Introduction

In 1509 Emperor Maximilian I was bogged down in a war with Venice. When his troops were unable to take the city by force, he appealed directly to its people for their support. On three separate occasions he instructed scholars to compose letters in Italian to be distributed to the Venetians, in which Maximilian praised them for their nobility and honor and reminded them of their former allegiance to his father, Emperor Frederick III, and to the House of Habsburg. Maximilian assured the Venetians that he and his army were there to free them from the tyrants controlling the city, just as he had freed other cities. He guaranteed to restore and protect their traditional laws and to let the Venetians choose their own rulers. He promised to grant the Venetians all the rights, privileges, and exemptions to trade in German cities that other cities in the empire enjoyed.[1] Maximilian had multiple copies of the letters printed, posted, and distributed to the people.[2] We do not know how persuasive the Venetians found his rhetoric, but Maximilian did succeed in bypassing the Venetian government and disseminating his message directly to the citizens. The contemporary Venetian chronicler Marino Sanuto recounts having seen a number of Maximilian's letters posted in various places throughout the city.[3] The emperor had crafted a message, used the latest technology to circumvent a foreign government, and broadcast his message directly to his enemy's citizenry. He offered them a particular image

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of the war and promised them a better future if they resisted their rulers and supported his cause.

Maximilian not only used what we would now call propaganda in his efforts to persuade enemies and advance his cause in the minds of foreigners; he also used it in his attempts to create an image of his rule and justify his actions in the minds of his own citizens. In 1499, after suffering a defeat by Swiss troops, Maximilian sought to boost morale among German princes and his own soldiers. When ambassadors from Milan offered him various astrological predictions about the successful outcome of his war with the Swiss and the growing tensions with the French, Maximilian apparently did not place much faith in them. The emperor did, however, encourage the ambassadors to continue bringing their predictions, as they were useful for reassuring German princes and his own court that victory over the Swiss was almost certain.[4] In Maximilian's use of these astrological predictions we can see a nuanced understanding of propaganda as a mechanism for shaping domestic opinion. He invoked independent experts who grounded their predictions in what was considered to be an authoritative body of knowledge, in astrology.

Astrology as Natural Knowledge

Propaganda as a category of rhetoric and representation is steeped in modern values and assumptions. We must use the term carefully to avoid treating it as a transhistorical category. But in considering Maximilian's communications as such, we begin to see how he tried to construct and convey authority. *The Crown and the Cosmos* focuses on one aspect of Maximilian's propaganda program: his use of astrology in his efforts to shape public opinion. Various systems of knowledge have long been used to assert and project authority. Well before Maximilian, princes and monarchs had invoked religion, prophetic knowledge and access to the divine, genealogies and historical analysis, and direct appeals to aristocracy to establish, justify, and bolster their rule. Maximilian made astrology an instrument of political power, an innovative use that points to an emerging role for natural knowledge in early modern political discourse. He took advantage of opportunities presented by the emerging print market to enlarge his audience and extend his base of political support, displaying an unprecedented concern with enlisting not merely the political elites, who already had power, but also popular audiences that extended into the lowest strata of society. In his program of political outreach, he enlisted astrology as a vehicle for communicating the Habsburg message to the broadest possible audience. As a traditional and academically respected body of

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knowledge that was embedded in popular and elite culture, astrology offered Maximilian a tool that used nature as evidence, guide, and justification for political actions. Controlling astrology and the experts who produced astrological knowledge played a key role in Maximilian's politics of representation.

While Ptolemy had distinguished between *astronomia* and *astrologia*, the early sixteenth-century actors in this book used these Latin terms in various and seemingly inconsistent ways. At times, the terms were interchangeable.[5] This flexibility reminds us that the two bodies of knowledge were complementary parts of a larger "science of the stars."[6] The flexibility also warns against reducing either term to its modern translation, astronomy or astrology. Similar terminological problems arise when trying to label the early sixteenth-century actors who engaged in these activities. Contemporaries identified themselves and others by a constellation of terms, such as *mathematicus*, *physicus*, *astrologus*, *astronomus*. Like the terms *astronomia* and *astrologia*, these markers of identification often varied. In this book I have opted to use the term *astrology* for the body of knowledge and *astrologer* for the person who produced that knowledge.[7]

