

THE CRUSADE IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

CONVERGING AND COMPETING CULTURES

CRUSADES – SUBSIDIA 8

EDITED BY
NORMAN HOUSLEY

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The Crusade in the Fifteenth Century

Increasingly, historians acknowledge the significance of crusading activity in the fifteenth century, and they have started to explore the different ways in which it shaped contemporary European society. Just as important, however, was the range of interactions which took place between the three faith communities which were most affected by crusade, namely the Catholic and Orthodox worlds, and the adherents of Islam. Discussion of these interactions forms the theme of this book.

Two chapters consider the impact of the fall of Constantinople in 1453 on the conquering Ottomans and the conquered Byzantines. The next group of chapters reviews different aspects of the crusading response to the Turks, ranging from Emperor Sigismund to Papal legates. The third set of contributions considers diplomatic and cultural interactions between Islam and Christianity, including attempts made to forge alliances of Christian and Muslim powers against the Ottomans. Last, a set of chapters looks at what was arguably the most complex region of all for inter-faith relations, the Balkans, exploring the influence of crusading ideas in the eastern Adriatic, Bosnia and Romania.

Viewed overall, this collection of chapters makes a powerful contribution to breaking down the old and discredited view of monolithic and mutually exclusive 'fortresses of faith'. Nobody would question the extent and intensity of religious violence in fifteenth-century Europe, but this volume demonstrates that it was played out within a setting of turbulent diversity. Religious and ethnic identities were volatile, allegiances negotiable, and diplomacy, ideological exchange and human contact were constantly in operation between the period's major religious groupings.

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University of Zurich, Switzerland, for The Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East

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Preface

This collection includes most of the papers read at a conference entitled ‘The Crusade in the Fifteenth Century: Converging and Competing Cultures’, which took place in London on 20–21 September 2014. The volume constitutes the first published output of the Leverhulme Trust International Network ‘Reconfiguring the Crusade in the Fifteenth Century: Goals, Agencies and Resonances’ (IN-2012-127). I am most grateful to the Trust for the financial support which made the Network and the conference possible. Thanks are also due to a number of individuals. The speakers at the conference responded with fortitude to a request that drafts of their essays be prepared relatively quickly after the event. Alan Murray kindly agreed to write a conclusion to the collection. Members of the Leverhulme International Network, whose own research output will appear in another collection currently in preparation, attended the conference and chaired the sessions. Derek Tate generously gave his services free of charge to compile the maps. Most importantly, the Network Facilitator, Jo Leadbetter, has provided editorial assistance for this collection and more broadly, invaluable administrative support for the Network’s activities since it began its work in the spring of 2013.

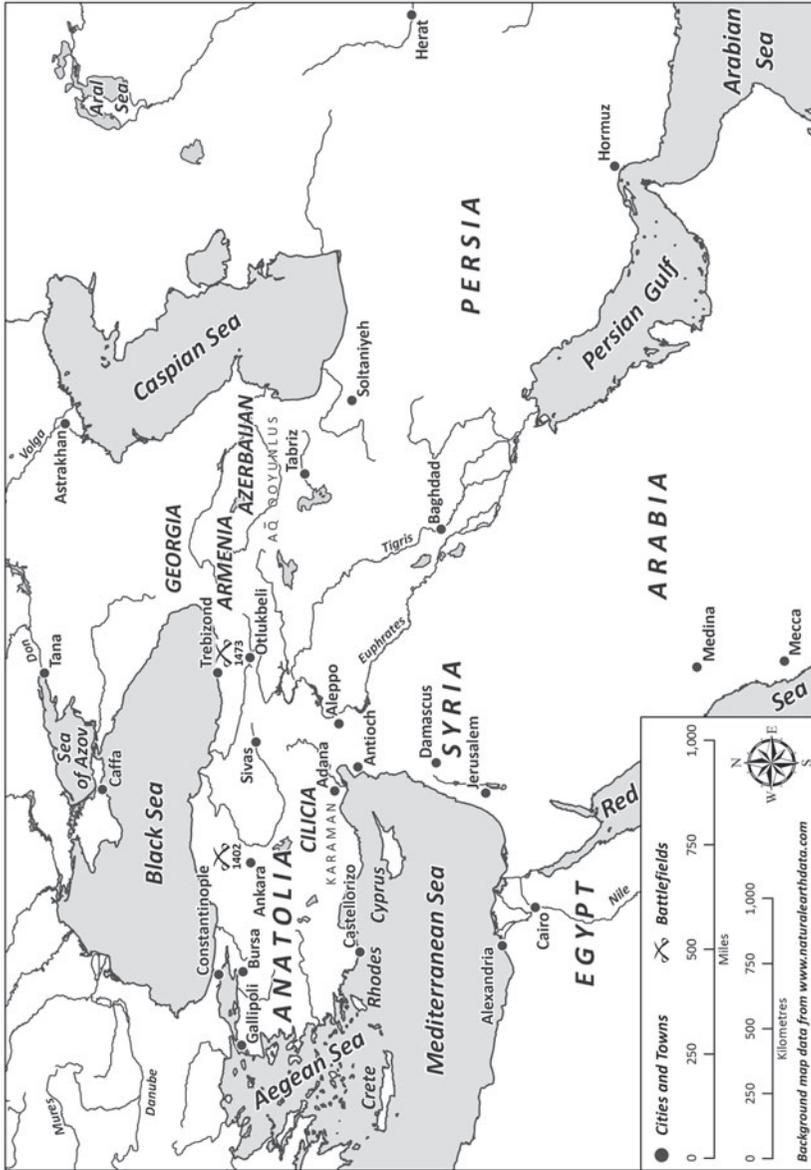
On the difficult issue of transliterating Arabic, Persian and Turkish names and words, we have followed the IJMES scheme, though the more familiar names for individuals, dynasties and practices (Bayezid II, Mamluks, jihad and so on) are given in their standard English versions.

Norman Housley
October 2015

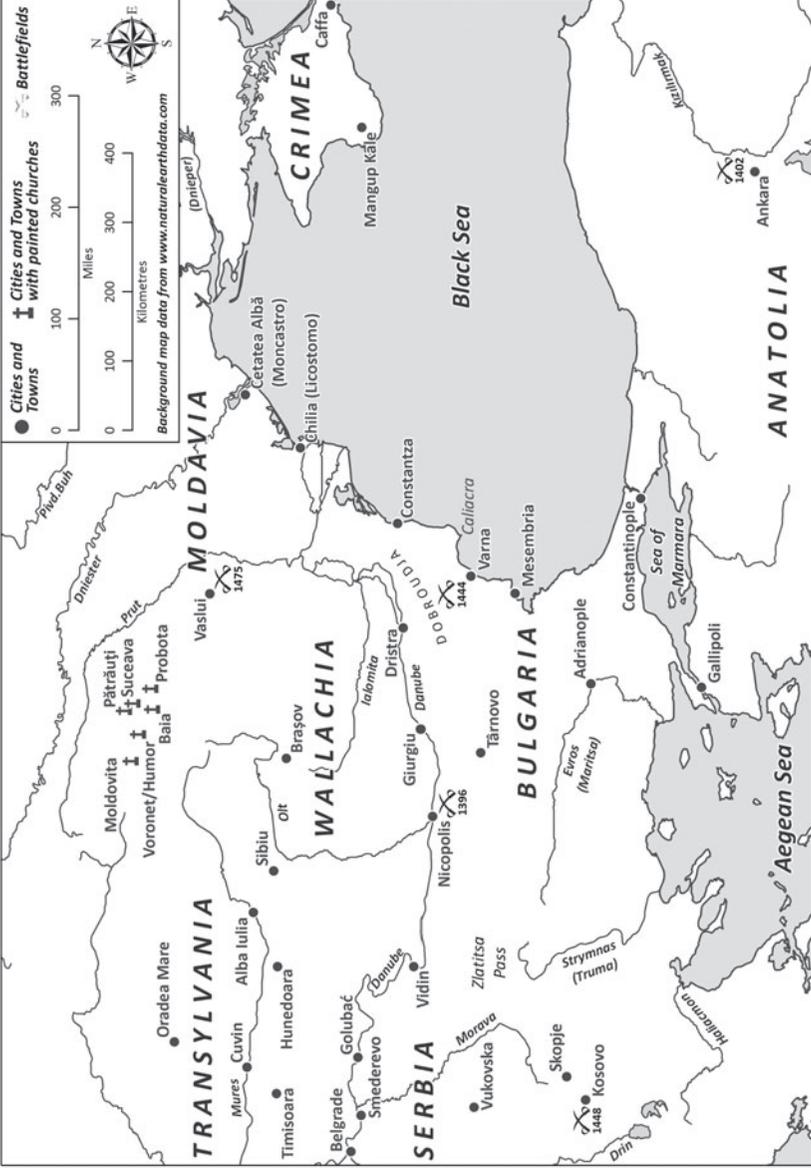
Abbreviations

AStV	Archivio di Stato, Venezia
ASV	Archivio segreto Vaticano
DRA	<i>Deutsche Reichstagsakten</i>
EI	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 2nd edn, 12 vols (Leiden, 1960–2005)
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae historica</i>
MGH SS	<i>MGH Scriptores</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 161 vols (Paris, 1857–66)
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–66)
RIS	<i>Rerum italicarum scriptores</i>
RIS NS	<i>RIS New series</i>
Setton, <i>Crusades</i>	<i>A History of the Crusades</i> , ed. Kenneth M. Setton, 6 vols (Madison, 1969–89)
Setton, <i>Papacy</i>	Kenneth M. Setton, <i>The Papacy and the Levant, 1204–1571</i> , 4 vols (Philadelphia, 1976–84)

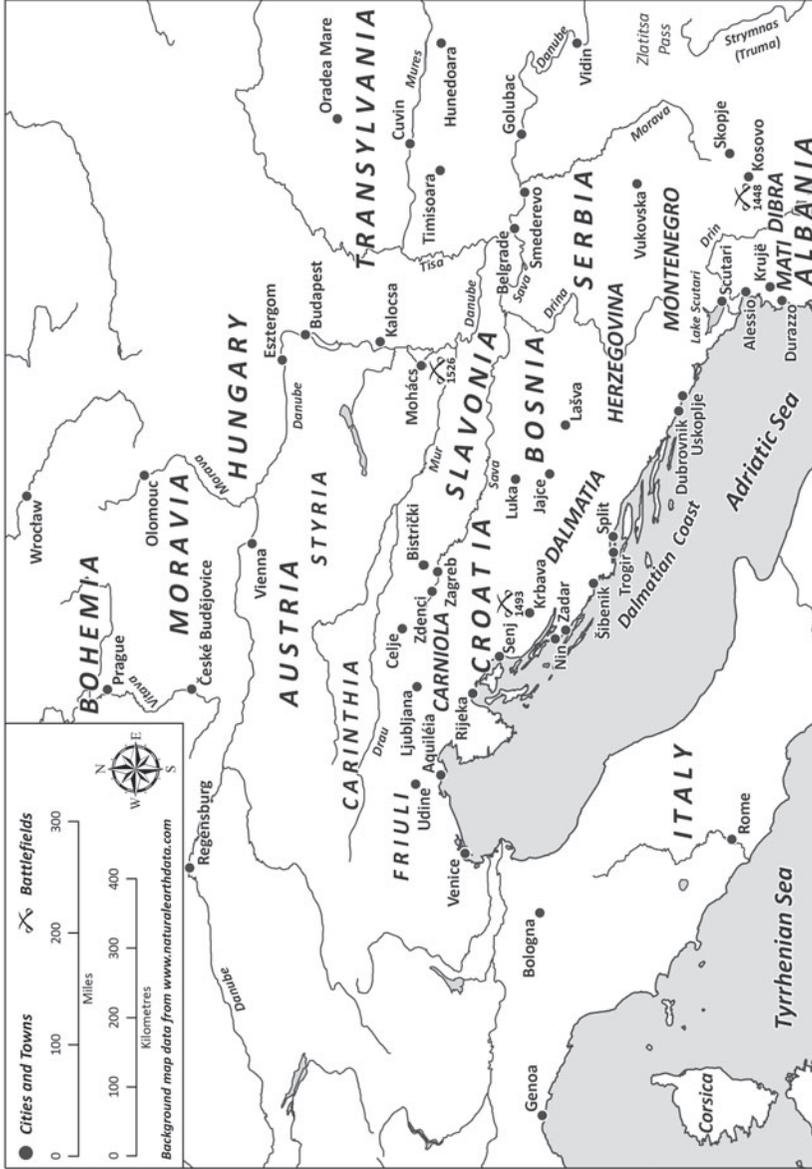
Maps



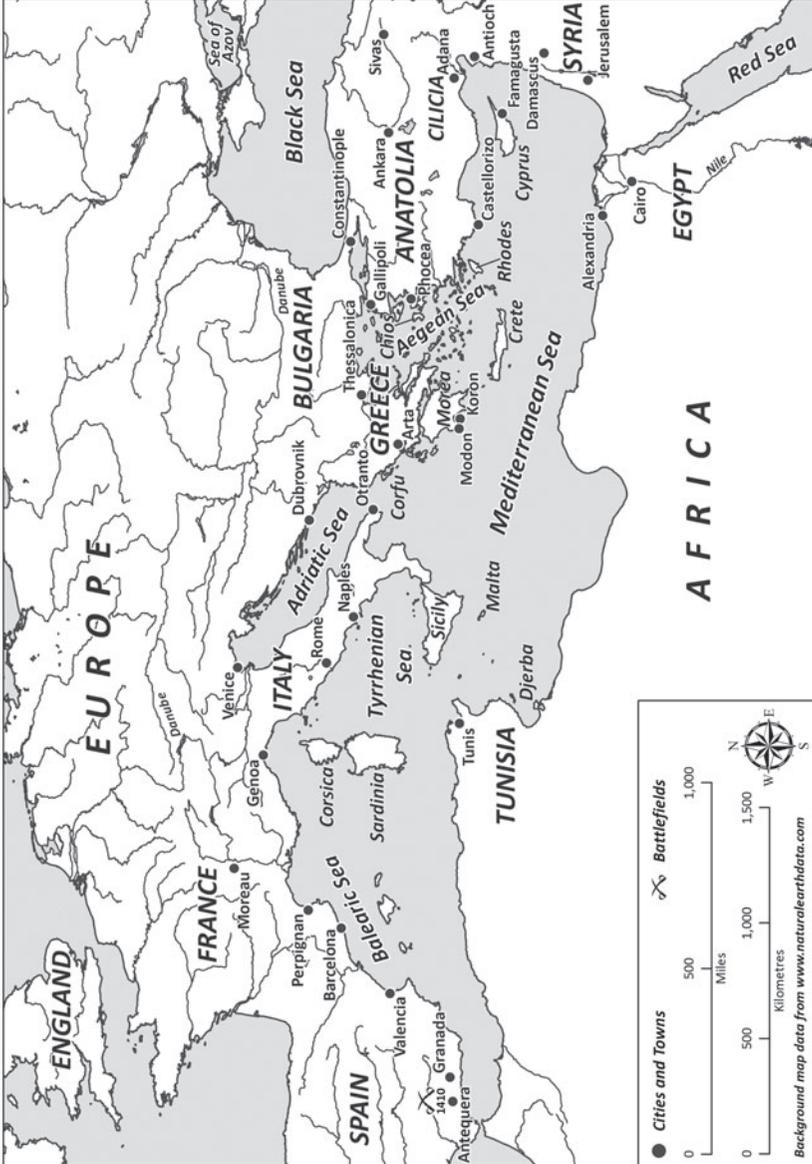
Map 1 The Middle East



Map 2 The eastern Balkans



Map 3 The western Balkans and Italy



Map 4 The Mediterranean Sea

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1 Introduction

Norman Housley

It is hard to introduce a collection of chapters on this theme without referring to the most important and catastrophic inter-faith encounter of the fifteenth century, the fall of Constantinople to Mehmed II in 1453.¹ In the first place, the Sultan's conquest of the city proved to be the first in an astonishing and relentless sequence of victories over Christian powers, which ended only with his death in 1481. Of course the West had become familiar with Ottoman power and ambition over many decades before 1453. With the exception of a few years following Bayezid I's crushing defeat at the hands of Tīmūr's Mongols in 1402, the Ottoman Turks had been a force to reckon with for almost a century. But 1453 was undoubtedly their *annus mirabilis*. Throughout the third quarter of the century it was they who set the military agenda. And under Mehmed's successor Bayezid II (1481–1512) the thrust of Ottoman conquest did not so much slacken as move in different directions.

In the second place, Constantinople's fall was of great significance to all three of the faith communities which will be discussed in these essays: the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, and Islam. For the Greeks, the loss of their city signified the demise of an empire which had lasted for more than a millennium. For the Latins, it meant that Ottoman power rested on their possession of the greatest city in the northeastern Mediterranean, enabling them to move armies at will from their Asian to their European lands, and facilitating the creation of a war-making capacity at sea. And for the Ottomans, Constantinople stimulated ambitions to add 'Old' Rome to 'New' Rome in a programme of messianic expansion.

But the main reason for starting with the fall of Constantinople is that the range of Latin responses to it illustrates so clearly the different themes that will run through this collection. Of these the first was the deployment of crusade as a means to unify Christendom and thereby hold off the Ottoman threat. In Pope Nicholas V's bull *Etsi ecclesia Christi*, issued soon after the news reached Rome, a hostile view of the Ottomans which had been taking shape for almost a century was given expression in language which combined military threat, eschatological anxieties and theological formulations.² Neither ideas nor language were particularly original, but a year later Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who in 1458 would be elected Pope after a rapid series of promotions, rose to the occasion with an oration at the Frankfurt diet which showed that the anti-Ottoman crusade could be

2 Norman Housley

energized – rhetorically at least – by the intellectual incisiveness and verve of the humanist elite. Piccolomini's oration, *Constantinopolitana clades*, was a bravura performance.³ It sustained a delicate balance between threat and opportunity with all the skill of a high-wire trapeze artist. Piccolomini's ground-breaking speech, and the many orations which imitated his approach and developed his themes in the decades that followed, showed that crusade was malleable enough to embrace new ways of thinking about Christian duty and its reward. Moreover, just a few months after the speech was given, the Franciscan friar Giovanni da Capistrano demonstrated, with the army that he raised to relieve the besieged fortress of Belgrade, that when crusade was operating in the right circumstances it could still be an effective call to arms. If, for Mehmed II, defeat at Belgrade was a timely warning of the danger of over-reaching himself, for the Catholic West it offered much-needed encouragement and hope.⁴

That said, nobody in the West was under any illusions about the difficulty of keeping the Ottomans at bay with collective military action. A fascinating feature of the response to 1453 was its breadth. To begin with, there was near synchronicity between the conquest of Constantinople and the first age of printing.⁵ The result was that the *imago Turci* that circulated in the Catholic lands was more variegated and nuanced than its antecedent, the *imago Saraceni*. This was not just due to the opportunities that new forms of communication offered, but also because audiences for news about the Turks had very varied expectations, depending on their milieu, education and proximity to the Ottoman frontier. The consequence is that we cannot hope to gauge what any particular group thought about the Turks solely from surviving evidence of what they read, heard, sang or looked at: every response demands critical assessment. In this regard the reception of *Constantinopolitana clades* at Frankfurt is instructive. Piccolomini's audience was spell-bound with admiration: on this point the evidence supports the vainglorious assertions of the orator. His listeners admired the language, not the message. So a clear interpretation of events seems to form: this was humanism crossing the Alps, and the oration was more significant in cultural than in political terms. Yet this in turn can be misleading: after all, earnest crusade negotiations continued, not least because Piccolomini pushed the issue with determination when he became Pope. And the orator was probably exaggerating his disappointment at his reception; he cannot *really* have expected a Clermont-like surge at Frankfurt, because he knew very well that Imperial diets did not work that way. The speech was just a milestone, albeit a particularly glittering one, on the arduous road that led to an effective military response to the Turks.

Crusade was part of a rich pattern. At times it was that pattern's dominant motif, but in a world as diverse and critically alert as that of fifteenth-century Europe, it could never be exclusive. Again it is Piccolomini (as Pope Pius II) who gives us excellent proof of this. When his own crusading enterprise seemed shipwrecked amidst diplomatic intrigues, Pius wrote a famous letter to Mehmed II in which he told the Sultan that if he would only accept baptism, all his dreams of glory in the West could be realized, because there would no longer be any reason for Christians to oppose him. Is the letter pure humanistic showing-off, a rebuke

to the Catholic world's negligent rulers, or Pius's homage to the venerable Papal obligation to convert heathen rulers? There are good grounds for arguing each case, though it is important to add that there is no evidence that the letter was actually sent.⁶ A more intriguing text originated with the Pope's friend, Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa. His response to the fall of Constantinople was to argue that the adherents of the world's faiths need not engage in violent behaviour against each other because at root their beliefs could be reconciled: 'there is only one religion in the variety of rites.'⁷ Nicholas espoused crusade and even became involved in its promotion. But this extraordinary text⁸ probably gives us a better view of his outlook: he was genuinely distressed by the horrific news reaching the West about the sack of Constantinople and set out an 'ideal world' scenario of inter-faith harmony. He was neither a fool nor a recluse; faced with the human suffering that arose from conflict, one of the age's finest minds placed his hope – admittedly with exceptional optimism – in convergence.

Conquerors and conquered

The conquest of 'New Rome' was bound to affect the thinking of the victors. Nikolay Antov shows in his essay that the event played a catalytic role in making the Ottomans reflect on their past and ponder their destiny. Hitherto the dynasty's apologists had constructed an image which focused on their expanding the *Dar al-Islam* through frontier clashes and conquests. The Varna crusade had already sharpened their consciousness that in the Papal court they faced an enemy which would do its utmost to oppose their plans and that its opposition would be framed in terms of rivalry between the faiths. Possession of Constantinople, and the accelerating pace of territorial acquisition under Mehmed, converged with the resilient crusade planning of Pius II to generate an atmosphere which combined ambition with anxiety. The Ottoman court became aware that the European powers were capable of persistent diplomatic manoeuvring with other Islamic powers, while its gruelling warfare against Hungary, Venice and other Christian powers on their borders left it under no illusions about the peril it would face should its individual Christian and Muslim enemies combine forces. The effects of these pressures were various. The most famous one was Bayezid II's acceptance in the 1480s and early 1490s of the need to make substantial annual payments to western powers to detain the person of his younger brother Jem (Cem). Bayezid knew that if Jem were released he might stir up discontent within the Sultanate in conjunction with a crusading enterprise. Less specific was the religious and cultural expectation of a counter-attack by the 'Blond Races' (*banū al-aşfar*), which was used to argue for pre-emptive military action and the centralization and fiscal demands needed to make it effective. More generally, Ottoman claims of pre-eminence if not leadership within the Islamic world could be bolstered by the threat of encirclement, as could the waging of war against such powers as the Āq Qoyūnlūs of Iran and the Mamluks of Egypt. Antov shows the complexity of interactions between the Christian and Islamic powers which stretched from the central Mediterranean to the Middle East, and the impact that they exerted on Ottoman legitimating

processes. The world of the Sultans, their advisors and propagandists was porous; they were no less eager to receive information, warnings and prophecies about the future than their counterparts at Rome, Venice and Buda.

At the same time the Catholic world was influenced in its reactions towards the Sultanate by Byzantine refugees, the arrival in the West of those fortunate few who had the resources and opportunity to evade Turkish rule. In the past Jonathan Harris has described these refugees in detail,⁹ and here he offers a case study of a Byzantine nobleman called Nicholas Agallon. Western sources illuminate Agallon's travels through Venice, the Holy Roman Empire, France and England in 1454–55, at the same time that Nicholas V attempted to summon a crusading response to Constantinople's fall and Piccolomini was fertilizing crusading discourse with humanist ideas and language. Agallon hoped to take part in the forthcoming crusade but as Harris shows, what such envoys could achieve was shaped as much by the political conditions of the day – in his case the closing stages of the Anglo-French war – as by their own eloquence and plausibility. Like so many Greeks before them, including the clerics who came to Ferrara and Florence in 1438–39 and achieved a belated and ineffectual union of the estranged Churches, Agallon can be viewed struggling to come to terms with a deeply unfamiliar and at times unsympathetic environment. Having said that, men like Agallon could rise above the role of passive victims. Harris shows in his closing pages that some of the exiles showed ingenuity in trying to bolt their own programmes of territorial recovery onto the planning of western powers which showed an interest in crusading.

The most famous of all these refugees, and the man who enjoyed the most successful career in the Latin West, was Cardinal Bessarion. In July 1439 he read aloud the Greek acceptance of union at Florence, and for the rest of his life he became the most fervent exponent of reconciliation between the Catholic and Orthodox communities, arguing that it was for their mutual benefit. Bessarion was an articulate and convincing bridge-builder and his influence on contemporary relations between the faiths still needs to be clarified. It is possible that his failure to be elected Pope after Pius II's death in 1464 was one of history's missed opportunities. As early as the council of Constance (1414–18) the suggestion was made that the Church might experience a Greek Pope, possibly including the transfer of the *curia* to Constantinople, and the prospect was welcomed as a way of escaping from French and Italian control of the office.¹⁰ Close study of crusading programmes in the 1460s often reveals that Bessarion was playing a major part in steering the debate and in particular lobbying for crusade within the *curia*, without being able to pin down his role with precision. Had he become Pope his imprint could hardly have failed to become apparent. Perhaps he would have tried to use the crusade largely to prop up Palaeologan interests, though we can be sure that the Hungarians would have lobbied hard to resist that. But it is also possible that he would have been able to give Pius's faltering programme a fresh lease of life. As a member of the 'committee' of cardinals created to carry forward the dead pontiff's project, he proved unable to counter Paul II's gradual winding down of the crusade.¹¹

The crusading response: expressions, dynamics and constraints

The crusading response was conditioned first and foremost by the attitudes of Christendom's rulers. Perhaps the most striking way in which the situation evolved in the 1400s was that western Europe's most powerful monarchies, England and France, virtually withdrew from active interest in the crusade, preoccupied by war, recovery from war, and dynastic disputes. In relation to the East at least, the axis for crusading activity and the endless discussions associated with it ran from the Scandinavian kingdoms through the Empire, bifurcating at the Alps into the Italian states on the one hand and the northern Balkan lands on the other. Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini's *Europa*, which he wrote on the eve of his election in 1458, forms a remarkable introduction to this mosaic of states and their recent history.¹² It is almost as if Piccolomini was weighing up the size and nature of the task lying before him, which was to galvanise these mutually hostile and suspicious countries into subsuming their differences for the sake of the common good. For each ruler viewed the call for action against the background of his own needs, culture and domestic circumstances, and a number of essays in this collection may be construed as case studies revealing the differences involved.

Sigismund, king of Hungary and Holy Roman Emperor (1368–1437), can be viewed as a special case because his interests were so diverse. His crusading plans have tended to receive scanty and somewhat dismissive attention from historians, not least because he rarely enjoyed the luxury of focusing on any task for long, because demands for his attention – and usually his physical presence – kept flooding in. There are few more striking examples of the difference between medieval and modern diplomacy than the fact that the council of Constance had effectively to place its entire agenda on hold for several months in 1415 while Sigismund travelled to Perpignan to persuade the adherents of the Anti-Pope Benedict XIII to relinquish their obedience. It was a task which would be now done by a long distance telephone call or – if absolutely necessary – a quick plane trip. Mark Whelan is fully aware of the extraordinary difficulties which Sigismund's relentlessly itinerant kingship imposed on him. But Whelan argues that Sigismund turned it to his benefit, possessing a knack for using any and every opportunity to flag up his exposed Danubian frontier. Whether he was in Paris, Perpignan or Rome, Sigismund became adept at directing the thoughts of the powerful and their advisors to the needs of his Hungarian lands. Whelan argues that this astute and charismatic man thus turned the Imperial office and its burdens into an opportunity, giving him access to resources which might be brought into play with some imaginative leverage. A key element in this was Sigismund's Order of the Dragon, whose crusading profile Whelan shows to have been substantially more important than others have recognized.

Diffusiveness was similarly a marked characteristic of the dominions ruled by Alfonso V 'the Magnanimous' of Aragon and Naples (r. 1416–58). Mark Aloisio offers a timely reassessment of Alfonso's involvement with the anti-Turkish crusading effort. Sigismund spent a good deal of his time searching for naval

support for his Danubian frontier, but for Alfonso the capacity and expertise of the war fleets of southern Italy, Sicily and Catalonia constituted his trump card both in his protracted negotiations with the Papal *curia* and in his diplomatic dealings with the Hospitallers on Rhodes, Scanderbeg in Albania and Christian rulers in Bosnia and the Peloponnese. The Papal *curia* discovered that like the other leading naval power in the Mediterranean, the Venetian republic, Aragonese Naples proved exceptionally reluctant to make the binding commitments to naval activity which were the *sine qua non* for combined land and sea operations. In desperation the Popes resorted to commissioning and building their own galleys.¹³ Methodological issues are crucial with regard to Alfonso just as they are with Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy, another ambitious and image-conscious ruler who frequently trumpeted his crusading zeal. What means should we use to measure or balance promise against performance, rhetoric against reality?

In different ways, Sigismund and Alfonso adhered to a view of crusade which at times proved hard to square with the formulations of the Renaissance Papacy. In keeping with his office, Sigismund was attracted by the ancient concept of an Imperial *passagium*. Alfonso, who was at odds with Calixtus III and gave the *condottiere* Jacopo Piccinino free rein to pillage in the Papal State, toyed with the idea of presiding over a congress of princes, anticipating the more comprehensive programme for a secularized form of crusade which was advanced after his death by George Podebrad, the Hussite king of Bohemia.¹⁴ Even when rulers showed less independence, a revival of the centralized direction of Christendom's crusading efforts which is visible (at times) in thirteenth-century crusading was out of the question in the 1400s. Popes with crusading aspirations, of whom the most dedicated were Calixtus III and Pius II, not only had to work out ways of cooperating effectively with ambitious and single-minded rulers like Sigismund and Alfonso, they also had to get their policies implemented hundreds of miles from Rome: for them there could be none of the itinerancy which became second nature to Sigismund. In solving the second of these problems legates had a central part to play, and their role is surveyed by Antonín Kalous. He confirms that the analysis of legatine activity forms one of most rewarding fields of research for this period. Kalous focuses on the central European lands, where attempts to deal with the Hussite heresy by force or by political measures added an additional level of complexity to the organization of an anti-Ottoman crusade. The most successful legates of the fifteenth century were skilled multi-taskers: they were called on to preach, arbitrate in disputes, implement Church reform and forward diplomatic processes at the highest levels. In the 1420s Martin V's legates shouldered the burden of promoting the Pope's crusades against the Hussites, even accompanying the crusaders on campaign. Kalous shows that the legatine success rate varied considerably, but the reports which they wrote can be valuable sources of information, not just revealing how the *curia*'s most powerful agents in the field perceived and carried out their briefs, but in the process illuminating the intricate dynamics of crusading.

The complications created by the Hussites in central Europe were matched by the scenario in the Baltic lands. Writing to the Sieneese civic authorities from

Wiener Neustadt in June 1454, Piccolomini stressed that the German princes were as concerned about the dangerous situation facing the Teutonic Order, at odds with the Poles and the Prussian estates, as they were about the fall of Constantinople.¹⁵ The Empire's associations with the Order were at once dynastic, cultural and economic, and war in the North was bound to be a major preoccupation of its diets. A major contributor towards the Order's critical condition was the conversion of the Lithuanians in the late-fourteenth century. This threatened to rob the Knights of their rationale for ruling over their Baltic lands, and Anti Selart reviews the ways in which the Order's officers tried to adjust its mission in response to a transformed religious situation. Initially they focused on Novgorod, and crusading terminology was deployed in relation to the Order's war with the principality in 1443–48. Nicholas V's willingness to transfer to the Order some of the proceeds of the indulgence granted by the council of Basel to fund Church union showed that Rome was sensitive to German anxiety about the Russian threat. But after 1453 this was subsumed by the greater danger from the Ottomans, and while indulgences were granted for the war against Muscovy in 1501–03, in the ongoing competition for resources between the two crusading fronts the Baltic was likely to be the loser.

Diplomatic and cultural interactions

Selart shows that one way in which the Teutonic Knights handled the task of sustaining their own reputation and mission as a military Order was to assimilate the Russians into the strategic threat posed by the Ottoman Sultans by describing them as 'the Turks of the North'. It was a hallowed rhetorical device. The juxtaposition between Christians and Turks, Us and Them, which underpinned its use, was one of the ways in which crusading influenced political and religious discourse in the fifteenth century. Another one, more pointed in its implications, was the *topos* of the *antemurale* (protective bulwark) and the argument that certain frontier states were defending all of Christendom. It was conspicuously applied to Croatia, Hungary and the Venetian territories. Not surprisingly, it was also used by the Teutonic Knights, and on Olaus Magnus's map of the Baltic, northern Livonia (*Livonia Aquilonaris*) is termed 'catholice ecclesie propugnaculum'. As Emir Filipović demonstrates, the rulers of Bosnia attempted without success to extend the *antemurale* image to their own exposed situation. Circumstances were not in their favour: Bosnia was internally divided, its defences were weak and in 1463 the Turks stormed the remainder of the country too rapidly for the period's slow diplomatic processes to bring any relief. The Bosnians were tarred with the brush of being schismatic or heretical, and this facilitated the charge made that Turkish raiding parties were being allowed to move through Bosnia on their way westwards and northwards. Only after Bosnia's fortresses had fallen did Venice and Hungary wake up to its strategic significance and try, ineffectually, to recover the lost strong points.

As argued earlier, the 'image of the Turk' impacted in different ways in different parts of the Catholic world. It did not preclude the 'Us and Them'

juxtaposition being nuanced by the paradox of ‘good Muslims’ – ‘good’ primarily in the sense that they could be enlisted as allies against the Ottomans, though as Margaret Meserve has shown in the case of Ūzūn Hasan, the frame of reference could be broader.¹⁶ Two essays in this volume deal with this theme. Michele Bernardini focuses on the sequence of western contacts with Tīmūr between 1395 and 1404. Although a notoriously violent warlord, an ardent practitioner of jihad who in the course of his Anatolian campaigning seized Izmir from the Knights Hospitaller, Tīmūr appeared receptive to approaches from a variety of states including Byzantium, Genoa, Venice, France and Castile. At the time of his death the discussions had got nowhere, and Bernardini questions whether Tīmūr was interested in anything but tactical gains (and confirmation of his own greatness). That said, Bernardini concludes his analysis by commenting on how the figure of Tīmūr came to be absorbed into western cultural history, much as Ūzūn Hasan would be a few decades later. What is striking about Tīmūr is that the conqueror also enjoyed posthumous prestige in the Islamic lands, amongst the Safavids, the Moghuls and – tellingly – his erstwhile victims the Ottomans.

It was Ūzūn Hasan of the Āq Qoyūnlūs who offered the strongest prospect of becoming an ally against the Ottomans, a ‘what if’ episode fully as intriguing as Bessarion being elected Pope. Giorgio Rota re-examines the lengthy negotiations between the ruler and the Venetians in 1461–73. For all their power at sea, the rulers of the republic lacked the means to deal a major blow to Mehmed II on land, and in these circumstances Ūzūn Hasan seemed the obvious ally to seek. At their height, his lands stretched from the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf, and came close to the Mediterranean and Black Seas. He posed a severe threat to the Ottoman Sultanate. For his part, the Āq Qoyūnlū Sultan was well briefed about the republic’s naval capacity and particularly welcomed the prospect of receiving western munitions. But Venetian hopes were largely dashed when Mehmed decisively defeated Ūzūn in August 1473 at the battle of Otlukbeli (Erzincan). Rota stresses the complexity of the military and diplomatic scenario, pointing out that despite the complete failure of their plans, the rulers of Venice made further attempts to enlist Persian help in their conflicts with the Ottomans in 1499–1503 and 1537–42. Rota also refers to the millenarian and apocalyptic expectations that accompanied and stimulated the diplomacy.

Giorgio Rota’s comments on prophecy remind one of Nikolay Antov’s reference to Ottoman fears, based on prophecy, that a crusade would recover Constantinople for the Christians. On the Christian side, prophetic pronouncements played a substantial role in keeping hope alive in dark days. One of the few high-ranking ecclesiastics to continue to advocate both reform and the crusade at the court of Pope Alexander VI was Bernardino López de Carvajal. In 1502 he was present in the church of S. Pietro in Montorio at Rome at the opening of the sealed *Apocalypsis nova* written by the Blessed Amadeus of Portugal (1420–82). Fr. Mariano da Firenze testified that Carvajal saw himself as Amadeus’s ‘papa angelico’ and that this belief drove him to preside over the schismatic council of Pisa in 1511.¹⁷ Far from being a recluse or dreamer, Carvajal was an experienced and very active cardinal – also, incidentally, a strong advocate of a Christian–Persian

alliance – and the 1502 revelation bears comparison with Christopher Columbus’s obsession with prophecies. Some historians have dismissed this as no more than a quirk in the explorer’s personality. In his essay on Genoa and the crusade in the fifteenth century, Steven Epstein takes issue with this, establishing links between the explorer’s eschatology, his passionate interest in recovering Jerusalem, and his programme of conquest and enslavement. He also situates Columbus’s crusading ideas within the context of Genoa’s past involvement in crusades, and its contemporary problems. With its colonies in the East tumbling to the Ottomans and its markets in the West challenged by the ambitions of France, Spain and their mercantile elites, the city faced a bleak future unless it could locate new sources of wealth.

Frontier zones: the Balkans and the Adriatic

More work on these prophetic patterns would be welcome, and it may be that they offer an example of the exchange of religious impulses between the faiths. That said, the fullest interactions occurred, as we would expect, in the frontier zones. It is these areas that the final group of papers in this collection investigate. We have already noted that Emir Filipović traces the pattern of invasion and conquest in Bosnia, a region which has received much less attention than its strategic importance and distinctive religious profile merit. Oliver Jens Schmitt surveys the western Balkans generally, focusing on Albania and Hercegovina. He argues that neither ideological alignments based on religious belief nor a paradigmatic ‘Great Power’ approach suffice to explain the character and major phases of the region’s transformation under the dual pressure of the Ottoman advance and the fragmented and inadequate western response. The most satisfactory way to explain the behaviour of the region’s elites in reaction to the extraordinary stress they were facing is not to test it against ideal types, but to establish the synergy between the way those elites interpreted the situation, their own needs, hopes and fears, and the value systems that they had inherited.

