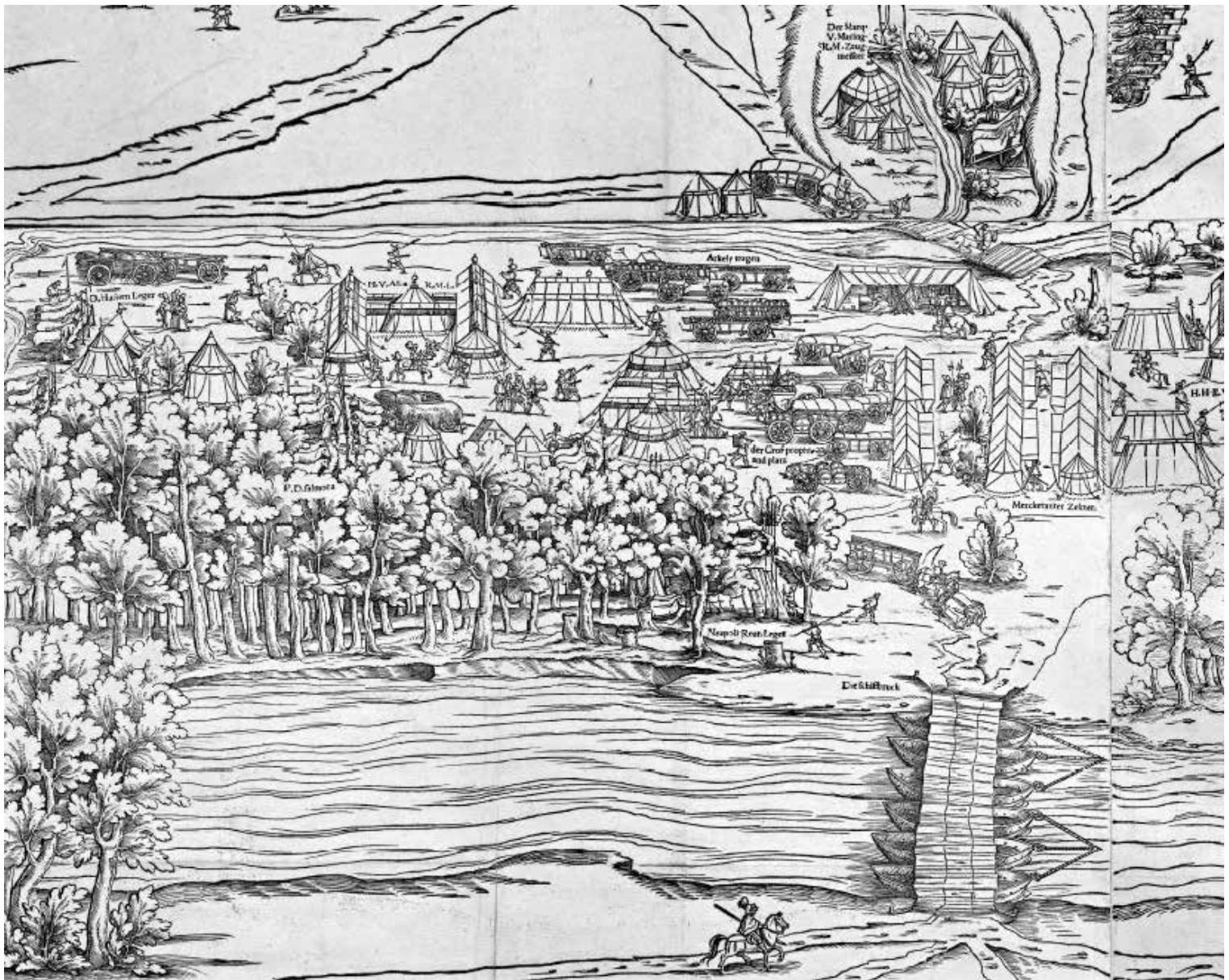
the clearings, interspersed with more substantial offensive walls constructed of braided willows filled with mud.

Within the encampment, the transient appears permanent, in a detailed examination of how temporary forms of inhabitation are built, arranged, and occupied. All the elements of urban life are present, including multiple modes of transportation, signs of social hierarchy, and structured access to communal resources. Tents sprawl across the landscape and intermingle among the trees, their shapes and sizes reflecting the ranks of their occupants. Simple A-frames, reserved for the regular foot soldiers, have laundry hanging to dry and animals staked to their poles. Bell tents, some small and round and others large and extruded, carry identifying labels, created from pieces of moveable type ganged together and inserted into the woodblock or stereotyped.