Astrology derived its authority, on the one hand, from its empiricism, its grounding in purportedly objective natural phenomena that everybody could observe. On the other hand, such phenomena required interpretation by expert practitioners. Through them, astrology provided both explanatory and predictive knowledge. For the prince, this dual character of astrology, simultaneously visible and esoteric, paired with astrology's interpretive and predictive functions, made astrology an instrument of cultural persuasion and therefore a powerful political tool. I trace the different ways Maximilian used astrological expertise at various levels of his political program, from his own self-fashioning as both a skilled astrologer and an enthusiastic patron, to his patronage of astrologers who served the emperor's agenda throughout his reign and who communicated that agenda to different audiences that read and annotated their astrological divinations.

What distinguished Maximilian's reliance on astrology from that of his predecessors and contemporaries was his consistent and public use of astrologers and astrology to advance his political programs. While Maximilian's contemporaries relied on the advice of astrological counselors, they did not celebrate their use of such advisers. By contrast, Maximilian drew attention to his own astrological expertise and to his reliance on skilled astrologers. As with his artistic projects, Maximilian oversaw both the astrologers and their products.[8] In the process, Maximilian developed a broad political instrumentality for knowledge about the natural world and the purveyors of that

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knowledge. His astrologers moved between his court and the University of Vienna. They composed learned poetry and literature that highlighted Maximilian's status as the celestially chosen emperor, produced printed astrological instruments that were distributed to princes and elite courts as diplomatic gifts, strengthened and expanded the astrological curriculum at the university, and composed popular astrological pamphlets, both annual *practica* and prognostications for extraordinary events such as planetary conjunctions and comets. Within a century princes across Europe turned to scientific knowledge to construct their own image, shape public opinion, and advance their own political agendas.[9]

Propaganda, Print, and Early Modern Statecraft

Effective propaganda merges intelligible forms with credible content, plausible facts and evidence, and authoritative systems of knowledge. Considering any aspect of early modern statecraft as an example of propaganda risks distorting the past by viewing it through our modern categories;[10] however, the absence of the term in the early sixteenth century does not mean that early modern princes and audiences failed to recognize attempts at persuasion.[11] In early modern Europe art, ceremony, monuments, poetry, and literature as well as more overtly political rhetoric such as acts, laws, mandates and letters of patent all served as efforts to influence princes, aristocrats, and politically powerful subjects—to persuade them of the legitimacy of one's rule, that a course of action was justified, that one's authority was unassailable, and other such political aims for controlling and shaping one's image.[12] In his politics of representation, his attempt to project political values and shape opinion, Maximilian not only deployed these traditional rhetorical forms but also enlisted astrology and its practitioners, reflecting his understanding of astrology as an authoritative body of knowledge and an expectation that his audiences also considered it as such.

Early modern Europe experienced a profound shift in communication media with the spread of print.[13] Literacy rates were climbing and markets were emerging for printed texts and visual prints.[14] In response to an expanding consumer market, princes developed a broader and more nuanced politics of representation.[15] As they involved wider populations in the political process they put more effort into controlling the information that was transmitted to those audiences.[16] In this changing political space, propaganda became an indispensable tool of statecraft.

Historians of early modern England have detailed the Tudor monarchy's

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use of propaganda. Henry VII seemed to recognize the importance of representation when he adapted Emperor Maximilian I's coinage practices but lacked the channels available to his successors, who developed a coherent and widespread program.[17] Roy Strong has labeled Henry VIII's construction of a royal image through the patronage of artists and the portraiture of Hans Holbein the first propaganda campaign in English history.[18] Since then scholars have traced the many ways in which Tudor monarchs, especially Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, employed it to define the state and to promote allegiance to the monarch. Kevin Sharpe has recently argued that the best way to understand the Tudor monarchy is through its pervasive politics of representation, through which the Tudors established, sustained, and enhanced their reputations.[19] Controlling their image was particularly important during periods of uncertainty and crisis. While traditional forms of representation such as portraits and images formed the cornerstone of Tudor efforts,[20] scholars highlight the importance of the expanding audience for royal propaganda, increasingly through pamphlets and proclamations.[21] Sharpe grounds his work in the analysis of texts, images, and pageants, showing how the Tudors struggled to persuade their subjects of their right to rule and then exercised authority through communication with and appeal to those same subjects. What makes Sharpe's work so useful is his focus on the concrete mechanisms by which authority was constructed and legitimated. Because legitimation is a cultural process, Sharpe directs our attention to the cultural products that enacted that process—the histories, paintings, legends, and prophecies—whose goal was to make authority seem natural.[22] In France, King Louis XIV and his advisers made royal propaganda and representation omnipresent. Peter Burke's *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* provides a careful analysis of these efforts. Like scholars of early modern England, Burke focuses on various elite forms of propaganda such as pageantry, portraiture, medallions, architectural projects, and court-sponsored poetry and literature; that is, forms of expression commonly associated with aristocratic pastimes that together shaped public opinion, packaged the monarch, and constructed an ideology. His work elucidates the ways that art, magnificence, and charisma served power.[23]