In this respect the career of George Castriota, known as Scanderbeg or Iskanderbeg (1405–68), which Schmitt has recently analysed at length, remains one of the most instructive. Scanderbeg was not the leader of a national uprising, nor is it easy to square events with the image of an ‘athleta Christi’ constructed by those hoping to offer him as a shining example to other Balkan leaders faced with Ottoman conquest (Janos Hunyadi being the other such exemplar). Schmitt’s conclusion is that Scanderbeg received no support of any importance from the townsfolk, and little from peasants living in the lowlands. His long struggle was sustained by highlanders, a volatile alliance of disaffected individuals and groups who invested their hopes in Scanderbeg’s military skill and his ability to persuade powerful individuals across the Adriatic that he was not just fighting for Christendom – manning the Albanian bulwark, as it were – but also stood a fair chance of winning.¹⁸

A different perspective is offered by Sergiu Iosipescu in his paper on the Romanian concept of crusade. Iosipescu advances the argument that even though

the Wallachians and Moldavians were not Catholic, their elites applied crusading ideas and formulae to the crisis they faced as the Turks advanced northwards. He argues that their participation in the crusades of Nicopolis (1396) and Varna (1444), and their overall role in defending the Lower Danube sprang not solely from self-interest but from their absorption of the emerging *antemurale* rhetoric of the times. Iosipescu supports his case with reference to intriguing and little-known wall paintings on the exteriors of churches in northern Moldavia, dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This is a neglected area of interaction between the Catholic and Orthodox worlds and it challenges the common assumption that the Danubian principalities had limited contact with the West. Clearly it is far from easy to reconcile the interpretations of Schmitt and Iosipescu regarding elite responses to the Turks, and it will be interesting to observe how these different assessments are developed over the next few years. Even when the picture is clearer, it will only tell us about the literate and influential: the views of the broad mass of the population are lost forever. But it is already apparent that the Balkan experience of the Turks in this period cannot be assumed to have fitted a standard pattern.

The common theme that does emerge from all the papers in this volume might best be summarized by the phrase ‘fertile interaction’. Both when listening to the papers at the conference, and when reading the submitted texts, it was impossible not to be struck by the remarkable quantity and spectrum of ideas, images and constructs that characterized the crusading effort in the period under review. We have long been aware of the incessant and arduous efforts made to mobilize manpower, money, shipping, armaments and equipment by the Catholic world’s highest authorities, by city states and military Orders, and by regional leaders like Scanderbeg. That is hardly surprising: it is these efforts that dominate the surviving sources. Just as important, though, was the unceasing traffic of individuals, from envoys, legates and spies to mendicant friars, traders and refugees. Some of these men played the role of ‘cultural brokers’, as one recent collection has described them.¹⁹ Alongside their cargoes of munitions, grain, merchandise and slaves, these men carried ideas, data, programmes for action and prophecies. Their job could be very dangerous: Bernardini’s essay gives a sense of how unpredictable it could be to visit the court of a volatile man like Tīmūr. They created and sustained dense and responsive networks of diplomacy, fact-finding and lobbying. Most significant is the contributors’ confirmation of the research theme that underpinned the entire conference: the rich variety of interactions not just *between* the period’s three dominant cultures – Catholic and Orthodox Christianity and Islam – but also *within* each of them. The truism of inevitable conflict between monolithic faith systems has given way to a much more credible world of porous and symbiotic archipelagos of belief, identity and self-interest.²⁰

Notes

- 1 *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies*, ed. Marios Philippides and Walter K. Hanak (Farnham, 2011); *550th Anniversary of the Istanbul University: International Byzantine and Ottoman*

- Symposium (XVth Century)*, ed. Sümer Atasoy (Istanbul, 2004); Jonathan Harris, *The End of Byzantium* (New Haven and London, 2010); Michael Angold, *The Fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans: Context and Consequences* (Harlow, 2012).
- 2 Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505* (Oxford, 2012), 18.
 - 3 See now *DRA, Ältere Reihe*, XIX/2, ed. Johannes Helmrath (Munich, 2013), 463–565.
 - 4 Norman Housley, ‘Giovanni da Capistrano and the Crusade of 1456’, in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley (Basingstoke, 2004), 94–115, 215–24.
 - 5 See now Karoline Dominika Döring, *Türkenkrieg und Medienwandel im 15. Jahrhundert, Historische Studien*, Bd 503 (Husum, 2013).
 - 6 Nancy Bisaha, ‘Pope Pius II’s Letter to Sultan Mehmed II: A Reexamination’, *Crusades* 1 (2002), 183–200; Benjamin Weber, ‘Conversion, croisade et œcuménisme à la fin du Moyen-âge: encore sur la lettre de Pie II à Mehmed II’, *Crusades* 7 (2008), 181–99.
 - 7 ‘Non est nisi religio una in rituum varietate’: *Nicholas of Cusa on Interreligious Harmony: Text, Concordance and Translation of ‘De Pace Fidei’*, ed. James E. Biechler and H. Lawrence Bond (Lewiston, 1990), 7.
 - 8 ‘Nothing short of stunning in the boldness of its suggestion’, comment its editors, though they add that it ‘should probably be classified with the literature of utopia’: *Nicholas of Cusa on Interreligious Harmony*, ed. Biechler and Bond, p. xxv.
 - 9 Jonathan Harris, *Greek Emigrés in the West, 1400–1520* (Camberley, 1995).
 - 10 *Quellen zur Kirchenreform im Zeitalter der grossen Konzilien des 15. Jahrhunderts*, eds Jürgen Miethke and Lorenz Weinrich, 2 vols (Darmstadt, 1995, 2002), 1:316: ‘et hic videndum est, ubi erit sedes [apostolica], si sequetur suam nationem vel erit in medio.’
 - 11 It was planned that this collection would include an essay by Panagiotis Kourniakos on Bessarion and the translation of St Andrew’s relics to Rome in 1462. Unfortunately Dr Kourniakos was unable to deliver the text in time, but it is much to be hoped that his important new findings about Bessarion and the crusade will be published in the near future.
 - 12 Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, *Europe (c. 1400–1458)*, tr. Robert Brown, introduced and annotated Nancy Bisaha (Washington, 2013).
 - 13 Benjamin Weber, *Lutter contre les Turcs: Les formes nouvelles de la croisade pontificale au XVe siècle* (Rome, 2013), 153–68.
 - 14 *The Universal Peace Organization of King George of Bohemia: A Fifteenth Century Plan for World Peace 1462/1464* (London, 1964).
 - 15 *DRA, Ältere Reihe*, XIX/2, ed. Helmrath, 84.
 - 16 Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, M.A., 2008), 223–31.
 - 17 Nelson H. Minnich, ‘The Role of Prophecy in the Career of the Enigmatic Bernardino López de Carvajal’, in *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period*, ed. Marjorie Reeves (Oxford, 1992), 111–20.
 - 18 Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Skanderbeg: Der Neue Alexander auf dem Balkan* (Regensburg, 2009).
 - 19 *Cultural Brokers at Mediterranean Courts in the Middle Ages*, ed. Marc von der Höh et al. (Paderborn, 2013).
 - 20 Cf. *The Renaissance and the Ottoman World*, ed. Anna Contadini and Claire Norton (Farnham, 2013), and *La Frontière méditerranéenne du XVe au XVIIe siècle: Échanges, circulations et affrontements*, ed. Albrecht Fuess and Bernard Heyberger (Turnhout, 2013).

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Part I

Conquerors and conquered

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2 Crusading in the fifteenth century and its relation to the development of Ottoman dynastic legitimacy, self-image and the Ottoman consolidation of authority

Nikolay Antov

Introduction: the challenge of dynastic legitimation in early Ottoman history

One of the great challenges that the Ottoman dynasty and its evolving establishment faced in the first two and a half centuries of the history of the Ottoman enterprise was the political and ideological legitimization of Ottoman rule – the justification of the dynasty's rise to power and territorial expansion, and the consolidation and centralization of its authority.

At the time the Ottoman polity was taking shape in the early fourteenth century, the most important and effective source of dynastic legitimacy in most of the Eurasian steppe and the eastern Islamic lands was descent from Chinggis Han and his house.¹ While prior to the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century, the caliphal institution represented, at least in theory, the sole legitimate locus of political authority in Islamdom and symbol of the moral and political unity of the *umma*, and regional Islamic rulers (especially after the mid-tenth century) sought, at least formally, recognition and investiture from the caliph in Baghdad, the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258 brought about, literally as well as symbolically, the destruction of the caliphate and its dispensation of universal authority. The caliphal dispensation which rested on the integrative universality of the Sharia was replaced by the Mongols' own universalist ideology based on the claim that divine dispensation to rule the world had been conferred to Chinggis Han and his descendants.

From the collapse of the Mongol Ilkhanid polity in Iran in 1335 until the early sixteenth century, the political life of much of the central and eastern Islamic lands was dominated by the struggle of numerous successor states led by Mongol and Turkic dynasties to fill the political vacuum left by the Mongols. Chinggis Hanid claims to universal rule remained dominant,² but they came to be rivalled by another universalist steppe tradition – that of the Oğuz Turks which came to prominence especially in areas where Turcoman polities held sway – in parts of western Iran, Azerbaijan and Anatolia. As these dynastic houses, be they Mongol or Turkic, were also Muslim, they had to reconcile the legitimizing power of their

steppe traditions of law and sovereignty with the universality of the Sharia. Thus, the period in question witnessed continuous and often bold ideological experimentation with political ideology that attempted a synthesis of Turco-Mongol steppe and Perso-Islamic sedentary traditions of government and political legitimation.

It is in this context that the rising Ottoman dynasty and state faced the great challenge of legitimizing their claim to conquest and rule. Being semi-nomadic upstarts of modest origins on the periphery of the Islamic world, the Ottomans (i.e., the house of Osman and the developing Ottoman establishment) possessed very weak claims to legitimacy from the perspective of both Islamic and steppe political traditions. Osman and his descendants did not possess an illustrious pedigree of any kind – they were not descendants of the Prophet (*seyyids*), for obvious reasons they could hardly extract any meaningful legitimacy by way of political sanction from the already non-existent Abbasid Caliphate, they were not Chinggis Hanids, and did not belong to a major branch of the Oğuz. The early Ottomans did indeed advance claims to legitimacy on some of the above-mentioned counts – contemporary Mamluk historians report that Bayezid I requested and received (in 1392) an investiture diploma and recognition as ‘sultan of Rum’ from the ‘shadow caliph’ in Cairo;³ from the late-fifteenth century onwards Ottoman historians would try to construct a prominent Oğuz lineage for the dynasty,⁴ and they also presented the latter as the rightful successor of the Seljuks of Anatolia whose legitimacy was rooted in the pre-Mongol Abbasid caliphal order.⁵ However, the Ottomans owed their rise to power and prominence above all to sheer military success, efficient administration and political acumen, rather than to claims of dynastic legitimation situated in the steppe or Islamic political traditions.

In this relation, the rising Ottoman house was forced to construct its claims to legitimacy of conquest and rule over diverse populations largely on the basis of current events (or developments in the near past) and the Ottoman government as well as Ottoman political writers and historians from the fifteenth century onwards made skilful use of the current political context as well as the Ottoman state’s own political and military actions within that context in order to legitimize the Ottomans’ right to conquest and rule. While claims to just rule and efficiency of government played a foundational role in the development of Ottoman political legitimacy from the fifteenth century onwards,⁶ the Ottomans’ efforts to construct a broader historical role for themselves in relation to their dealings with the outside world probably performed a not less important and formative function in the shaping of Ottoman dynastic and state legitimacy in the first two and a half centuries or so of Ottoman history.

Stages in the development of dynastic legitimacy and self-image in early Ottoman history

The Ottomans’ role in the historical development of the Mediterranean world, southeastern and central Europe, and the Islamic Near East evolved with time from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries and so did the historical self-image and mission that the Ottoman house and state constructed for themselves. Needless

to say, this evolving self-image was in continuous dialogue with actual policies and responses to external and internal challenges. While current events shaped the Ottomans' dynastic self-image and related claims to political legitimacy, both evolving self-image and self-ascribed historical role helped to articulate the direction, motivation and blueprint for future military and political action.

From the perspective of the development of the Ottomans' dynastic self-image and legitimacy, especially in the light of their relations with the outside world, the historical role that the Ottomans claimed for themselves – through political and military action, and via written claims in epigraphic, as well as administrative, legal, diplomatic, historiographic and literary material – underwent several stages of accumulation and gradation from the fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries. In the first such stage, up to the 1430s–1440s, the rising Ottoman principality must have justified most of its campaigns of war and conquest with waging successful *gazā* (usually understood as offensive 'holy war') against non-Muslim polities on the western edges of the Islamic world with the overarching goal of expanding *dār al-Islām* (the Abode of Islam).⁷ The early 'Ottomans attempted to reconcile their Islamic identity with their nomadic origins and political traditions through the creation of a religiously based ideology in the form of the *gāzī* ideal';⁸ 'the strong material interest in booty coupled and rationalized by the emphatic and ethical injunction to extend the frontiers of Islam formed the effective basis for political and military organization'.⁹

While *gazā* along the frontier between Islamdom and Christendom in the Balkans and central Europe continued to have a formative impact on the formation of the Ottomans' self-image and dynastic legitimacy, developments in the late 1430s and the 1440s initiated a shift in the construction of their self-image vis-à-vis the outside world. Their expansion in southeastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean had created long-standing challenges for Byzantium as well as for the interests of major western powers such as Hungary and Venice since the late-fourteenth century, but it was the 1430s and the rising tensions between the Papacy and the conciliar movement that generated incentives for the active involvement of the Pope as the leader of a major crusading project. The council of Ferrara–Florence (1438–39) proclaimed the union of the Latin and Greek Churches under the primacy of the Pope and provided the necessary coherence among the anti-Ottoman powers which prepared the ground for the crusading campaigns of 1443–45 (especially the crusade of Varna in 1444) and the second battle of Kosovo (1448).¹⁰

It was in this context that the Ottomans' self-ascribed historical role evolved from that of 'frontier *gāzīs*' expanding into southeastern Europe at the expense of small and fragmented Christian polities to the role of an emerging major actor in international politics that also increasingly claimed or at least alluded to the status of the premier power in the Islamic world in the following decades.¹¹ In this second stage in the development of the Ottoman dynastic self-image which extended from the late 1430s to the early sixteenth century (i.e. to the end of the Ottoman–Venetian war of 1499–1503 and the emergence of the Safavid state in 1501) the Ottoman house, for the first time in its history, sought to construct for itself a

world-historical role and it was very much shaped by the dynamics and intricacy of crusading warfare and crusading politics in Europe. The most important historical event in this period – the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453,¹² was itself (among other things) a strategic response to the crusading campaigns of the 1440s. The decades that followed the fall of the city were dominated by the efforts of the Papacy to organize a crusade that would restore Constantinople to Christianity and oust the Ottomans from Europe, accompanied by crusading rhetoric and related anti-Ottoman projects current in virtually all European dynastic states. They also witnessed the saga of the captivity of the Ottoman prince Cem and the involvement of major Islamic powers (especially the Mamluks of Egypt and the Aqqoyunlu confederation in Iran as well as earlier on the Karamanids of central Anatolia) in anti-Ottoman diplomatic exchanges and alliances with western powers.¹³ Thus in this period (c.1439–c.1503), which is the main focus of this essay, the Ottoman state made the transition from seeing itself as a leader of frontier *gazā* to constructing for itself a self-image that included that of leader of frontier ‘holy war’, but importantly added to it the image of defender of Islamdom vis-à-vis a united (at least in terms of theory or potentiality) Latin Christendom under the leadership of the Pope. While the Ottomans continued to view their fight against the infidels as *gazā*, the nature of the latter underwent significant changes, both in terms of actual practice, and in the way it was conceptualized by the Ottoman state and contemporary (or near contemporary) Ottoman historians representing what came to be the mainstream Ottoman historiographic tradition.¹⁴ Ottoman *gazā* came to acquire a defensive facet, in addition to its original offensive character. It also came to be an enterprise increasingly dominated by the centralizing state, in contrast to earlier Ottoman expansion in Anatolia and the Balkans when it was very much the preserve of frontier lords, nomadic Turcoman groups and heterodox dervishes fairly loosely associated with the Ottoman dynasty and state.¹⁵

After the early years of the sixteenth century, while crusading politics and the crusading threat continued to play a visible role in the way the Ottoman dynasty and establishment imagined their historical role and mission, other factors and sensibilities came to exert a stronger influence that further upgraded and enriched the Ottoman dynastic self-image, without taking away from the formative contributions that the period from the Union of Florence to the early sixteenth century had made.

To begin with, the first couple of decades of the sixteenth century witnessed the Ottoman dynasty effectively claiming for itself (in addition to being defender of Islamdom from without), the role of the defender, protector and upholder of ‘true’ Islam from within the Islamic world. The first major development in this regard was the rise to prominence of the Safavids as the leaders of a mahdistic (messianic) religio-political conquest movement in the second half of the fifteenth century which managed to prevail in the Aqqoyunlu civil war in the late-fifteenth century and to establish a state in 1501 which would officially adopt Twelver Shi‘i Islam as the religion of state and would thus emerge as the major confessional rival of the Ottomans within the Islamic world. No less importantly, while he adopted

‘mainstream’, ‘moderate’ Twelver Shi‘ism as official religion, Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid state, also maintained his mahdistic claims rooted in what is often called ‘extremist’ or *ghuluww* Shi‘ism, which catered to the religio-political sensibilities of his Turcoman nomadic supporters within his new state, but significantly also attracted the sympathies of Turcoman nomads on Ottoman soil in Anatolia, thus posing a unique threat to the stability and very existence of the Ottoman state. The late 1510s witnessed the Ottoman conquest (under Selim I) of Syria, Egypt and the Holy Cities, which cemented the Ottomans’ position as upholder of Sunni Islam. Thus the first two decades of the sixteenth century saw developments that played a formative role in the drawing of lasting confessional boundaries between Shi‘i and Sunni Islam and their adherents.

The reign of Süleyman I (1520–66) saw an intense experimentation with the concept of universal empire, which may be seen as the reflection of both historic accumulation of claims in the evolution of Ottoman dynastic self-image and legitimacy, resting on actual historic achievement of continued territorial expansion and efficient rule, as well as a reaction to a millenarian and apocalyptic impulse that was felt not only in the Islamic world, but also in Europe and the wider Mediterranean (a good related example being Charles V’s experimentation with the same concept).¹⁶ From the later years of Süleyman’s reign onwards such universalist claims gradually started to wane as the Ottomans began to accept their position as one of four great regional Islamic empires (together with the Safavids, Mughals and Özbeks),¹⁷ and in the context of the emerging stalemate vis-à-vis western powers in the Mediterranean and central Europe.

The impact of the crusading threat on the Ottoman dynastic self-image and political claims (from the 1440s to the early sixteenth century)

Having outlined a tentative timeframe for the evolution of Ottoman dynastic self-image and legitimacy vis-à-vis the outside world from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, this paper will now focus on the second period referred to (c.1439–c.1503). Several aspects of the construction of the Ottoman dynastic self-image related directly or indirectly to fifteenth-century crusading campaigns, and crusading politics also deserve attention. To this effect, selected Ottoman chronicles, but also other works (such as diplomatic correspondence, works on divination, etc.) will be adduced. The first such aspect is the development of the image of an aggressive Christian West with the Pope of Rome as its undisputed leader, who would direct or preside over alliances of Christian nations that would attack the Ottomans, themselves conceptualized as the leading defenders of the Islamic world. Second, and in relation to this, attention will be paid to developing Ottoman claims to leadership in the Islamic world. While for the time being it was the Mamluk sultans of Egypt who controlled Mecca and Medina and claimed the title of Servitors of the Holy Cities (they were also the custodians of the ‘shadow’ Abbasid caliph in Cairo), it was during this period that the Ottomans were developing substantive rival claims, including patronage over and protection of the

Holy Cities, that were meant to challenge the Mamluks' pre-eminent position in the Islamic world. This was related both to the Ottomans' emerging self-image as Islam's defenders against a Christendom that was presumed to be united, but also to the perception of various actions of other Islamic powers as treacherous to the cause of Islam. In other words, while it was only in 1516–17 that Selim I conquered Syria, Egypt and the Hijaz, claims in that direction were brewing as early as the middle of Mehmed II's reign and in the following decades. Third, the developing Ottoman self-ascription of a world historical role as a defender of Islam vis-à-vis a united Latin Christendom was not the mere outcome of *realpolitik*, it was intimately intertwined with apocalyptic, millenarian and eschatological overtones that developed in the mid- and late-fifteenth century in relation to the conquest of Constantinople and the expected counter-attack of the West on the Islamic world with the aim of recovering Constantinople. The two most important apocalyptic tropes associated with this were the motif of the Blond Peoples (*banū al-aṣfar*) and the legend of the Last Roman Emperor. Finally, some remarks will be made on actual Ottoman policies of centralization and consolidation of authority and the way these related to the crusading threat and the developing Ottoman dynastic self-image. All these aspects outlined above may also be related to the Ottoman historiographic explosion of the second half of the fifteenth and early-sixteenth century, which itself may be seen as a reflection of the Ottoman dynasty and elite's emerging awareness of their historical achievement and mission, as well as a way to legitimize and further enhance that image.

The image of a united Christian threat and its impact on developing Ottoman self-perceptions

A good source that can be used to present an illustration of the contemporary Ottoman image of the Pope and allied Christian foes is *Gazavāt-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehmed Han* (*The Holy Wars of Sultan Murad son of Mehmed Han*) – an anonymous Ottoman account of the crusading campaigns of 1443 (John Hunyadi's expedition to the Zlatitsa Pass) and the crusade of Varna in 1444.¹⁸ Composed most probably in the later years of the mature reign of Mehmed II (1451–81) by an anonymous author who was very likely a member of Murad II's retinue and a direct participant in the events of 1443–44,¹⁹ the *Holy Wars* starts off with the image of the Emperor of Byzantium being frightened by the conquests of the 'son of Osman' (i.e. Murad II). In a clear reference to the council of Ferrara–Florence, the author of the *Gazavat* recounts the Emperor's visit to the Pope of Rome (*Rim-Papa*), whom the Emperor addresses as 'the head of our religion' (*bizim dīnimiz ulusu*); the Emperor describes his plight and points to the 'son of Osman' as a threat to all of Christendom, he asks the Pope to summon 'all the kings of the Christian community' to help him defeat and expel the Ottoman Sultan.²⁰

The Pope accepts the plea of his son (i.e. the Byzantine Emperor) and writes letters to the Hungarian king and other Christian sovereigns to urge them to accept the plan of the Emperor and expel the Sultan from Rumelia, take Bursa,

and advance all the way to Jerusalem, destroy the minarets of mosques and put bells in their place, and thus advance the religion of Jesus, presumably under the Byzantine Emperor's leadership.²¹ Upon his return, the Emperor conspires with the ruler of Karaman (the most powerful Ottoman rival in Anatolia) and persuades him to attack the Sultan from the rear and seize Bursa.²² Hearing about the treachery of the ruler of Karaman, Murad II gathers leading members of the religio-legal establishment (the *ulema*), asks their opinion in accordance with the Sharia (*şer'an ne lâzım geliür*), and they tell him that he who makes a common cause with an infidel to harm and oppress the 'community of Muhammad' (*ümme-i Muhammed*) has become an infidel himself.²³ Murad defeats the Karamanid ruler and accepts peace upon the latter's repentance and oath of loyalty. The Byzantine Emperor then sends a letter to the king of Hungary urging him to follow the word of the 'head of our religion – the pope of Rome' (*dinimiz ulusu olan Rim-Papa*) and admonishing him that he should fear the curse of the Pope of Rome; the Hungarian king gathers Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, Croats, Wallachians, the Despot (of Serbia) and 'Yanko' (John Hunyadi), and the 1443 campaign begins.²⁴

After the end of that campaign in the winter of 1443–44, when ambassadors from Hungary and Serbia come to Edirne to negotiate peace with Murad II in the spring of 1444, a letter from the Hungarian king asking for mercy and peace is read out to Murad II, importantly (and interestingly) it refers to Murad II as the 'Sultan of Mecca and Medina' (*sen ki Mekke Medîne sultânısın*).²⁵ Following the Peace of Edirne, the Byzantine Emperor urges the ruler of Karaman to attack 'the son of Osman' again so that he (the Emperor) could take the Ottoman ruler's lands and drive him away up to Jerusalem and even to the Ka'ba.²⁶ After the ruler of Karaman attacks and is defeated once again, and after the Hungarian king and Hunyadi abjure their oaths (to respect the peace with the Ottomans) and advance deep into the Balkans with their armies (what became known as the crusade of Varna, in the autumn of 1444),²⁷ Murad once again convenes the *ulema* and asks what to do given that the people of the 'community of Muhammad' are under threat, whereupon they reply that since it is the infidels who are invading, it is the obligation of all to join the holy war in defence and thus authorize Murad to order a general levy throughout the whole of Rumelia.²⁸ At the end of the story, a victorious Murad, referred to as the 'emperor of the religion of Islam' (*pâdişâh-ı dîn-i İslâm*) during and immediately after the decisive battle (at Varna, November 10, 1444) sends a letter to his son referred to here also as the 'emperor of the religion of Islam', and proclamations of victory are sent to all Islamic lands so that all of the community of Muhammad can be informed and rejoice.²⁹

To summarize the main sets of religio-political claims here: 1) The Pope is presented as the head of an aggressive and united Christendom, he stands above all Christian rulers and is able to command them to attack the Ottomans (and more broadly speaking the 'community of Muhammad'), these rulers would fear the curse of the Pope if they did not obey him; 2) troops from various Christian nations unite to attack the Ottoman lands; 3) they are aided by a treacherous Muslim ruler who by conspiring with the infidels to harm the Community of Believers has essentially renounced Islam; and 4) the Ottoman ruler is presented

as the pious, Sharia-abiding defender of Islam, the ‘community of Muhammad’, and Islamdom in general, the ‘Sultan of Mecca and Medina’ (which, of course, was far from reality) who takes important decisions in consultation with the leading members of the Ottoman religio-legal establishment (the *ulema*); both he and his son Mehmed II are referred to as ‘the emperor of the religion of Islam’. The claim that the Ottoman ruler was the ‘Sultan of Mecca and Medina’ as well as the references to the Byzantine Emperor’s plans (with the help of the West and the blessing of the Pope) to reconquer Jerusalem and drive the Ottomans from the Ka’ba may be seen as a conscious attempt at ‘universalizing’ the conflict between the Ottomans and the infidels, with the intention to further position the struggle between the Ottomans and the Christian powers on a grand scale as a conflict between Islamdom (with the Ottoman *pādiṣāh* at the helm) and Christendom (led by the Pope) and to highlight the Ottomans’ central, world-historical role therein; such claims and references may likewise reflect developing Ottoman ambitions to assume actual leadership in the Islamic world and also carry apocalyptic overtones (on which more below). In related fashion, the struggle against the Christians is conceptualized as *gazā*, but has a defensive quality. Thus, in accordance with the precepts of the Sharia, the Ottoman ulema determines that the defence against the infidel invaders is the individual obligation of every Muslim (authorizing Murad II to impose a general levy (*nefir-i ām*) in Rumelia), as opposed to the more typical (up to that time) Ottoman conceptualization of *gazā* as a series of offensive campaigns against the infidels with the aim of expanding the Abode of Islam.³⁰

Similar claims (although not always in such concentration) are made in various other Ottoman narrative sources of the second half of the fifteenth and the early-sixteenth centuries. The Pope is usually acknowledged as the leader of Christendom, who may summon Christian rulers to action against the Ottoman state and Islam. Similarly to the *Holy Wars*, the Pope (*Rim-Pap*) has a prominent presence in Firdevsi-i Rumi’s *Kutb-Name* – an epic in verse devoted to the Ottoman–Venetian war of 1499–1503 (composed in 1503). It presents him directing a broad alliance of Christian states fighting the Ottomans in the Mediterranean. He also urges all Christians to proceed to Adana and take possession of Damascus and Jerusalem (again reflecting apocalyptic impulses to be discussed further below).³¹ A source that deals specifically with prince Cem’s tribulations in captivity, the *Vaki’at-ı Sultan Cem* (composed in the early-sixteenth century) gives a detailed description of the Pope in relation to his dealings with Cem, and describes him as the one whose feet all Christian rulers should kiss upon meeting him, in the hope of getting forgiveness for their sins; an exception is made for the ‘German lord’ (*Alaman begi*) who did not have to do that as he had a ‘double-crown’ while the Pope himself had a ‘triple-crown’ – this alludes to current Ottoman perceptions of the Pope as not just a spiritual leader of the Christians, but also the head of a hierarchy of Christian kings.³² This source also highlights the prominence that the Ottoman house had gained in European affairs by describing the complex negotiations between the Pope, European rulers and the Mamluk Sultan to get possession of Cem and the hopes they entertained of using him against the Ottoman state. In a similar vein, the Ottoman chronicle of Aşıkpaşazade, one of the most important

early histories of the Ottoman dynasty, composed in the late-fifteenth century or early-sixteenth century, refers to the Pope as the ‘head of the infidel lords’ (*kāfir beylerinin re’īsi*), in reference to his plans to incite prince Cem to lead a crusade against his brother Sultan Bayezid II.³³

The painstaking enumeration of various Christian allies that joined forces to attack the Ottomans is also an oft-used trope in Ottoman historiography of the period, be it in relation to the crusade of Varna as described in the *Holy Wars*³⁴ and the anonymous *History of the House of Osman* (composed in the first half of the sixteenth century),³⁵ the beginning of the Ottoman–Venetian war of 1463–79 in Tursun Beğ’s *History of the Conqueror*,³⁶ or the Ottoman–Venetian war of 1499–1503 as rendered by Firdevsi-i Rumi.³⁷

Also in agreement with the claims made in the *Holy Wars*, a number of works of Ottoman historiography of the period confer on Ottoman Sultans of the time – that is Mehmed II and Bayezid II (though also Murad II in the *Holy Wars*), titles that allude to their assumed leadership of the Islamic world. While the *Holy Wars* employs the title of ‘emperor of the religion of Islam’ for Murad II and Mehmed II, other works fairly regularly use the title ‘emperor of Islam’ (*pādišāh-ı İslām*),³⁸ and the grander ‘emperor of Islam and (all) Muslims’ (*pādišāhu’l İslām ve’l Müslimīn*), redolent of the universalist claims of the caliphal period.³⁹ So it probably should not be too surprising to find an example of early bureaucratic experimentation with titles such as ‘the Caliph of the Lord of the Worlds’ (*khali-fat rabb al-‘alemin*), ‘the Sword of God’ (*Sayf Allah*) and ‘the Shadow of God on Earth’ (*zill Allah fi’l-arḍeyn*) as they were employed for Murad II in a document from late 1444, shortly after the Ottoman triumph at Varna.⁴⁰

Emerging Ottoman claims to leadership in the Islamic world

Calling oneself ‘emperor of Islam and the Muslims’ is one thing, having an effective claim to leadership in the Islamic world is another. In the post-caliphal period, it was the ruler who controlled and protected the Holy Cities and the Hijaz who could claim the highest station in Islamdom. Since the demise of the caliphate in 1258 that had been the Mamluk Sultan in Cairo. Thus, in order to make an effective and definitive claim to being the premier imperial power in the Islamic world, the Ottomans had to gain control of the Hijaz. In later Ottoman historiography, from the second half of the sixteenth century and onwards, Selim I’s conquest of Syria, Egypt and the Hijaz in 1516–17 is usually presented as a response to the Mamluk Sultan conspiring with the Safavids against him, which made an all-out attack on the Mamluk sultanate a strategic priority for Selim in the second decade of the sixteenth century. But if one looks back to the period from the 1440s to the early years of the sixteenth century, when the Ottomans were constructing a world-historical role for themselves in the context of their continuous struggle against Christendom, one may see that claims to the conquest of the Holy Cities as well as Egypt date from as early as the reign of Mehmed II.

A letter of victory to the Mamluk Sultan Sayf al-Din Inal sent by Mehmed II on the occasion of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople recognized the high

station of the Mamluk ruler, but also suggested a ‘division of labour’ of sorts within Islamdom – while the Mamluk Sultan performed his traditional (and honourable) duty of protecting the hajj (and the Holy Cities) the Ottomans excelled in *gazā* and jihad against the infidels; on this basis the letter hinted at an assumed parity between the two rulers and called for friendship and mutual respect between the two powers.⁴¹

However, not too much later, Mehmed II would take steps pointing to his ambitions to establish himself as the undisputed pre-eminent ruler in the Islamic world. In 1458–59, upon being informed of the unsatisfactory condition of the wells on the hajj road leading to Mecca which caused a lot of trouble for the pilgrims, he sent workers to make repairs with an accompanying letter to assist their reception by the Mamluks, though the ‘humanitarian convoy’ was turned back.⁴² While this was supposed to be done for the good of Islam, the message was clear: the Mamluk Sultan could not ensure the proper maintenance of the hajj infrastructure (and by association, the Holy Cities), and so was an unworthy ‘servitor of Mecca and Medina’. In 1467–68 Mehmed II is reported by Tursun Beğ to have turned his armies toward the Arab lands in order to take away the ‘sultanate of Egypt’ from the possession of the ‘Circassians’, but when the ruler of Karaman refused to come and serve as a guide to Mehmed as he was summoned, Mehmed turned against Karaman itself; at the end of his history Tursun Beğ also states that when Mehmed II died at Gebze in May 1481 he had just embarked upon a campaign into Anatolia, but one could not say whether it was directed against Iran or Egypt.⁴³ In this context, the *Holy Wars*’ reference to Murad II as the ‘Sultan of Mecca and Medina’ may also be viewed as reflecting developing Ottoman ambitions during Mehmed II’s reign, especially if one assumes that it was written in the 1460s or 1470s and reflected the current political climate in the Ottoman establishment.

Apocalyptic overtones

The development of Ottoman political ideology, dynastic legitimacy and self-image during the period in question should also be viewed in the context of the heightened sense of apocalyptic urgency that permeated the Mediterranean (and indeed, much of Eurasia) during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These apocalyptic (as well as millenarian) sensibilities were intensified by the escalating struggle between Christendom and Islamdom in the context of Ottoman expansion; the 7,000th (and final) year of creation according to the Byzantine tradition and the beginning of the final century of the Islamic Millennium both fell in the late fifteenth century (1492 and 1494 respectively). The fall of Constantinople (‘the City’) in 1453, well-established as a sign of the Last Hour in both the Byzantine and Islamic apocalyptic traditions, was indisputably the single most important event in this context – a prophecy fulfilled, but it should be viewed as an integral element in a sequence of developments that included the crusading campaigns of the 1440s, the crusading ferment in Europe immediately following the fall of the City (including the Christian defence of Belgrade in 1456, the congress of Mantua

in 1459 and the Pope's planned crusade in 1464), concurrent Ottoman expansion in southeastern Europe under Mehmed II, the Ottoman invasion of Italy in 1480, the fall of Granada and the Columbian discoveries of 1492, and continuing into the first half of the sixteenth century. In the words of Cornell Fleischer,

apocalyptic represented the common idiom through which, for a time, Muslims, Jews, and Christians expressed and evaluated their experience of a single history in which imperial combat could reasonably be seen as a struggle for world rule, the troubles that would precede the Millennium in which a single, purified religion would gain sway.⁴⁴

For the purposes of the present discussion, it is appropriate to refer to two prominent representatives of the Islamic apocalyptic tradition in the Ottoman dominions, both of whom were Sunni (Hanafi) Muslims and devoted a lot of attention to the fall of Constantinople and the events that were to follow. The first one was Abd al-Rahman al-Bistami (c.1380-c.1455). He was born in Antioch on Mamluk soil, spent much of his youth in Cairo where he was drawn to the study of Islamic mysticism and the 'science of letters and names' (*ilm al-ḥurūf wa'l-asmā*), and after some travelling in the Mamluk and Ottoman realms, established himself in Ottoman Bursa c.1420 where he spent the rest of his life as a *protégé* of Sultan Murad II.⁴⁵ It was there that by 1440 he completed his major work – *Al-miftāḥ al-jafri al-jami'* (*The Key to Comprehensive Prognostication*) – a compendium of apocalyptic traditions then current in the Mamluk dominions including some crusade-era traditions.⁴⁶ In it he predicted the imminent fall of Constantinople and the events that were to follow; this work soon earned him the reputation of the pre-eminent divinatory master in the Ottoman realm.

The second figure that deserves attention here is Ahmed Bican. He was born most probably in the last decade of the fourteenth century and spent most of his life in a Bayramiyya dervish lodge in Gallipoli with his brother Mehmed (another important intellectual figure), and died after 1465. He left the area twice, once to study in Egypt and once to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. Among the most important works that he authored was the *Dürr-i Meknun* (*The Hidden Pearl*), composed between 1454 and 1465. This was a treatise on cosmology with significant apocalyptic content (especially chapters sixteen and seventeen) in which he interpreted the signs of the Last Hour (*ashrāt al-sā'a*) and the 'final battles' associated with it.⁴⁷

It is important to note that while Bistami predicted the fall of the City shortly before the actual event, Bican who, according to his own admission, was very much influenced by the work of Bistami, wrote the *Dürr-i Meknun* shortly after that event. Thus, his work had an added credence as it was articulating a set of prophecies, of which part had already been fulfilled.