The emperor's camp appears at the center, a group of large buildings joined together with tents and barricade walls, collectively identified as "El Palatio Caesareo" (fig. 6). The names of the emperor's close advisors and officers appear on the buildings of the surrounding village, commandeered for this purpose. Around the village, clusters of tents are organized into distinct groups. Satellite camps form a loose ring around the main camp at the center, separated from it by some distance. To the west, on the left side of the frame, the Bohemians have pitched their tents and stabled their horses near a pair of buildings. To the south, along the Elbe, the Duke of Alba, the emperor's chief general, is camped within a forest, ensconced amid the trees. The Spanish and Neapolitan troops under his command are stationed nearby, near a large fleet of artillery wagons, adjacent to the camp's market. Just north of them, the field marshal's tents are placed within a deep trench, defended by a bank of cannons.

On the opposite side of the main camp, to the north, another cluster of smaller encampments fills the top left corner of the print. Within this grouping, the tents and provision wagons of Maurice, Duke of Saxony, stand out on the far right, decorated with a distinctive checkerboard pattern. Notably, Maurice and Alba are positioned at opposite extremes of the composition, a sign that this depiction of the camp's layout might reflect a degree of historical truth. Tensions between Maurice's German troops and Alba's Italian and Spanish soldiers ran so high that attacks among these ostensible allies were frequent. Charles had ordered that they camp as far apart as possible to keep the fighting to a minimum. The print's far-flung constellations of subsidiary camps reflect the uncomfortable circum-

stance that Charles's temporary coalition of unruly troops, recruited from across Europe, could not easily unite under the banner of common purpose.

Fortunately for the emperor, he never had to lay siege to Wittenberg. Instead, his camp served an essentially consular purpose. *Field Camp near Wittenberg* gestures toward that function with a row of tents gathered on the southern side of the main camp, near Charles's quarters. The presence of these tents, labeled as belonging to the English, French, Venetian, and Portuguese ambassadors, indicate how the emperor's victory at Mühlberg had resounded across the continent, drawing representatives ready to press their countries' cases with the victorious emperor. Others, such as the Elector of Brandenburg – stationed next to Maurice – came to plead for John Frederick's life.

It is as if Charles V invaded Richard Scarry's *Busytown*, prompting the question: what do imperial soldiers and diplomats actually do all day? Many of them occupy themselves less with combat than with logistics. A large and complex support structure was necessary to support an army of this size. Furthermore, when nobility traveled with the imperial army, they took large entourages with them, enough to support their families in addition to themselves and their troops[8]. For every figure in *The Field Encampment near Wittenberg* overseeing a cannon, ten more are minding cattle, stirring cauldrons, washing laundry, and loading the wagons. The business of feeding, clothing, and housing the army on the road is shown as a more labor-intensive activity than firing weapons – and from a political and military point of view, it could be more effective. Faced with the threat of a siege, a city might come to

[8] H. KAMEN, *The Duke of Alba*, New Haven 2004, p. 31.
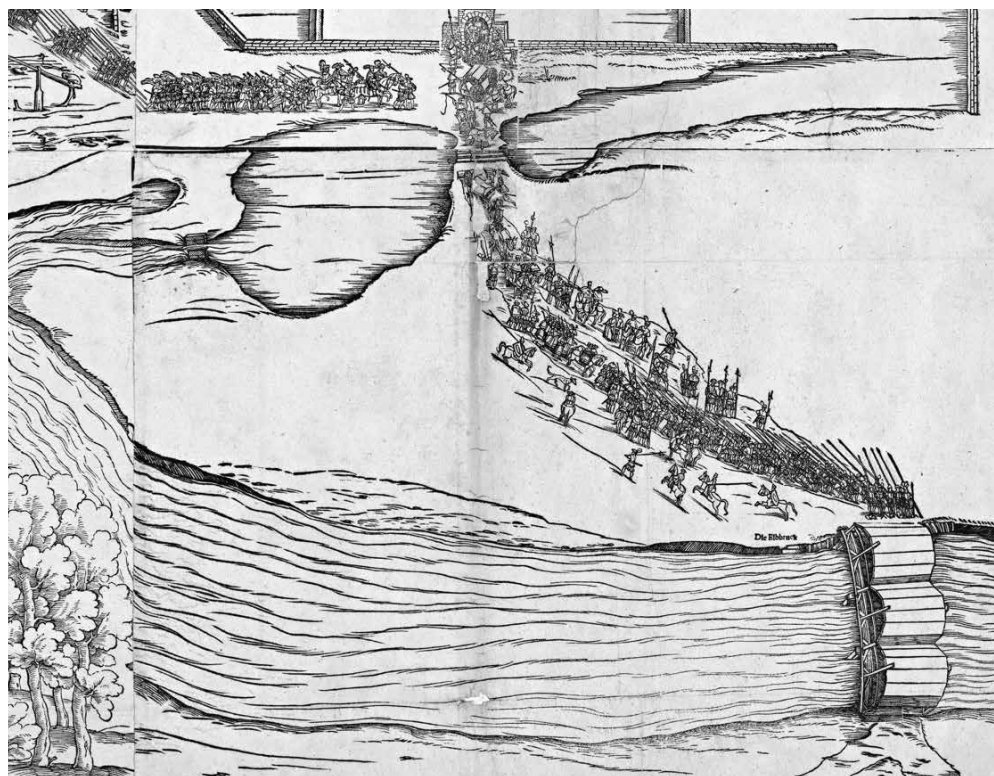
terms quickly rather than try to withstand the horrors of holding out, especially when surrendering without resistance meant a city's inhabitants could exit the walls with dignity, not to mention their belongings.