Historians of early modern propaganda and the politics of representation owe a debt to R. J. W. Evans's study on Emperor Rudolf II.[24] Evans traced the ways that Rudolf shaped a coherent political program out of religion, humanist culture, the arts, and occult sciences. Although Evans avoided the term *propaganda*, Karl Vocelka made it the center of his detailed study of

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Rudolf II's court. In addition to examining traditional elite forms, Vocelka drew attention to Rudolf's use of popular press.[25] Following Vocelka, Margit Altfahrt considered pamphlets an important vehicle for imperial propaganda at the court of Maximilian II.[26] For both Vocelka and Altfahrt, pamphlets function as important vehicles for princely propaganda during periods of crisis. Maximilian II and Rudolf II used ephemeral print because they recognized that pamphlets had been effective when used against them to foster sedition and unrest, especially among popular audiences.[27] They then sought to use this media to advance their own agenda in these popular audiences.

The Prince and the Public Image

The growing role of propaganda in early modern politics was not lost on sixteenth-century writers. In *The Prince* Machiavelli justified its use in early modern statecraft. He advised the prince to feign and dissimulate, to say whatever served his interests rather than be constrained by what he held to be true. Princes needed to appear to embody a set of virtues and characteristics whether or not they believed in them.[28] The prince's true nature was displaced by the prince's public image. A few years later Thomas Elyot wrote *The Book Named the Governor* in which he urged the monarch to display symbols of power in order to inspire his subjects' reverence and therefore obedience.[29] Both Machiavelli and Elyot point to the expanding role for representation in the exercise of rule as princes sought to gain support from traditional elite audiences and to secure compliance from their subjects in the lower registers of society.

By the mid-sixteenth century, Machiavelli and Elyot were justifying a set of practices that monarchs had already begun to adopt, albeit haltingly. We see in Maximilian an early understanding of the importance of public opinion and the prince's need to shape that opinion. Like other princes of his time, Maximilian considered his own image and representation an important piece of political rhetoric.[30] Compared to his predecessors and contemporaries, Maximilian employed a wider array of tools to construct his image and broader variety of channels to project it. He incorporated printed texts and visual arts, music, theater and ceremony, acts and mandates, and oral recitations into a coherent body of material that celebrated the emperor himself and the House of Habsburg.[31] Expanding what it meant to be a political actor, Maximilian broadcast his message to all registers of society. A letter from 1494 reveals his intended audience. Trying to generate support for a crusade

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against the Turks, Maximilian cataloged the many levels of society he sought to reach and to enlist in his program: "electors, spiritual and worldly, prelates, counts, freemen, gentlemen, knights, servants, captains, magistrates, guardians, administrators, officials, village mayors, lord mayors, judges, councilors, citizens and parishioners, and otherwise all others of our and the empire's subjects and followers of whatever dignity, rank and occupation, who come forward or are shown this our royal letter or copy thereof to see or read, our every grace and good."[32] Maximilian also projected his image through collections of books, manuscripts, medals and coinage, and patronage of counselors.[33] He disseminated his message through printed texts, letters of patent, proclamations, broadsheets, and pamphlets. Historians of print have cataloged the emperor's tireless use of print as a political instrument.[34] Similarly, art historians have detailed Maximilian's efforts, especially the many woodcuts and other visual representations that came from the emperor's coterie of artists.[35]

Maximilian understood these efforts and the expense associated with them to be a necessary part of political praxis. In his autobiographical *Weisskunig* he justified spending any amount of money and effort on crafting his image by saying that those who failed to create their own memorials were destined to be forgotten shortly after their death.[36] Maximilian also recognized that his image was enhanced by being seen as a patron of learned men, and by their service to him, two points he celebrated throughout his reign. Once again Machiavelli seemed to confirm what Maximilian already understood: "The first indications of the intelligence of a ruler are given by the quality of the men around him. If they are capable and loyal, he should always be taken to be shrewd, because he was able to recognize their ability and retain their loyalty."[37] The prince's reputation was linked directly to the reputation and expertise of the ministers, artists, and scholars he attracted to his court and supported there.