Both works mentioned above relied on the central idea that humankind had a specific life-span of 7,000 years (starting with Adam) determined by God which was about to expire.⁴⁸ For both, the most dramatic part of humankind's history was the last millennium (that of the Prophet Muhammad) and especially its last century that was to start in 1494, leading to the Millennium in 1591. Both authors

based their discussion of the fall of the City and the Last Hour on Hadith reports, whereby two of the most important elements of prophetic tradition regarding the Muslim conquest of Constantinople were that the fall of the City to the Muslims was a portent of the Last Hour, and that the conquest would be followed by a counter-attack of the *banū al-aṣfar* (the ‘Blond Races’), after which the Muslims, suffering severe losses, would be pushed back to Syria or the Arabian Peninsula. They would ultimately recover the City only after the descent of the Messiah who would assume leadership of the Muslim armies.⁴⁹

The trope of the Blond Peoples has a long history in the Jewish, Christian and Muslim apocalyptic tradition. Of Jewish origin, it gained prominence in the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition, featured in major texts such as the apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius and the *Visions of Daniel* cycle, whereby the Blond Peoples (or Blond Beards, of Nordic European origin) would assist the Last Roman Emperor in defeating the Ishmaelites, entering Constantinople and pursuing them into their own territory before surrendering his authority to God at the End of Time.⁵⁰ In Muslim tradition, the trope of *banū al-aṣfar* can be traced back to Hadith traditions of the ninth century, and evolving in dialogue with Christian apocalyptic, it travelled through the centuries, being applied initially to the Byzantines and then to the crusaders.⁵¹ In the fifteenth-century Ottoman context the Blond Peoples were usually identified with Latin Christendom and its crusading ideology and politics (and up to 1453, by association, with Byzantium as well).

With renewed confidence lent by the actual conquest of Constantinople, Bican warns his readers that the final troubles following the Muslim conquest of Constantinople – the counter-attack of the Blond Peoples, and the ensuing battles including the appearance of the Dajjal (the Muslim Antichrist), the Last Hour, the Resurrection and the Last Judgement were bound to happen soon.⁵² Pointing out that political fortune (*devlet*) travelled from dynasty to dynasty, Bican alludes that the Ottoman dynasty which completed the conquest of the lands of Rum (i.e. the Byzantine Empire), is the one blessed to lead the Muslims in the time of the final troubles with Mehmed II as the apocalyptic warrior at its helm.⁵³ As Kaya Şahin has also aptly demonstrated, in his last major work, the *Münteha* (Epilogue) completed in 1465, Bican describes Mehmed II as a just Sultan whose true objective, following the conquest of Constantinople, is to conquer Rome (*Rumiye*) and eventually all the lands of the Blond Peoples.⁵⁴ This can be seen as a continuation of medieval Islamic apocalyptic tradition, which often saw the Muslim conquest of Rome as following that of Constantinople,⁵⁵ and can also be related to Mehmed II’s developing ambitions vis-à-vis Italy and Rome (culminating in the capture of Otranto in 1480),⁵⁶ which very possibly were influenced by growing apocalyptic ferment as well.

Works such as those of Bistami and Ahmed Bican and the major apocalyptic tropes contained therein circulated heavily in the Ottoman cultural space during most of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century. Not surprisingly, with their powerful legitimizing potential regarding the Ottoman Sultan and dynasty, apocalyptic impulses of this kind exercised a visible influence on the development of Ottoman dynastic ideology, legitimacy and self-image. It is

known that at a military council preceding the siege of Constantinople Mehmed II's spiritual guide and adviser Sheykh Akşemseddin predicted, on the basis of his interpretation of Prophetic tradition (Hadith), that the City would fall first to the Ottoman ruler and only later to the Blond Peoples;⁵⁷ during the actual siege he also applied divinatory techniques to specific passages in the Qur'an to identify the signs that suggested the Ottomans' imminent success.⁵⁸ In a letter sent by Mehmed II to the Sharif of Mecca shortly after the fall of the City, the Ottoman triumph was referred to as an occasion on which the Blond Peoples (*banū al-asfar*) – the enemies of God and his Messenger – were ground into the dust.⁵⁹ A pious endowment deed of Mehmed II dated 885 AH/1480–81 AD presents him as the defender of Islam against the hostile Blond Peoples and the evil forces of Gog (and Magog).⁶⁰

In this context, it is not surprising to observe the presence of such apocalyptic motifs in contemporary Ottoman historical works. The story of the Byzantine Emperor's 'plan' to drive the Ottomans as far as Jerusalem, destroy the minarets and convert the mosques into churches to advance the religion of Jesus with the aid of western Christian sovereigns and the blessing of the Pope as recounted in the *Holy Wars* (ultimately a reference to the crusading campaign of 1443) and the similar story (in the same source) of the Emperor requesting the aid of the ruler of Karaman, so that he (the Emperor) could drive the 'son of Osman' to Jerusalem and the Ka'ba (in reference to events in the summer of 1444) are nothing else but a contemporary Ottoman rendition of the legend of the Last Roman Emperor, which was so popular in Byzantine apocalyptic lore,⁶¹ but also had its presence in classical Islamic apocalyptic.⁶² Traces of the same motif, emphatically coupled with the trope of the Blond Peoples, are to be found in the invented speech of Pope Alexander VI who urges all Christian powers to join forces during the Ottoman–Venetian war of 1499–1503, as rendered by Firdevsi-i Rumi in his *Kutb-Name* composed in 1503:

I have read the Gospels through and through;
Depend on it, for I am the Pope of Rome (*rim-pap*)
It is time for the worshippers of icons (i.e. the Orthodox) to move,
That the Blond Peoples (*Benī Asfer*) should attack the Turk.
Let them go to Constantinople
To aid the friends of the icon-worshippers.
Then let the Christians proceed to Adana
And take possession of Damascus and Jerusalem.
It is time for the Messiah to descend from heaven;
Know that all I say is the truth.⁶³

Similarly, the Latin Christians (and more specifically the Hungarians, presented as the Ottomans' most formidable Latin Christian foe) are repeatedly identified with the Blond Peoples in Tursun Beg's *History of the Conqueror*.⁶⁴

The Ottoman transition from conquest movement to a centralized bureaucratic empire in the light of crusading politics in the fifteenth century

The second half of the fifteenth century (and especially the second reign of Mehmed II (1451–81) is widely seen in Ottomanist scholarship as the definitive beginning of ‘empire building’ in the history of the Ottoman enterprise. The conceptual underpinnings of this transition from ‘frontier principality’ to a ‘centralized bureaucratic empire’ have been eloquently analyzed by Ira Lapidus.⁶⁵ Lapidus defined the early Ottoman polity as a conquest movement led by a warrior tribal chieftaincy; Osman and his early descendants were successful frontier warriors who won the support of frontier freebooters.⁶⁶ They enjoyed essential legitimizing support and co-operation on the part of wandering frontier Muslim holy men who preached *gazā* and whose antinomian, latitudinarian and non-conformist conceptualization of Islam appealed to the ‘undisciplined religiosity’ of Turcoman tribesmen. This conquest movement overwhelmed townsmen and peasants in the frontier zone between Islamdom and Christendom, and set up rudimentary mechanisms of taxation and territorial government.⁶⁷ Among the major features of the transition from a warrior chieftaincy-led conquest movement to a centralized imperial state regime were a change in the nature of the ruler (from the egalitarian *primus-inter-pares* role of Osman to the divinely supported, cosmopolitan, but detached image of Mehmed II), the growth of bureaucratic institutions supported by an emerging administrative–scribal apparatus, the rise of Islamic ‘orthodoxy’ and the related religio-judicial body of the ulema patronized by the state and integrated into state ideology and structures at the expense of the initially prominent wandering antinomian dervishes, the displacement of conquering mostly (semi-)nomadic *gāzīs* with forces dependent on and loyal to the ruler and state (esp. the Janissary corps), and a related general shift in the ‘wanderers/settlers’ balance in favour of the latter that entailed a strengthening of the cereal economy at the expense of pastoralism.⁶⁸ Cemal Kafadar has echoed these ideas, emphasizing the gradual marginalization of ‘the coalition of centrifugal forces’ represented by Ottoman frontier lords (*uç beyleri*), nomadic *gāzī* warriors, and ‘metadox’ dervishes (all of whom were instrumental in the shaping of the early Ottoman conquest movement) as a major feature of the transition of the Ottoman polity from a frontier principality to a centralized bureaucratic empire.⁶⁹

In this context, it is not difficult to identify and appreciate the importance and impact of the crusading campaigns and crusading politics in the fifteenth century, above all from the 1430s to the early-sixteenth century. The crusading threat furnished the Ottoman enterprise with a sense of purpose that transcended the horizons of the original Ottoman conquest movement and helped the Ottoman dynasty in finding opportunities to construct for itself a world-historical role and an expanded political agenda that would inspire, justify and legitimize the strengthening and consolidation of its authority. Most of the major aspects of the broad transformation discussed above could be seen to bear a direct relationship to the Ottoman political climate of the fifteenth century in which the crusading threat played a major role.

Notes

- 1 This section is largely based on Chapter 11, ‘The Turkic and Mongol Heritage’, in Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)* (Princeton, 1986), 273–92.
- 2 This prompted Marshall Hodgson to call what he termed ‘the later middle period’ in the history of the Islamic world (1258–1503) ‘the period of Mongol prestige’. See Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 2 (Chicago, 1974).
- 3 Şehabeddin Tekindağ, *Berkuk Devrinde Memluk Sultanlığı (XIV. Yüzyıl Mısır Tarihine Dair Araştırmalar)* (Istanbul, 1961), 101–02. While the legitimacy of the ‘puppet caliphs’ in Cairo is questionable, the period also saw other upstart rulers on the periphery of the Islamic world seeking and receiving from Cairo a similar patent of investiture, for example, the Sultans of Delhi Muhammad b. Tughluq and Firuz Shah did so in 1344 and 1353, respectively. See Michael Cook, gen. ed., *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, 6 vols (Cambridge, 2010), 3:118–19.
- 4 Ottoman historians in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries constructed different genealogies for the founder of the Ottoman dynasty, typically attributing to Osman descent from Oğuz – the mythical founder of the Oğuz tribal confederation in Central Asia, and a distinguished son and grandson of Oğuz. What came to be the most successful such genealogy traced Osman’s descent via Oğuz’s eldest son Günhan and Günhan’s eldest son Kayı, thus claiming for the Ottoman house a pre-eminent Oğuz lineage. For a classic example, see Mehmed Neşri, *Cihannüma [Osmanlı Tarihi (1288–1485)]*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (Istanbul, 2008), 6–12. For criticism of the tradition, see Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1938), 6–15.
- 5 The reference here is to the alleged transfer of authority and regalia from the Seljuk sultan of Anatolia to Osman, Mehmed Neşri, *Cihannüma*, 50–52. See also Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 287–8.
- 6 The first major Ottoman author who emphasized the significance of justice and efficiency of government as fundamental for the legitimacy of the Ottoman dynasty and state was Tursun Beğ, a prominent bureaucrat and historian in the second half of the fifteenth century who served as finance minister to Mehmed II; in parallel with this argument Tursun Beğ minimized the legitimizing importance of distinguished dynastic lineage and also attempted to separate efficiency of government from the primacy of Islam, pointing to the rule of Chinggis Han as a legitimate, albeit not preferable alternative, Tursun Beğ, *Tarih-i Ebü'l-Feth*, ed. Mertol Tulum (Istanbul, 1977), 10–30. Similar considerations on the legitimizing role of just and efficient government were later advanced by other prominent Ottoman historians and political thinkers, for example Mustafa Ali in the late sixteenth century and Koçi Bey in the 1630s. On Mustafa Ali, including a commentary on Tursun Beğ, see Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 291–2, for Koçi Bey’s argument, see Koçi Bey, *Koçi Bey Risalesi*, ed. Yılmaz Kurt (Ankara, 1994), 60–62 and *passim*.
- 7 According to classical Islamic political theory, the world is divided into *dār al-Islām* (the Abode of Islam) – areas under the control of Islamic states, governed by Islamic principles, and *dār al-ḥarb* (the Abode of War) – areas outside the Abode of Islam where waging ‘holy war’ was legitimate and which would ideally be ultimately incorporated into the Abode of Islam. While contemporary written evidence on the nature of Ottoman *gazā* and its usage as a dominant ideological injunction is fairly limited, epigraphic evidence, such as the inscriptions of the Bursa mosque inscription of 1337, Ahmedi’s *Iskendernâme* from the early fifteenth century and numerous oral traditions circulating in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Anatolia and the early Ottoman Balkans (and only later put to paper) point in this direction; early Ottoman chronicles of the late-fifteenth century enshrined *gazā* as the major ideological motive for early Ottoman expansion in what became the mainstream Ottoman historiographical tradition. For an

- up-to-date discussion of the so-called ‘gazā thesis’, see Heath Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany, NY, 2003), 1–54; for an analysis of related sources, especially ‘gāzī lore’, see Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley, 1995), 60–117, hereafter cited as Kafadar.
- 8 Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 276.
 - 9 Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi’ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago, 1984), 78.
 - 10 Colin Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443–1445* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2006), 7–12.
 - 11 While the crusade of Nicopolis (1396) could potentially have had a similar impact on the development of the Ottomans’ self-image and their actual confrontation with Byzantium and the Latin West, it was quickly followed by the battle of Ankara (1402) and the Ottoman civil war (1402–13), which gave Byzantium an effective reprieve for several decades.
 - 12 On the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and its impact on developing Ottoman self-perceptions and ideology, see Feridun Emecen, *İstanbul’un Fethi Olayı ve Meseleleri* (Istanbul, 2003), esp. 51–65; Stéphane Yerasimos, *Légendes d’empire: La Fondation de Constantinople et de Sainte-Sophie dans les traditions turques* (Istanbul and Paris, 1990), hereafter cited as Yerasimos; and Kaya Şahin, ‘Constantinople and the End of Time: The Ottoman Conquest as a Portent of the Last Hour’, *Journal of Early Modern History* 14 (2010), 317–54.
 - 13 For discussion of crusading politics in Europe during the period in question, see Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580: From Lyons to Alcazar* (Oxford, 1992), 80–117 and idem, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505* (Oxford, 2012).
 - 14 On early Ottoman historiography, see V.L. Ménage, ‘The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography’, in *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt (London, 1962), 168–79, and Halil İnalçık, ‘The Rise of Ottoman Historiography’, in *ibid.*, 152–67. On Ottoman historiography in the sixteenth century, see Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 235–52.
 - 15 Contemporary Ottoman historiography and the religio-legal establishment (the ulema) also came to sanction the emerging primacy of the Sultan and the centralizing state as the unquestioned leader of *gazā* from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards; see Colin Imber, ‘Ideals and Legitimation in Early Ottoman History’, in *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*, ed. Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (London, 1995), 138–53.
 - 16 Cornell Fleischer, ‘Imperialism and the Apocalypse’, unpublished paper; Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-century Ottoman World* (Cambridge, 2013), 74–87; see also Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York, 2012).
 - 17 Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 287.
 - 18 *Gazavat-ı Sultān Murād b. Mehmed Hān: İzladi ve Varna Savaşları (1443–1444) Üzerinde Anonim Gazavatname*, ed. Halil İnalçık and Mevlud Oğuz (Ankara, 1978), hereafter cited as *Gazavat*; English translation by Colin Imber, ‘The Holy Wars of Sultan Murad Son of Mehmed Khan’, in Imber, *The Crusade of Varna*, 41–106, hereafter cited as *Holy Wars*.
 - 19 See Imber’s comments in his introduction to the *Holy Wars*, 37. The source may be dated more specifically in the later years of Mehmed II’s second reign in relation to its affirmative attitude towards more assertive policies of state centralization which most probably reflected current realities at the time the piece was composed.
 - 20 *Gazavat*, 2–3; *Holy Wars*, 42–3. For a brief discussion of the Union of Ferrara–Florence, see Hubert Jedin and John Dolan, eds, *Handbook of Church History*, 4 vols (London and New York, 1965–), 4:479–84.

- 21 *Gazavat*, 3; *Holy Wars*, 43.
- 22 *Gazavat*, 4; *Holy Wars*, 44.
- 23 *Gazavat*, 5; *Holy Wars*, 45.
- 24 *Gazavat*, 7–8; *Holy Wars*, 47–8.
- 25 *Gazavat*, 32; *Holy Wars*, 70. This is a reference to the peace negotiations between the Ottomans and envoys of the king of Hungary, the despot of Serbia, and John Hunyadi that resulted in the Peace of Edirne of June 12, 1444; the actual letter by the Hungarian king to Murad II was dated April 24, 1444; for a critical analysis, see Halil İnalçık, *Fatih Devri Üzerine Tetkikler ve Vesikalar I* (Ankara, 1954), 17–28.
- 26 *Gazavat*, 34; *Holy Wars*, 71–2.
- 27 By that time Murad II must have abdicated, believing he had secured peace with both the ruler of Karaman and the Christian powers. It is generally accepted that Murad II abdicated in favour of his son Mehmed II in early August 1444 and returned to the throne in September 1446, see İnalçık, *Fatih Devri*, 36. The *Holy Wars* however, continuously refers to Murad II as emperor (*padişah*) and to Mehmed II as prince (*şahzāde*), with some exceptions at the victorious end of the story (i.e. in November 1444) where both are jubilantly referred to as *padişah*.
- 28 *Gazavat*, 50–51; *Holy Wars*, 86.
- 29 The use of the title *padişah* (emperor) and its variations (*pādişāh-ı ‘alem* – emperor of the world; *pādişāh-ı ‘alem-penāh* – emperor, refuge of the world, and *padişah-ı dīn-i İslām* – emperor of the religion of Islam) in the *Holy Wars* is often confusing, especially for the period from c. August, 1444 (when Murad II abdicated in favour of Mehmed II) to November 1444 (where the account ends). The text explicitly mentions Murad II’s abdication (*Gazavat*, 36–7, *Holy Wars*, 74), but continues to use for him *pādişāh* and its variations throughout, while Mehmed II continues to be referred to as *şahzāde* (prince) even after his enthronement, and only at the triumphant end of the story is the title *pādişāh* used for him unequivocally as well. As for the variation *pādişāh-ı dīn-i İslām* (emperor of the religion of Islam) in particular, it is employed twice for Murad II (during and immediately following the main battle at Varna), *Gazavat*, 62, 68, *Holy Wars*, 97, 102, and once for Mehmed II, after the battle, in a sentence in which his father is referred to as ‘the emperor, refuge of the world’, *Gazavat*, 69–70; *Holy Wars*, 104; see also footnote 27.
- 30 While the terms *gazā* and *jihad* in the sense of ‘holy war’ have been used interchangeably in Ottomanist literature, many classical Islamic jurists made a difference between *jihad*’s ‘offensive’ and ‘defensive’ aspects (in the sense of military activity), whereby offensive *jihad* was a communal obligation (*fard kifaya*) and defensive *jihad* an individual one (*fard ‘ayn*) which carried a greater legal and moral weight. *Gazā*, in turn, originally had the meaning of predatory, irregular incursion into foreign territory, while from the eleventh century onwards, especially in the Turkic Islamic world, it came to acquire a religious significance. Some medieval jurists specifically equated *gazā* with offensive warfare and *jihad* with defensive warfare. A fourteenth-century Anatolian codebook shares this distinction between offensive warfare as a (lesser) communal obligation and defensive warfare as a (greater) individual duty that necessitated a general levy (*nefir-i ām*). See Şinasi Tekin, ‘XIV. Yüzyılda Yazılmış Gazilik Tarikası “Gaziliğin Yolları” Adlı Bir Eski Anadolu Türkçesi Metni ve Gaza/Cihad Kavramları Hakkında’, *Journal of Turkish Studies* 13 (1989), 139–45, 156–7, and Kafadar, 79–80.
- 31 Firdevsi-i Rumi, *Kutb-Name*, ed. İbrahim Olgun and İsmet Parmaksızoğlu (Ankara, 1980), 52–83.
- 32 Anonymous, ‘Vāki‘āt-ı Sultān Cem’, Ottoman text and French translation in *Sultan Djem: un prince Ottoman dans l’Europe du XV^e siècle d’après deux sources contemporaines: Vāki‘āt-ı Sultān Cem, Oeuvres de Guillaume Caoursin*, ed. and trans. Nicolas Vatin (Ankara, 1997), 198–203.
- 33 Aşıkpaşazade, *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi (Osmanlı Tarihi, 1285–1502)*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul, 2013), 324.

- 34 *Gazavat*, 7–8, 27; *Holy Wars*, 47–8, 66.
- 35 *Anonim Tevarih-i Al-i Osman (F. Giese Neşri)*, ed. Nihat Azamat (Istanbul, 1992), 72–4.
- 36 Tursun Beğ, *Tarih-i Ebü'l-Feth*, 129–32, in this case the list of Christian enemies is not extensive, but an ‘alliance of malevolent infidels’ (*ittifāk-ı küffār-ı bedkirdār*) is explicitly mentioned, with the Hungarians advancing toward Bosnia on land, and the Venetians, presented as the ‘accursed Franks’ (*Fireng-i lain*) attacking the Morea by sea.
- 37 Firdevsi-i Rumi, *Kutb-Name*, 54–7, 77–83, 275–80.
- 38 Employed by Neşri for Mehmed II in the context of his campaign against Vlad III Dracula in 1462, but also, exceptionally, for Bayezid I and Mehmed II; Neşri, *Cihannüma*, 334, 143–7, 170.
- 39 Used by Oruç Beğ in the early-sixteenth century for Mehmed II in relation to the conquest of Constantinople and for Bayezid II in the context of the conquest of Modon and Koron (1500); Oruç Beğ, *Oruç Beğ Tarihi: Osmanlı Tarihi (1288–1502)*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (Istanbul, 2014), 99, 171, 173; also in the anonymous *History of the House of Osman*, for Mehmed II in relation to the conquest of Constantinople, *Anonim Tevarih-i Al-i Osman (F. Giese Neşri)*, 114.
- 40 The document is a slave manumission deed (*āzād-nāme*) dated the last ten days of Şa’ban, 848 A.H (mid-December 1444 A.D.), Topkapı Palace Archive, E. 5566, published by İnalık in *Fatih Devri*, 215–17, facsimile on plate No. 6.
- 41 The letter (*nāme-yi hümayün*), composed in Arabic by Molla Gürani, is found in Feridun Bey’s famous sixteenth-century collection of bureaucratic correspondence; Feridun Bey, *Mecmua-yı Münşeātü’s-Selatin*, 2 vols (Istanbul, 1848–58), 1:236; modern Turkish translation available in Ahmed Ateş, ‘İstanbul’un Fethine Dair Fatih Sultan Mehmed Tarafından Gönderilen Mektublar ve Bunlarla Gelen Cevablar’, *Tarih Dergisi* 7 (1952), 16.
- 42 Aşıkpaşazade, *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, ed. Friedrich Giese (Leipzig, 1928), 221–2.
- 43 Tursun Beğ, *Tarih-i Ebü'l-Feth*, 145–6, 181.
- 44 Fleischer, ‘Imperialism and the Apocalypse’, 2.
- 45 On Bistami’s life, see Cornell Fleischer, ‘Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences: Prophecies at the Ottoman Court in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries’, in *Falnama: The Book of Omens*, ed. Massumeh Farhad (London, 2009), 232–43, and Denis Gril, ‘Esotérisme contre hérésie: ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Bistami, un représentant de la science des lettres à Bursa dans la première moitié du XVe siècle’, in *Syncrétismes et hérésies dans l’Orient seldjoukide et ottoman (XIVe-XVIIIe siècle)*, *Actes du Colloque du Collège de France, octobre, 2001*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris, 2005), 183–95.
- 46 Fleischer, ‘Ancient Wisdom’, 238.
- 47 On Ahmed Bican and the *Dürr-i Meknun*, see Laban Kaptein, *Apocalypse and the Antichrist in Islam: Ahmed Bijan’s Eschatology Revisited* (Asch, the Netherlands, 2007), 11–38 and the introduction and commentary on the author and his work in Laban Kaptein’s critical edition of the *Dürr-i Meknun*, *Ahmed Bican Yazıoğlu, Dürr-i Meknun: Kritische Edition mit Kommentar* (Asch, the Netherlands, 2007), 12–65, hereafter cited as DM/Kaptein; also Şahin, ‘Constantinople’, and Yerasimos, 193–6.
- 48 Ahmed Bican positioned the 7,000 years of human history as the last of ten 7,000-year long cycles that constituted the lifespan of the world, see Fleischer, ‘Imperialism and the Apocalypse’, 18 and DM/Kaptein 396, Şahin, ‘Constantinople’, 542–3.
- 49 On prophetic tradition regarding the Muslim conquest of Constantinople, see Necdet Yılmaz, *Değeri ve Tesiri Açısından Fetih Hadisi* (Istanbul, 2002), hereafter cited as Yılmaz; see also Yerasimos, 187–99, and Şahin, ‘Constantinople’, 319, 324–8 and the literature cited therein; on the fall of Constantinople according to Bistami, see Fleischer, ‘Imperialism and the Apocalypse’, 18–19, on the corresponding views of Bican in *Dürr-i Meknun*, see DM/Kaptein 561–65, Şahin, ‘Constantinople’, 343–5.

- 50 Paul Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1985), 161–2; Yerasimos, 190.
- 51 The motif of the Blond Peoples is most notably found in the Hadith collection *al-Musnad* compiled by the famous medieval jurist Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), see Yerasimos, 190–91, Şahin, ‘Constantinople’, 324–5.
- 52 Şahin, ‘Constantinople’, 341–5.
- 53 DM/Kaptein, 553–61; Şahin, ‘Constantinople’, 347–8.
- 54 Şahin, ‘Constantinople’, 348–50.
- 55 David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (Princeton, 2002), 64–6, 167, hereafter cited as Cook.
- 56 Selahattin Tansel, *Osmanlı Kaynaklarına Göre Fatih Sultan Mehmed’in Siyasi ve Askeri Faaliyeti* (Ankara, 1953), 217–22.
- 57 Necdet Yılmaz, *Değeri ve Tesiri Açısından Fetih Hadisi* (Istanbul, 2002), 70.
- 58 This becomes clear from a letter written by Akşemseddin to Mehmed II, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, E. 5584; published in İnalçık, *Fatih Devri*, 217–19, facsimile on plate No. 7; see also Şahin, ‘Constantinople’, 326.
- 59 Feridun Bey, *Mecmua-yı Münşeati’s-Selatin*, 1:241; modern Turkish translation available in Ateş, ‘İstanbul’un Fethine Dair’, 28.
- 60 Istanbul, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Ali Emiri, II. Mehmed 63, cited also in Fleischer, ‘Ancient Wisdom’, 233 and Şahin, ‘Constantinople’, 326.
- 61 Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 151–84.
- 62 Cook, 71, 76, 78–80, 168.
- 63 Firdevsi-i Rumi, *Kutb-Name*, 56; I am using Cornell Fleischer’s English translation of this passage as rendered in his ‘Imperialism and the Apocalypse’, 5.
- 64 Tursun Beğ, *Tarih-i Ebü’l-Feth*, 33, 111, 122, 129, 205.
- 65 Ira Lapidus, ‘Tribes and State Formation in the Islamic History’, in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, ed. Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (Berkeley, 1990), 25–47, hereafter cited as Lapidus.
- 66 Lapidus, 33.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 This list of aspects of transition has been inspired by the work of Lapidus and Kafadar, but is essentially my rendering, for Lapidus’s specific views, see Lapidus, 34–8, for Kafadar’s see the footnote immediately following.
- 69 Kafadar, 138–50; Kafadar defines ‘metadoxy’ as ‘a state of being beyond doxies, a combination of being doxy-naive and not doxy-minded, as well as the absence of a state that was rigorously defining and strictly enforcing an orthodoxy’, *ibid.*, 76.

3 Byzantine refugees as crusade propagandists

The travels of Nicholas Agallon¹

Jonathan Harris

In September 1453, some four months after the fall of Constantinople to Sultan Mehmed II, Pope Nicholas V (1447–55) issued a crusading bull, *Etsi Ecclesia Christi*, with a view to galvanizing Christian Europe to respond to the threat that the Ottomans now clearly posed.² His successors took more direct measures. Calixtus III (1455–58) not only confirmed Nicholas's bull but ordered the construction of a fleet in the Tiber, converting papal treasures into coin to pay for it.³ Pius II (1458–64) devoted much of his pontificate to organizing the expedition to recover Constantinople and himself took the cross as a crusader.⁴ It is hardly surprising that this call to arms was strongly supported by many Byzantine Greeks who had left their homeland both before and after the catastrophe and who were now living in the West. The obvious example is Cardinal Bessarion (1402–72), originally the Byzantine metropolitan of Nicaea, who gave speeches and undertook various legatine missions to promote the crusade.⁵ Another is Thomas Palaiologos (1409–65), youngest brother of the last Byzantine Emperor, Constantine XI (1449–53). He arrived in Rome as a refugee in 1461, having been ejected by Mehmed II from the last Byzantine territories in Greece. The following year he toured Italy to drum up support for the proposed expedition.⁶ There were plenty of other less prominent individuals involved in one way or another as well. Up to the end of the century and beyond, they addressed impassioned speeches to princes and prelates, urging them to take up arms against the Ottomans.⁷

When it comes to the involvement of these Greek émigrés in crusade propaganda there is one theme that recurs over and over again. Coming as they did from the very areas engulfed by Ottoman expansion, they could be seen as symbolizing the plight of the thousands left behind. In his instructions to crusade preachers in 1463, Bessarion urged them to remind their audience 'how many thousands of Christians are in captivity and most shameful slavery, and how they are to be pitied'.⁸ Pope Pius II described Thomas Palaiologos in similar terms in his encyclical to all Christians:

Compassion at least for such a grand prince ought to move you, a prince who ... has been robbed of his empire, of his every kingdom ... a man who is now an immigrant, naked, robbed of everything except his lineage ...⁹

These oppressed Christians needed to be rescued and liberated. Michael Apostolis, a protégé of Bessarion, urged the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III (1440–93) to ‘restore our people – which is scattered everywhere on earth – to our country’.¹⁰

On one level, there is every indication that such appeals to conscience were taken very seriously for there are numerous examples of Byzantine refugees from the fall of Constantinople being received kindly and given gifts of money, like the three ‘counts’ who received 22 *sous* from the town council of Compiègne.¹¹ It would appear too that the presence of refugees in a particular area often coincided with efforts to preach the crusade there or to raise money for the cause. There seem to have been several in England in the first few months of 1455 when the Jubilee indulgence was being sold to raise funds for the defence of Rhodes. Doubtless their presence was encouraged by the ecclesiastical authorities as a way of bringing home the immediacy of the Ottoman threat.¹²

Hand in hand with the sympathy that the refugees evoked, however, there sometimes went another perception, that the Byzantines had to some extent brought their fate upon themselves. Western eyewitness accounts of the fall of Constantinople were often scathing about the Constantinopolitans’ lack of involvement in the defence. Nicolò Barbaro, a Venetian ship’s surgeon, roundly proclaimed that it was the Venetians alone who kept the Turks at bay for so long while the Greeks scarcely lifted a finger.¹³ Leonard of Chios, bishop of Mytilene, accused the wealthy Byzantines of refusing to use their money to help pay for the defence, pleading poverty while stashing their treasures away.¹⁴ Moreover, regardless of whether the Greeks were seen as unfortunate victims or rank cowards, they were seldom perceived as likely to play an active part in the proposed crusade. Indeed once the Venetians became involved in the crusading plans of Pius II during the 1460s, they were insistent that Thomas Palaiologos should play no part in the expedition. They instructed their ambassador to the Holy See to advise the Pope that the Byzantine prince’s presence was likely to lead to disagreements and that he should therefore be left behind.¹⁵ In any case, crusading strategists had long since come to the conclusion that Greeks were much too unwarlike to be of any use on a crusade.¹⁶

That is not the whole picture. There were Greeks whose involvement in the crusade propaganda of the 1450s and 1460s went beyond that of the symbolic passive victim. Some were active in pressing for Christian unity against the Ottomans. Frankoulios Servopoulos, the former chancellor of Constantine XI, was sent to England by Pius II in 1459 where he urged King Henry VI (1422–61, 1470–71) and his court to bring about peace among Christians so that they could unite against the infidel.¹⁷ There were even some cases where the involvement of Greeks extended to possible participation in the crusade and it is one such instance that is the main focus here.

The starting point is a letter written by the Milanese humanist Francesco Filelfo (1389–1481) to the chancellor of France, Guillaume Jouvenel des Ursins (1401–72). The letter is dated 29 May 1454, exactly one year after the fall of Constantinople, and concerns two refugees from the sack of the city, Manuel ‘Agallus’ and Manuel ‘Hiagupes’. Filelfo recommended the pair to the

chancellor's charity and to that of the king of France, Charles VII (1422–61).¹⁸ It is the first Manuel who is of most interest here. His surname, which would have been that of Agallon in Greek, was apparently an influential one in late Byzantine Constantinople. It appears on an inscription on the Land Walls, suggesting that a member of the family had been wealthy enough to pay for the repair of that section.¹⁹ A Nicholas Voullotes Agallon had held the judicial office of *Katholikos Krites* during the 1440s.²⁰ The second Manuel mentioned in the letter was clearly a member of the Iagoup family which had been prominent at the Byzantine court in the last decades before the fall of Constantinople: Alexios Iagoup had been a personal friend of Manuel II Palaiologos (1391–1425).²¹ Thus the two Manuels would have moved in similar circles and it is not surprising to find them travelling together as refugees. Filelfo also provided them with a letter of recommendation addressed to his son Giovanni Mario who at that time was residing at Turin which would have been one of the first stages on the journey to the French court.²²

It appears only to have been Agallon who carried Filelfo's letter with him all the way to France for Iagoup disappears from the record at this point. Agallon's progress north can be followed as he was probably the 'Manuel Egal' of Constantinople who received a gift of money from the duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good (1419–67) at Nevers in the summer of 1454.²³ Later that same summer, Agallon reached the court of the king of France. His name appears in a set of transcribed fifteenth-century treasury accounts in the Bibliothèque Nationale. The entry describes a gift of 68 *livres* and 15 *sous* 'en aumosne' to 'Mes[sire] Manoli Agalo chevalier du pays de Grece'. Significantly Agallon was not alone. The next entry records a gift of 15 *livres* to 'Nicolaus Agalo du pays de Grece'.²⁴ A great deal can be inferred from these terse entries. Manuel is clearly of higher status than Nicholas: he is listed first, described as 'Messire' and given more money. One therefore assumes that he was older, perhaps Nicholas's father. There is another difference between these two members of the same family. While Manuel had been touring Europe gathering alms, probably to pay the ransoms of members of his family still in Constantinople, Nicholas had been following a very different path.

Information about Nicholas Agallon's movements comes from the register of the French Great Council.²⁵ The entry for 27 April 1455 begins with the words: 'Here follows what was said by Sir Nicolas Agalo, knight and count, former adviser of the Emperor of Constantinople. In the first place, that he has come to persuade the Christian princes to move against the Turk.'²⁶ The register then traces the journey that Agallon had made to promote this message. He had gone first to Venice where the Senate had made no promises but had provided him with letters addressed to the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick III. This was a fairly typical Venetian response to this kind of request. Venice was just about to sign a commercial treaty with the victorious Ottoman Sultan. Its rulers did not want to jeopardize that by involving themselves in a crusade unless it had a realistic chance of success. As Pope Pius II later noted, their greatest fear was being left to face the wrath of the Sultan alone.²⁷ So Agallon headed north with his letters and in April 1454 he found Frederick at Wiener Neustadt in Lower Austria.

According to the register, Frederick gave him a cordial reception. Agallon had, after all, arrived at a good moment. The diet of Regensburg was about to convene at Frederick's invitation to discuss the response of the princes of the Holy Roman Empire to the fall of Constantinople.²⁸

It is what happened during Agallon's stay at the Imperial court that marks him out from the other Greek émigrés involved in crusade propaganda. With Agallon it was not just a matter of words but of participation. According to the French register, Frederick made Agallon a count and a member of his council. He also announced that when the crusade was launched, Agallon would lead a contingent of 500 men.²⁹ Agallon's appointment as a count is confirmed from Frederick's own register under the date 10 April 1454 although it makes no allusion to the 500 men.³⁰ During the stay at Wiener Neustadt, Emperor Frederick suggested that his Greek visitor ought to carry his message further, to the kings of France and England.³¹ Agallon agreed to do this and asked to be provided with letters but Frederick advised him that letters would not be necessary and that he should approach those rulers in exactly the same way as he had the Emperor. Frederick did, however, provide Agallon with a safe conduct on 30 April 1454³² and that would certainly tally with him being at Milan in company with Manuel Agallon and Manuel Iagoup at the end of May, even though he is not mentioned in Filelfo's letter.