After Wittenberg – represented by John Frederick's wife and son as well as city government officials – came to peaceful terms with Charles, its citizens were granted this slightly brighter fate. The print carefully illustrates the terms of the Capitulation. Amid all the activity outside the walls, the encampment's *raison d'être* has been relegated to the side, one sheet up from the bottom right corner. Only the city's defense and a few key buildings appear, a synecdoche for the Lutherstadt.

In the aerial view of the city, Wittenberg's defenses dominate the composition, with a wide moat and thick walls ringing its perimeter. Cannons are spaced at intervals, left in place upon the city's surrender to the enemy. The city church, or Pfarrkirche, stands at the center, prominent against a blank background. The wooden pyramids that once topped its two towers have been removed and replaced with artillery platforms, shown in the print as manned by gunners. The surrounding architecture identifies the city as Martin Luther's: the Wittenberg castle and its church – where the reformer had once tacked his 95 *Theses* and where he now lay buried – appears along the city wall, near his cloister and

college. That a print commemorating an imperial victory should brandish an oversized Wittenberg Castle and Pfarrkirche, which symbolically magnify the city's Protestant identity, demonstrates one of its primary rhetorical functions.

At the end of the Schmalkaldic War, Charles sought to convince his defeated enemies that religious confessionalization had not been at the core of the conflict, though clearly it had been. Unable to continue fighting the Protestants on the battlefield, he needed to lay this point aside, at least temporarily. At Wittenberg, Charles allowed Protestant services to continue in the churches and even made a public spectacle of bowing his head to the city's crucifix. Although the Capitulation required the destruction of the fortifications at Gotha, John Frederick's second city, his first city – Luther's city – could remain intact. Its inhabitants were allowed to leave with their arms and their goods, a significant and generous concession. In the print, the evacuation unfolds at the main gate facing the Elbe (fig. 5). The city's residents depart, accompanied by wagons, with soldiers still carrying their lances. The emperor leads the much neater and longer procession of troops entering from the left, marching down the main road from the camp. The print presents a peaceful convergence rather than a collision.

Field Camp near Wittenberg makes visible the enormous human apparatus required to force a

political victory without direct combat. In a siege encampment, patterns of inhabitation emerge rapidly and with urgency, clustered around natural resources, organized in social hierarchies, and, most critically, arranged with consideration for sightlines. In these respects, at least, they share typological characteristics with other forms of ephemeral architecture that developed alongside the early modern itinerant monarch, including triumphal entries. Charles employed public ceremonies of the entry, which often required reorganizing city streets and erecting temporary structures, to solidify his control over a disparate and far-flung set of territories. *The Field Encampment near Wittenberg* depicts the city's capitulation for what it was: a ceremonial entry of a different kind. As a permanent record of that epiphenomenal event, the view is similar to the prints of festival architecture common to the period.

Printed representations of triumphal entries and encampments both document ephemeral architecture, arguing by extension for the importance of ephemeral architecture for a contemporary understanding of early modern history. The comparison of the two is apt enough to hone attention on the key point of difference. In a triumphal entry, there is a clear route and the end of the procession is predetermined. That is why prints of triumphal entries are basically prints of *frames*. In contrast, encampment prints show settled and inhabited *places*, even if those settle-

ments were temporary. The uncertainty of the outcome motivates the creation of visual records showing the process, or change.

Debates about the course, structure, and even existence of the military revolution explore how new architectural and technological developments in warfare led to sweeping social change. Prints of encampments speak to these questions in a lively way, revealing how contemporary artists encountered and grappled with that change. The woodcut medium was not elite: more people could make, buy, and see these prints than had ever had access to the older, more traditional media of war commemoration, like tapestries or frescoes. Dramatic, complex events of broad import and long duration could be depicted with infinite detail at an enormous scale, produced quickly, and distributed widely.

The Field Encampment near Wittenberg provides an apposite case study for reflecting on the interdisciplinary nature of early modern architectural history. Monumental prints of siege warfare – and the encampments they produce – represent entire worlds at the very moment that a new and terrible process of world-making came into being through artillery warfare. They picture the architectural forms, both permanent and ephemeral, that produced and resulted from this process. These works of uncertain outcome are the ultimate uncertain works.