Early Modern Propaganda and Courtly Science

Earlier scholarship has established that Maximilian exploited print as propaganda and has traced the many specific forms that propaganda has taken. The emperor relied on dozens of printers to publish hundreds of mandates and proclamations.[38] From the early 1480s, even before he was elected King of the Romans, until his death in 1519, Maximilian orchestrated the production and dissemination of printed materials intended to advance public opinion of himself, the reputation of the House of Habsburg, and the authority of the imperial office. Only recently have scholars begun to ask *how* the emper-

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or's many projects constituted propaganda or *why* Maximilian's many edicts, pamphlets, broadsheets, and images might have been persuasive. Larry Silver's masterful study of the emperor's artistic program, *Marketing Maximilian*, explains how and why Maximilian expended so much energy on his genealogical projects and on portraying himself engaged in aristocratic pastimes.

The Crown and the Cosmos extends this scholarship both in what it considers propaganda and how that propaganda was intended for multiple and diverse audiences. In particular, I want to move our understanding of early modern propaganda beyond the traditional forms that historians typically understand to constitute a monarch's purview, such as poetry and literature, art and imagery, and the artists and scholars who produced them. In addition to these, Maximilian enlisted cheap ephemeral texts such as astrological pamphlets, wall calendars and timely broadsheets, and paper instruments. Along with these increasingly diverse forms, Maximilian also broadened the content of propaganda as it existed at the time. He recognized the strength of natural knowledge as a source of authority in persuading multiple audiences of his agenda. His use of astrology in light of his efforts to enlist all levels of society in his political program reveals an expanding role for scientific knowledge in politics and in shaping public opinion.

The present work contributes to a rich literature on Maximilian I. For more than a century political historians have assessed Maximilian's effectiveness as a political actor on the European stage and as an agent of political change. In these accounts the emperor is alternately viewed as regressive and an impediment to the formation of a German state, or as progressive and a stimulus for constitutional reform and the development of a multinational empire.[39] Along with these political histories, considerable scholarship has examined the emperor's efforts to construct and disseminate his image through literary and artistic works. Studies have shown how Maximilian used visual and literary arts to memorialize the emperor himself, to justify his claim to the imperial title, and to elevate the Habsburg dynasty.[40] Despite sustained interest in Maximilian's reign, little effort has been made, in any language, to investigate the scientific culture, specifically the astrological culture, at Maximilian's court.[41] No previous scholarship on courtly science has concentrated on Maximilian's court and his patronage practices.[42] Yet in order to understand Maximilian as a political actor we must take seriously his use of the science of astrology, which was highly innovative. The emperor imagined a much broader and more public role for astrology and astrologers in politics than any of his contemporaries.

This book draws on and contributes to scholarship on courtly science that

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elucidates how noble patronage shaped emerging attitudes about nature and enlisted natural knowledge to achieve commercial and material goals. With their carefully articulated codes of conduct and standards for authority, courts forged new ways of validating and using natural knowledge.[43] More recently, scholars have begun to study how purveyors of that knowledge established and maintained their places at court and the ends to which princes put their expertise.[44] Maximilian's use of astrology is an early example of a prince publicly invoking natural knowledge in the construction of his image, celebrating and rewarding the experts who produced that knowledge, and deploying it in early modern politics.