From there he presumably travelled with Manuel Agallon to France via Turin and Nevers, receiving his gift of 15 *livres* from the king of France in the summer of 1454. He caught up with Charles VII of France at the chateau of Brueil-Doré, now Bridoré, in the Loire valley in late August. Unlike Duke Philip of Burgundy, Charles had never shown any interest in joining a crusade which is understandable given that he had spent his entire reign struggling to keep his kingdom out of the hands of the English. He even went so far as to reduce the ten per cent levy on their incomes that the clergy of Normandy were supposed to pay to support the forthcoming expedition.³³ Agallon was given an audience but it was a rather brief one. The French king listened to his message, then suggested that he move on to Rouen where Cardinal Guillaume d'Estouteville (c.1412–83) was to be found and promised to reply fully to Agallon's proposals on his return.³⁴ The suggestion was a sensible one. D'Estouteville had been sent as a legate to France by Pope Nicholas V to negotiate a peace between the kings of France and England and thus open the way for their participation in the crusade.³⁵ Moreover, he turned out to be the means by which Agallon moved on to the next stage of his journey. When the Greek reached Rouen, the cardinal showed him a Papal letter announcing the appointment of Bartolomeo Roverella (1406–76), archbishop of Ravenna, as nuncio to England. D'Estouteville suggested that Agallon should make his visit to England coincide with that of the archbishop, but the Byzantine said that he did not dare cross the Channel without the permission of the French king. The cardinal had to enlist the help of Jean of Orléans, count of Dunois and a close adviser of Charles VII, and together the two men were able to persuade Agallon that taking advantage of this opportunity would be the best way to advance his cause.³⁶

Agallon arrived in England on about 28 September 1454 and he seems to have been received hospitably enough, even though he was waiting around for many

weeks before the archbishop of Ravenna finally arrived on 20 December.³⁷ He was probably the 'Nicolas Greke' who was awarded a gift of 50 marks from the English treasury on 4 December, not as alms but 'by way of reward'.³⁸ Moreover, from one perspective, Agallon had arrived at a good moment. The archbishop of Ravenna had brought with him the Jubilee indulgence which the royal council of England had requested from the Pope the previous July. Such indulgences, the most recent of which had been proclaimed in 1449, had originally only been available to those who visited and confessed in certain churches in Rome itself but now it was extended to the people of England and Ireland so that the benefits could be received without the necessity of a long and expensive journey. The proceeds of its sale were to be passed to the Knights of St John and used for the defence of the Christian faith. The Jubilee indulgence was announced at St Paul's Cross on 20 January 1455 while Agallon was still in England and it must have given wide publicity to the very cause that he was promoting.³⁹

In other respects, though, Agallon had not chosen a good moment. The king of England, Henry VI, had become mentally ill in August the previous year, following the arrival of news that the English had been routed by the French at Castillon, a defeat which left Henry holding only Calais. During the king's indisposition, the kingdom was governed by a royal council headed by Richard, duke of York. The council was a fragile one as many of its members deeply distrusted York who had had his main rival, the duke of Somerset, imprisoned in the Tower of London on a charge of treason.⁴⁰ It was this council which presumably authorized Agallon's gift of 50 marks and it was to its members that Agallon made his initial pitch, assuring the duke of York, the duke of Buckingham, the earl of Salisbury and the rest of the council that he was there to advise on how to bring about the destruction of the Turks.⁴¹ Then, during December 1454, the political landscape shifted when Henry VI recovered from his illness after Christmas and moved to put an end to the dominance of Richard of York. The duke of Somerset was released from the Tower in January 1455 and the Yorkist members of the council were replaced with Lancastrians, the office of Lord Chancellor going to the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Bourchier. The open breach between the two groups was to lead to the outbreak of civil war in May.⁴² It was from this reconstituted council that Agallon received his answer from the rulers of England. Unsurprisingly, while the king and his counsellors professed themselves to be most willing to join the anti-Turkish enterprise, they claimed that they felt the need to keep their army at home to avenge themselves on the French who had ousted them from their rightful inheritance.⁴³ There was nothing for it but to return to France to make his report to Charles VII which Agallon did on 28 April 1455. He was told that the French council would need to consider his report and that he would be given his final answer on 7 May.

Agallon received the decision at Mehun-sur-Yèvre. The king was not present but the count of Dunois was, along with Jehan Bureau, Charles VII's master of artillery and architect of the victory over the English at Castillon in 1453. Also present was Thomas le Franc, Charles VII's personal physician. Thomas was a Greek from Venetian-ruled Coron, so he may have been there as an interpreter

to ensure that there were no misunderstandings.⁴⁴ There may have been another reason for his presence, however. Around the same time as Agallon's first arrival in France, Thomas's nephew, François le Franc, had been given 68 *livres* and 15 *sous* from the French treasury to participate in the anti-Ottoman crusade.⁴⁵ He may have been connected in some way with Agallon's mission and it is likely that he was involved with crusade propaganda too: he may have been the 'Francisco de Franc' who transmitted an eyewitness account of the fall of Constantinople to the cardinal of Avignon, Alain Coëtivy (1407–74) in 1454.⁴⁶ Thus Thomas might well have had a personal interest in the proposed crusade and his presence may suggest that the conclusion of the meeting was not as foregone as might at first sight be supposed.

In the end, of course, the verdict of the council was negative and ironically it was delivered by the man who had been contacted by Francesco Filelfo to help the Agallon family in the first place, the chancellor of France, Guillaume des Ursins. In view of the persistence of the English in their plans to invade the kingdom of France, he said, the king had no choice but to give priority to the defence of his own people.⁴⁷ This was, of course, a very familiar refrain. The French delegation to the congress of Mantua was to repeat it four years later.⁴⁸ Des Ursins was careful to sugar the pill at the end, asserting that the Byzantine deserved great praise, that every good Christian should be grateful to him and that he had done his duty like a good and virtuous knight.⁴⁹ It must nevertheless have been a crushing disappointment after so much travel and effort. Nicholas Agallon thereafter disappears from the record and nothing is known of his subsequent fate.

The whole episode could be seen as just yet another example both of fifteenth-century crusading that never got off the ground and of a pro-western Byzantine who hopelessly overestimated the unity and power of Christian Europe, even if he toured Europe as a potential combatant rather than as a refugee. There is, however, one aspect of the case that could cast new light on the role of émigré Byzantines like Agallon as crusade propagandists. When Frederick made Agallon a count in April 1454, the entry in the register recording the grant lists some of the places which would constitute the county to be held by the beneficiary and his descendants. These were listed as 'Novo-Patre', 'Salona', 'Liborice' and 'Fedrinice', all of which were 'close to the Morea'.⁵⁰ These names all refer to the area now known as *Sterea Elladha* or Central Greece which lies across the Gulf of Corinth from the Morea or Peloponnese. Novo-Patre is Neopatras, modern Ypati, Liborice is the mountain village of Lidoriki, Fedrinice is Vitrinitsa and Salona is now Amfissa. In 1318, all these places had been occupied by the Catalan Company under its captain general Alfonso Fadrique and formed part of the county of Salona within the duchy of Athens.⁵¹ The whole area had come under Ottoman rule in the late-fourteenth century.⁵² Presumably Agallon would be installed as the new count of Salona once the crusade had been launched and the war had been won.

That raises the question of why Frederick III should have promised Agallon that particular area as opposed to anywhere else. The most likely reason is that Agallon had some connection with the county of Salona and he had therefore requested it. That would almost certainly seem to be what happened in another,

similar case. In June 1463, Pope Pius II addressed a letter to Alexander Asanes, promising him the island of Imbros at the mouth of the Dardanelles for himself and his heirs, in return for an annual tribute of 100 ducats.⁵³ Like the county of Salona, Imbros was by then firmly under Ottoman rule. In fact, Sultan Mehmed II had recently appointed Thomas Palaiologos's brother Demetrios as its governor.⁵⁴ It would seem then that like Frederick III's grant to Agallon, this was to be Asanes's reward once the crusade had achieved its objective. Not only was Imbros strategically important but Asanes had long-standing connections with the area. A Manuel Laskaris Asanes, who was probably his father, was governing Imbros for the Byzantine Emperor in the 1440s.⁵⁵ Alexander had, moreover, given great assistance to the Papal fleet commanded by Cardinal Ludovico Trevisan when it had briefly reconquered the nearby island of Lemnos in 1457.⁵⁶ Like Agallon, once he had received his grant of land, Asanes was probably involved in the effort to promote the expedition that would turn the promise into reality. Two years after his agreement with Pius II, he was to be found in Naples where he might have been trying to persuade King Ferrante (1458–94) to join in.⁵⁷

When it comes to possible pre-existing links between Agallon and the county of Salona, an initial clue might lie in the fact that his kinsman Nicholas Voullotes Agallon, who held the office of *Katholikos Krites* during the 1440s, did so not in Constantinople but in the Morea.⁵⁸ That meant he would have served under Constantine Palaiologos, the future Constantine XI, who was ruling the area as despot. Nicholas Agallon may also have held office at the court at Mistra, for the register of the French council specifically describes him as 'a former adviser' to Constantine, though that might have dated from when Constantine moved to Constantinople as Emperor.⁵⁹ What is certain is that from his capital at Mistra, Constantine pursued a noticeably more aggressive policy than his brother the Emperor John VIII (1425–48). In 1445, he took advantage of the temporary abdication of Sultan Murad II (1421–51) to lead an army over the Isthmus of Corinth, through Attica and into central Greece where he captured Thebes. Meanwhile, Constantine Kantakouzenos, who governed the town of Vostitza in the Morea on the despot's behalf, ferried a force of cavalry and infantry across the Gulf of Corinth to join him. This campaign brought Byzantine forces into the area of the old county of Salona. The Italian humanist Cyriac of Ancona received news that Lidoriki was one of the places that had been captured and that there had been a sharp engagement with the Turks at Neopatras.⁶⁰ These conquests proved ephemeral. The following year, Murad II returned to power and in November 1446 he led a punitive expedition against the Morea, demolishing the fortifications on the Isthmus and systematically devastating the countryside. Never again did Constantine Palaiologos dare to challenge the Sultan so directly.⁶¹ It may well have been, however, that members of Agallon family had been involved in this action, perhaps Manuel, perhaps Nicholas himself if he had been old enough, and that may have led them to maintain a claim on the area.

Agallon and Alexander Asanes were by no means the only potential eastern participants in fifteenth-century crusades who had links with a particular area which they most likely sought to recover. In the summer 1481, when Thomas Palaiologos's son Andreas moved south through Italy with a view to launching an

attack across the Ionian Sea, he was accompanied by a certain ‘Coycondo Clada’. This was almost certainly the Peloponnesian nobleman Krokodeilos Kladas, who had launched a revolt against the Turks in the Mani peninsula from Venetian-ruled Koroni the previous year. Kladas had held wide lands that extended west from the plain of Elos and it is likely that he aimed at their recovery as well as at restoring Andreas to his father’s despotate of Morea.⁶² Nearly 15 years later, Constantine Arianites hoped to play a part in the crusading plans of the French king, Charles VIII (1483–98), who saw his invasion of Italy in 1494 as the first step in a holy war against the Ottomans. As the French army marched south, Arianites moved to Venice from where he and the bishop of Durazzo planned to stir up a rebellion against the Ottomans on the opposite Adriatic coastline.⁶³ Again there was a reason why Arianites should have been involved with this particular area. Although his family had originated in Constantinople, his father, George Komnenos Arianites, also known as Topia Golemo, had been lord of Cerminizza and Catafigo in the area of the Adriatic port of Ragusa. Constantine Arianites was also well connected with the local nobility through the marriages of his three sisters, one of whom had been the wife of George Kastriotes Skanderbeg (1405–68) who had led the Albanian revolt against the Ottomans from 1443 to 1468.⁶⁴ However, just as Nicholas Agallon’s proposal foundered on the rock of entrenched Anglo-French hostility and England’s descent into civil war, neither of these expeditions was ever launched. This time the sticking point was the attitude of Venice and the republic’s reluctance to end up fighting the Ottomans alone. That of Andreas Palaiologos and Krokodilos Kladas was probably doomed from the start because the Venetian *signoria*, which had recently signed a treaty with the Sultan, deeply disapproved of Kladas and his anti-Ottoman activities. It is difficult to see how Andreas’s small force could have crossed the Adriatic without Venetian assistance. The plans of Constantine Arianites failed to get off the ground when the *signoria* hastened to make peace with the Sultan in January 1495 and distanced itself from the enterprise.⁶⁵

Thus it is quite clear that the role of Greeks in crusade plans and propaganda in the later-fifteenth century went beyond symbolic victimhood, even if, thanks to the political realities of the day, their efforts to take part in anti-Ottoman hostilities came to nothing. That does not mean that these leaders were somehow naïve or deluded. Agallon, if the French register is an accurate record of his words, seems to have made a very shrewd appraisal of the situation that he found in England. Although an outsider visiting the country for the first time, Agallon divined that the council really had no choice but to give the negative answer that they did to his proposal, partly because the English were so divided among themselves and partly because they did not have the financial wherewithal to maintain an army anyway.⁶⁶ He can hardly have been surprised at the final response from the counsellors of Charles VII either. The most important point here though is that by linking their own participation in proposed anti-Ottoman crusades with the recovery of some specific tract of territory, Agallon and others were thus expressing neither naivety nor helplessness but a genuine irredentism.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Jacques Paviot, Oliver Schmitt and Benjamin Weber for their helpful suggestions.
- 2 Caesar Baronius, Odericus Raynaldus and Giacomo Laderchi, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 37 vols (Bar-le-Duc and Paris, 1864–83), 28:599–601; Peter Georgisch, *Regesta Chronologico-Diplomatica in quibus recensentur omnis generis Monumenta et Documenta publica*, 4 vols (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1740–44), 1:1162; Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505* (Oxford, 2012), 18; Setton, *Papacy*, 2:139, 150.
- 3 C. Marinesco, 'Le pape Calixte III (1455–58), Alfonse V d'Aragon et l'offensive contre les Turcs', *Bulletin de la Section Historique de l'Académie Roumaine* 19 (1935), 77–97; P. Paschini, 'La flotta di Callisto III (1455–58)', *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 53–5 (1930–2), 177–254; Setton, *Papacy*, 2:163–8, 185–8.
- 4 Nancy Bisaha, 'Pius II and the Crusade', in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley (Basingstoke and New York, 2004), 39–52; Norman Housley, 'Pope Pius II and Crusading', *Crusades* 11 (2012), 211–49; Setton, *Papacy*, 2:196–270.
- 5 Raoul Manselli, 'Il Cardinale Bessarione contro il pericolo turco e l'Italia', *Miscellanea Franciscana* 73 (1973), 314–26; Margaret Meserve, 'Patronage and Propaganda at the First Paris Press: Guillaume Fichet and the First Edition of Bessarion's *Orations against the Turks*', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 97 (2003), 521–88; Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 167–70.
- 6 Silvia Ronchey, 'Orthodoxy on Sale: the Last Byzantine and the Lost Crusade', in *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, London 21–26 August 2006*, ed. Fiona K. Haarer and Elizabeth Jeffreys, 3 vols (Aldershot, 2006), 1:313–42, at 313–14; Jonathan Harris, *The End of Byzantium* (New Haven and London, 2010), 249–50.
- 7 Deno J. Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice: Studies in the Dissemination of Greek Learning from Byzantium to Western Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 1962), 97–9; J. Whittaker, 'Janus Lascaris at the Court of Charles V', *Thésaurismata* 14 (1977), 76–109; Han Lamers, 'The Imperial Diadem of Greece: Giovanni Gemisto's Strategical Representation of Graecia (1516)', in *Discourses of Power: Ideology and Politics in Neo-Latin Literature*, ed. Karl Emenkel et al. (Hildesheim, 2012), 65–94.
- 8 Ludwig Mohler, 'Bessarions Instruktion für die Kreuzzugspredigt in Venedig (1463)', *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte* 35 (1927), 337–49, at 340: 'Quot millia Christianorum in captivitate sunt et in servitute turpissima quam sit eis compatiendum.' Translation from Norman Housley, ed. and trans., *Documents on the Later Crusades, 1274–1580* (Basingstoke, 1996), 147–54, at 149.
- 9 Spyridon P. Lambros, *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 4 vols (Athens, 1912–30), 4:259–64, at 263–4: 'Moveat vos saltem commiseratio istius principis qui ... regnis omnibus suis, tali patria, tot opidis ac civitatibus spoliatus, profugus natali solio, nudus atque egens ad vos confugit ...' Translation in Ronchey, 'Orthodoxy on Sale', 322.
- 10 Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars*, 98.
- 11 Henri de l'Épinois, 'Notes extraites des Archives Communales de Compiègne', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 5th series 4 (1863), 471–99, at 498.
- 12 Jonathan Harris, 'Publicising the Crusade: English Bishops and the Jubilee Indulgence of 1455', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 50 (1999), 23–37.
- 13 Nicolò Barbaro, *Giornale dell'assedio di Costantinopoli*, ed. E. Cornet (Vienna, 1856), 26: 'che atruovandose alcuni valenti homeni in questa zità de Costantinopoli, de i qual ne iera venitianì zentilhomeni, i qual iera asai più animoxi, che non iera Griexi ...' English translation by John R. Jones, ed. and trans., *Diary of the Siege of Constantinople, 1453* (New York, 1969), 36.

- 14 Leonard of Chios, 'Historia Constantinopolitanae Urbis a Mahumete II Captae', in *PG* 159: 924–44, at 934: 'Sed, o Graecorum impietatem, o patriae proditores, o avaros! Quos cum saepenumero lacrymis profusus inops imperator rogasset ut pro militibus conducendis pecuniam mutuarent, jurabant se inopes exhaustosque penuria temporum ...' Translation in John R. Melville Jones, ed. and trans., *The Siege of Constantinople: Seven Contemporary Accounts* (Amsterdam, 1972), 11–41, at 26.
- 15 AStV, Senato, Secreta reg. 22, fols 16, 20 (originally fols 14, 18); Setton, *Papacy*, 2:268, note 28.
- 16 Felicitas Schmieder, 'Enemy, Obstacle, Ally? The Greek in Western Crusade Proposals (1274–1311)', in *The Man of Many Devices who Wandered Full Many Ways: Festschrift in Honor of János M. Bak*, ed. B. Nagy and M. Sebök (Budapest and New York, 1999), 357–71, at 362.
- 17 *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France during the Reign of Henry VI*, ed. J. Stevenson, *Rolls Series* 22, 2 vols (London, 1861–64), 1:368; Jonathan Harris, *Greek Émigrés in the West, 1400–1520* (Camberley, 1995), 107.
- 18 Francesco Filelfo, *Epistolarum Familiarum Libri XXXVI* (Venice, 1502), 85v: 'viros nobilissimos atque equites auratos Manuelem Agallum et Manuellem Hiagupem qui etiam ipsi Constantinopolitani naufragii miserabilis aerumnas apud impios Turcos patiantur : commendatos facere humanitati tuae ...'
- 19 Alexander van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople: The Walls of the City and Adjoining Historical Sites* (London, 1899), 108; Raymond Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1964), 282.
- 20 Paul Lemerle, 'Le juge général des grecs et la réforme judiciaire d'Andronic III', in *Mémorial Louis Petit* (Bucharest, 1948), 292–316, at 315, reprinted in Paul Lemerle, *Le monde de Byzance: histoire et institutions* (London, 1978), no. X; Sophia Mergiali, *L'enseignement et les lettrés pendant l'époque des Paléologues (1261–1453)* (Athens, 1996), 204–06; Erich Trapp et al., *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, 14 vols (Vienna, 1976–96), 1:9, no. 107.
- 21 John W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaiologos (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, 1969), 410–13, 528–30; Trapp et al., *Prosopographisches Lexikon*, 4:78, no. 7819.
- 22 Francesco Filelfo, *Epistolarum Familiarum Libri XXXVI* (Venice, 1502), 85v; Francesco Pignatti, 'Filelfo, Giovanni Mario', in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 78 vols so far (Rome, 1960–), 47:626–31, at 627.
- 23 Lille, Archives Départementales du Nord, B2017, fol. 237v; Henri Taparel, 'Notes sur quelques réfugiés byzantins en Bourgogne après la chute de Constantinople', *Balkan Studies* 28 (1987), 51–8, at 53.
- 24 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France [hereafter cited as BnF], MS français 32511 (Cabinet de Titres 685), fol. 175v.
- 25 Preserved in BnF, MS français 182, fols 98–137 and MS français 16216, fols 45–9, 75v–79. The former has been published in Noël Valois, 'Fragment d'un registre du Grand Conseil de Charles VII (mars-juin 1455)', *Annuaire Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de France* 19 (1882), 273–308, at 283–93.
- 26 Valois, 'Fragment', 283–4: 'S'ensuit ce que a dit messire Nicolas Agalo, chevalier et conte, jadis conseiller de l'empereur de Constantinoble. Primo, qu'il est venu pour mouvoir les princes chrestiens à aler contre le Turcq.'
- 27 Pius II, *Commentaries*, ed. and trans. Margaret Meserve and Marcello Simonetta, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA and London, 2003–), 2:99.
- 28 Pius II, *Commentaries*, 2:129; Setton, *Papacy*, 2:151–2.
- 29 Valois, 'Fragment', 284: 'Et le fist [l']empereur conte, et le retint de son conseil; et oultre lui dist que, quant il yroit contre le Turcq, il lui bailleroit charge de Vc hommes, qui seroient soubz lui ...'
- 30 Joseph Chmel, *Regesta Chronologico-Diplomatica Frederici IV (III), Romanorum Regis* (Vienna, 1838), 319–20 (no. 3175); Constantine N. Sathas, *Documents inédits*

- relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce*, 9 vols (Paris, 1880–90), vol. 9, pp. xl–xli where the date 10 March 1454 is given, rather than April as in Chmel and Valois. Since Sathas was only reproducing Chmel's document, it would seem that the latter's date is the correct one.
- 31 Valois, 'Fragment', 284: 'Et lui dist aussi l'Empereur qu'il estoit bien joieux de ce qu'il estoit venu vers lui pour l'avertir de la destruction des Turcqs et que pareillement il alast devers les autres princes chrestiens, mesmement devers le roy de France, et après devers le roy d'Angleterre.'
- 32 Chmel, *Regesta Chronologico-Diplomatica*, 320.
- 33 Mark Spencer, *Thomas Basin (1412–1490): the History of Charles VII and Louis XI* (Nieuwkoop, 1997), 131–2.
- 34 Valois, 'Fragment', 284: 'Et lui remonstra ce qui estoit à faire pour la chrestienté. Et le roy fist bailler lettres adreçans à M. le cardinal de Stouteville, lors estant à Rouen, et lui dist qu'il s'en alast devers lui ... et lors à son retour il lui feroit response.'
- 35 A. Esposito, 'Estouteville (Tuttavilla), Guillaume d'', in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 43:456–60, at 457.
- 36 Valois, 'Fragment', 284: 'mondit seigneur le cardinal lui monstra une lettre par laquelle Nostra Saint-Père lui escrivoit qu'il envoioit en Angleterre l'arcevesque de Ravane, et lui dist qu'il transportast devers ledit arcevesque pour les choses qu'il avoit en charge.'
- 37 London, The National Archives, C76/137, membrane 22; E404/70/2/36; Valois, 'Fragment', 284; Thomas Rymer, ed., *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae etc.*, 3rd edn, 10 vols (The Hague, 1735–45), 5:60–1.
- 38 London, The National Archives, E404/70/2/39: 'We ... charge you that unto the said Nicolas ye do make payment of the said same of L. marc to be had of oure gifte by way of reward.'
- 39 William Gregory, 'Chronicle, 1451–60', in *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. James Gairdner, *Camden Society Second Series*, 17 (London, 1876), 197; Harris, 'Publicising the Crusade', 30.
- 40 Ralph A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority, 1422–1461* (London, 1981), 715–38; Bertram Wolffe, *Henry VI* (London, 1981), 267–86; P.A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York, 1411–1460* (Oxford, 1988), 123–51.
- 41 Valois, 'Fragment', 285: 'Et pareillement dist aux seigneurs d'Angleterre, qu'ilz ne le laissassent point aler qu'il n'eust dit les bonnes voyes et manières commant on pouvoit destruire les Turcqs. Et pours lors estoit ensemble le duc de York, le duc de Bouquingam, le conte de Salsbery, le chancelier, le trésorier, et les évesques.'
- 42 Valois, 'Fragment', 285: 'Et avant qu'il partist, le roy fut guéry et ala devers lui le duc d'York, et fist mettre hors de prison le duc de Sommerset, et fut mise en gouvernement et fait chancelier l' évesque de Cantorbéry.' E. B. Fryde et al. (eds), *Handbook of British Chronology* (London 1986), 85; Griffiths, *Reign of Henry VI*, 738–41; Wolffe, *Henry VI*, 290–93; Johnson, *Duke Richard*, 152–3.
- 43 Valois, 'Fragment', 285: 'Ilz n'ont point de vouloir d'avoir paix avecques le roy de France. Mais ilz ont bien dit qu'ilz aideront volontiers de secours à l'encontre du Turcq; toutesvoies, il leur fault retenir armée pour eulx venger des François, qui leur ont osté leur seigneurie.'
- 44 On Thomas le Franc, see Harris, *Greek Émigrés*, 35, 60–61, 90–93, 167–8.
- 45 BnF, MS français 32511, fol. 175 (F13): 'François le Franc, du pays de Grèce, neveu de Thomas le Franc, médecin du Roy, LXVIII livres, XV sous pour aler à la guerre contre le grand Turcq.'
- 46 M.L. Concasty, 'Les informations de Jacques Tedaldi sur le siège et la prise de Constantinople', *Byzantion* 24 (1954), 95–110, at 95; *Mehmed II the Conqueror and the Fall of the Franco-Byzantine Levant to the Ottoman Turks: Some Western Views and Testimonies*, ed. Marios Philippides (Tempe, 2007), 341. François is also mentioned in a pardon issued by the French king in January 1454: E.T. Hamy, 'Thomas

- de Coron, dit le Franc', *Bulletin de la Société Française d'Histoire de la Médecine* 7 (1908), 193–205, at 203–05.
- 47 Valois, 'Fragment', 292–3: 'Comme il avoit rapporté, les Anglois estoient fort obstinez en oultrageuse et mauvaise volonté de invader et porter dommage au royaume; pourquoy est nécessaire au Roy ... de veiller et entendre à la deffense d'icellui royaume et ses subgez, et les garder et préserver de la mauvaise volonté desdiz enemis anglois ...'
- 48 Pius II, *Commentaries*, 2:175.
- 49 Valois, 'Fragment', 293: 'Lui fut dit que ce lui devoit tourner à grant louenge, et chacun bon chrestien lui en devoit savoir bon gré, et faisoit son devoir comme bon chevalier et vertueux.'
- 50 Chmel, *Regesta Chronologico-Diplomatica*, no. 3175, p. 319: '... et in verum comitem castri Nova-Patre Salone Liborice et Fedrinice prope Moream terrarum orientalis ecclesie siti, elevamus erigimus, sublimamus et nobilitamus de Romanocesaree plenitudine potestatis per presentes.'
- 51 Antoni Rubio I Lluç, *Diplomatari de l'orient català (1301–1409)* (Barcelona, 1947), 159–61 (doc. CXXIX); Raymond-Joseph Loenertz, 'Athènes et Néopatras I: Regestes et notices pour servir à l'histoire des duchés catalans (1311–1394)', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 25 (1955), 100–212, 428–31, at 104 and reprinted in R.-J. Loenertz, *Byzantina et Franco-Graeca* (Rome, 1978), 183–303, at 188; Peter Lock, *The Franks in the Aegean, 1204–1500* (London and New York, 1995), 125–6; Kenneth M. Setton, *Catalan Domination of Athens 1311–1380* (London, 1975), 18–20.
- 52 Julian Chrysostomides, *Monumenta Peloponnesiaca: Documents for the Study of the Peloponnese in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Camberley, 1995), 401, note; John V.A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor, 1987), 430–31.
- 53 ASV, Reg. Vat. 492, fols 4v–5; Spyridon P. Lambros, 'Ἐπιστολὴ Πίου Β' πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον Ἀσάνην', *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων* 10 (1913), 113–26.
- 54 Michael Kritovoulos, *Critobuli Imbriotae Historiae*, III.144, ed. Diether R. Reinsch, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 22 (Berlin and New York 1983), 150. English translation by Charles T. Riggs, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror* (Princeton, 1954), 159; Laonikos Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, IX.59, 75, ed. and trans. Anthony Kaldellis, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA and London, 2014), 2:340–41, 360–61; Setton, *Papacy*, 2:227.
- 55 *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, ed. E. Curtis and A. Kirchoff, 4 vols (Berlin, 1828–77), 4:499 (no. 9444); Cyriac of Ancona, *Later Travels*, ed. and trans. Edward W. Bodnar (Cambridge, MA and London, 2003), 92–3, 96–7, 98–9.
- 56 ASV, Reg. Vat. 472, fol. 334v (orig. fol. 332v), full text in Harris, *Greek Émigrés*, 191.
- 57 Francesco Forcellini, 'Strane peripezie d'un bastardo di casa di Aragona', *Archivio storico per le province napoletane* 39 (1914), 172–214, 268–98, 459–94, 767–87, at 195. On Ferrante's attitude to the crusade, see David Abulafia, 'Ferrante I of Naples, Pope Pius II and the Congress of Mantua', in *Montjoie: Studies in Crusade History Presented in Honour of Hans Eberhard Mayer*, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar et al. (Aldershot, 1997), 235–49.
- 58 Lemerle, 'Le juge général', 315.
- 59 Valois, 'Fragment', 283–4.
- 60 Cyriac of Ancona, *Later Travels*, 6–7, 340–43; Chalkokondyles, *Histories*, VI.47, 2:64–5; Peter Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 12, 3 vols (Vienna, 1975–77), 2:465; Donald M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor: The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans* (Cambridge, 1992), 28–30.
- 61 Harris, *End of Byzantium*, 165–7.
- 62 Forcellini, 'Strane peripezie', 212, note 4; Sathas, *Documents*, 1:273–81, 6:226–8; Jonathan Harris, 'A Worthless Prince? Andreas Palaeologus in Rome, 1465–1502',

- Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 61 (1995), 537–54, at 550; Diana Gilliland Wright, ‘The Kladas Affair and Diplomatic Relations (1480–1485)’, *Studi Veneziani* 67 (2013), 157–82, at 160.
- 63 Philippe de Commines, *Mémoires*, ed. Joël Blanchard, 2 vols (Geneva, 2007), 1:584–5; English translation *The Memoirs of Philippe de Comines*, trans. Samuel Kinser and Isabelle Cazeaux, 2 vols (Columbia, 1973), 2:487–8; Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, ed. Silvana Seidel Menchi, 3 vols (Turin, 1971), 1:157.
- 64 Demetrios I. Polemis, *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography* (London, 1968), 103–4; Franz Babinger, *Das Ende der Arianiten* (Munich, 1960), 9–27. For Skanderbeg see the essay in this volume by Oliver Jens Schmitt.
- 65 Wright, ‘Kladas affair’, 166–8; Jonathan Harris, ‘Despots, Emperors and Balkan Identity in Exile’, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 44 (2013), 643–61, at 654.
- 66 Valois, ‘Fragment’, 293: ‘Combien qu’il lui semble qu’ilz ne pevent nuyre, pour deux raisons: la première, car ilz sont très divizez entre eulx; la seconde, qu’ilz n’ont point d’argent pour sustenir leur armée.’

Part II

The crusading response

Expressions, dynamics
and constraints

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4 Dances, dragons and a pagan queen

Sigismund of Luxemburg and the publicizing of the Ottoman Turkish threat

Mark Whelan

Sigismund of Luxemburg (1368–1437), as king of Hungary (1387) and then later as king of the Romans (1410) and Holy Roman Emperor (1433), was one of the first major European rulers forced to confront the rising threat of the Ottoman Turks in southeastern Europe. After his election as Roman king, Sigismund sought to bring peace and unity to Christendom, and his political and diplomatic attempts to galvanize his fellow princes into a joint effort against the Turks, most notably at the council of Constance (1414–18), are well known and have been intensely studied. However, what has often been neglected is Sigismund's more general advertisement of the Turkish threat as king of the Romans. This article will therefore explore how, alongside his political and diplomatic drives at the great ecclesiastical councils and political assemblies which he convened, there lay a deep-seated aspiration to raise awareness of the Ottoman peril, not just in his correspondence but in his courtly ceremony too. In doing so, it will set Sigismund's promotion of the crusading message more firmly in the context of the fifteenth century, and point to how Sigismund's courtly ceremony and activity prefigured the crusading propaganda of later rulers, notably Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy (1419–67) and Frederick III, king of the Romans and Holy Roman Emperor (1440/1452–92). More importantly, and in contrast to the current historiographical trend which emphasizes the close links between humanist learning and the promotion of the crusading message, this study will point to the importance of the German vernacular in promoting the crusade, and point to the various ways in which rulers such as Sigismund could heighten awareness of the Turkish threat beyond letter writing and the convening of councils and assemblies.

At the time of his election as king of the Romans in 1410, Sigismund had been fighting the Turks for perhaps 20 years on the southern borders of his kingdom of Hungary.¹ His gaining of this new crown marked not just a shift in his status, but also in his interests, and for the rest of his reign Sigismund would be absent from Hungary for long periods while he involved himself in the political and diplomatic affairs of Christendom and attempted to fulfil the responsibilities that came with holding the Imperial office.² His efforts to galvanize the combined powers of Christendom into a joint effort against the Turks, notably at the councils of Constance and Basel, made a great impression on his contemporaries,

but they ultimately never delivered the crusade for which he wished. Historians such as Franz-Reiner Erkens and Martin Kintzinger are therefore certainly right when they emphasize how Sigismund's dreams of leading a new crusade against the Ottoman Turks as the Roman king were never turned into reality.³ In many respects, Sigismund's entire reign has often been seen as one of grand ambitions but few concrete results, a conclusion which many of his contemporaries came to. The near contemporary Klingenberg chronicle dismisses Sigismund with the pithy phrase of *'sine wort warent süess, milt und guot, die werk kurz, schmal und klain'* ('his words were sweet, free and fair, his deeds brief, slight and few'), and this impression has come to dominate much of modern scholarship.⁴ Jaroslav Goll summed it up most pithily in 1895, when he stated of Sigismund's politicking that *'das war eben seine Art, mehr zu wollen, als auszuführen, mehr zu versprechen, als zu halten'* ('that was exactly his way, to want more than he could achieve, to promise more than he could keep'), and more recently Engel has stated that 'many of the emperor's over-ambitious plans would finally come to naught'.⁵ Nevertheless, this focus on Sigismund's failures has obscured the innovative nature of much of his crusade propaganda, and the new ways which he pioneered in order to promote the crusading message throughout Christendom, particularly when it came to the use of his chivalric order, the Order of the Dragon.

From a broader perspective, Sigismund barely features in studies of crusade propaganda and the promotion of warfare against the Turks in the fifteenth century. Numerous works of literature on Sigismund's diplomatic activity in the West have mentioned how one of Sigismund's key aims was to generate aid for his campaigns against the Turks, but never really explore his use of ceremony in aid of this.⁶ It would seem that historians have only rarely connected Sigismund's use of ceremony as Roman king and later, as Holy Roman Emperor, with the advertisement of the Turkish threat.⁷ Gustav Beckmann's short but brilliant exploration of Sigismund's plan to move Christendom into making a combined effort against the Turks, largely focused upon the years 1410–15, features little or no mention of ceremony.⁸ Anna Maria Drabek in her study on Imperial ceremony in the later Middle Ages includes dances and jousts and other similar activities during diplomatic congresses or meetings under the sub-heading of 'festivities and distractions'.⁹ For Sigismund they were certainly not distractions.

This all seems strange, for historians have had no problem in linking the courtly events and ceremony of, for example, Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy or Frederick III, king of the Romans and Emperor, with the advertisement of the Turkish threat.¹⁰ It has been pointed out by Norman Housley that in the second half of the fifteenth century 'Hungary does not appear to have had an equivalent to Philip the Good's Feast of the Pheasant or Maximilian's Society of St George'.¹¹ This was certainly so, but the same cannot be said for the first half of the fifteenth century. As we will see, the diplomatic correspondence and chronicle accounts generated in the wake of Sigismund's courtly events, diplomatic congresses and other such spectacles give the impression that the ceremony surrounding Sigismund as Roman king and the advertisement of the Turkish threat went hand in hand. Sigismund, much like the duke of Burgundy at the famous

Feast of the Pheasant of 1454, used courtly ceremony as an effective means to make Christendom aware of the Turkish threat. The difference here, however, is that Sigismund made good on his promise to fight the Turks and encouraged members of his audience to do the same.

Perhaps the study of Sigismund's efforts to promote the crusade has suffered as they come before the date of 1453. There has been a significant amount of literature on the impact that the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (1451–81) in 1453 had on the perception of the Turks among contemporary European rulers, and 1453 is now taken as a start date for many researchers working on the topic. Historians, such as Karoline Döring, Matthias Thumser and Dieter Mertens, have argued that the fall of the city to the Turks marked the beginning of an intense reaction on the part of Christian rulers in the West to the Turkish threat.¹² This manifested itself in courtly contexts, notably Philip's Feast of the Pheasant, but also in learned texts, orations and humanist discourse.¹³ Historians, such as Jonathan Harris and Anthony Bryer, have underlined other strategies pursued by crusade propagandists to heighten the awareness of the Turkish threat after the fall of Constantinople.¹⁴ These included the use of Greek refugees to help sell crusade indulgences in England, as well as the display of exotic easterners by Franciscans in order to generate interest in launching campaigns against the Ottoman Turks.¹⁵ This focus on the period after 1453 has obscured Sigismund's own efforts in raising awareness of the Turkish threat. Moreover, Sigismund sought to spread awareness of the Turkish threat not through the medium of Latin but through the German vernacular. As the vast majority of research in this field has usually focused on humanist discourse, most often conducted in Latin, Sigismund's attempts to advertise the Turkish threat in his German vernacular have gone relatively unnoticed.¹⁶ As this study will demonstrate, Sigismund, a generation before the fall of Constantinople and the birth of *Turcica* as a literary form, was attempting to spread awareness of the Turkish threat and the peril in which Christendom lay through various means.¹⁷

This article proposes, then, to explore some of the ways in which Sigismund sought to spread awareness of the Turkish threat after he assumed the Imperial office in 1410, be it through speeches and orations made while holding court, as part of his public ceremony, or by means of his chivalric order, the Order of the Dragon. One of the most significant opportunities that came with securing the Roman crown was the increased number of openings Sigismund now had to advertise the severity of the Ottoman threat, often at the great gatherings of princes and prelates which he himself could now convene. Research by Márta Kondor has confirmed Sigismund's fondness for theatrical events and spectacle, and it can clearly be seen that alongside Sigismund's political and diplomatic drives lay a deep-seated aspiration to raise awareness of the Ottoman peril.¹⁸

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An eyewitness account of Sigismund holding court in Paris in early 1416 reveals how the advertisement of the Turkish threat was constantly in Sigismund's

thoughts. In February of 1416 a certain Ulrich Meiger, a notary of Strasbourg, was dispatched to Sigismund in order to discuss the confirmation of various town privileges which only the Roman king could grant.¹⁹ Ulrich was received by Sigismund in Paris one evening, but the king of the Romans was in no mood to talk business and wanted to only talk about ladies, and therefore for the benefit of Ulrich and his assembled audience he began speaking at length about the ladies in Strasbourg. Ulrich had clearly come prepared. He softened Sigismund up by joining him in his discussion about the ladies, an action which made Sigismund 'especially cheerful' (*zumal froelich*), and then stated that he had brought a piece of jewellery and a letter from the ladies of his town to give to Sigismund.²⁰ The king was overjoyed with these gifts, and commanded his servants and attendants to join him in his chamber, where he then proudly declared that he would make the ladies of London, whom he was about to go and visit, send numerous gifts to the ladies of Strasbourg. After this Sigismund commanded everyone to start dancing and, as Ulrich records, launched into speech:

Now, God willing, with this jewellery I will from today for a year move against the Turks and whoever wishes to fight with the Turks, be it through God, through honour or on account of a lady, should remain for this time with me.²¹

Sigismund's speech, as reported by Meiger, helps to underline how he was actively seeking to spread awareness of the Turkish threat through a means upon which historians have traditionally not focused. Sigismund was in wide correspondence between 1410 and 1415, with everyone from kings such as Henry IV of England and Charles VI of France all the way down to rather junior members of the clergy in Hungary. These letters do indeed make a point of stressing the threat of the Turks.²² As well as individual letters targeting particular princes or prelates, Sigismund also sent a circular letter in August 1415 to, among others, the kings of England, Aragon and France, Duke Ernest of Austria and the counts of Savoy.²³ Its circulation was clearly greater than its stated address list, for a copy ended up in Venice too. During the council of Constance the synod itself sent letters to the various princes and rulers in Christendom, reminding their readers of the monstrosities to which the Turks were daily subjecting Christians in Hungary.²⁴ Sigismund would, in fact, write similar letters throughout the rest of his reign. These efforts certainly did raise awareness of the Turkish threat and Hungary's dire position, but they did so only among the ruling classes of Christendom.²⁵ Sigismund's speech in Paris as recorded by Meiger, made in the German vernacular, demonstrates a commitment to raise awareness of the Turkish threat beyond the limited circle of people that received his letters. The speech was made in late February 1416 and it was by no means the only courtly event during which Sigismund deliberately sought to advertise the Turkish threat.

This advertisement of the Turkish threat was no mere blip, and Sigismund's entrance into Perpignan in September 1415 would suggest that the king's desire to make his fellow Christians aware of the Ottoman menace was part of a much broader plan of action as Roman king. Sigismund's entrance into Perpignan, which

then was technically within the kingdom of Aragon, was an ostentatious event and attended by dignitaries and emissaries from across Christendom, and it is noteworthy that the set piece event of Sigismund's entry into the city involved the Roman king showing off a supposedly Turkish prisoner to the assembled crowd.²⁶ A chronicle of the reign of John II, king of Castile and Leon (1406–54), composed by Álvar García de Santa María (1370–1460), reports on Sigismund's entry in the most detail.²⁷ The reason for Sigismund's visit to Perpignan, as García's chronicle makes clear in numerous repetitions in the preceding chapters, was to negotiate with the king of Aragon for the successful 'union of the Church, which has been in schism for 36 years . . . , and so to bring order and peace to all of Christendom'.²⁸ The healing of the Papal schism and the fight against the Turks were, in Sigismund's mind at least, inextricably entwined. At Perpignan it was clear that the *Emperador de los Romanos*, as García calls Sigismund, intended not only to lay the groundwork for the abdication of Pedro de Luna, the renegade antipope Benedict XIII resident in Iberia, but also to raise awareness of the Turkish threat.²⁹

Sigismund was grandly received in Perpignan by Alfonso, the crown prince of Aragon, and was accompanied down the streets, specially carpeted for the occasion, with numerous nobles and prelates of the Iberian kingdoms.³⁰ With Sigismund was a large retinue of 300 knights, fully armed and displaying 'the arms of the Empire', who entered the town to find the celebrations in full swing, with dances and other celebrations lining the streets.³¹ Upon arriving at his prepared lodgings, Sigismund was received at the entrance by one of his servants. This servant was, as the chronicler reports, none other than a 'king of Turkey, whom the Emperor had captured in battle'.³² This so called *Rey de Turqía* was Sigismund's sword-bearer, who, after drawing and presenting his sword in front of the king, escorted him into his lodgings amid his escort of four crossbowmen, 25 litter-bearers and the accompanying music of three young musicians.³³ Sigismund was careful not to appear too decadent, however, as the chronicler goes on to relate how Sigismund restricted himself to eating off plain tableware rather than his usual silver set, on account of the 'schism in which the Church was'.³⁴

This ceremony was performed in front of a crowd which included, among others, Prince Alfonso, the future Alfonso V of Aragon (1416–58) and nobles from across Iberia and southern France.³⁵ It is not unreasonable to suggest that in this audience Sigismund saw potential crusaders whom he could rally to his cause in his fight against the Turks. The display of a Turkish prisoner whom he had captured in battle was certainly an overt symbol of the struggle which he had been waging on the Danube. That the chronicler explicitly says that Sigismund's Turk was captured in battle is noteworthy.³⁶ It implies that when contemporaries viewed Sigismund's courtly events they were reminded of Sigismund's fighting the Turks and the military efforts in which he was engaged. Sigismund would display a Turkish captain recently captured in battle again in 1423, when he met with King Wladyslaw II of Poland and Grand Duke Witold of Lithuania at Käsmark.³⁷ According to one continuator of Andreas von Regensburg's *Chronica pontificum et imperatorum Romanorum*, Sigismund even took a group of Turks to pray with him when visiting a church near Straubing in Bavaria in September 1430.³⁸

Sigismund's display of Turks to important audiences would therefore appear to be part of a much broader plan to bring the Ottoman threat to the attention of his contemporaries.

Speeches and the display of Turkish prisoners were only two of the means which Sigismund used to publicize the Ottoman threat once he had acquired the Imperial office, and he could turn other events to his advantage too. This is demonstrated by his personal baptism of Petro de Orasteia in the summer of 1433, undertaken while Sigismund was celebrating his coronation as Holy Roman Emperor in Rome.³⁹ For information on Petro de Orasteia's baptism we are reliant on one source, Petro's own supplication to Pope Eugenius IV (1431–47) which survives in the *Registra Supplicationum* and is dated to 13 July 1433.⁴⁰ Petro records how he had previously been of the Greek rite but on 7 June he had been baptised into the Catholic faith by the Holy Roman Emperor himself (*per eundem dominum imperatorem fuit baptizatus*) in a ceremony conducted in St Peter's Basilica in Rome.⁴¹ Sigismund had been crowned as Holy Roman Emperor the week before on 31 May 1433, and this public baptism may have been seen as a continuation of the festivities and celebrations of the past few weeks.⁴² Petro's supplication reveals that he had enjoyed a particularly interesting career in Sigismund's service and a career that the Holy Roman Emperor would have liked to publicize for others to emulate and follow. Petro was a knight of Sigismund who had fought 'for the defence of the Catholic faith and of Christians against the most perfidious and infidel Turks and the heretical Hussites'.⁴³ Petro had an interesting background for a knight of Sigismund. He had clearly first entered Sigismund's service some time previously and while still an adherent of the Greek rite. After serving against Sigismund's Turkish and Hussite enemies for several years he had accompanied Sigismund to Rome where he was baptized into the Latin rite. His supplication asked for him to be cleansed of all sin on account of his services to Christendom, a request that was granted by the Papacy.

As Kondor has argued, there could also be a broader significance behind this baptism, especially when Sigismund's personal interest in union between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches is considered.⁴⁴ It would appear that Sigismund remained a strong proponent for Church union through his entire reign, even if his desire for union did not regularly present itself in his own correspondence. The later Polish chronicler Jan Długosz records the highly amusing tale of Sigismund debating the merits of the Orthodox rite while at Lutsk in 1429. Sigismund proclaimed that the only things separating the Greeks from the Latins were beards and wives (*barbis duntaxat et uxoribus a nobis secreti sunt*).⁴⁵ He then went on to joke that the issues surrounding the clerical taking of wives was more of a problem for the Latins, as the Greeks were content to take just one wife each, while Latin clerics usually took ten or more! What his fellow Latins made of this joke is anyone's guess, but Sigismund's audience, in this case a group of Ruthenian nobles, enjoyed it immensely.⁴⁶ Sigismund's firm belief in union and its links to combating the Turkish threat surfaced in other situations, as shown by a letter of Johann Karschau, a cleric of the Teutonic Order present at the council of Basel. In September 1437 he noted to his grand master how it was the 'Emperor's opinion,

that the Greeks be one with us Latins'.⁴⁷ Karschau reports in the same letter that Sigismund also wanted to unite the Order of St John with the Teutonic Order and to place them in Hungary 'against the Turks' (*widdir die Torken*). Clearly then, unions were close to Sigismund's heart. Perhaps Sigismund's public baptism of Petro was intended to show his explicit support for Church union. Nevertheless, by showing off a successful and triumphant knight, Sigismund was underlining the rewards and spiritual prizes which one could receive if they were to fight in his service against his infidel enemies.

Sigismund's advertisement of the Turkish threat could, however, take more subtle forms. In March 1434, for example, the future Duke Albert of Bavaria-Munich (1401–60) wrote a rather bemused letter to his father Duke Ernst (1373–1438). In this letter Albert noted how he had recently received a letter from Sigismund, his *kaysar*, inviting him to join him in Bohemia.⁴⁸ Albert went on to explain how it was Sigismund's intention to make him one of his captains, and to use him in a campaign against the Turks ('wie er uns zu einem hawbtman auf die Turgken machen wollt'), though Albert was unsure how to reply. Sigismund had circulated this request in a letter ('auf einen glaubsbrief') so it is highly likely that he was making this sort of offer to other members of German nobility.⁴⁹ Sigismund was sending similar letters to Iberian nobility, though he had to adapt his message and language accordingly. A good example is Sigismund's letter to the young Henry of Aragon (1400–45), third son of King Ferdinand I of Aragon (1412–16).⁵⁰ Addressed to 'illustrious Prince Henry, prince of Aragon and Sicily and master of [the Order of] St James' in January 1418, the letter arranged for the delivery to the young prince of the statutes of Sigismund's Order of the Dragon, which he had founded in 1408 and which obligated all of its members to aid him in the fight *contra paganos*, an admittedly flexible term that could include both his Orthodox Christian and Turkish opponents in the Balkans.⁵¹ Despite his youth Henry was already the grand master of the Order of Santiago, which commanded significant military resources. One gets the impression that Sigismund was targeting him at a young age in the hope that he would join the Order and support him once he had matured. Sigismund states that he has invited Henry into the Order and that once he has taken the customary oath (*solitum iuramentum*) he should not only seek to fulfil the responsibilities which the Order of the Dragon requires, but aim to surpass them: 'statutis et moribus, que dicta nostra requirit societas [sic], praestare debeas.'⁵²

In fact, it is when Sigismund's attitude towards his Order of the Dragon is considered that his desire to link his status as king of the Romans with the advertisement of the Ottoman threat emerges most sharply. It is worth comparing Sigismund's courtly ceremony with that of other fifteenth-century rulers. Much has been written on Philip the Good's Feast of the Pheasant, his Order of the Golden Fleece and his programme, which ultimately never materialized, to combat the Turks. Historians, such as Adalbert Roth, have credited Philip the Good with devising innovative techniques to encourage his subjects to protect Christendom against infidel threats.⁵³ Leaving aside the giant singing pies and the fire-breathing dragon displayed during the Feast of the Pheasant, vividly described

by Olivier de la Marche, Roth, for example, underlines how Philip utilized a range of court musicians and poets to produce and circulate songs and ballads to make his advertisement of the Turkish threat more potent.⁵⁴ This was done in connection with his Order of the Golden Fleece, itself with a clear crusading ethos.⁵⁵ Maximilian, king of the Romans and Holy Roman Emperor, (1486/1508–19) followed a similar policy to Sigismund when he succeeded in securing privileges from Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503) for all those who served against the Turks in his Fraternity of St George.⁵⁶ The above case studies of Sigismund's courtly ceremony demonstrate that he was also at pains to advertise the Turkish threat in various languages and through various means. Much like Philip and Maximilian, Sigismund also used his own chivalric order, the Order of the Dragon, in the attempt to organize an offensive against the Turks.

The Order's general history has been well researched, and in recent years numerous historians have analysed Sigismund's use of the Order both inside and outside Hungary as a political instrument during his reign, and they have largely come to the same conclusions.⁵⁷ Jonathan Boulton, Kintzinger, Erkens, Jörg Hoensch, among others, have all explored how Sigismund used the Order as a political tool with which he could consolidate his power-base in Hungary.⁵⁸ More specialist studies, by historians such as Mihailo Popović and Gerald Schwedler, have explored how Sigismund used the Order to solidify his political and military relations with neighbouring rulers in Serbia, Bosnia and Wallachia.⁵⁹ They are all certainly correct, but when the Order's impact on the international stage is considered in more detail, it can be seen that the Order served as another vehicle to advertise the Turkish threat, as well as a means with which Sigismund could subtly refashion and repackage warfare in the name of Christ against the Turks.

This can be most clearly seen in 1433, when Sigismund used the opportunity of his Imperial coronation to request numerous privileges from the Holy See.⁶⁰ One particular supplication, entered twice into separate books now known as part of *Registra Supplicationum*, is perhaps of unique significance for the history of chivalric and military orders.⁶¹ Sigismund was able to convince Pope Eugenius IV to endow the Order of the Dragon with a crusading indulgence. Anyone who fought personally 'against the Turks, schismatics, heretics and also infidels' under the aegis of the Order of the Dragon, 'for the defence of the kingdom of Hungary in support of the lord Emperor', would gain full remission of sins.⁶² The fact that the supplications contain different phrases and emphases can make analysing the attachment of the indulgence complex, but the deeper issues here will be left to one side, to be explored in a future study. The later supplication, of 21 July 1433, is the most complete, and it is given in full here:

Item, because, by the power of its statutes and fulfilment of its oath, whoever is touched by the device or the society of the dragon is obliged personally to set forth against the Turks, schismatics and heretics and also infidels and to expose his own person and to attend to the extermination and confusion of the same [groups of people], the lord Emperor himself therefore supplicates, that our lord should mercifully consider conceding in perpetuity, that

the aforementioned lord Emperor and his successors, the kings of Hungary and those of the aforesaid society and also all and everyone of the kingdom of Hungary and those of other foreign nations, who personally set out for the defence of the kingdom of Hungary and in support of the lord Emperor and the successors of the kings and of the aforesaid society against those labelled infidels, schismatics and heretics, should have full remission of sins and penalties, in the same way that crusaders (*crucesignati*) [have], confessed and penitent, in the passage for the acquisition of the Holy Land. Permitted for all in the most blessed form.⁶³

While there are complexities involved in analysing the indulgence, the basic point remains clear: those who fought against the Turks under the aegis of the Order of the Dragon, in support of the Holy Roman Emperor and of the kingdom of Hungary, merited a crusading indulgence. Of course, a ruler augmenting his own wars with sacral elements is nothing special. Sigismund was just one of many who sought to do so in the Middle Ages, and anecdotal evidence would suggest that his commanders and soldiers in Hungary believed they were engaging in warfare which carried spiritual benefits anyway, which means that Papal recognition would not necessarily have helped further encourage his garrison troops and levies to fight the Turks.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, gaining Papal recognition of Hungary's worth as a bastion against the Turks is significant in this context. It reveals that the conscious development of the idea that Hungary formed the so called *antemurale et clipeus* of Christendom, which became prevalent during the reign of King Matthias Corvinus and which, in effect, meant that anyone who fought for the defence of Hungary was in fact fighting for Christendom, was also encouraged by Sigismund.⁶⁵ Kintzinger has argued that Sigismund used the Order of the Dragon 'in the interests of Hungarian defence and not as an expression of crusading ideals'.⁶⁶ Perhaps the conclusion to be drawn here is rather that Sigismund's success in securing a crusade indulgence for those who fought the Turks under the aegis of his order meant that the defence of Hungary and ideals surrounding crusading were now combined.

Despite Sigismund's intense efforts to raise awareness of the Ottoman threat, not all of Sigismund's contemporaries were so positive about his crusade posturing. A letter sent by a Teutonic Knight, the Komtur of Koblenz, to the grand master, Michael Kuchenmeister, dated 8 April 1419, makes interesting reading.⁶⁷ As well as discussing a range of mundane matters in the area, such as the lack of ships and the difficulty he was experiencing with shipping wine, the Komtur's letter contains a garbled and fantastical account of the goings on 'in the king's court' ('in des conynges hove'). The Komtur claims in his letter that Sigismund had taken his daughter away from the duke of Austria, to whom she was engaged, and instead given him a pagan queen ('eyne heydenische conynge'), with whom Sigismund had allied in order 'to gather their power this summer and so to attempt, whether they may gain the Holy Sepulchre'. The Komtur went on to report that all of this was, however, a ruse, 'for with real concern it is feared, that their plan is perhaps not to gain the Holy Sepulchre but to lay waste to our Order

and its land, which God forbid'.⁶⁸ Thankfully for Sigismund, however, not all of his contemporaries were so negative, and most did not see such nefarious ulterior motives behind his plans to fight the Turks. When Juan de Segovia came to write his monumental history of the council of Basel around 1450, he singled out Sigismund for praise, noting how 'he had made war for the faith from the beginning of his life, and that he was well known in many clashes against the Turks'.⁶⁹ Similarly, the later observer Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421–98) marked Sigismund out as 'a valiant foe of the impious Turks, as is plainly manifest, because in his reign they were kept within their own limits and not suffered to oppress Christian people as in former days'.⁷⁰

In conclusion, much of Sigismund's advertisement of the Turkish threat undoubtedly contained elements of self-aggrandisement and Erkens is right to emphasize how Sigismund's publicizing of the Ottoman threat was as much about advertising his own power and reinforcing his own status as it was about raising aid for his Turkish campaigns.⁷¹ Nevertheless, this does not mean that his propaganda and courtly ceremony were without substance or that his approach to the crusade was duplicitous, an argument which could be made for other rulers in the fifteenth century.⁷² His speeches and letters in the German vernacular may not have quite the pulling power or the gravitas, at least to modern scholars, of the later humanist orations and discourses *contra Turcos*, but they were targeted at a different audience, and they succeeded in leaving an impression on their addressees.⁷³ Furthermore, Sigismund's decision to use the Order of the Dragon as a flagship for his crusading intentions prefigure the activities of later rulers, and point to a ruler willing to experiment with and repackage the ideals surrounding the crusading movement to help them better fit the environment of the fifteenth century. In the last analysis, unlike Philip the Good and Frederick III and many other rulers in the fifteenth century whose courtly ceremony drew upon the spectre of the Turkish threat, Sigismund was 'a valiant foe of the impious Turks' in both word and deed, and for that, at least, he should be given credit.

Notes

- 1 The chronology of Sigismund's early campaign against the Turks remains unclear. See László Veszprémy, 'King Sigismund of Luxemburg at Golubac (Galamboc) 1428', in *Worlds in Change: Church Union and Crusading in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Christian Gastgeber *et al.*, *Transylvanian Review*, 18, supplement 2, (Cluj-Napoca, 2009), 291–307, at 293, 302.
- 2 For the background to Sigismund's election, Jörg Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund: Herrscher an der Schwelle zur Neuzeit, 1368–1437* (Munich, 1996), 148–61. For Sigismund's diplomatic activities while in the West, see Martin Kintzinger, 'Die Hausmachtpolitik oder internationale Politik? Die Diplomatie Sigismunds in Europa', in *Sigismund von Luxemburg: Ein Kaiser in Europa*, ed. Michel Pauly and Francois Reinert (Mainz am Rhein, 2006), 35–42.
- 3 The literature on the council of Constance and Sigismund's plan for a crusade is extensive, and to save space only the most recent secondary literature will be referenced in this article. Martin Kintzinger's *Westbindungen im spätmittelalterlichen Europa: Auswärtige Politik zwischen dem Reich, Frankreich, Burgund und England in der*

- Regierungszeit Kaiser Sigmunds* (Stuttgart, 2000) remains the key work regarding Sigismund and the council, and Franz-Reiner Erkens's shorter study is immensely useful: Franz-Reiner Erkens, "...Und wil ein grosse Reise do tun." Überlegungen zur Balkan-und Orientpolitik Sigismunds von Luxemburg, in *Studien zum 15. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Erich Meuthen*, ed. Johannes Helmuth *et al.* (Munich, 1994), 739–62.
- 4 *Die Klingenberg Chronik*, ed. Anton Henne von Sargans (Gotha, 1861), 208. My most sincere thanks to Duncan Hardy for this reference, and to Alan Murray for his help in interpreting the passage.
 - 5 Jaroslav Goll, 'König Sigmund und Polen, 1419–1436', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 16 (1895), 222–75, at 275; Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526*, trans. Tamás Pálosfalvi (London, 2001), 257.
 - 6 Gerald Schwedler, *Herrschartreffen des Spätmittelalters: Formen – Rituale – Wirkungen* (Ostfildern, 2008), 124; Kintzinger, *Westbindungen*, 301.
 - 7 Such as Márta Kondor, in her useful study on Sigismund and the prospect of union with the Orthodox Church. See Márta Kondor, 'Latin West and Byzantine East at the Dawn of the Renaissance: Emperor Sigismund and the Union with the Greeks', in *Infima Aetas Pannonica: Studies in Late Medieval Hungarian History*, ed. Péter Kovács (Budapest, 2009), 79–96, at 81.
 - 8 Gustav Beckmann, *Der Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds gegen die werdende Weltmacht der Osmanen, 1392–1437* (Gotha, 1902), *passim*.
 - 9 Anna Maria Drabek, *Reisen und Reisezeremoniell der römisch-deutschen Herrscher im Spätmittelalter* (Vienna, 1964), 69–71.
 - 10 Harry Kühnel, 'Spätmittelalterliche Festkultur im Dienste religiöser, politischer und sozialer Ziele', in *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter: Paderborner Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes*, ed. Detlef Altenberg *et al.* (Sigmaringen, 1991), 71–87, at 77–80.
 - 11 Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505* (Oxford, 2012), 119.
 - 12 Karoline Döring, 'Rhetorik und Politik im 15. Jahrhundert. Die "Türkenreden" und Ihre Verbreitung im Druck', in *Rhetorik im Mittelalter und Renaissance: Konzepte – Praxis – Diversität*, ed. George Strack and Julia Knödl (Munich, 2011), 429–54, at 429–30; Matthias Thumser, 'Türkenfrage und öffentliche Meinung. Zeitgenössische Zeugnisse nach dem Fall von Konstantinopel (1453)', in *Europa und die Osmanische Expansion im ausgehenden Mittelalter*, ed. Franz-Reiner Erkens (Berlin, 1997), 59–78. Dieter Mertens, 'Europäischer Friede und Türkenkrieg im Spätmittelalter', in *Zwischenstaatliche Friedenswahrung in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Heinz Duchhardt (Cologne, 1991), 45–90, at 73–4.
 - 13 Döring, 'Rhetorik und Politik', 429–30; Kühnel, 'Spätmittelalterliche Festkultur', 77–80.
 - 14 Jonathan Harris, 'Publicising the Crusade: English Bishops and the Jubilee Indulgence of 1455', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 50 (1999), 23–37; Anthony Bryer, 'Ludovico da Bologna and the Georgian and Anatolian Embassy of 1460–1', in *idem, The Empire of Trebizond and the Pontos* (London, 1980), no. X.
 - 15 Harris, 'Publicising the Crusade', 36–7; Bryer, 'Ludovico da Bologna', 181–2. See the essay by Harris in this volume.
 - 16 See, for example, Dieter Mertens, "'Europa, id est patria, domus propria, sedes nostra...". Zu Funktionen und Überlieferung lateinischer Türkenreden im 15. Jahrhundert', in *Europa und die Osmanische Expansion im ausgehenden Mittelalter*, ed. Franz-Reiner Erkens (Berlin, 1997), 39–57. On the broader research trend, see Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 24–5.
 - 17 For 'Turcica' see Klára Pajorin, 'The Crusades and Early Humanism in Hungary', in *Infima Aetas Pannonica*, ed. Péter Kovács, 237–49, at 244; Housley, *Ottoman Threat*,

- 170–1; Johannes Helmraht, ‘Pius II. und die Türken’, in *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, ed. Bodo Guthmüller et al. (Tübingen, 2000), 79–138, at 84.
- 18 Kondor, ‘Latin West and Byzantine East’, 81.
- 19 For Ulrich’s letter see Heinrich Finke, ed., *Acta concilii constanciensis*, 4 vols (Münster, 1896–1928), 4.455–8, no 464. This same letter with other letters of Ulrich, though transcribed differently, can be found in Jacob Wencker, *Collecta archivi et cancellariae jura* (Strasbourg, 1715), 158–61. The tale of Ulrich’s visit to Sigismund features in the chronicle of Jacob von Königshoven. See Jacob von Königshoven, *Elsassische und Straßburgische Chronicke* (Strasbourg, 1648), 145–6.
- 20 Finke, ed., *Acta concilii constanciensis*, 4.456.
- 21 Wencker, *Collecta archivi*, 159: ‘nun wil ich mit disem Cleinot ob Gott wil, von hut uber ein Jar uf den Turken ligen, Darumb wer durch Gott und durch Ere oder umb Frawen willen mit den Türcken vechten welle, der sol uff die zit bi mir syn.’
- 22 For Henry IV, Finke, ed., *Acta concilii constanciensis*, 1.88–92, esp. 91, no. 21; *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár*, ed. Elemér Mályusz et al., 12 vols (Budapest, 1951–2013), 3, no. 1849. For Charles VI, *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár*, 4, no. 1347. For the clergyman in Hungary, Imre Nagy, ed., *Codex Diplomaticus Patrius/Hazai Okmánytár*, 5 vols (Jaurina, 1865–91), 2.201–5, esp. 201–2, no. 137; *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár*, 5, no. 167. For background and further references, see Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, 60–62; Kondor, ‘Latin West and Byzantine East’, 91–2.
- 23 Sime Ljubić, ed., *Listine o odnošajih između južnoga slavenstva I mletačke republike*, 10 vols (1868–91), in *Monumenta Spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium*, vols 1–5, 9, 12, 17, 21–2: for this letter, *Listine*, 7 (= *Monumenta Spectantia*, vol. 12), pp. 209–11; Finke, ed., *Acta concilii constanciensis*, 3.284, note 2, no. 129.
- 24 Finke, ed., *Acta concilii constanciensis*, 4.659–62, no. 511.
- 25 See for example the response of Venice, *ibid.*, 4.283, no. 129.
- 26 See Sieglinde Hartmann, ‘Sigismunds Ankunft in Perpignan und Oswalds Rolle als *Wisskunte von Türkei*’, in *Durch Aubenteuer muess man wagen vil: Festschrift für Anton Schwob zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Wernfried Hofmeister and Bernd Steinbauer (Innsbruck, 1997), 133–9, where Hartmann makes the argument that Sigismund’s Turkish prisoner was in fact played by Oswald von Wolkenstein. For the background to Sigismund’s diplomatic journey through France and Iberia, see Drabek, *Reisezeremoniell*, 70–71.
- 27 Álvaro García de Santa María, ‘Crónica del Rey don Juan, secundo Rey deste nombre en Castilla y en Leon’, in *Crónicas de los Reyes de Castilla*, ed. Cayetano Rosell, 7 vols (Madrid, 1877), 2.365. The relevant passage has been translated into German and is available in Hartmann, ‘Ankunft in Perpignan’, 137–8. I am most grateful to Sieglinde Hartmann for information regarding Sigismund’s entry into Perpignan. For dating of the chronicle and further discussion, see, Hartmann, ‘Ankunft in Perpignan’, 133–4; Esteban Sarasa Sánchez, *Aragón en el reinado de Fernando I, 1412–1416: gobierno y administración, constitución política, hacienda real* (Zaragoza, 1986), 33–47.
- 28 Álvaro García, ‘Crónica del Rey don Juan’, 364.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 364: ‘la union de la Iglesia, que treinta y seis años habia que estaba en cisma ..., é asi daría orden á la pacificacion de toda la Christiandad.’
- 30 Alvar García, ‘Crónica del Rey don Juan’, 365. See also Eberhard Windecke’s somewhat fantastical account of Sigismund at Perpignan: Eberhart Windecke, *Eberhart Windeckes Denkwürdigkeiten zur Geschichte des Zeitalters Kaiser Sigmunds*, ed. Wilhelm Altmann (Berlin, 1893), 63.
- 31 Álvaro García, ‘Crónica del Rey don Juan’, 365: ‘las armas del Imperio.’ For the dances, see Luis Vela Gormedino, *Crónica incompleta del reinado de Fernando I de Aragón* (Zaragoza, 1985), 62; Hartmann, ‘Ankunft in Perpignan’, 137.
- 32 Álvaro García, ‘Crónica del Rey don Juan’, 365: ‘que habia seydo Rey de Turquía, é que el Emperador lo habia prendido en batalla.’
- 33 *Ibid.*, 365; Hartmann, ‘Ankunft in Perpignan’, 137.

- 34 Álvaro García, ‘Crónica del Rey don Juan’, 365: ‘la cisma en que la Iglesia estaba.’
- 35 In regards to diplomatic guests, Sigismund notes the arrival of princes and legates from Aragon, Castile and Navarre while in Narbonne in December 1415. See, Frankfurt am Main, Institut für Stadtgeschichte (Stadtarchiv Frankfurt), Kaiserschreiben, 2.362. Published, though with errors, in Johannes Janssen, *Frankfurts Reichsrespondenz, nebst andern verwandten Aktenstücken von 1376–1519*, 3 vols (Freiburg, 1863–72), 2.295, no. 509.
- 36 Álvaro García, ‘Crónica del Rey don Juan’, 364.
- 37 Andreas von Regensburg, ‘Diarium sexennale’, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Georg Leidinger (Munich, 1903), 309. On this meeting, see Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 312–15.
- 38 Anonymous, ‘Oberaltaicher Zusätze zur Chronica pontificum et imperatorum Romanorum und deren Fortsetzung in clm. 9711’, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Leidinger, 705.
- 39 On Petro’s baptism, see also Kondor, ‘Latin West and Byzantine East’, 81.
- 40 ASV, Registra Supplicationum, hereafter cited as RS, 287, fols 132v–133. It has been published, though with some mistakes, in Giorgio Fedalto, ed., *Acta Eugenii Papae IV (1431–1447)* (Rome, 1990), 127–8, no. 207.
- 41 ASV, RS, 287, fol. 132v.
- 42 Kondor, ‘Latin West and Byzantine East’, 81.
- 43 ASV, RS, 287, fol. 132v: ‘qui pro fidei catholice et christianorum defensione contra perfidissimos et infideles turcos et hussitas hereticos.’
- 44 Kondor, ‘Latin West and Byzantine East’, 81, 90–93.
- 45 Jan Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, ed. Aleksander Przedziecki, in *Joannis Długossi, Opera Omnia*, 14 vols (Krakow, 1873–78), 11.368.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 11.368.
- 47 Berlin, Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ordensbriefarchiv, 7363. The letter has been partially printed in Erich Joachim, ‘König Sigmund und der Deutsche Ritterorden in Ungarn, 1429–1432: Mitteilung aus dem Staatsarchiv zu Königsberg’, *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 33 (1912), 87–119, at 119.
- 48 František Palacký, ed., *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hussitenkriegs vom Jahre 1419 an*, 2 vols (Prague, 1873), 2.405–6, no. 902.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 2.405.
- 50 Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Reichsregisterbücher, G, 83v; calendared in *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár*, 4, no. 1402.
- 51 Georgius Fejér, ed., *Codex Diplomaticus Hungariae: Ecclesiasticus ac Civilis*, tome (sc. section) 10, 8 vols (Buda, 1834–43), 4.690, no. 317.
- 52 Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Reichsregisterbücher, G, 83v. The middle clause, in order to make more grammatical sense, should run *que dicta nostra societas requirit*. Details regarding the oath are scarce. For the issues surrounding Witold’s taking of the oath in 1429, see John Jefferson, *The Holy Wars of King Wladislas and Sultan Murad: The Ottoman-Christian Conflict from 1438–1444* (Leiden, 2012), 132.
- 53 Adalbert Roth, ‘“L’homme armé, le doubtful turcq, l’ordre de la toison d’or”: Zur “Begleitmusik” der letzten großen Kreuzzugsbewegung nach dem Fall von Konstantinopel’, in *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter: Paderborner Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes*, ed. Detleif Altenberg *et al.* (Sigmaringen, 1991), 469–79, at 478–9.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 478–9. For de la Marche’s account of the Feast of the Pheasant, see Olivier de la Marche, *Les Mémoires*, in *Collection universelle des mémoires particuliers relatifs à l’histoire de France*, 8–9, 2 vols (London and Paris, 1785), 2.1–31. For the pie see *ibid.*, 11–12, and for the dragon, *ibid.*, 16. For an English translation of de la Marche’s account, see Andrew Brown and Graeme Small, *Court and Civic Society in the Burgundian Low Countries, c. 1420–1530* (Manchester, 2007), 36–53.

- 55 For the statutes of the order, see Brown, *Court and Civic Society*, 137–45.
- 56 Housley, *Ottoman Threat*, 59–61.
- 57 The starting point when researching the Order of the Dragon is now Holger Kruse and Kirstin Kamenz, ‘52. Drache (1408)’, in *Ritterorden und Adelsgesellschaften im spätmittelalterlichen Deutschland: Ein systematisches Verzeichnis*, ed. Holger Kruse et al. (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), 230–47; for background, see D’Arcy Jonathan Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown: The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Later Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge, 1987), 350–52.
- 58 Boulton, *Monarchical Orders*, 350–52; Erkens, ‘Überlegungen’, 744–5; Kintzinger, *Westbindungen*, 262–6, 272–3, 299. Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 123–5; Pál Lövei, ‘Hoforden im Mittelalter, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Drachenordens’, in *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Mainz, 2006), 251–63.
- 59 Mihailo Popović, ‘Der Drachenorden Sigismunds von Luxemburg und der serbische Despot Stefan Lazarević’, in *Church Union and Crusading in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Christian Gastgeber et al. (Cluj-Napoca, 2009), 71–8; Gerald Schwedler, ‘Rituelle Diplomatie: Die persönlichen Beziehungen Sigismunds von Luxemburg zu benachbarten Königen und den Herrschern des Balkans’, in *Kaiser Sigismund (1368–1437): Zur Herrschaftspraxis eines europäischen Monarchen*, ed. Karel Hruza and Alexandra Kaar (Vienna, 2012), 421–6.
- 60 For background see Péter E. Kovács, ‘Emperor Sigismund’s Coronation in Rome’, in *Infima Aetas Pannonica*, ed. Péter E. Kovács, 97–162.
- 61 ASV, RS, 287, fol. 195v; RS, 292, fols 202r–203. For background to supplications to the Papacy in general, see the useful study by Mike Carr, ‘Crossing Boundaries in the Mediterranean: Papal Trade Licences from the Registra supplicationum of Pope Clement VI (1342–52)’, *Journal of Medieval History* 41 (2015), 107–29, at 110–12.
- 62 ASV, RS, 287, fol. 202r.
- 63 ASV, RS, 287, fol. 202r: ‘Item quia quilibet de praetacta divisa seu societate draconica ex vi statutorum et prestiti iuramenti obligatur contra Turcos scismaticos et hereticos ac infideles quoscumque personam suam exponere et eorundem exterminum et confusionem pro posse suo procurare. Supplicat ipse dominus imperator ut dominus noster dignetur misericorditer concedere imperpetuum ut praefatus dominus imperator et eius successores reges hungarie ac illi de societate predicta necnon omnes et singuli tam de regno hungarie quam aliarum quarumcumque exterarum nacionum qui pro defensione regni hungarie in subsidium domini imperatoris et suorum successorum regum ac societatis praetacte contra iamfatos infideles scismaticos et hereticos personaliter profiscuntur perinde sicut crucesignati in passagio acquisitionis terresancte plenam contriti et confessi habeant remissionem culparum et penarum. Concessus pro omnibus in forma Beatissime gradensis.’ This document has been partially published in Fedalto, ed., *Acta Eugenii*, 129, no 209, though with errors, and a similar transcription can be found in Wilhelm Fraknói, ‘Genealogiai és Heraldikai Közlemények a Vatikani Levéltarbol’, *Turul* 11 (1893), 1–8. Both are problematic. For a detailed discussion, see Mark Whelan, ‘Sigismund of Luxemburg and the Imperial Response to the Ottoman Turkish Threat, c.1410–1437’ (unpublished PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2014), 81–7.
- 64 Norman Housley, ‘Pro deo et pro patria mori: Sanctified Patriotism in Europe, 1400–1600’, in *War and Competition between States*, ed. Philippe Contamine (Oxford, 2000), 221–48, at 222–5, 247–8. On the second point, see Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, 145.
- 65 For an introduction to this idea, see Paul Srodecki, *Antemurale Christianitatis: Zur Genese der Bollwerksrhetorik im östlichen Mitteleuropa an der Schwelle vom Mittelalter zur Frühen Neuzeit* (Husum, 2015), esp. 31–9, 95–103. For Corvinus’s attitudes towards crusading, see Norman Housley, ‘Matthias Corvinus and Crusading’, *Transylvanian Review*, 28, supplement 2 (2009), 239–50 (esp. 240–5).

- 66 Kintzinger, *Westbindungen*, 271: 'im Interesse der ungarischen Landesverteidigung, nicht als Ausdruck einer Kreuzzugs-idee.'
- 67 Ordensbriefarchiv, 2944: 'uff desen somer yre maicht zo versamelen, und zo versuechen, ap sy das heilige graff moegen gewynnen.' This letter has been published, though with errors in the transcription, in Ottokar, *Das Verhältnis des Hochmeisters des Deutschen Ordens zum Reich im 15. Jahrhundert* (Marburg, 1952), 96, no. 18.
- 68 Ordensbriefarchiv, 2944: 'sunder mit mirklichen vermessen ist zo vesorgen, das ir uffsacz sy nyt das heilige graff zo gewynnen, sunder unsern ord und syn lant zo verderben, das doch got verbiede.'
- 69 Joannis de Segovia, *Historia Gestorum Generalis Synodi Basiliensis*, ed. Ernst Birk, in *Monumenta Conciliorum Generalium* (Vienna, 1857), 2.585: 'ab inicio iuventutis sue militaverat semper pro fide, ut notum erat in multis congressibus contra Turcos factis in primo flore sue iuventutis.'
- 70 Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Vite di uomini illustri del secolo xv* (Florence, 1938), 289; translated in Vespasiano da Bisticci, *The Vespasiano Memoirs: Lives of Illustrious Men of the XVth Century*, trans. William George and Emily Waters (Toronto, 1997), 231.
- 71 Erkens, 'Überlegungen', 758–9.
- 72 Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 205–7
- 73 On this genre of crusade literature, see *ibid.*, 159–67.