Despite some excellent early studies on astrology's importance for understanding European history, mainly by art historians and classicists, historians of science have only relatively recently come to terms with astrology's historical importance.[45] Studies have begun to illustrate astrology's central place in shaping how early modern Europeans understood the relationship between humans and the cosmos and how astrologers applied their science.[46] Perhaps the most thorough example is Robert Westman's magisterial *The Copernican Question*. Westman argues that a mixture of pragmatic concerns growing out of Copernicus's experience among Italian prognosticators—including how to go about making better and more accurate astrological predictions, as well as dealing with intellectual challenges, such as how to justify the ordering of the planets—stood at the center of his efforts to formulate a heliocentric model.[47]

Although some scholarship on the history of astrology in the Germanies confronts explicitly the relationship between astrology and politics—often in the context of the planetary conjunctions in 1524—other studies have only implicitly raised questions about the role of astrology in politics, concentrating instead on astrology's intellectual contexts.[48] Still, as Monica Azzolini pointed out in her book on astrology at the Sforza courts, *The Duke and the Stars*, considerable work remains to elucidate astrology's role in politics.[49] Two studies demonstrate how fruitful it is to consider astrology an integral facet of premodern politics. The first, Azzolini's careful analysis of the role of astrology at various Sforza courts in fifteenth-century Milan exposes the many different ways that Sforza dukes used astrology to understand and shape political situations.[50] Second, Michael Ryan's *A Kingdom of Stargazers* sheds light onto three fourteenth-century Aragonese courts, detailing how a strong monarch could use astrology to solidify one's authority and bolster one's rule. By contrast, a weak monarch's predilection for astrology was seen by contemporaries as evidence of an effete and inept ruler.[51] Both studies point to the value astrology could have as an instrument of propaganda. At the same time, they illustrate

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the very different ways princes who preceded Maximilian I used astrology. In contrast to Maximilian, other monarchs used astrology in an ad hoc way and did not generally draw attention to either their patronage of astrologers or their own knowledge of the subject.

This is the first book to link astrology to the Habsburg courts through the practices and products of a group of scholars active at those courts and at the University of Vienna, who benefited from Habsburg patronage. Such patronage sometimes assumed typical forms such as positions at court, stipends, or titles. Sometimes, however, it did not leave such easily identifiable tracks. And not all forms of patronage produced relationships in which a patron distributed favors to a client who, in turn, served the patron. Sometimes networks of patronage were grounded in shared obligations, mutual aid and benefit, and reciprocity. These more amorphous relationships are often difficult to demonstrate through surviving documents and have to be inferred by contextualizing authors, highlighting their various personal connections, and analyzing their immediate political and social arenas.

I have based my research on extensive manuscript and early printed materials from archives across northern and central Europe, including Austria, England, France, Germany, Poland, and Switzerland. Despite their contemporary importance, many of these sources have escaped scholarly consideration. Along with drawing our attention to these sources and their intellectual and cultural significance, I have tried to convey the sense and complexity of early modern astrology through nuanced translations of relevant and exemplary passages from the German and Latin originals. These translations reveal the contours of early modern astrology and give us an opportunity to watch historical actors teaching, learning, and using their science in some of its many contexts. Manuscript sources include letters and canons written explicitly for the emperor, pedagogical texts written for university students, students' lecture notes, and correspondence between individual astrologers. Printed materials range from technical treatises and university textbooks, at one end of the spectrum, through annual almanacs and ephemerides, to cheap ephemeral pamphlets, wall calendars, and broadsheets at the other. In addition to printed textual sources, I discuss paper astrological instruments and related visual material. Considering these sources as a coherent body of material allows us to reconstruct how the astrologers themselves understood these texts and images, and the relationships between them. In addition, it allows us to trace the lines of influence between the astrologers and the court, and to recover some of the concrete mechanisms that Maximilian used to disseminate his agenda through the various levels of society.

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Chapter 1 argues that astrology was central to the emperor's efforts to fashion the ideal "modern" prince. Propaganda is inextricably linked to the image of the prince himself. Maximilian crafted his memorial in both words and visual representations, which were simultaneously idealized monuments shaping how contemporaries viewed him and normative portraits offering a model for his Habsburg successors. Throughout his autobiographical works, Maximilian underscored the importance of astrology.

The coherent system of predictive and explanatory knowledge proffered by astrologers became a cornerstone in Maximilian's courtly politics. Chapter 2 examines how the predictions of pro-Habsburg astrologers aligned with the emperor's goals, both promoting his agenda and advancing their own fortunes. In particular, I focus on the work of two astrologers in the 1490s, Sebastian Brant and Joseph Grünpeck. Brant produced a number of broadsheets supporting Maximilian's war against the French and his efforts to establish a centralized military, while Grünpeck used his astrological explanation of the spread of pox to argue for Maximilian's social reforms and produced pro-Habsburg astrological pamphlets timed to coincide with important moments or struggles throughout Maximilian's reign.