5 Alfonso V and the anti-Turkish crusade

Mark Aloisio

The degree to which Alfonso V attempted to confront the Ottoman threat to Europe and his reasons for doing so have for some time been the subject of debate.¹ In a study of Alfonso's 'eastern policy' published in 1902–03 Francesco Cerone depicted the king as a heroic figure who placed the need to resist Ottoman power at the heart of his foreign policy and selflessly launched diplomatic and military initiatives intended to drive the Turks out of Europe and ultimately out of Asia Minor.² Accordingly, the blame for Alfonso's inability to achieve those goals lay squarely with other Christian powers – the Greeks, the Venetians and the Papacy.

By and large those writing after Cerone adopted a more critical assessment of Alfonso's response to the Turks. One argument is that Alfonso deliberately misled the Papacy and other European rulers about his true intentions and instead exploited the crusade in order to extract financial aid from the Church, further his political ambitions in Italy and the Balkans and strengthen Aragonese commercial interests in the Mediterranean.³ Ludwig Pastor, who believed that only the Papacy truly understood the gravity of the Ottoman threat, was particularly scathing in his assessment of Alfonso, claiming that 'he cared for nothing but his own exaltation and that of his dynasty, and never struck a blow for the defence of Christendom'.⁴ The Romanian Constantin Marinescu, in a recently recovered study of Alfonso's diplomatic and military activities in the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean, also stressed the primacy of political and economic interests that shaped his policies toward Christian and Muslim powers there.⁵ Unlike Cerone, therefore, Marinescu saw little, if any, religious motivation behind Alfonso's initiatives in the region nor any particular inclination to confront the emerging Turkish threat. Rather, the king's priorities lay in protecting Aragonese economic interests in the Levant and furthering his dynastic claims in the Holy Land, Greece and the Balkans.⁶

The final portion of Marinescu's work dealing with the post-1453 period remains lost and with it his assessment of how Alfonso's attitude may have changed following the fall of Constantinople. That event, we now know, led to a half century of intensive crusading activity against the Turks.⁷ Thanks to scholars such as Alan Ryder, author of several studies on Alfonso, and Miquel Navarro Sorní, who has examined the turbulent relationship between the king and Pope Calixtus III, we are now also better informed on Alfonso's role and involvement

in the crusading preparations undertaken by the Papacy in the final five years of the king's reign.⁸ For Ryder there is little doubt that Alfonso's response to the Turkish problem suggests 'not that he was wilfully shutting his eyes in face of impending disaster but that he did not believe in the reality of such a catastrophe'.⁹ Years of military campaigning had also convinced Alfonso that attempts to organize a grand crusade were doomed to fail. Political considerations, however, demanded that he should at least appear to go along with such plans by engaging in 'an elaborate diplomatic charade involving most of the princes of Europe'.¹⁰ In contrast Navarro Sorní argues that in fact Alfonso showed considerable interest in the crusade but only in so far as he recognized that it represented the only practical way of realizing his political and economic ambitions in the Balkans.¹¹ As early as the 1420s and 1430s royal officials and propagandists orchestrated a veritable campaign to represent the king as a longstanding and committed enemy of Islam and eventually as a would-be crusader against the Turks.¹² After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 those efforts also gained strength from the writings and orations of humanist scholars who looked to Alfonso as a champion of the anti-Turkish crusade.¹³ Needless to say, Alfonso's role within the crusading movement and how he responded to the challenge posed by the Ottoman Turks cannot be viewed in isolation. Recent interest in crusading during the fifteenth century has opened up new opportunities to assess his policies and decisions in their broader European context.¹⁴

* * *

As king of the realms of Aragon, Alfonso the Magnanimous ruled over a confederation of states that had a long history of political, military, economic and socio-cultural interactions with Muslims and Muslim lands. Indeed by the fifteenth century neither the Muslim populations within the Iberian kingdoms nor the neighbouring Islamic states were perceived as a critical threat by the Christian rulers of Aragon, Castile and Portugal. This state of affairs, it has been remarked, predisposed Alfonso toward a pragmatic and level-headed approach toward the Turkish problem that contrasted with 'the more apocalyptic attitudes of those who dealt with Islam at a distance'.¹⁵ There is, for instance, no indication that Alfonso was susceptible to what Norman Housley has termed 'the Spanish syndrome', an inferiority complex born out of Spaniards' lack of participation in the early crusades that may have inclined Alfonso's contemporary, the Valencian Pope Calixtus III, to include the conquest of Jerusalem within his crusading plans.¹⁶

Nevertheless Alfonso was not immune to the draw of crusading or the political capital that he could derive from appearing to do so. In 1410, as a fourteen-year-old, Alfonso reputedly watched in frustration while his father, Fernando of Trastámara, went to war against Muslim Granada where he earned the sobriquet 'de Antequera' following the capture of that town. Memories of Fernando's exploits remained with Alfonso beyond childhood.¹⁷ In the 1440s, as king of Naples and heir to Frederick II, he laid claim to the throne of Jerusalem as well as territories in the Balkans that by then lay along the path of Ottoman advance.

Meanwhile individuals associated with the royal court avidly sought to raise Alfonso's 'international' stature by depicting him as a crusader in defence of Christendom. It was around this time that the winged dragon, a favoured emblem of the Catalan-Aragonese kings, was represented as a bat, a symbol associated with the ruler from the West destined to recover Jerusalem.¹⁸

While he may not have considered Islam as a critical threat to his realms, Alfonso nevertheless showed a willingness to directly confront Muslim powers when he thought that such action was in his interest. In the 1420s and 1430s there were a number of military and diplomatic initiatives involving North Africa and Egypt. Catalans and other merchants from the crown of Aragon had longstanding economic interests in those parts and Alfonso's intention to extract commercial concessions from the Hafsid rulers of Tunis and the Mamluk sultanate was a major factor behind his activities there.¹⁹ But there were other potential advantages that could be derived through such policies, especially if hostile actions were framed in the context of war against the infidel and in the defence of the Christian faith.

In 1424 and again in 1432 Alfonso launched punitive expeditions against 'Abd-al-Aziz of Tunis. The 1424 raid initially targeted the island of Djerba, partly in reaction to disputes relating to Tunisian piracy and 'Abd-al-Aziz's refusal to release Christian captives in Tunis but perhaps also with an eye to the potential booty that could be obtained should the enterprise prove successful.²⁰ When that attempt to capture Djerba failed the Aragonese forces led by Alfonso's brother Pedro turned their attention to nearby Kerkenna, taking over 3,000 of its inhabitants into captivity. Eight years later Alfonso led a second, larger assault against Djerba. A substantial fleet had been assembled the previous summer to launch his quest for southern Italy but the Papal bull recognizing Alfonso's claims to the kingdom of Naples had still not arrived by mid-summer 1432. Partly in reaction to Hafsid threats to Sicily and Malta, partly because a fleet assembled with much pomp and expense could not be left idle, 132 ships left Sicily for Djerba that August.²¹ The Aragonese forces remained there for more than three weeks and scored some successes against Hafsid attempts to counterattack from the mainland but this incursion ultimately proved no more successful than the first.²² Significantly, while the expedition's objective was purely political, royal propagandists embellished the affair as a triumph over the enemies of the faith while portraying Alfonso as a defender of Christendom against Islam. Letters proclaiming Alfonso's 'victory' went out to the German Emperor, the duke of Burgundy and the council of Basel while the Pope received the news directly from the Aragonese ambassador.²³

During the years preceding his campaigns in southern Italy, Alfonso also intervened periodically in the eastern Mediterranean. In accordance with Aragonese priorities and interests there, however, the focus was on the Mamluks rather than the Turks. Trade between the realms of Aragon and the Byzantine Empire was modest. Unlike Venice and Genoa, which had major commercial interests in Constantinople and the Aegean, Catalan commerce in the East was not unduly threatened by Turkish encroachment on Greek territories. In contrast, Catalan

mercantile activity in Egypt and Syria surged during the first three decades of the fifteenth century, notwithstanding periodic outbreaks of tensions, and culminated in a wide-ranging commercial treaty signed in 1430.²⁴ Three more commercial treaties followed during the next decade.²⁵ Although Alfonso cultivated close relations with King Janus of Cyprus and even positioned himself as protector of the Hospitallers on Rhodes, it was economic matters that ultimately determined his stance toward the Mamluk sultanate.²⁶ In December 1426, following a devastating attack on Cyprus the previous summer, he accepted 100,000 florins from the Hospitallers to lead a crusading fleet to their island base of Rhodes in response to what was believed to be an imminent Egyptian assault. But plans were abruptly cancelled when the Hospitaller commanderies in Aragon failed to come up with the promised sum.²⁷ A crusade subsidy amounting to another 100,000 florins was obtained from Pope Eugenius IV in 1433 to undertake naval operations against the Mamluks. But in the end most of the subsidy went to fund military operations against Castile and a renewed attack on the Tunisian coast.²⁸ If these interventions in Egypt and North Africa during the 1420s and 1430s demonstrate Alfonso's willingness to project his power against Muslim territories, there is little indication that he had much interest in the crusade or indeed in confronting the Ottoman Turks.

A change in that approach is evident from late 1442 following the conquest of southern Italy. There were at least two reasons for this. First, as king of Naples and therefore a vassal of the Pope, Alfonso could not completely ignore Papal requests to support an anti-Turkish crusade. A few months after his triumphal entry into Naples in February 1443 Alfonso therefore complied with Eugenius IV's request to contribute some of his own ships to the 10 Papal vessels that Eugenius had ordered built in Venice and which the Pope intended to dispatch to the eastern Mediterranean. But disagreements between Alfonso and the Venetians on one hand and the Venetians and the Pope on the other meant that the planned expedition never materialized.²⁹ Second, with the throne of Naples secured, Alfonso felt confident that he could project his power in the eastern Mediterranean against Egypt and rival Christian powers. In the 1420s repeated raids against Mamluk ports in Egypt and Syria by Catalan corsairs had helped secure a favourable commercial treaty for the Aragonese. Between 1449 and 1450 Alfonso sent three galley squadrons under the command of Bernat de Villamari which mainly targeted Venetian and Egyptian subjects. In October 1450 Pope Nicholas V granted Alfonso permission to occupy the former Hospitaller island of Castelorizo, situated just off the Anatolian coast and some 100 miles east of Rhodes.³⁰ Financial difficulties and political developments in Italy prevented its effective use after 1452 but the operation again demonstrates that Aragonese interests in the eastern Mediterranean lay in Egyptian rather than Ottoman areas of influence.

By the late 1430s, with the Papacy increasingly alarmed at the Ottoman threat to both the Byzantine lands and eastern Europe, the anti-Turkish crusade became a major western concern.³¹ However that concern did not easily translate into action on the part of Europe's princes and rulers. Indeed it seemed that

no one wanted to be the first to commit men and resources to a new crusade; no one wanted to leave his own borders exposed, his own lands and treasure at risk, to fight a battle that might well benefit a rival power.³²

As ruler of perhaps the strongest Christian kingdom in the Mediterranean, Alfonso was inevitably singled out as a potential leading participant in a grand crusade. If, as Ryder and others have argued, he was unconvinced of the need for an anti-Turkish crusade, political considerations therefore demanded that he should at least appear mindful of the concerns of the Pope and of other European princes such as Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy.³³ In mid-1444, reacting in part to Philip's prompting and preceding the defeat of the Hungarian army at Varna, Alfonso presented a proposal to the German Emperor, the English and French monarchs and Philip to confront the Ottomans on multiple fronts.³⁴ The Ottoman advance into Greece and the Balkans was to be blocked by providing financial and material aid to local leaders, notably the Albanian Scanderbeg and the despot of Arta; Hungary, with German assistance, would advance from the east; and a naval expedition would tie down Turkish forces in the Levant. Along with offensive operations on two key fronts, the plan therefore also envisaged an application of the *antemurale* principle aimed at bolstering the defensive capabilities of front-line Christian territories.³⁵ How seriously Alfonso took this proposal is unclear but in any case, except for Philip of Burgundy, the response from the other princes was lukewarm. In 1451 Alfonso approached Pope Nicholas V offering to lead a 'grand enterprise' in return for a subsidy of 100,000 ducats and if other Christian powers agreed to participate.³⁶ Negotiations dragged on and nothing had been settled by the time news of the Turkish conquest of Constantinople reached Naples in early July 1453.

Alfonso's response to the fall of Constantinople was to present another memorial to Nicholas V in September 1453 which recalled the one he had put forward in 1444. The emphasis was now mainly on the protection of those regions most threatened by the Ottoman advance, namely Hungary, the Greek despotate of Arta and the Albanian territories defended by Scanderbeg and his local allies.³⁷ The plan had three strands: the dispatch of a fleet to the Levant to defend the populations menaced by the Turks and attack Turkish vessels in those waters; the sending of reinforcements of at least a thousand infantry and 200 cavalry to Albania in order to augment the forces available to Scanderbeg; the launching of attacks against the Turks from Hungary while also supporting the despot of Serbia. The entire enterprise was to be placed under the command of one individual capable of coordinating its different elements and provided with adequate material and financial support. Perhaps spurred on by the potential flow of crusading subsidies into his coffers, Alfonso was in effect putting forward his own candidacy for the role of leader of the crusade. Such was the determination with which he pursued his proposal on this occasion that he turned to the College of Cardinals for support when it seemed to him that Nicholas was dragging his feet.³⁸

Although the strategic objective of this plan lay in the defence of Christendom, its proposal to defend the Balkans and Greece also dovetailed with Alfonso's

dynastic ambitions there. As ruler of Aragon, Naples and Sicily he could assert titular claims over Albania and the duchies of Athens and Neopatras. The proximity of southern Italy to the Balkans therefore demanded that more attention be paid to the advance of Ottoman armies in those parts, even if from Alfonso's perspective it was Venice that posed the greater threat to Aragonese commercial interests in the region. Alfonso's support for local leaders such as the Albanian George Castriota (Scanderbeg) was therefore intended to weaken Venice as much as to halt the westward progress of the Ottoman Turks.³⁹

During the 1440s Alfonso demonstrated a willingness to intervene repeatedly in Balkan affairs.⁴⁰ Through his officials in Ragusa he was kept well informed about Turkish activities in the region.⁴¹ In 1444, Stefan Vukčić, the voivode (governor) of Bosnia agreed to stop paying the tribute he owed to the Turks and instead became Alfonso's vassal. Meanwhile, an alliance with the despot of Arta, Charles II Tocco, extended Aragonese influence to northern Greece and Corfu. Lastly, and most significantly, Alfonso reached out to Scanderbeg who from 1443 led the resistance against Turkish domination over Albania. Initially an ally of Venice, Scanderbeg turned to Alfonso for support and protection when the Venetian policy toward the Ottoman Turks led them to break their alliance with the Albanian leader. Aragonese military assistance began to flow across the Adriatic from 1449, in time to bolster Scanderbeg's resistance against a major Turkish offensive, and continued until the end of Alfonso's reign in 1458. In 1451 Scanderbeg pledged to become Alfonso's vassal once the Turks had been pushed out of Albania.⁴²

Given the strategic value of Albania for Alfonso's Mediterranean ambitions, he understandably tried to convince the Papacy to channel crusading resources there against the Turks. The Church had for some time taken an interest in that area but the election of Calixtus III in April 1455 provided a new opportunity for Alfonso to exploit.⁴³ Calixtus's anti-Ottoman strategy was broad, encompassing military operations in eastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean as well as diplomatic initiatives toward the Mamluks and Ethiopia.⁴⁴ Inevitably, however, Alfonso's designs also met with suspicions on the part of the Venetians that he wished to use the crusade to strengthen his presence in the region at Venice's expense.⁴⁵ In particular Venice resisted Alfonso's plan to send the Italian condottiere Jacopo Piccinino and his mercenary troops to Albania. With the peace of Lodi and formation of the league of Italian states signed in 1454 (to which Alfonso added his assent the following January), Alfonso argued that Piccinino's services could be employed in aid of Scanderbeg. Discussions continued for months but with Calixtus III siding with the Venetians the project eventually fell by the wayside.⁴⁶

Thereafter, the remainder of Alfonso's reign was profoundly shaped by his escalating conflict with Calixtus III even as he appeared more than ever determined to participate in a crusade against the Turks. On 1 November 1455 he took the cross at the cathedral of Naples during a ceremony that, according to the Milanese ambassador, lasted from morning to evening and which saw some 2,000 people following the king's example.⁴⁷ On Alfonso's instructions, detailed accounts of the ceremony were immediately dispatched to several European

courts announcing the king's determination to confront the Turkish Sultan in defence of Christendom and the faith.⁴⁸ That he failed in the end to honour the vow was due to a combination of political and financial circumstances. In Italy, the always-tense relations with Venice interfered with his Balkan plans while in the final year of his life Genoa became a great obsession that at times appeared to consume all other considerations.⁴⁹ But there was also the limited financial support that Calixtus provided and which ultimately proved inadequate to meet Papal requests for naval and military support.⁵⁰ And there were also distractions of a personal nature, notably recurring health problems but also his relationship with Lucrezia d'Alagno.⁵¹

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Among those attempting to draw the king of Aragon into a crusade against the Turks were some of the many humanists who wrote letters and orations addressed to princes and prelates across Europe lamenting the fall of Constantinople and its impact on the West's religious and cultural heritage.⁵² Several of these compositions were produced at Alfonso's court while others came from authors living outside the kingdom of Naples. Among the humanist scholars who saw Alfonso as a potential protagonist of an anti-Turkish crusade were Flavio Biondo, Poggio Bracciolini, Andrea Contrario, Leonardo Dati and Giannozzo Manetti. The earliest work in this genre, an oration by the Cretan George of Trebizond urging an expedition against Egypt, Syria and the Holy Land, was written in 1443, shortly after Alfonso's conquest of Naples.⁵³ From 1453, however, humanist exhortations to Alfonso focused squarely on the recovery of Constantinople and only occasionally mentioned Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Biondo's *De expeditione in Turchos* was completed just three weeks after news of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople reached Rome.⁵⁴ Some compositions were intended as propaganda pieces; others, such as a 1455 *epistola exhortatoria* by Manetti, may have also been an indirect solicitation for Alfonso's favours.⁵⁵ Others formed part of the broader diplomatic pressure applied by Calixtus III to convince Alfonso to commit his resources against the Turks.⁵⁶

As indicated above, propagandistic texts that framed Alfonso's actions against Muslim powers in the crusading tradition had appeared in the 1430s. Recently characterized as 'one of the most extraordinary courtly campaigns of legitimization and exaltation in fifteenth century Europe', it began with an effort to secure Alfonso's place on the throne of Aragon and later his conquest of Naples and continued thereafter with a sustained effort to portray him as the greatest of European princes.⁵⁷ This latter strand reached its height with depictions of Alfonso as a monarch destined to lead a grand anti-Turkish crusade. It was orchestrated by humanists but also by men-of-letters and artists who enjoyed or aspired to Alfonso's patronage or approval: Antonio Beccadelli ('Panormita'), author of *De dictis et factis Alphonsi regis Aragonum et Neapolis*; Bartolomeo Facio, who wrote *Rerum gestarum Alfonsi regis*; and lesser-known figures such as the Sicilian notary Matteo Zuppardo, who in his epic poem *Alfonseis* went so

far as to claim that Alfonso's close collaboration with Janos Hunyadi made possible the victory over the Turks at Belgrade in 1456.⁵⁸

Perhaps the most famous literary expression of the aspirations surrounding Alfonso as a potential crusading champion against the Turks comes by way of the Catalan novel *Tirant lo Blanc*, composed mainly by the knight Joanot Martorell in 1460. In a recent article David Abulafia has drawn attention to a number of allusions to Alfonso found in Martorell's text.⁵⁹ While the work as a whole 'can be read as a passionate plea for greater involvement by the west in the war against the Turks', there is also praise for interests and traits that Alfonso's supporters would have associated with him. These include references to the Holy Grail as well as admiration for men who balanced valour with wisdom and for monarchs endowed with magnanimity.⁶⁰ And Martorell's depiction of the Angevins and the Genoese as obstructing Christian efforts to confront the Turks in turn echoes the deeply negative feelings that Alfonso often expressed toward those two implacable rivals.⁶¹

Finally, this literary effort had an artistic counterpart, notably allegorical performances. The annual celebrations commemorating the conquest of Naples included a mock battle between Christians and Turks. There was also an attempt (not very successful as it turned out) to promote the cult of St George – a warrior saint with strong associations to the crusades – among the Neapolitan population. A book of hours once belonging to Alfonso included an illustration that showed him putting to flight a group of Muslim knights. And as mentioned previously, depictions and use of the image of the bat as the king's personal emblem evoked strong symbolic associations with the defeat of the infidel.⁶²

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How did Alfonso's stance toward crusading generally and the anti-Turkish crusade in particular compare with that of contemporary Christian rulers? Certainly he was hardly unique in weighing the demands of those who would have him take a leading role in the crusade against the political and economic interests of his realms and his military and diplomatic affairs in Italy, the Balkans and elsewhere. Did he, as some have argued, cynically exploit the Papacy's concern with the Turkish problem for self-interest, or was it the case that, as for Matthias I of Hungary, 'the crusade was something to which he subscribed and aspired [yet] it had to compete for his attention with much else'?⁶³ As Norman Housley, Benjamin Weber and others have shown, fifteenth-century Popes faced constant problems in persuading European princes to support their often complex and hugely expensive crusading plans. Understandably, therefore, those considering whether to commit troops and resources to the crusade worried about the repercussions of leaving their own states and kingdoms weak and exposed to their enemies. As one who had spent most of his reign battling rivals in Italy and the Mediterranean, Alfonso had plenty of enemies closer to home to worry about.

Notes

- 1 Miquel Navarro Sorní, *Calixto III Borja y Alfonso el Magnánimo frente a la cruzada* (Valencia, 2003), 31–4; Alan Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous: King of Aragon, Naples and Sicily, 1396–1458* (Oxford, 1990), 290–2.
- 2 Francesco Cerone, *La politica orientale di Alfonso di Aragona* (Naples, 1903), originally published in *Archivio storico per le province napoletane* vol. 27 (1902), 3–93, 380–456, 555–634, 774–852 and vol. 28 (1903), 154–212.
- 3 Notably sympathetic assessments of Alfonso in Athanase Gegaj, *L'Albanie et l'invasion turque au XVe siècle* (Louvain, 1937), 83–96; Santiago Sobrequès Vidal, 'Sobre el ideal de la cruzada en Alfonso V de Aragón', *Hispania* 47 (1952), 232–52. Like Cerone, Ernesto Pontieri, *Alfonso il Magnanimo re di Napoli 1435–1458* (Naples, 1975) considered Alfonso to be the only ruler in Italy who cared about the crusade.
- 4 Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, trans. and ed. Frederick I. Antrobus (London, 1906), 284.
- 5 Constantin Marinescu, *La Politique orientale d'Alfonse V d'Aragon, roi de Naples (1416–1458)*, ed. M. T. Ferrer i Mallol (Barcelona, 1994). Marinescu's manuscript went missing during the Second World War and was believed lost until parts of it were rediscovered decades later and published by the Institut d'Estudis Catalans.
- 6 Note for instance Marinescu's harsh criticism of Alfonso's decision to recall Bernat de Villamari, who had been raiding Mamluk and Ottoman ships in the Levant, in January 1453, in order to undertake naval operations against Florence, thereby further weakening Constantinople's capacity to resist the Ottoman siege the following spring: Marinescu, *La Politique orientale*, 232.
- 7 Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505* (Oxford, 2012); Benjamin Weber, *Lutter contre les Turcs: Les formes nouvelles de la croisade pontificale au XV^e siècle* (Rome, 2013).
- 8 Alan Ryder, 'The Eastern Policy of Alfonso the Magnanimous', *Atti dell'Accademia Pontaniana* 28 (1979), 7–26; Alan Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, 290–305; Navarro, *Calixto III Borja y Alfonso el Magnánimo*.
- 9 Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, 295.
- 10 Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, 292.
- 11 Navarro, *Calixto III Borja y Alfonso el Magnánimo*, 33–4.
- 12 Joan Molina Figueras, 'Contra Turcos. Alfonso d'Aragona e la retorica della crociata', in *La battaglia nel Rinascimento meridionale: moduli narrativi tra parole e immagini*, ed. Giancarlo Abbamonte *et al.* (Rome, 2011), 97–110; Francesco Senatore, ed., *Dispacci sforzeschi da Napoli, I, 1444–2 luglio 1458* (Salerno, 1997).
- 13 Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 2008); Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia, 2004); Jerry H. Bentley, *Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples* (Princeton, 1987).
- 14 For recent historiography, Norman Housley, 'Introduction', in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley (Basingstoke, 2004), 1–12; Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 1–6.
- 15 Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, 292.
- 16 Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 28. On the conquest of Jerusalem as a goal of Calixtus III, Weber, *Lutter contre les Turcs*, 125–7.
- 17 Navarro, *Calixto III Borja y Alfonso el Magnánimo*, 34.
- 18 Figueras, 'Contra Turcos', 107–8. A helmet surmounted by a bat appears alongside Alfonso in a drawing by Pisanello. Alfonso is believed to have worn such a helmet during tournaments held in Naples.
- 19 Eliyahu Ashtor, 'Alfonso il Magnanimo e i Mamelucchi', *Archivio storico italiano* 519 (1984), 3–30; Marinescu, *La politique orientale*, 1–12; Francesco Cerone, 'Alfonso il

- Magnanimo e Abu' Omar Othman: trattative e negoziati tra il Regno di Sicilia da qua e di là dal Faro ed il Regno di Tunisi (1432–1457)', *Archivio storico per la Sicilia orientale* 9 (1912), 45–70 and 10 (1913), 22–78.
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- 24 Mario del Treppo, *I mercanti catalani e l'espansione della Corona d'Aragona nel secolo XV* (Naples, 1972), 35–42.
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- 27 Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, 141–2.
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- 30 Daniel Duran Duelt, *Kastellórizo, una isla griega bajo dominio de Alfonso el Magnánimo (1450–1458). Colección documental* (Barcelona, 2003).
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- 32 Margaret Meserve, 'Italian Humanists and the Problem of the Crusade', in Norman Housley, ed., *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century*, 13–38, here 13.
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- 35 On the *antemurale* or bulwark strategy, Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 40.
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- 38 *Ibid.*, 48.
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- 42 Marinescu, *La politique orientale*, 164.
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- 44 Navarro, *Calixto III Borja y Alfonso el Magnánimo*, 18–20.
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- 59 David Abulafia, ‘Aragon versus Turkey – Tirant lo Blanc and Mehmed the Conqueror: Iberia, the Crusade, and Late Medieval Chivalry’, in *Byzantines, Latins, and Turks in the Eastern Mediterranean World after 1150*, ed. Jonathan Harris *et al.* (Oxford, 2012), 291–312, here 300–2.
- 60 Abulafia, ‘Aragon versus Turkey’, 300, 309 reiterating similar reflections in Mario del Treppo, ‘Alfonso il Magnanimo e la Corona d’Aragona’, in *XVI Congresso internazionale di storia della Corona d’Aragona (Napoli, 1997)*, ed. Guido d’Agostino and Giulia Buffardi, 2 vols (Naples, 2000), 1:1–17, here 7.
- 61 In a letter from July 1456 Alfonso described the Genoese as ‘the true Turks of Europe’ and repeated the accusation that they had brought the Turks into Europe and through their betrayal contributed to the fall of Constantinople: Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, 401.
- 62 Figueras, ‘Contra Turcos’, 105–10.
- 63 Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 119.

6 Papal legates and crusading activity in central Europe

The Hussites and the Ottoman Turks¹

Antonín Kalous

From the eleventh century onwards legates were a common instrument of Papal policy and government. They had many attributes and powers, extending from politics and diplomacy as well as judicial authority to spiritual and penitentiary practice. As direct representatives of the Pope holding a specific commission, they could replace the Pope or more precisely his office in various contexts reaching from liturgy to crusade.² In crusading terms, legates were present on expeditions from the very beginning of the movement in the reign of Pope Urban II. In 1096 it was Bishop Adhémar of Le Puy who was appointed as legate to the army, commissioned to promote the crusade and to be one of the leaders of the armies in Europe as well as in the far-off Holy Land.³ His position was not only based on his personal abilities, it was conceived as an office: after Adhémar's death he was replaced by other prelates who also held legatine powers.⁴ He had thus established a precedent for later crusades: legates were usually present and influential in the leadership of a crusade.

What was the role of legates in the later crusades? In what capacity did legates enter the field of crusading activity? Did they continue personally to wield the sword against their enemies and lead crusading armies? The role of Papal legates is traditionally described according to the above-mentioned model, but both the office of Papal legates and their operational roles evolved in different settings and times. In the fifteenth century, legates and nuncios were mostly concerned with two specific forms of crusade: one against the advancing Ottoman Turks, the other against the first successful heretics, the Hussites of Bohemia. The Ottoman Turks had set foot on the European continent in the mid-fourteenth century and by the end of it they had managed to conquer large parts of the southeastern tip of Europe. Although their advance was halted by Timur Lenk and subsequent internal conflicts, the issues raised by their expansion resurfaced in the 1420s and 1430s, featuring in the texts of Popes, scholars as well as popular preachers for centuries to come. The Hussites, on the other hand, were successful in their revolt and managed to exert control over most of Bohemia and Moravia in the 1420s and early 1430s. Constant civil war and occasional struggle against external intruders led to a split in Czech society and to the creation of the *utraquist* church (from communion in both kinds, *sub utraque specie*), which incorporated some of the main ideas of the Hussite revolution. The country later

became problematic again and the crusade was proclaimed not only in the first stage of the revolt, but also in the later 1460s.

Papal legates and the Hussites

Crusading activity in central Europe is related to the ‘heretical’ movement of the Czech Hussites of Bohemia and Moravia. Jan (John) Hus was burned at the stake in July 1415 and liturgical reforms started to develop even before his death. It was only in 1418, however, that the first legates were dispatched to the region in the persons of Cardinal Giovanni Dominici and Fernando de Palacios, the bishop of Lugo, both of whom operated at the court of King Sigismund. Following Dominici’s death at Buda in June 1419, it was Fernando who actively administered the organization of the first crusade against the Hussites. As Papal nuncio – sometimes termed *legatus missus* – it was Fernando who on the basis of the Papal bull *Omnium plasmatoris domini* solemnly proclaimed the crusade against the Hussites in Wrocław on 17 March 1420.⁵ Thereafter a series of legates were involved in the organization of the Hussite crusades: Fernando de Palacios in 1419–20 (he remained active in the region even after his replacement as main organizer of the crusade); Cardinal Branda da Castiglione in 1421 and 1422–25; Cardinal Giordano Orsini in 1426; Cardinal Henry Beaufort in 1427–29; and finally Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini in 1431.⁶

What kind of involvement of these Papal legates can be identified in the first phase of the Hussite crusades? Did they really imitate Bishop Adhémar? In this setting the Papal legates had a number of functions relating to the crusade. First of all, they were the agents of the Pope in proclaiming the crusade and preaching the cross. Cardinal Branda is well known for spreading the word throughout Germany, especially during his second legation to Germany, when he was also commissioned to advance the cause of reform.⁷ In the case of the crusade, he was able to utilize not only the bull of the crusade and faculties for condemning the Wycliffites and Hussites, but also mandates for granting indulgences and disseminating an anti-Hussite liturgy. It is clear, however, that Cardinal Branda was not *directly* leading the crusade, for he confined his involvement to political negotiations with local rulers: he even brought a banner for King Sigismund, consecrated by the Pope for the fight against the heretics. Others, however, did try to stand at the head of the crusading army.

Papal nuncio Fernando de Palacios, for example, was fiercely criticized by the Hussite manifestos as

not a legate of Christ, who is the author of peace and salvation, rather a nuncio of Antichrist, who like Behemoth maintains himself with forged weapons and shields, vaunts himself and grows with bloodshed, murder, pestilence and the oppression of innocent saints.

He was, they continued, not ashamed to take up the cross against the Czechs in Wrocław, to assemble large numbers of troops and cast away all justice.⁸ This text

naturally illustrates the opposing side's criticism of the active leadership of the crusade. The same can be said about the other proponents of the crusade. They were heavily criticized by the Hussites, naturally, and praised by the Catholic side. However, even from the Catholics praise was not unanimous, because the crusades failed to bring about positive outcomes. Thus the Pope was driven to search for more effective substitutes for his legates, a search which explains the above-mentioned sequence of cardinals, each of whom failed and was replaced.

The organizational role of the legates was thus the key one. Even though they were not successful and did not manage to eliminate the Hussite heresy, both their intention and the volume and range of their activity are quite clear. All the legates gathered money as well as troops to lead the war in Bohemia. Giuliano Cesarini's other obligation was to preside over the council of Basel and it was the council that took over the initiative in dealing with the Hussites. It was clear that the latter could not be subdued by force, and negotiations started. The legates of the council were no longer interested in crusading, but in discussions. The struggle between the council and the Pope clearly constituted a hindrance to the crusade, and even to further negotiations. That is why it was not until the 1450s that negotiations with the Pope recommenced.

The role of the legates in the struggle against the Hussites, or utraquists as they were generally called, started to change in the mid-fifteenth century. It entailed substantially more negotiation than previously. Discussions between the council and the Czechs in the 1430s shaped later communication with the Pope and the representatives of the Papal *curia*. The end of the Hussite wars coincided with renewed interest in the Ottoman Turks and Papal activity in this direction. It did not mean, however, that the Pope neglected the battlefields of central Europe. At the end of the 1440s Cardinal Juan Carvajal was the man who started discussions with the 'heretical' Czechs. A Czech embassy, representing the land diet of Bohemia, appeared in Rome in 1447, but arrived too late to deliver obedience to Pope Eugenius IV. It was Nicholas V or rather his cardinals, who began to talk to the Czechs: their crucial topic was always the question of the Compacts, the agreement with the council of Basel that allowed communion in both kinds, and of the archbishop of Prague. Juan Carvajal led the talks in Rome and at this point it was already clear that he was earmarked to go to central Europe as legate *de latere*. There he managed to conclude the Concordat of Vienna with Frederick III, but in Prague he was unsuccessful. That said, there was no sign of a renewed crusade.⁹ It seemed that the crusade was to be confined to the Ottoman Turks. In 1444 Giuliano Cesarini, as leader of the crusade against Sultan Murad II, fell at Varna together with Wladislas the king of Poland and Hungary.¹⁰ Cesarini, who had first-hand experience with the battlefields of Bohemia, also led a crusade against the Ottoman Turks, but as will shortly become apparent, he was not the last prelate to connect the fifteenth century's two most urgent crusades.

When we consider the involvement of Papal legates and nuncios in Hussite, or rather utraquist affairs in the second half of the fifteenth century, there is no longer much debate about crusade. Nicholas of Cusa planned to hold negotiations with the utraquists, but he never entered Bohemia when on legation in Germany,

even though he was commissioned to go there.¹¹ The king of Bohemia, George of Poděbrady, installed in 1458 with limited Papal backing, at first enjoyed the grudging support of Pope Pius II, who had met him personally when in Bohemia and viewed him as the only person capable of reconciling the quarrelling Czechs. Pius also counted on George for the crusade against the Ottoman Turks. The negotiations of the archbishop of Crete and Papal nuncio Girolamo Lando and his colleague Francesco da Toledo did not, however, bring positive results.¹²

The start of the clash between the Pope and King George was the embassy sent to Rome by the king in 1462 to offer obedience. The fatal blow to the king's plans was the Pope's abolition of the Compacts when this royal embassy was actually present in Rome. As recounted by Pius II in his *Commentaries*, Fantino della Valle, the Papal nuncio and a former diplomat of King George, was imprisoned following his speech on his return to the royal court at Prague, and an argument with the king. George then firmly supported the idea of the redeeming function of communion in both kinds.¹³ The organization of a new crusade was at hand, but it was only the successor to Pius II, the Venetian Pope Paul II, who embarked on the road leading to a new anti-Hussite, or more properly anti-George, crusade. After unsuccessful dealings with the Emperor and the king of Poland, the one who offered his cooperation was Matthias Corvinus, the king of Hungary, a former son-in-law of King George. King Matthias promised to fight both against the Ottoman Turks and the heretics (i.e. the ultraquists), thereby once more connecting the two struggles.¹⁴

The war started only in 1468, but the preparation, coordination and communication with King George's opposition was largely a task for Papal diplomacy: the Pope himself wrote to the Catholic powers of central Europe, but more importantly a Papal legate (*legatus missus*), Rudolph of Rudesheim, was operating in the region. Moreover, it was Lorenzo Roverella, as a nuncio *cum potestate legati de latere*, who was commissioned to proclaim war against the heretical king. He was dispatched to reinforce the activity of Rudolph together with another Papal representative, Gabriele Rangoni, a very energetic Franciscan friar who later became one of the crucial supporters of Matthias Corvinus in Rome. These three men actively organized the fight against King George, dealing with conflicting interests and constructing support for the crusade.¹⁵

One example of their activity was discussion about possible neutrality. Lorenzo Roverella was open to discussion; for example, he confirmed the compromising neutral position of České Budějovice, a strongly Catholic royal town in southern Bohemia.¹⁶ Rudolph, on the other hand, was not willing to hear anything at all about neutrality and political (which effectively entailed doctrinal) compromise. According to the Wrocław chronicler, Peter Eschenloer, Rudolph remarked to the town's envoys

if you could find the middle way between God and the Devil, it would be good for you to stay in the middle between the lords and the heretics, but if it is not possible, you will have to choose between the Devil and God.¹⁷

So while the religiously divided inhabitants of Bohemia and Moravia were in some instances attempting to continue with cohabitation and toleration – which they knew from personal experience in the first round of the crusades against the Hussites was the only way to survive – the opposition league was formed and in 1468 King Matthias joined it to lead the crusade.

The position of the legates was changing, however, as Rudolph was appointed bishop of Wrocław and began to be less involved in the crusade itself. His inactivity was noticed and even criticized by the other nuncios, especially Gabriele Rangoni.¹⁸ The crusade itself, however, was entrusted to the secular arm, that is King Matthias, who organized it in close cooperation with the local opposition. The nuncios Lorenzo Roverella and Gabriele Rangoni were present at the court of Matthias Corvinus, gained financial support,¹⁹ and organized political negotiations with allies as well as with opponents (one example being the meeting between King George's sons and King Matthias in Olomouc in April 1469).²⁰

The Papal representatives (legates or nuncios) thus had three basic functions in the crusading activity directed by King Matthias against King George. In the first place, they were organizers of the crusade, though not in the sense of the earlier crusades against the Hussites. In this instance they were not leaders of the military actions, rather organizers in the background, remaining absent from the battlefields; for the most part they confined their activities to the court of Matthias Corvinus, the city of Wrocław or some equally safe spot. Second, they were organizing the collection of financial support for the warring king. It was through Lorenzo Roverella that Papal support reached the king of Hungary, and at the same time Lorenzo organized the collection of money from crusading indulgences in the region. Third, they represented Papal policy in the region, which had always to be adapted to the circumstances. For example, even while disagreeing and lacking a direct commission by the Pope, Lorenzo Roverella was forced by Matthias to confirm his election as king of Bohemia. That happened after the death of George and the election of another candidate, the first-born son of the king of Poland, Wladislas, as king of Bohemia in 1471.²¹

Even before King George's death another legate *de latere*, Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini, was dispatched as a representative of the Pope in the *Reichstag* held at Regensburg. In reaction to the mission of the Saxon embassy in Rome, which tried to exonerate King George, he was expressly commissioned *not* to deal with the heretical king or to attempt any cooperation with the heretics. The crusade against the Ottoman Turks was again stressed, even if Paul II never abandoned the idea of the crusade against the utraquists. The settlement of the conflict came only later, with the king's death acting only as a tentative first step.²²

The policy of the Papacy changed considerably with the death of Paul II and the accession of Sixtus IV. He continued to support King Matthias, but did not consider the Bohemian struggle to be as important as his predecessor had. Like Paul, Sixtus wished to launch a crusade against the Ottoman Turks; unlike Paul, however, he strove for internal peace in central Europe. The legates sent to the region were supposed to act accordingly. Politically too the situation changed: Wladislas,

the king of Bohemia who was elected at the diet in Kutná Hora was a Catholic, even though he was not yet confirmed as king by either Pope or Emperor.

The Papal legate *de latere* who came to central Europe immediately after Sixtus's accession to the throne was Cardinal Marco Barbo. He was dispatched from Rome together with four other legates to facilitate preparations for the crusade. The central European legate was destined to go to the courts of the Emperor and the kings of Hungary and Poland. He was coming as *angelus pacis* with the brief of halting the war between the two kings, who were in conflict for the Bohemian crown. Cardinal Marco not only enjoyed the typical *facultates* of Papal legates *de latere*, he also had at his disposal special mandates for negotiation, with two alternative outcomes. One was the excommunication of the king of Poland as well as his son and their supporters and also, should negotiations prove successful, Matthias's confirmation as king of Bohemia. The other was the division of the Bohemian Crown lands into two parts, this being the precondition for bringing about a compromise solution.²³ The political division of the lands was first mentioned in 1472 and finally occurred in 1478–79, though it resulted not from the activity of Cardinal Marco Barbo, but from discussions between the representatives of the two kings (and kingdoms). Still, in Italy at least peace was viewed as a success for Papal diplomacy.²⁴

From this point onwards the heretical Czechs were not really viewed in crusading terms. Only at the end of 1483, when there was an utraquist uprising in Prague and the second defenestration occurred, did Pope Sixtus call for organized central European action against the heretics. He wrote to the nuncio in place, Bartolomeo Maraschi and the legate *de latere*, John of Aragon, to the kings of Poland and Hungary, to the neighbouring German bishops and princes and to the administrator of the Prague archdiocese.²⁵ The crucial person in this list was, however, Matthias Corvinus, the king of Hungary and Bohemia, as the Pope still did not recognize Wladislas II Jagiellonian as king of Bohemia – that would happen only in 1487. The Pope requested Matthias to deal with the heretics, acting as ‘always the hammer of infidels and heretics’ (*semper malleus infidelium et hereticorum*), but without mentioning a crusade. That was now reserved for another theatre, the southeast. The kingdom of Bohemia returned to negotiations for union with the Roman Church, which acquired new urgency with the onset of the German Reformation.²⁶

Ottoman crusades

As a logical consequence of the geographical advance of the Ottoman Turks, central Europe represented a key region for the Turkish crusade during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. And the Papal legates and nuncios (usually with the powers of the legate, *cum potestate legati de latere*) had specific roles to play within the evolving process of the Papacy's programme.

In the broadest terms what we see is a sequence of general crusade projects launched by individual Popes during the second half of the fifteenth century and the early 1500s. The intention was that Papal legates would play a decisive role in

such projects, which placed severe demands on the European sovereigns in terms of their coordination and cooperation. Active cooperation would represent participation in the crusade, but there was also passive cooperation in ensuring general peace between all Christian monarchs and countries. In this sense the Papal legates were negotiators and facilitators of the crusade rather than direct leaders and organizers.

Four larger projects were launched during this period. In 1455 Pope Calixtus III sent four Papal legates *de latere* out from Rome; in 1471 Pope Sixtus IV dispatched as many as five cardinals as legates. This practice was followed in 1500 by Pope Alexander VI who confined himself to three legates, and finally, in 1518 Pope Leo X commissioned four cardinals to act on his behalf as Papal legates. Table 6.1 shows the details for these legations.

As can be seen from the table, there was always interest in the area of Germany and its eastern neighbours, because this was the crucial area for a military expedition against the Ottoman Turks. Central and east-central Europe was the border region of the advancing Ottoman Turks and needed to be internally organized and externally supported if it was to withstand the pressure of the southeastern superpower. In the historiography of the subject the positions of Hungary and to a lesser extent Poland have been emphasized.²⁷ The treatment of these two countries in Papal policy is highly revealing for Rome's overall strategy.

First, however, the cluster of attempts at dispatching multiple legates calls for comment. The two best illustrative examples are those of Sixtus IV in 1471 and Leo X in 1518, but the other two are useful for analyzing the overall distribution of legates in Europe. In the first case, in 1455, the Papal legates were reacting to

Table 6.1 Multiple creations of legates mid-1400s to early 1500s

<i>1455</i> <i>Calixtus III</i>	<i>1471</i> <i>Sixtus IV</i>	<i>1500</i> <i>Alexander VI</i>	<i>1518</i> <i>Leo X</i>
Alain de Coëtivy <i>France</i>	Bessarion <i>France, Burgundy, England</i>	Juan Vera <i>France, Spain, Portugal, England</i>	Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena <i>France</i>
Nicholas of Cusa <i>England, Germany</i>	Roderigo Borja <i>Spain</i>	Raymund Peraudi <i>Germany</i>	Lorenzo Campeggi (& Thomas Wolsey) <i>England</i>
Juan Carvajal <i>Germany, Hungary, Poland</i>	Angelo Capranica <i>Italy</i>	Pietro Isvalies <i>Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, Russia &c.</i>	Egidio da Viterbo <i>Spain</i>
Dionysius Szécsi <i>Hungary</i>	Oliviero Carafa <i>Naples, fleet</i>		Tommaso De Vio (& Matheus Lang) <i>Germany</i>
	Marco Barbo <i>Germany, Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden</i>		

the fall of Constantinople and the general response across Europe, reflected in the end of the Hundred Years War, Burgundian crusade promises, the Italian league and the anti-Turkish diets held in Germany.²⁸ The division of Europe was less clearly organized than in the later cases. In 1500 Europe was divided into three main parts: Germany and the regions to the east and to the west. Germany was perceived to be central in the new crusade, which – with its crusading indulgences – was connected to the Jubilee of 1500.²⁹

Sixtus IV's attempt to organize a crusade in 1471 constituted one of the first acts of his pontificate, through which he hoped to consolidate his position in Christendom. A Papal diplomat and Dalmatian bishop, Nicholas of Modruš, described in his *Defensio ecclesiasticae libertatis* the struggle against the Ottoman Turks and especially its organization by Papal legates and nuncios. After Cesarini and Carvajal, and all the legates and nuncios of Pius II, including himself, he comes to Sixtus IV with the following words: 'Now I hasten to Sixtus, who sitting on the throne sent legates with enormous power all around the world to invoke help against the common enemy of the Christians.'³⁰ Sixtus's efforts were viewed as a decisive step for the crusade after the fall of Negroponte. The involvement of the top cardinals is also quite telling: Cardinal Bessarion, for example, was an ardent supporter of the crusade for the liberation of his homeland. He wanted to work in France, but his mission was a total failure. Similarly, even though Roderigo Borja was a native of the Iberian peninsula, where he was destined to go, his mission did not present a positive image in the eyes of other cardinals. Both Bessarion and Borja were heavily criticized by Jacopo Ammannati Piccolomini in a letter to Francesco da Toledo written on 20 October 1473. Cardinal Ammannati mentioned Bessarion's criticism of the Pope and his promotion of his nephews to cardinals, but then focused on his enthusiasm for the French legation (to be precise, he was sent to France, Burgundy and England). The Greek cardinal, however, had to wait two months to be admitted by the king, and when he finally was, 'there was no time or place to explain the faculties'. The vice-chancellor of the church, Roderigo Borja – who induced the Pope to create him legate *artibus et corruptelis suis* – proved to be no more successful in Aragon, Castile and Portugal, as he was not welcome in the first place and returned to Rome 'with the hatred of the princes and the people'. Moreover, his entourage had suffered a serious blow when two of his ships collided outside the Ebro estuary and one sank, taking with it some 75 people.³¹ Not only did Cardinal Ammannati criticize both the legates after their return, he had discerned a problem in the legations even before they set out. On 1 January 1472 he communicated to the same addressee his fears that 'their legations will bring more confusion than profit' and criticized the decision to send the respective legates to western countries, including Italy and the Papal fleet. The only hope he could see lay in Hungary, 'if it is decided to send money with the legate'; the legate *de latere* being the above-mentioned Cardinal Marco Barbo.³²

Even though Ammannati Piccolomini was not consistent in his criticism, given that he personally encouraged Bessarion to go to France, he did make a crucial point in one of his letters. There was hope in Hungary, and there was likewise

hope in central Europe. Sending legates to central Europe might have meant that they would succeed, to the benefit of the future crusade. However, even Marco Barbo, whom Ammannati praised to the skies, proved unsuccessful in his efforts to make peace in central Europe to facilitate the crusading activities of its Christian princes: as we have seen, it was only later that peace was secured there.

In his attention to Hungary Jacopo Ammannati Piccolomini agreed with the Papal master of ceremonies Paride Grassi, who described in detail Leo X's creation of his four legates in 1518. Paride recounted the discussion he had with Leo after he learned that no legate would be sent to Hungary and Poland:

And when I asked the Pope why he did not create another legate for the kings of Hungary and Poland, he responded that the cardinal of Esztergom [Tamás Bakóc] had already been functioning as his legate on this subject for a long time.

I replied that the cardinal of Esztergom is not a useful legate, because he is of the same nation and basically a creature (*creatura*) of the king of Hungary. He does not behave as a legate, but rather as the king's chaplain, because when he should be, as a Papal legate, superior to the king, not only is he *not* above the king, he is below him, and in all matters he behaves like a subordinate ...

And the Pope responded that he had learned the same about the cardinal from many others, that he behaves improperly as if with honour for the apostolic see, though in practice it is with dishonour ...

On that I said it would be for the best if his sanctity were to send another prelate there as nuncio, who would at the same time provide for a legate, so that the two strongest kings would embark on this expedition against the Turks.

And the Pope replied to me that there are no doubts about the two kings, because they bother the Pope (*papam interpellabant*) every day with various envoys and letters about that expedition, because they are in the frontline, if the Turk should attack Christendom.³³

The discussion turns around Tamás Bakóc, a strong but unsuccessful candidate to the Papal throne in 1513. Bakóc was indeed the *creatura regis*, because in the 1480s Matthias Corvinus had raised him from peasant status to the highest ranks of society. As bishop of Győr, he was able to work for the king as secretary in the chancery, and was one of the most prominent prelates in the kingdom. Matthias's successor, Wladislas II, made similar use of Bakóc's services and even elevated him to the archbishopric of Esztergom. In 1500 he became a cardinal, and was sent back to Hungary as Papal legate by Leo X in July 1513, just four months after the new Pope was elected.³⁴

The lengthy record of this discussion sheds light on more than one issue. In general the Papal court viewed the role of Hungary and Poland as crucial in the event of war against the Ottoman Turks. The fact that the two countries were left without a legate who would organize the crusade alarmed the master of ceremonies.

Pope Leo X, on the contrary, believed that no legate was needed: the attempt by Tamás Bakóc, the cardinal and archbishop of Esztergom, to organize a crusade in 1513 and 1514 ended in a peasant uprising and after that the legate's role in Papal planning diminished. Leo's creation of legates in 1518, then, did not entail much for central Europe. On the contrary, it was little more than the continuation of the struggle between the major Christian powers, including the Papacy, as can be seen from the later nomination of *collegati* in the case of England and Germany, where the ministers or 'creatures of the kings' – Thomas Wolsey for England and Matheus Lang for Germany – were officially to accompany the legates who were originally named.³⁵

In general the legates in central Europe carried the same faculties and had the same role as legates elsewhere. They brought spiritual benefits normally entrusted to the Sacred Penitentiary, could impose ecclesiastical bans and – most importantly – they had the authority to distribute indulgences, as is clear both from the cases mentioned above and from the well-known career of Raymund Peraudi (Perault).³⁶ Papal legates, and nuncios with the power of legate *de latere* were, however, changing into diplomatic representatives of the Popes. This meant that they were observers and commentators on events in central Europe rather than vigorous executives of Papal policy in individual countries. This argument is supported by the appointments in 1518, when all the legates, including the *collegati*, were dispatched without any faculties.³⁷

From the 1470s onwards, moreover, the observations of the nuncios were starting to resemble the system of Papal nunciatures of the sixteenth century. A few nuncios can be singled out for the informative reports which they sent back to Rome. In 1483–85 the above-mentioned Bartolomeo Maraschi was sent to central Europe as a nuncio *cum potestate legati de latere*. He spent a few months at the royal court in Buda and passed remarks on Matthias's views about the crusade. When reporting on his talks with the king, he noted the frequent mentions of Sultan Djem, whom the king wanted to acquire for his crusading plans. Maraschi also described the visit of the Ottoman ambassadors to the royal court, where they concluded a truce with Matthias.³⁸ Even more detailed are the reports of Angelo Pecchinoli, likewise a nuncio *cum potestate legati de latere*. He spent roughly two years in central Europe and recounted a number of discussions with King Matthias. In addition to the recurrent topic of Sultan Djem, in his first report he mentioned one of Matthias's proud proclamations:

lord legate, I tell you that if our lord insists on this war against the Turks, which I greatly desire in order to gain entry to paradise, it is my wish to drive the Turks away within two years, beyond the sea and their lands...³⁹

The king's intention was thus personalized – it was not contingent on any of the crusading activities of Papal diplomacy or indeed the Pope himself. Moreover, the Papal nuncio, who was present at the court, was not to play any role in the war against the Ottoman Turks: his function was simply to observe and transmit information that the king wanted to share with the Pope.

The idea of driving the Ottomans beyond the mountains and even the sea was presented not only by the king himself, but also by manuscript illumination. One manuscript, a Florentine Bible, which belonged to the Corvinian library, has an image of the fight between David and Goliath. It depicts the Philistines as Ottoman Turks and the Israelites and David as the Christian army. It is telling that among the three onlookers Matthias Corvinus is depicted together with (most probably) King Charles VIII of France. In ideology at least, Jerusalem still seemed to be the goal, as the words of the king also implied.⁴⁰

Before the system of nunciatures officially and fully developed, nuncios were coming to central Europe to report on the local political situation, on the gains made by the Reformation as well as by the Ottoman Turks. In 1518 no nuncio was dispatched to assist the organization of the general crusade east of Germany. Later, however, Giovanni Antonio Buglio barone di Burgio remained in the region for more than two years, and was present during the decisive period of the mid-1520s. His abundant letters are stored in the Vatican archives and library. Most of the letters were edited, but among other documents relating to his mission one can find detailed information on Hungary's land diets, reports on the negotiations with the Bohemian utraquists, military preparations against the Ottomans as well as their advance in the Balkans.⁴¹ One of the most remarkable documents is a depiction of the order of the Hungarian army when ceremonially leaving Buda on 20 July 1526, led by King Louis II towards Mohács, where the decisive battle would take place more than a month later.⁴² The author of the outline was most probably another man in Papal service, namely Giovanni Verzelio, a Papal messenger, who brought money for Burgio.⁴³ According to the plan, Burgio (called *il signor Barone* by Verzelio) was following the king and his guard accompanied by Elek Thurzó, master of the treasury, and László Szalkai, archbishop of Esztergom. Thus, the nuncio took part in a solemn departure for war that was not organized by the Papal *curia*, though it did enjoy its support. The *curia* itself was informed about what happened in detail by the nuncio and other people in its service. There was no more than a ceremonial participation in the campaign; otherwise, the nuncio stayed detached from the host and reported from Buda.⁴⁴

* * *

Legatine involvement in crusading in central Europe is not easily summarized. At best there are tendencies that can be described and presented as part of the background for the overall development of Papal representation. One tendency is especially clear: Papal legates *de latere*, who were so common in the high Middle Ages and remained significant in the fifteenth century, when the College of Cardinals strengthened its position, gradually surrendered some of their competencies to permanent diplomatic representatives of the Popes, the embedded nuncios. This trend is already discernible in the early sixteenth century, though the system developed more fully in the century's second quarter.

As for crusading, one can see that individual Papal legates *de latere*, necessarily cardinals, played a crucial role in organizing the sequence of crusades against

the Hussites, in raising money for the campaigns as well as mobilizing support from secular Christian leaders. The same can be said about the crusades directed in central and east-central Europe against the Ottoman Turks. One notable example applying to both cases is Giuliano Cesarini, who personally led a crusade against the Hussites and another crusade against the Ottomans. Both crusades failed and in the latter the cardinal lost his life. Gradually, legates as well as other Papal representatives (in the fifteenth century frequently nuncios *cum potestate legati de latere*) came to shift their duties towards organization, preaching and communication with Rome. In the first instance, they gave up the role of military leaders and their presence in crusading armies was no longer needed. Later, legates and nuncios became mainly involved in raising money through crusading indulgences and – most importantly – in reporting to the Papal *curia*. Central Europe, as the region most endangered by the Ottoman advance, was never omitted from plans for crusading, but the fact that the region's kingdoms had such a strong vested interest in their own defence caused a steady shrinking of the *curia*'s organizational role, leaving military obligations exclusively to individual rulers. The role of Papal representatives thus evolved from acting as the agents of crusading to being its promoters and finally its observers.

Notes

- 1 This study was made possible by the generous support of a European Social Fund project, Confessional Culture between the Middle Ages and the Modern Era, reg. no. CZ.1.07/2.3.00/20.0192; the research was also enabled by the Czech Historical Institute in Rome.
- 2 See Kriston R. Rennie, *The Foundations of Medieval Papal Legation* (Basingstoke, 2013); Kathleen G. Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change* (Manchester, 2005), 84–5 and passim; I. S. Robinson, *The Papacy 1073–1198: Continuity and Innovation* (Cambridge, 1990), 146–78.
- 3 See Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1951; repr. 1988), vol. 1; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (London, 1986; repr. 2003).
- 4 Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade*, 80.
- 5 The bull in *Monumenta Vaticana res gestas Bohemicas illustrantia*, ed. Jaroslav Eršil, vol. 7, *Acta Martini V., pt 1, 1417–1422* (Prague, 1996), 247–9, no. 565.
- 6 For basic information, see František Šmahel, *Hussitische Revolution*, trans. Thomas Krzenek, 3 vols, *MGH Schriften* 43 (Hannover, 2002), ad indicem.
- 7 Birgit Studt, 'Legationen als Instrumente päpstlicher Reform- und Kreuzzugspropaganda im 15. Jahrhundert', in *Formen und Funktionen öffentlicher Kommunikation im Mittelalter*, ed. Gerd Althoff (Stuttgart, 2001), 421–53, at 426–37.
- 8 *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hussitenkrieges in den Jahren 1419–1436*, ed. Franz Palacký, 2 vols (Prague, 1873), 2:487–94, no. 2, at p. 489: 'Et super hoc quemdam Fernandum, praetensum episcopum Lucensem, incentorem et auctorem sceleris et stimulum suae damnationis, ad nostras partes missum legatum quidem non Christi, qui totus auctor est pacis et salutis, sed nuntium Antichristi, qui more Vehemot in armis scutisque fusilibus fovere (sic), gloriaturque et crescit in sanguine, nece, peste et sanctorum oppressione innocentum, sibi adhibuit et adjunxit.'
- 9 Otakar Odložilík, *The Hussite King: Bohemia in European Affairs, 1440–1471* (New Brunswick, 1965), 44–50; Lino Gómez Canedo, *Un español al servicio de la santa*

- sede: Don Juan de Carvajal, cardenal de Sant'Angelo, legato en Alemania y Hungria (1399?–1469)* (Madrid, 1947), 99–121.
- 10 Setton, *Papacy*, 2:82–107.
 - 11 Nicholas of Cusa, *Writings on Church and Reform*, ed. and trans. Thomas M. Izbicki (Cambridge, MA, 2008), 356–428; Antonín Kalous, *Plenitudo potestatis in partibus? Papežští legáti a nunciové ve střední Evropě na konci středověku (1450–1526)* (Brno, 2010), 185–6.
 - 12 Odložilík, *The Hussite King*, 106–07; Frederick G. Heymann, *George of Bohemia: King of Heretics* (Princeton, 1965), 232–4.
 - 13 *Pii II Commentarii rerum memorabilium que temporibus suis contigerunt*, ed. Adrian van Heck, 2 vols (Città del Vaticano, 1984), 2:559–64; *Pii Secundi Pontificis Maximi Commentarii*, ed. Ibolya Bellus and Iván Boronkai, 2 vols (Budapest, 1993), 1:439–45.
 - 14 *Mátyás király levelei, küllügvi osztály*, ed. Vilmos Fraknói, 2 vols (Budapest, 1893–95), 1:113–14, no. 78, summarized in Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 476–7; Antonín Kalous, *Matyáš Korvín, uherský a český král (1443–1490)* (České Budějovice, 2009), 122–6; Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat 1453–1505* (Oxford, 2012), 88–91.
 - 15 Odložilík, *The Hussite King*, 204–9; for the crusading bull see ASV, Registra Vaticana 528, fols 180r–181v, for the commission for Lorenzo Roverella, see *ibid.*, fol. 209r–v.
 - 16 František Beneš, 'Postoj Českých Budějovic ke králi Jiřímu z Poděbrad v letech 1465–1471', *Jihočeský sborník historický* 37 (1968), 57–75, at 64–5; Karel Pletzer, 'České Budějovice za Matyáše Korvína (1468–1490)', in *Minulost a současnost Českých Budějovic: Studie a materiály I.* (České Budějovice, 1969), 17–56, at 20–23.
 - 17 Peter Eschenloer, *Geschichte der Stadt Breslau*, 2 vols (Münster, 2003), 2:690–1: 'könden sie czwischen got vnd dem tewfil ein mittil finden, so were wol, das sie in mittil der herren vnd des keczirs rweten, adir das möchte nicht gesein, sunder müsten bey dem tewfil adir bey got bleiben.'
 - 18 Kalous, *Plenitudo*, 214.
 - 19 See, e.g., Karl August Fink, 'Der Kreuzablaß gegen Georg Podiebrad in Süd- und Westdeutschland', *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 24 (1932–3), 207–43.
 - 20 *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte Böhmens und seiner Nachbarländer im Zeitalter Georg's von Podiebrad (1450–1471)*, ed. Franz Palacky, *Fontes rerum austriacarum* II/20 (Vienna, 1860), 571–82.
 - 21 *Vetera Monumenta historica Hungariam Sacram illustrantia*, ed. Augustinus Theiner, 2 vols (Roma, 1859–60), 2:422–3, no. 603.
 - 22 ASV, Arm. XXXIX 12, fols 129v–133r; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter BAV), Vat. lat. 10637, fols 588r–611v; Josef Macek, 'K zahraniční politice krále Jiřího', *Československý časopis historický* 13 (1965), 19–48, at 37–48; Cf. Alfred A. Strnad, 'Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini: Politik und Mäzenatentum im Quattrocento', *Römische historische Mitteilungen* 8/9 (1965/66), 104–425, at 226–48; Kalous, *Plenitudo*, 237–43.
 - 23 ASV, Reg. Vat. 680, fols 65r–69r (= *Vetera Monumenta*, ed. Theiner, 2:431–4), 80r–v.
 - 24 Federico da Montefeltro, *Lettere di stato e d'arte (1470–1480)*, ed. Paolo Alatri (Rome, 1949), 14–15, no. 14.
 - 25 ASV, Arm. XXXIX 16, fols 89v–93r.
 - 26 See Antonín Kalous, 'The Politics of Church Unification: Efforts to Reunify Utraquists and Rome in the 1520s', in *Friars, Nobles and Burghers – Sermons, Images and Prints: Studies of Culture and Society in Early-Modern Europe*, In Memoriam István György Tóth, ed. Jaroslav Miller and László Kontler (Budapest, 2010), 179–97.
 - 27 See for example László Veszprémy, 'The State and Military Affairs in East-Central Europe, 1380–c. 1520s', in *European Warfare, 1350–1750*, ed. Frank Tallett and D. J. B. Trim (Cambridge, 2010), 96–109; Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 107–19.

- 28 See for example Setton, *Papacy*, 2:138–60; individual chapters in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley, (Basingstoke, 2004).
- 29 Setton, *Papacy*, 2:531–3.
- 30 BAV, Vat. lat. 8092, fol. 62r: ‘Ad Sixtum festino, qui vix dum in sedem collocatus ex templo per universum orbem ad implorandam adversus comunem hostem Christianorum opem, magna cum potestate mittit legatos.’
- 31 Iacopo Ammannati Piccolomini, *Lettere (1444–1479)*, ed. Paolo Cherubini, 3 vols (Rome, 1997), 3:1750–2, no. 686.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 3:1484–5, no. 512.
- 33 Paride Grassi, *Diarium Curiae Romanae, in Nova scriptorum ac monumentorum ... collectio...*, ed. Christ. Godofredus Hoffmannus, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1731–33), 1:361–500, at 402–04: ‘Et cum dicerem pape, quare etiam non faceret alium legatum ad regem Hungarie et Polonie, respondit mihi, quod ibi esset cardinalis Strigoniensis, ut legatus destinatus iam diu ab ipso super hac materia.
- Replicavi, per ipsum Strigoniensem non esse utilem legatum, quia cum sit de natione et tanquam regis Hungarie creatura, non se gerit tanquam legatum, sed tanquam capellanum regis; nam cum deberet esse tanquam legatus apostolicus supra regem, non solum non est supra regem, sed sub illo et in omnibus regi defert tanquam minor ... Et papa respondit, quod hoc idem a pluribus aliis de hoc Strigoniensi cardinali intellexit, qui se male habet cum honore, imo cum dedecore sedis apostolice et quod ille esset male aut parum nationi acceptus et parum existimatus, unde volebat providere.
- Desuper dixi bonum fore, si sanctitas sua etiam illuc destinaret unum prelatum tanquam nuncium, qui simul cum legato provideret, ut reges illi duo potentissimi venirent ad expeditionem istam contra Turcas. Et papa mihi respondit, quod non esset de his duobus regibus dubitandum, quia ipsi quotidie papam interpellabant, cum diversis nunciis et litteris super hac expeditione, quia in primo periculo sunt, si Turcus christianitatem petit.’
- 34 Vilmos Fraknói, *Erdódi Bakócz Tamás élete* (Budapest, 1889); Frank S. Tompa, *Cardinal Thomas de Erdeud and His Clan: A Genealogical and Historical Revision* (Pender Island, 2001).
- 35 ASV, Arch. Concist., Acta Vicecanc. 2, fols 67v, 69r, 74v; Kalous, *Plenitudo*, 38; Setton, *Papacy*, 3:172–97.
- 36 Adolf Gottlob, ‘Der Legat Raimund Peraudi’, *Historisches Jahrbuch* 6 (1885), 438–61; Nikolaus Paulus, ‘Raimund Peraudi als Ablaßkommissar’, *Historisches Jahrbuch* 21 (1900), 645–82; Norman Housley, ‘Indulgences for Crusading, 1417–1517’, in *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Robert N. Swanson (Leiden, 2006), 277–307; Kalous, *Plenitudo*, 336–43.
- 37 Kalous, *Plenitudo*, 38.
- 38 Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Lat. X 174 (=3621), fol. 110v.
- 39 BAV, Vat. lat. 5641, fol. 242r–v: ‘Ego dico vobis, domine legate, quod si dominus noster intendit ad istum bellum contra Turchos, quod ego tantum desidero, sic ire ad paradysum, quod in duobus annis ego volo expellere Turchum ultra mare et terras suas...’
- 40 Csaba Csapodi and Klára Csapodi-Gárdonyi, *Biblioteca Corviniana: Die Bibliothek des Königs Matthias Corvinus von Ungarn* (Budapest, 1978), 112–13 – Tab. XVI. Biblia, Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Plut. 15. Cod. 17, fol. 1r. (see also www.wga.hu/html/g/gherardo/bible.html, accessed 17 March 2016).
- 41 For Burgio’s letters see *Relationes oratorum pontificiorum / Magyarországi pápai követek jelentései 1524–1526*, ed. Vilmos Fraknói, Monumenta Vaticana historiam regni Hungariae illustrantia II/1 (Budapest, 1884); *Acta Nuntiaturae Poloniae*, vol. 2, *Zacharias Ferreri (1519–1521) et nuntii minores (1522–1553)*, ed. Henricus Damianus Wojtyśka (Rome, 1992), 151–224; Kalous, *Plenitudo*, 382–406.

- 42 BAV, Vat. lat. 3924, fol. 257r; the drawing was published by Antonín Kalous, ‘Elfeledett források a mohácsi csatáról: Antonio Burgio pápai nuncius jelentései, és azok hadtörténeti jelentősége’, *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 120 (2007), 603–21, at 607 and Kalous, *Plenitudo*, 388; facsimile now in Róbert Hermann, ed., *Kis magyar hadtörténet* (Budapest, 2013), 59.
- 43 *Relationes*, ed. Fraknói, 424, no. 114: ‘Mando a Vostra Reverendissima Signoria la uscita del Re da Buda aponcto, con che ordine è andato. Saranno un poco più o meno gente, di quello io pongo, chè non gli ho aponto noverati. In verità furono molti Signori bene in ordine, con bellissimi fornimenti et richi, et pennache sino in terra bellissimi.’
- 44 See *Relationes*, ed. Fraknói; *Acta*, ed. Wojtyska.

7 Switching the tracks

Baltic crusades against Russia in the fifteenth century¹

Anti Selart

Often the entire history of the medieval Baltic region, and especially Livonia, is grouped together and referred to as a crusade, even up until the demise of the Teutonic Order in Livonia in 1561–62.² The definition of a ‘crusade’ here understandably differs considerably across different periods; and this involves more than just a change in crusading itself during the late Middle Ages. The medieval system of ecclesiastical territories in Livonia and Prussia, in which the Teutonic knights played a central role,³ was born during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as the result of a series of crusades that resulted in substantial territorial conquest. In the fourteenth century, the regular expeditions against the grand duchy of Lithuania, even after the conversion of Lithuania to Catholicism after 1385 (Union of Krewo), were defined as crusades. The Teutonic Order continued to summon western European knights to participate in chivalric sorties against the Lithuanians until about 1420.⁴ However, in the fifteenth century, the crusades generally ‘became a matter of pious fiscality’.⁵ In northeastern Europe, the crusades also became less of a religious undertaking, or element of chivalric culture, and became more related to political and diplomatic competition and financing schemes. Moreover, the Christians’ main enemies were no longer called ‘pagans’ but ‘Russians’ here.

Already in the thirteenth century, military activities related to the crusades in the region caused a series of conflicts with Russian lands – although these wars were not explicitly anti-Russian. Contemporary sources speak of a struggle against the pagans and the conversion of pagans, rather than a religiously motivated war against Russia and/or the schismatics, even when the military activities were directed at areas that were politically claimed by Rus’. In the second half of the thirteenth century, Polotsk, and somewhat later Pskov, became politically tied to the heathen grand duchy of Lithuania, and the anti-pagan rhetoric was applied to the former, and partially, to the latter. Still, the role of the schismatics or Russians as claimed targets of the crusades was of secondary importance. They were depicted primarily as the helpers and allies of the pagans. In Prussia and Poland, the subjugation of the Russian principalities by the Mongols in the thirteenth century created an additional opportunity to describe the Russian princes as the subjects and helpers of the ‘Tatars’.⁶ It was not until the crusade of 1348–51 by King Magnus IV of Sweden in Karelia, that it was explicitly stated that the war was being fought against the Russian ‘enemies of the Catholic faith’.⁷

This situation changed significantly in the fifteenth century. After the Christianization of the Lithuanians, the Teutonic Order was faced with the challenge of having to prove that its fundamental task to fight the enemies of Christ had to be continued since ‘the crusading privilege of the Order had become worthless’.⁸ The Papal curia now recognized Polish King Władysław, who had recently been the Lithuanian pagan grand duke Jagiello, as a fully-fledged fighter for Christianity along with the Teutonic Order. Especially in Polish politics during the fifteenth century, this country was depicted as playing a special role as the protector of all Christendom as the *antemurale christianitatis*.⁹ In opposition, the Teutonic Order started around 1400 to argue that the conversion of Lithuania was only illusory; and around 1410, that the Polish king was utilizing auxiliary forces comprised of Russians, Tatars and ‘other non-Christian and pagan peoples and tribes’¹⁰ or that the king was even in the service of the Tatars, who sought to destroy the Order, i.e. Christianity.¹¹ For the Teutonic Order, the altered situation hence caused a significant deficit in legitimization. According to the Order, the Polish king threatened its historical mission as the protector of all Christians and, especially the protector of German lands. Soon after the defeat in the battle of Tannenberg (1410), the Dominican Johannes Falkenberg developed a formulation according to which the war against the Polish king was *de facto* a kind of crusade, since those who perished in this combat would inherit the kingdom of God.¹²

The use of such crusade-related phraseology in propaganda¹³ regarding one’s adversaries whose ‘Christian quality’ was, in practice, difficult to call into question, and who were able to successfully employ jurists and theologians to deliver counterblows, was not sustainable in the long run. In the fifteenth century, the Order was challenged in Prussia by its own subordinates, who organized an alliance (the Prussian Confederation of 1440) against the Order and whose religion could not be used as an excuse for fighting against them – how then could this be justified and explained? Emphasizing celestial assistance in regard to themselves in the defeat of Catholic adversaries could not really legitimize the Order’s activities to the outside world.¹⁴ The developments that took place during the fifteenth century, which changed the Teutonic Order from a crusading organization to *Aufenthalt* and *Spital* of Germany’s ‘poor nobility’, were an important rhetorical argument for garnering support for the Order in Germany,¹⁵ but insufficient justification for its entire existence and all its activities. A new ‘legitimizing enemy’ had to be found. Therefore, during the fifteenth century, a ‘rhetorical reorientation’ took place among the Teutonic Order and the other regional lords: the Russians replaced the pagans as the Order’s main enemy.

However, in the Middle Ages, one cannot speak of any ingrained or fundamental opposition between the Teutonic Order and Russian political centres. Although confessional differences left their mark, Livonia and Prussia, as well as the neighbouring Russian principalities, constituted a uniform political and economic space. The Teutonic Order also developed economic relations with the Russian centres, and based on the political situation, wars were waged and alliances were concluded. It is important that both Russia and the countries of Latin

Europe that bordered it were politically fragmented and in the political sense, two uniform camps that could be labelled as 'East' and 'West' never existed.¹⁶

Nonetheless, Livonian activity, as well as that of the Teutonic Order's chanceries in Prussia, simultaneously promoted the idea that the location of this land *in faucibus Ruthenorum hereticorum et scismaticorum* (1423)¹⁷ justified and substantiated virtually any and all political actions and positions. When writing about the Russians, it was actually 'internal Catholic' conflicts that were being dealt with. To give just one example: when a bailiff of the Teutonic Order murdered a mission of Livonian prelates on their way to Rome in 1428, the Order was accused of preventing clerics and envoys from leaving Livonia so that they could not go to law against the Order. The Order's diplomats defended themselves by claiming that no such ban existed. And if some ban really existed, it would only be to stop horses and herd animals from being taken out of Livonia – a poor and wild land – where they might be needed in time of war, being that the land was surrounded *cum Ruthenis scismaticis et infidelibus*.¹⁸ Although a similar trade regulation regarding horses really existed on the eastern and southern borders of Livonia,¹⁹ in this case, it is undoubtedly an ad hoc justification that utilized the common excuse of a dangerous neighbourhood. The same argument about dangerous infidel neighbours was also used in Scandinavia, for instance, in order to obtain dispensation for royal intra-familial marriages or as explanations why contributions could not be made to the war against the Turks.²⁰ Replacing the words 'pagans' and 'Lithuanians' in the list of enemies with the generic 'infidels', then with 'schismatics' and 'Russians' became the general trend in the Livonian political rhetoric of the fifteenth century.²¹

This crusade-related vocabulary was generated in particular by the war between Novgorod and the Teutonic Order between 1443 and 1448. Militarily, this relatively small-scale contest fought intermittently in the Narva area proved unsuccessful for the Order.²² The war was caused by the abortive pilgrimage undertaken by Westphalian nobleman Gerhard, count of Mark, through Russia to the Holy Land in 1438. He was forced to turn back at Novgorod, most probably due to the complicated political situation in Russia. On his way back to Livonia, his interpreter, who was a servant of the Teutonic Order from the border town of Narva and had some personal affairs to settle with the Russians, was killed. However, Gerhard treated the case as a violation of the safe conduct that had been promised him by Novgorod and demanded revenge from the Livonian lords.