Chapter 3 illustrates how Maximilian relied on the University of Vienna both as a source from which to draw astrologers into his court and as a body of experts who could be tapped for advice and intellectual support in his political endeavors. This chapter details Maximilian's efforts to revitalize the university and to fund a series of institutional developments intended to reestablish the University of Vienna as an important center for teaching astrology and astronomy. It also shows how Maximilian developed patronage practices that extended beyond the court.

Chapter 4 focuses on the astrological instruments produced for Maximilian and important members of his court. In 1506 Andreas Stiborius developed an astrological instrument for use in and around Vienna that facilitated the calculation of propitious moments, which Maximilian used in concluding peace negotiations with the Hungarian forces that year. During the last decade of Maximilian's reign the imperial historian Johannes Stabius produced ornate printed astrological instruments along with his work on the imperial genealogies and Maximilian's *Ehrenpforte*. These instruments were functional devices used to calculate propitious times for various activities, but they were also distributed to important members of the emerging administrative class of lower nobility, imperial free knights, and upper bourgeoisie. These case studies illuminate how Maximilian used astrology to guide political decisions, to bolster his authority among the growing bureaucratic class,

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and to disseminate his image as a patron and student of astrology to rival courts.

The following chapters trace Maximilian's efforts to disseminate his political message through more popular texts. Capitalizing on the ubiquity of astrology, Maximilian exploited the power of print to publicize his political agenda to various audiences and all levels of society. Pamphlets, broadsheets, and advertisements were posted on notice boards, read out in town hall meetings, sold in the markets, becoming indispensable vehicles for communicating Habsburg and imperial interests. The emperor enlisted the astrologers at his court and the university in his propaganda campaign to promulgate a pro-Habsburg agenda to audiences beyond the narrow confines of elite society. Maximilian's coterie of astrologers used a variety of astrological genres to spread the emperor's message. Chapter 5 argues that astrological wall calendars and the annual *judicia* and *practica* that complemented them became important instruments in Habsburg politics. These texts, which drew on a visual vocabulary and used images along with words to convey their content, were wildly popular in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. For more than two decades they were produced by Georg Tannstetter, who was *Leibartz* and adviser to Maximilian and Archduke Ferdinand as well as a professor at the university. Analyzing his wall calendars and *practica* within the context of Tannstetter's activities at both the court and the university indicates how Tannstetter was able to publicize the Habsburg political and social programs to a popular audience. Chapter 6 focuses on Andreas Perlach, a master at the University of Vienna and an adviser to the Habsburg court in Vienna who for more than a decade produced astrological almanacs and ephemerides that supported the Habsburg political agenda.

Prognostications composed in response to particular celestial phenomena were another popular astrological genre. Unusual events such as the appearance of a comet or significant conjunctions of planets attracted widespread public attention and offered astrologers further opportunities to interpret the natural world. Chapter 7 details how astrologers at the Habsburg court seized on these prodigious events as evidence of Maximilian's preordained right to rule and justification for Habsburg authority within the empire. Three case studies stand at the center of this chapter: Johannes Stabius's *Pronosticon* on the planetary conjunction in 1503/1504, Tannstetter's *Libellus consolatorius* on the series of planetary conjunctions in 1524, and Perlach's *Des Cometen und ander Erscheinung in den Lüfften*, his tract on the comet in 1531.

Finally, I look beyond Maximilian's reign to his legacy for the Habsburg dynasty and, more broadly, the relationship between science and politics

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in early modern Europe. The importance Maximilian attached to scientific knowledge became a key component of Habsburg politics, which found its most mature expression a century later at the court of Emperor Rudolf II. Maximilian's efforts to establish patronage networks that linked individual experts as well as institutions to the court emerged as a central characteristic of early modern politics, especially in the Germanies where princes increasingly viewed local universities as corporate bodies of academic experts to be consulted in political affairs. Similarly, Maximilian's representation of himself as both a skilled practitioner and generous patron of the sciences prefigured the expanding roles for scientific knowledge in politics and at princely courts in later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe.

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