Initially, none of the Livonian territorial lords wanted to defend the count's interests. At the same time, starting in 1437, a sharp conflict developed between the knights from Westphalia and Rhineland inside the Livonian Teutonic Order, which resulted in victory by the Westphalian majority over the Rhinelanders supported by the Prussian grand master. Thereby the Westphalians took over the leading positions in the Order's Livonian branch. Westphalian Heidenreich Vincke von Overberg was given *de facto* recognition as the new master in 1439 followed by official recognition in 1441, by the new grand master, Konrad von Erlichshausen. Heidenreich's family owned properties in the county of Mark and were Gerhard's vassals. The knights from Mark generally strengthened their

position among the functionaries of the Livonian brethren during this internal conflict. The war between the Order and Novgorod can therefore be viewed as an expression of vassal allegiance. The master of the Livonian brethren found himself in a situation where, as the leader of a branch of the military Order, he commanded an area significantly larger than the county of Mark, but, at the same time, his family were vassals in the count's domain.²³

This war therefore contained elements of a personal feud, but the contemporary political correspondence explained it away by using the terminology typical of the crusades.²⁴ At that time, the union of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches was on the agenda. This was not just a religious matter, but was also a strongly political one in central and eastern Europe, where a role was also played by the discord between the council of Basel and the Pope.²⁵ The Church Union proclaimed by the council of Florence in 1439 came up against local opposition in Byzantium and eastern Europe. The opposition was especially strong in Russia, where the Metropolitan of Russia, Isidore of Kiev, upon returning from the council in 1441, was first imprisoned by the grand prince of Moscow, and then essentially banished from the country. However, even before the grand prince's decision, Novgorod above all had been a centre of anti-Union sentiment in Russia.

This fact could help to explain why anti-schismatic rhetoric showed a sudden increase in the texts produced by the Order's officers in the 1440s. First, the Livonian brethren sought much needed military support from Prussia by emphasizing the threat posed to the Christians by the infidel and schismatic Novgorod Russians. Second, the same argument was used by the Prussian Order in its dealings with the European ecclesiastical and secular authorities. Third, the affair involved money collected in the course of an indulgence campaign declared in 1436 by the council of Basel to support Church Union. The collections were successful in both Prussia and Livonia. Since the money was demanded by both the Pope and the council, it provided the Order with some leeway in balancing its interests between those of the Pope and the council. In 1443, Eugenius IV granted the Teutonic Order the right to use some of the money collected on the Order's territory in its own interests, since the Order was *propugnaculum fidei cristiane adversus cristiani nominis inimicos*.²⁶ At the curia, the representatives of the Teutonic Order pointed out the danger posed to all of Christendom by the Novgorod Russians and their alleged possible allies (like Moscow, Pskov, the Tatars, Wallachians and Bohemians – i.e. the Hussites) and the high costs of the war conducted by the Order.²⁷ Finally, in 1448, Nicholas V gave the Order two-thirds of the money from the indulgence campaign.²⁸ Therefore, thanks to this 'Greek' indulgence, finances essentially existed, the acquisition of which required that the war with Novgorod be portrayed as a war against the schismatics and on behalf of Church Union. Similarly, the propagandistic scheme used by the Teutonic Order also portrayed the conciliarist-minded Catholic opponents of the Order (including Livonian bishops) as enemies of Union.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, the entire political situation in the Baltic region changed significantly. The grand princes of Moscow strengthened their position and gradually started to subordinate the other principalities of Russia.

In the 1470s, Novgorod lost its independence. The subjugation of Novgorod by Moscow was strongly related to religious rhetoric: the polemical chronicles compiled in the interest of the grand prince of Moscow accused Novgorod, among other things, of being inclined toward Catholicism and depicted Moscow's military campaigns as being conducted to defend the Orthodox faith.²⁹

Papal policies in this peripheral area continued to be exclusively reactive in nature, including crusades and the offer of indulgences. Viewed in the broader context, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries all the anti-Russian (anti-Moscow and anti-schismatic) initiatives were overshadowed by the really big problem facing the Popes as well as southern and central Europe – the fight against the Turks. As Edgar Hösch stated, ‘the remarkable misjudgement of the real geographic, political, economic and strategic realities’³⁰ was hidden behind the idea, which was introduced time and again in western Europe, of turning the grand prince of Moscow into an active ally against the Ottoman Empire – and simultaneously have him recognize Papal primacy. After Constantinople fell into the hands of the Sultan in 1453, these hopes and dreams might have been fed by the Greek emigrants who, in addition to Italy, also settled in Muscovy and as interpreters and envoys mediated communications between the grand princes and western Europe and were sustained by a dream of a reconstituted Greek realm.³¹

As early as 1461, Greek émigré Nicholas Ralli presented in the name of Grand Prince Vasily II of Moscow the idea of cooperation against Ottomans to the duke of Milan Francesco Sforza. Members of the Ralli family often acted as diplomats on behalf of Thomas Palaiologos around 1460.³² In order to achieve a real anti-Ottoman coalition the Greek cardinal Bessarion arranged the marriage of Thomas's daughter, Zoe Palaiologina, to Ivan III of Moscow in 1472.³³ Locally, the Livonian master of the Teutonic Order explicitly interpreted the marriage as the mission of ‘Christianization’ of the grand prince.³⁴ These hopes for cooperation, and implementation of the Union of the Russian Church under Papal primacy failed, however, and the Papal legate Antonio Bonombra, bishop of Accia, returned from Moscow empty-handed. But the project remained. In eastern Europe it resulted in two competing ‘crusading policies’: to protect Christianity against Russian schismatics, and to form an alliance with Muscovy against Ottomans. Incidentally, an additional hint at Greek involvement in these matters could be the legatine zone of Bishop Bonombra, which in addition to Russia included Pomerania and Caffa.³⁵ Caffa was a junction of relations between Muscovy and the Mediterranean around 1470, and it was again the Greeks who carried the diplomatic communication.³⁶

Livonia's first response to these new challenges was an initiative by Johann Waldhaus von Heerse (1470–71), the Livonian master of the Teutonic Order, who tried to reform the Order internally and together with Novgorod and Lithuania stood up to the grand prince of Moscow.³⁷ However, before these plans could be executed, Muscovy's army defeated Novgorod and Heerse was overthrown by his brothers in the Order. The arguments that the conspirators used to justify their actions included the claim that the union with Novgorod would have been fatal because it would have pushed the Order into a war for which it was unprepared.

‘But God was on our side and the side of our Order, and caused Novgorod ... to be defeated by the grand prince [of Moscow].’³⁸ Due to the tense situation inside Livonia, the new Livonian master, Bernd von der Borch (1471–83) was not able to resolve the disputes with Russia, among which the border issues with Pskov were especially urgent.³⁹

In 1478, Ivan III conclusively merged Novgorod with the grand principality of Moscow; in terms of foreign affairs Pskov was, even earlier, essentially under the control of the grand prince. In view of the border conflicts with Pskov and especially the need to ensure his internal position in Livonia, including justifying the occupation of the archbishopric of Riga by the Order, Bernd von der Borch now started to prepare for war with Pskov. The Livonian army lacked any success in the war in 1480–81. At the end a truce based on the *status quo* was concluded for ten years, and was thereafter repeatedly renewed.⁴⁰

One result of the war was that the Livonian lords made greater efforts to find support from abroad. This coincided with Papal attempts to achieve a general internal peace in Latin Europe in order to ensure success in the crusade against the Turks; and with the region’s internal tensions, in connection with which diplomacy again employed the theme of the ‘Russian threat’.⁴¹ Bernd von der Borch’s argument around 1480 was that all of Livonia must be united under the authority of the Teutonic Order; otherwise, the infidels and schismatic Russians could conquer the land. Through his activities, the archbishop of Riga – Borch’s main political opponent – allegedly prevented Russia from joining the Catholic Church. If the Pope were to give the Teutonic Order secular power over the Riga archbishopric, there would, Borch claimed, be a hope that Pskov and Novgorod would recognise Papal primacy. However, this argumentation was also needed in order to convince the Pope to revoke his support for the archbishop of Riga, for the Livonian brethren incurred Papal excommunication between 1479 and 1484 on account of their ill-treatment of the archbishop.⁴² The appointment of Tallinn Bishop Simon von der Borch (1477–92) as the Papal legate in Scandinavia, Prussia, Livonia and Lithuania in 1488 was supposed to achieve peace among the Christians and to repel Russian attacks. However, the real purpose of the Teutonic Order was to use the legate (who was the master’s cousin) to disrupt political collaboration between the town of Riga and Sweden,⁴³ i.e. ‘peace’ was again defined as the Order’s hegemonic position in the region. In order to achieve these goals, a whole series of diplomatic and propagandistic techniques were employed. Thus, just as the Baltic pagans had previously been labelled as ‘the other Saracens’⁴⁴ in northern and western Europe, now, in the late-fifteenth century, the Russians had become ‘the other Turks’.

By the end of the fifteenth century, the lands of Poland and Lithuania were the arena for actual wars with the Turks, Crimean Tatars as well as Muscovites. Polish diplomacy in particular emphasized that the latter posed no less of a threat to Christianity than the former.⁴⁵ For the Teutonic Order, the confrontation with the Ottomans in the Balkans during the late Middle Ages was of minor importance. However, as early as the 1350s Lithuania presented a project, which called for the Order to be relocated to southeastern Europe to fight against the Turks and

Tatars once the Lithuanians had accepted Christianity. In the fifteenth century, the same proposal was repeated by the Polish king, who also pointed out that the hostility of the Order toward Poland prevented the king from fighting against the Turkish enemies of the Christians. The attempt made by a small contingent of the Order to fight against the Turks in Hungary in 1429 and 1430 was, however, unsuccessful.⁴⁶

In 1458, Polish King Casimir IV proposed that the Teutonic Order be relocated from Prussia to Podolia, on the southeast border of his realm; another project of the king, a few years later, proposed that the Teutonic Order be united with the Order of St John and relocated to the vicinity of Constantinople. After the Second Peace of Toruń (1466), the Teutonic Order was obligated to serve the Polish king, but in reality, the Order's contingent – which was militarily completely ineffective – only participated in the 1497 campaign against the Ottomans in Moldova.⁴⁷ However, this provided sufficient basis for the Order to declare that it too was an active protector of Christendom against the Turks. Along with other, mainly economic, reasons the argumentation of the Teutonic Order why they could not contribute to the war against the Turks or Tatars highlighted the fact that Livonia was under threat from the Russians, especially during the 1490s. Wilhelm von Isenburg, the acting grand master, presented the Order to King Maximilian I in 1497 as 'pillar and bulwark' of Christendom against 'infidel Turks, Tartars, and Russians'. He also expressed the fear that the Turks might form an alliance with the grand prince of Moscow against the Teutonic Order. According to the Order, all of Europe and Christendom was in unprecedented danger after the defeat of the Order in Podolia. As stated by Matthias Thumser, Isenburg wanted to 'reap the greatest benefits ... Thus, in retrospect, the totally failed campaign gave the Teutonic Order a new basis of argumentation for its legitimacy'. The Russian aspect played an extremely important role in this, since it supposedly made it impossible for the Order to be employed outside of its main territory on the Baltic Sea.⁴⁸ At the same time in the 1480s, the long-term military conflict between Lithuania and Moscow began, and Polish-Lithuanian diplomacy supported the proposition regarding the need to fight the Moscow schismatics.

Borch, the master of the Livonian brethren, was already weighing the possibility of applying for an indulgence in order to support the Livonian branch, by using the military strength of Moscow and the Tatar ties of the grand prince as an argument.⁴⁹ The context and definitely the model for this idea were provided by the anti-Turkish indulgence campaigns.⁵⁰ It should always be remembered that, in the context of Latin Europe, 'Russian' indulgences were always marginal compared to the 'Turkish' indulgences, and the latter served as an example for the former. Yet, the consensus that the Ottomans posed a special and unique threat to Christians did not prevent the 'Turkish' indulgences from occasionally being used as sources of money and propaganda instruments for entirely different purposes.⁵¹ In the late-fifteenth century, Poland and Lithuania conducted an actual war with the Ottoman Empire, but from a political viewpoint, the crusade (i.e. indulgence) as such was secondary, since the national interests and Papal interests did not complement each other very well.⁵²

In 1480, there was also a plan to preach an indulgence in Prussia and Livonia in support of the island of Rhodes and the Order of St John.⁵³ In 1486, the Polish king was granted permission for an indulgence campaign against the Turks and Tatars.⁵⁴ Between 1489 and 1491, under the general leadership of Raimund Peraudi, an indulgence supporting a crusade against the Turks was preached in Denmark, Sweden, Livonia, Prussia and other countries.⁵⁵ The legation area of Peraudi included Russia,⁵⁶ which shows that there was still hope that the grand prince of Moscow could be persuaded to become an ally against the Turks. Between 1500 and 1503, Peraudi headed up a new indulgence campaign to collect money for a war against the Turks, by preaching mostly in Germany⁵⁷ including also Livonia and Prussia.⁵⁸

The financial success of these anti-Turkish indulgence campaigns can be seen as the factor that most clearly defined the idea of organizing an indulgence campaign against the Russians for the Scandinavian and Livonian leaders. In 1471, Danish King Christian I presented a plan for directing the crusading army gathered in northern Europe to Jerusalem through Russia.⁵⁹ In a letter written in 1490 to the archbishop of Turku Magnus Särkilahti, the archbishop of Riga and member of the Teutonic Order Michael Hildebrand tied the anti-Turkish campaign to the idea of a crusade against the Russians. He suggested that part of the army, to be gathered from all of Europe in the future, might come to support Livonia against Russia, just as in the ‘times of Godfrey of Bouillon’s crusade’, when, the archbishop believed, those who did not have sufficient money to travel to the Holy Land, were sent to fight the pagans in Prussia.⁶⁰ At the same time actual clashes between the Orthodox and Catholic worlds occurred in Karelia on the frontier between the kingdom of Sweden and Novgorod. In the second half of the fifteenth century, these local conflicts became associated with the holy patrons of Sweden and Finland – King Eric the Holy (†1160) and Bishop Saint Henry (twelfth century) – who in this way were made into the advocates of the Christians in these countries fighting against the pagans and Russians. Although the crusade aspect of these legends is largely fictional and does not reflect the reality of the twelfth century, this new role created a conceptual connection between these border conflicts and crusading.⁶¹

The conflict between the Danish king and Sweden resulted in the collapse of the Kalmar Union in the 1460s and 1470s. Danish King Hans concluded a treaty with grand prince of Moscow Ivan III in 1493,⁶² which was directed against Sweden and the Hanseatic League. In 1494 the forces of Muscovy invaded Finland, which was part of Sweden. The devastating war in the frontier region lasted until a truce was signed in 1497.⁶³ Thomas Lindkvist calls it a ‘national crusade’ – as an idea to unite Swedish society by using the war against Russia as the impetus.⁶⁴ In 1496, Pope Alexander VI accepted the idea and allowed the people of Sweden, Livonia and all others who went to war against the Russians to be granted a plenary remission of sins if they were killed in the war.⁶⁵ However, since the grand prince of Moscow was King Hans’s ally, it is possible that the belated arrival of the bull of crusade in Sweden was orchestrated by the Danish archbishop of Lund, Jens Brostrup (1472–97).⁶⁶ The Swedish leader Sten Sture emphasized that he was

defending all Christians with his war in Karelia against the schismatic Russians. However, to quote Janus Møller Jensen, ‘both Denmark and Sweden used the crusade against the Russians as a strategy to gain political support from the papacy’. The finale of the story occurred when Sten Sture was removed from office in 1497 and the Swedish council accepted Hans as king, while also accusing Sture, among other things, of collaborating with the Russians.⁶⁷

In the 1490s, it was the Teutonic Order in Prussia that was most interested in diplomatically ‘exploiting’ the topic of a Russian threat, in order to protect its privileges and possessions. Its opponents, such as the Polish king and Bishop Lucas Watzenrode of Warmia, were questioning the validity of the Order’s old privileges, which were derived from the crusades, now that it was no longer fighting against pagans.⁶⁸ At the same time, the Livonian branch, which actually bordered Muscovy and was in an endangered position, was initially quite cautious regarding the declaration of an anti-Russian crusade. In 1496, Wolter von Plettenberg, the master of the Livonian brethren, feared that the Russians might find out about the preaching of the cross and be provoked to attack.⁶⁹ This problem also played a role in the relations between the different branches of the Order: the Livonian brethren claimed they could not support the Prussian brethren because of the Russian threat; the Prussian brethren pointed out that they had to participate in the war with the Turks and so could not help Livonia.⁷⁰ Plettenberg finally decided to support the indulgence, but since it would have competed with the Jubilee Year of 1500, the plan was postponed.⁷¹ At the curia, the Order’s proctor saw the plan for a *cruciata* proposed by the Polish and Hungarian kings also to be competitive in nature.⁷² A crusading indulgence was only one of the potential means of fundraising for the Teutonic Order. In 1495–96, the grand master, first off, hoped to acquire some of the Imperial tax (*Reichssteuer*) and other aid from the Empire.⁷³ But the Order’s goal was also to use the alleged need to protect Livonia as an excuse to be exempted from the obligation to participate in the Polish king’s anti-Turkish expeditions,⁷⁴ and the payment of the same Imperial tax.⁷⁵

In the 1490s anxious communications were received from Russia about the movement of the grand prince’s armed forces.⁷⁶ In 1494, the Hanseatic commercial enclave (*Hansekontor*) in Novgorod was closed by Ivan III.⁷⁷ Regardless of the constant talk of the ‘Russian threat’ Livonia was not able to modernize its military capacity, however. In 1501, the territorial lords of Livonia, under the leadership of Wolter von Plettenberg, finally started a preventive war against Pskov. Lithuania’s Grand Duke Alexander signed a treaty in 1501 for military cooperation with Livonia. However, after Polish King John Albert died unexpectedly, Alexander’s focus turned to demanding his brother’s crown, and he withdrew from military activities. The planned siege of Pskov was not carried out, and the Livonian army was weakened by an epidemic. The counter-incursion by the Russians was very devastating, after which the other Livonian territorial lords accused the master of providing insufficient military support and complained about the high cost of maintaining the mercenaries. The bishop of Tartu threatened to conclude a separate truce with the Russians. The Livonian army again lacked the strength to besiege Pskov during a new campaign in 1502. On

13 September, a battle between the Livonian and Russian armies occurred on the shores of Lake Smolino near Pskov, which Plettenberg won.⁷⁸

The Livonian accounts of the battle describe the victory by Livonia at Smolino as a genuine triumph of the Order and the Christians. However, contemporary Russian sources speak about a small conflict, and a minor defeat suffered by the Russians. The weak position of Livonia at the truce negotiations in Moscow in 1503 demonstrates that the Smolino battle cannot be considered a great military event.⁷⁹ But it was exceptionally important for the political self-perception of the people in Livonia, which was expressed primarily in religious terms. In 1504, Archbishop Michael Hildebrand of Riga raised the rank of the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14 September) in the church of Riga to the same level as Easter, in order to commemorate the battle ‘with the real enemies and contesters of the Holy Roman Church and religion’.⁸⁰

Thus, the war with Russia from 1501 to 1502 primarily demonstrated that Livonia was not economically capable of waging such a large-scale war. The attempt of the Order to use part of the indulgence money collected to fight the Ottomans failed.⁸¹ However, the plan to collect money especially for Livonia with the help of indulgences was now realized.⁸² In 1501, the grand master of the Teutonic Order asked for Papal support to issue a *cruciata* or *jubileum* to sponsor Livonia, similar to the one issued against the Turks.⁸³ Achieving this goal at the curia was not simple, and it meant, among other things, competing with actual and presumed rivals (the king of Poland and the archbishop of Riga).⁸⁴ In 1505, Polish King Alexander really did get a *cruciata* against the Turks, Tatars, schismatics and ‘other sects’ for two years, a bull which was also to be preached in Livonia and Scandinavia.⁸⁵

Plettenberg’s representatives, Councillor Eberhard Schelle and Secretary Christian Bomhower, ended up in Rome in 1502. In the following year, Pope Alexander VI granted an indulgence for three years, which was to be preached in the Hanseatic towns, the ecclesiastic provinces of Riga, Magdeburg and Bremen, as well as the bishoprics of Tallinn and Kammin. Schelle (†1505) and Bomhower were appointed to be the general commissioners for the indulgence preaching, and they modelled their activities on those of Peraudi.⁸⁶ In 1504 the new Pope Julius II reconfirmed the indulgence. The revenue from the campaign was at least 30,316 ducats, of which one third went to the Apostolic Camera. However, a considerable part of the collected resources went to the local authorities in Germany.⁸⁷

In 1506, Julius II granted a new Jubilee indulgence for the next three years intended for the defence of Livonia against the threatening Russians. This was to be preached in the ecclesiastical provinces of Cologne, Mainz and Trier, as well as in the dioceses of Meißen and Bamberg. The collection conducted from 1507 to 1510 under Bomhower’s leadership was estimated to be even more successful than the first. A Papal brief in 1506 authorized the indulgence commissioners, among other things, to mark the brethren of the Teutonic Order who went to fight the Russians with the sign of the cross.⁸⁸

The relevant crusade propaganda included several printed works. It stressed the religious errors of schismatics and the extreme cruelty of the Russians and

Tatars, and compared them to the Turks. Should the Russians conquer Livonia, they might conquer the entire Christian world.⁸⁹ The indulgence preaching for the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order has been considered influential in shaping the image of Russia in western Europe, although its impact over the long term probably should not be overestimated.⁹⁰ The Popes also allowed indulgences to benefit Livonia and Prussia in 1514 and 1515, but these were not administered by the Teutonic Order: ‘It is astonishing that it was not considered necessary to offer the people grace if this did not promise great profit, the entire approach to the matter was strictly commercial’, the Protestant historian Leonid Arbusow commented.⁹¹ The constant conflict between Moscow and Poland-Lithuania in the early-sixteenth century actually brought the Order and Moscow closer together. In the period from 1515 to 1522, this rapprochement ended with direct diplomatic contacts being established between Grand Master Albrecht von Brandenburg and Grand Prince Vasili III, and a subsidy being provided by Moscow to the Order for a war against the Polish king.⁹²

In conclusion, as stated by Juhan Kreem,

The crusade certainly played a decisive role in making medieval Livonia, and religious warfare remained an important aspect of its society until a later time. But the country did not live in a permanent state of conflict with its pagan and Orthodox neighbours ... [and] not every military action of the Order was conducted as a crusade.⁹³

The same can be said *mutatis mutandis* about Prussia and Scandinavia. In addition, the role of crusading in society changed immensely. In the fifteenth century ‘although not yet seen as antique, talk of the crusade was by now largely figurative and ornamental’.⁹⁴ The fiscal aspects decisively rose to the fore, and the argumentation relating to the threat of the pagans and schismatics became almost devoid of meaning – although still capable of exercising an impact. Figuratively speaking, while the Teutonic Order in the thirteenth century made money for crusading, in the fifteenth century crusading made money for the Order. The fact that the region’s rulers portrayed themselves as the edge of the world, the bulwark of Christianity and the German nation, and advocates of Church Union turned out to be merely a tool, just like the crusades and indulgences turned out to be merely financial means in a political context. However, the success of the indulgence campaigns demonstrates that, at least in the case of remission of penance, a real thirst for them still existed in the societies around the Baltic Sea around 1500.

And yet, for all of Europe and the Catholic world, this was a marginal and local policy, as well as a financial mechanism that seldom achieved the expected success. An attempt was made to connect it to the ‘great’ Turkish crusade, by using it as a model and borrowing its forms.⁹⁵ In a sense, the argument regarding the schismatic Russians was more a part of ‘chancellery culture’ than a ‘crusading culture’. It remains noteworthy how, in the early modern translations and adaptations of texts from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, the ‘Russians’ have replaced the ‘pagans’ who were originally cast in the role of the anti-Christians.

The miracle which happened to Westphalian Knight Lubbert in Livonia probably in the 1220s became reworked in a sixteenth-century chronicle so that original pagans became Russians and 'Livonia' was replaced by *Turchia*.⁹⁶ The original 'pagans' and 'infidels' in descriptions of the Prussian crusade of Count Engelbert of the Mark (1347–91) appear as 'Russians and Muscovites' in the sixteenth-century chronicle of his house.⁹⁷

For the Popes, the Ottoman problem was undoubtedly most important. This eclipsed any possible competitive ideas.⁹⁸ This affected the Poles and Lithuanians most: they had to rebuff the Popes' efforts to force them to make considerable concessions and come to an – unrealistic – agreement with the grand prince of Moscow in order to establish a common front against the Ottoman Empire. Plettenberg's war against the Russians was a religious war if we proceed from the fact that, in the early modern age, a 'religious war' was not a means for motivating but rather legitimising it.⁹⁹

Notes

- 1 The research was supported by *Eesti Teadusfond* grant no. PUT 107.
- 2 Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades: The Baltic and the Catholic Frontier, 1100–1525* (Minneapolis, 1980); William L. Urban, *The Livonian Crusade*, 2nd edn (Chicago, 2004).
- 3 In the fifteenth century the Teutonic Order consisted of three branches: Prussia (headed by the grand master), Livonia (headed by the Livonian master) and Germany (headed by the German master). During the second half of the century the Livonian brethren emancipated themselves from the grand master; occasionally the branch had different political focuses. However, the Order retained its unity, and the Livonian brethren remained dependent on the grand masters, especially in terms of diplomatic relations with western Europe.
- 4 Werner Paravicini, 'Vom Kreuzzug zum Soldzug: Die Schlacht bei Tannenberg und das Ende der Preußenfahrten des europäischen Adels', in *Conflictus magnus apud Grunwald 1410. Między historią a tradycją*, ed. Krzysztof Ożóg and Janusz Trupinda (Malbork, 2013), 119–26.
- 5 Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (London, 2006), 872.
- 6 Anti Selart, *Livonia, Rus' and the Baltic Crusades in the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden, 2015).
- 7 Thomas Lindkvist, 'Crusades and Crusading Ideology in the Political History of Sweden, 1140–1500', in *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier 1150–1500*, ed. Alan V. Murray (Aldershot, 2001), 119–30, at 125–6.
- 8 Hartmut Boockmann, *Johannes Falkenberg, der Deutsche Orden und die polnische Politik: Untersuchungen zur politischen Theorie des Mittelalters* (Göttingen, 1975), 120, 125.
- 9 Paul Srodecki, *Antemurale Christianitatis: Zur Genese der Bollwerksrhetorik im östlichen Mitteleuropa an der Schwelle vom Mittelalter zur Frühen Neuzeit* (Husum, 2015).
- 10 Kurt Forstreuter *et al.*, eds, *Die Berichte der Generalprokuratoren des Deutschen Ordens an der Kurie*, 4 vols (Göttingen, 1960–2005), 2, no. 102 (1414).
- 11 Forstreuter, ed., *Die Berichte der Generalprokuratoren*, 4/1, no. 292; Boockmann, *Johannes Falkenberg*, 120–5; Klaus Militzer, 'Der Wandel in der Begründung der Existenz des Deutschen Ordens und seiner Selbstrechtfertigung vor und nach der

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- 12 Heinrich Finke, ed., *Acta concilii constanciensis*, 4 vols (Münster, 1896–1928), 4, no. 450; Jürgen Miethke, 'Heiliger Heidenkrieg? Theoretische Kontroversen zwischen Deutschem Orden und dem Königreich Polen vor und auf dem Konstanzer Konzil', in *Heilige Kriege. Religiöse Begründungen militärischer Gewaltanwendung: Judentum, Christentum und Islam im Vergleich*, ed. Klaus Schreiner (Munich, 2008), 109–25, at 114–17.
- 13 Kristjan Toomaspoeg, 'La guerre baltique au regard des sociétés de l'Europe méditerranéenne à la fin du Moyen Âge', in *Regards croisés sur la guerre sainte: Guerre, idéologie et religion dans l'espace méditerranéen latin (XIe–XIIIe siècle)*, ed. Daniel Baloup and Philippe Josserand (Toulouse, 2006), 399–412, at 410–12; Annika Souhr, "'Von jeher *fredeschilt* der Christenheit". Rückgriffe auf die eigenen Ursprünge im auswärtigen Schriftverkehr des Deutschen Ordens in Krisenzeiten', in *La mémoire des origines dans les ordres religieux-militaires au Moyen Âge*, ed. Philippe Josserand and Mathieu Olivier (Berlin, 2012), 237–68, at 237–41.
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Part III

Diplomatic and cultural interactions

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8 Tīmūr and the ‘Frankish’ powers

Michele Bernardini

1395: the first encounter

The European powers and Tīmūr (Tamerlane, r. 1370–1405), negotiated several alliances during the last decade of the Central Asian conqueror’s long military career.¹ According to the eastern sources these alliances were confined to Byzantium and the Latin powers, the *Ifrangs* or *Ifranjs* (Franks) as the western Christian powers were called in the Timurid chronicles.² Up to 1395 the same sources described all Christian powers as enemies, and various Christian peoples were systematically attacked by the conqueror in the period leading up to this date.³ In this preliminary phase the Timurid chronicles mention some Slavonic peoples, the Latin Christians and the Eastern Christians as a whole.⁴ They showed a confused perception of these regions, all of which were the object of a comprehensive jihad, albeit one that sometimes remained notional. The Armenians and Georgians alone were the target of an actual jihad. The Georgian king Bagrat V was captured and forced to convert to Islam in 788/1386 by Tīmūr;⁵ as for the Armenians, they fell victim to Timurid incursions in the Caucasus and eastern Anatolia.⁶

A change of attitude occurred from 1395, the year of Tīmūr’s last campaign against Toqtamish Khān, lord of the Golden Horde. This episode was the final clash in a protracted war begun nine years earlier (787/1386) at the time of Toqtamish’s invasion of Tabriz.⁷ The conflict of 1395 led to the destruction of all the main towns of the Toqtamish khanate. These included various Italian trading posts on the Volga and Don rivers, above all Saray, Astrakhan and Tana. Tīmūr apparently spared Caffa, despite the fact that its inhabitants were considered allies of Toqtamish from an earlier period. During the siege of Tana (Azov) Tīmūr met with European envoys, who were sent to save the European trading bases (*comp-toirs*) in the town. The envoys failed to achieve their objective, but the occasion was probably the first encounter of significance between Tīmūr and Europeans, although isolated individuals may well have met him just before this date.⁸

This first approach is described by the *Cronaca di Treviso*, written by Andrea Redusio de Quiero,⁹ and completed in 1460. With a few exceptions, this source has been neglected by scholars.¹⁰ Redusio reports the description given by Pietro, one of three sons of Giovanni Miani from Treviso, who together with the Genoese Giovanni

Andrea was an eyewitness to Tīmūr's capture of Tana. During the approach of *Tamberlanus* to the town, after the destruction of *Turchia* (sc. the Golden Horde's domains), merchants from Venice, Genoa, Catalonia, Biscay and other countries who sought refuge in the town, held a meeting (*consilium*) and finally decided to send Tīmūr one envoy representing each group, carrying presents. The envoys eventually reached Tīmūr's encampment, which is described as a sort of town made up of tents; in its centre stood Tīmūr's own pavilion, richly decorated with gold and silk.¹¹ To reach it the envoys had to traverse three large enclosures (*claustra*), all of which were guarded by a large number of soldiers. In the third enclosure were the court mistresses, clothed in the Persian way, 'for the satisfaction of Tīmūr's sexual lust'. The author of the *Cronaca di Treviso* here introduces a description of a large golden tree with golden leaves jingling in the wind, producing a musical effect.¹² Redusio also describes the carpets hung up in the encampment, as well as various precious artefacts in the areas that led to the throne hall. After depositing their shoes, cloaks and hats, the envoys prostrated themselves three times in the presence of Tīmūr, exclaiming: *Ave Rex Regum et Dominus dominantium*, a formula designed to evoke the title of *Shāhinshāh* (King of kings), and probably an echo of Timurid protocol. They offered their gifts to Tīmūr, imploring the safety of the 'Franks' of the town of Tana and protection for their commercial activities.

According to the *Cronaca di Treviso*, Tīmūr was seated between two Franciscan friars.¹³ He showed his guests a very large basin, with a capacity of five *metretes* (around 190 litres), made of *carbunculum* (a sort of ruby) and full of wine. This he offered to the envoys to drink. Then he enquired of them whether any king or lord of the 'Franks' possessed a basin of such size and value. They answered that no western king could boast of such a basin. Tīmūr explained that his basin came from the Persian emperor (*Imperatore persarum*).¹⁴ Tīmūr gave the emissaries permission to return to Tana. With them he sent one of his nobles (*proceribus*), who feigned affability and showed particular interest in the galleys and other ships, and the goods on sale in the markets, some of which he bought. After this reconnaissance he returned to the court of Tīmūr, who just a few days later assaulted the town and pillaged all the merchandise. Some of the western merchants managed to escape to sea on their galleys, while others were captured and released on payment of a ransom to Tīmūr. The *Cronaca di Treviso* also reports the evidence of the Genoese Giovanni Andrea who described a curious episode, which he had probably misunderstood. This was the visit by an obscure ambassador of a 'great emperor' (*maximi imperatoris*), in front of whom Tīmūr allegedly knelt, using assistance to do so due to his lameness.¹⁵

1395–1399: a change of approach in Tīmūr's imperial policy

Even if suspect in parts, the account given by Giovanni Andrea attests the presence of some westerners at the court of Tīmūr, men who were able to gain direct access to him. During the years that ensued, the evidence of a western presence at the court of Tīmūr becomes more difficult to demonstrate. It is possible that before the battle of Nicopolis (1396) he had an encounter somewhere with a

Frenchman called Jacques du Fay. This individual is mentioned by Jean Froissart in his *Chroniques*;¹⁶ he was probably an emissary of the French court and later fought at Nicopolis.¹⁷ Certainly other powers showed strong interest in the opportunities that might be offered by the new conqueror, for as early as 1394 the Venetian senate was discussing the opportunity of an approach.¹⁸

The battle of Nicopolis, fought between a western coalition and the Ottoman army on 25 September 1396,¹⁹ ushered in a change in the policy followed by Tīmūr. Failure to bring into being a coalition of the two main leaders of the *ghazā* against a generic 'infidel world', attested by the exchange of letters between Tīmūr and Bayezid, constituted a substantial diplomatic setback for Tīmūr.²⁰ Later, the Timurid chronicles would develop the theme, claiming that Murad I had proved unable to conquer the Anatolian *beyliks* and unify Turkey, and denouncing the alliance between his successor Bayezid I and Qarā Yūsuf, the leader of the Turkmen confederation Qarā Qoyūnlū. They accused Bayezid of supporting the Turkmen 'brigand' and, implicitly, of rejecting any serious chance of mounting a common jihad.²¹ This substantial shift of perspective in Tīmūr's plans corresponded also with a change of projects, in particular the Indian campaign launched in 1398 represented an ideological response to the western activities of the Ottomans. In fact in this phase (1396–99) a series of vehement accusations of impiety, addressed against Tīmūr, appear in various Ottoman and Persian sources from Anatolia.²²

The return of Tīmūr to Samarqand in May 1399 was followed by the rebuilding of the town with the erection of the Great Mosque, an architectural enterprise which gave a new impulse to the reconstruction of the whole town, in particular its markets (1403) and later a number of other buildings.²³ The presence of various Christian captives, but probably also Christian merchants who were interested in this new market for their wares, seems to reflect a change of attitude especially towards the Byzantine court and the Latin powers in the West.²⁴ In fact the reactivation of western relations started as early as 1398 when the Roman Pope Boniface IX transferred the Franciscan Friar Jean from Nakhchevān to the archbishopric of Sulṭāniyya. It was probably then that Fr. Jean initiated diplomatic activity with the French court. In a well-known work, Sylvestre de Sacy suggested that a meeting took place between Jean and Tīmūr, at which the friar informed Tīmūr of events at Nicopolis.²⁵ The question of an embassy to Europe then taking place, and comprising Fr. Jean and Fr. Francis Sandron as Tīmūr's ambassadors, was given consideration by various scholars.²⁶ The discussion included the important report about Tīmūr that was composed by the archbishop of Sulṭāniyya.²⁷ Persian sources refer to a good deal of intelligence work sponsored by Tīmūr in the hope of ascertaining the full extent of his enemies' military potential, above all in Anatolia.²⁸ It is possible that this intelligence also informed him about the westerners, in particular the Genoese, who were active in the area.

1400–1401: towards a new pragmatism in relations

France certainly played an important part in the revival of relations with this new 'Tatar' power in the East. The role of Marshal John II Le Meingre, known

as Boucicaut, who returned to France in 1397 following his capture at the battle of Nicopolis, proved to be pivotal.²⁹ Boucicaut was the commander of a ‘micro-crusade’ in 1399 to break the Ottoman blockade of Constantinople and to escort Manuel II to France. This period, in particular the months following the nomination of Boucicaut as governor of Genoa (23 March 1401),³⁰ was characterized by the intensification of relations between Genoa and the East. It is not clear how many envoys tried to meet Tīmūr before Boucicaut’s Genoese appointment, which brought to a close a troubled seven-year French administration of the Italian town, culminating with the dictatorship of Battista Boccanegra (12 January 1400).

A meeting at Sivas between Tīmūr and a delegation headed by a certain Giuliano Maciocco, or Maiocho, and dated 1400, appears quite obscure. Rather than being a diplomatic mission from Italy, this was likely to have been an independent initiative from Constantinople, one representing the interests of the Venetians and Genoese of that city, and probably including a message from the Byzantine Emperor.³¹ A Genoese ambassador from Pera may have reached the court of Tīmūr at the beginning of 1401.³² In fact he preceded the sending of two Timurid ambassadors to Constantinople, who arrived at Pera on 19 August 1401, alongside the above mentioned Fr. Francis. According to Giacomo de Orado, as reported by Adam Knobler, ‘the purpose of the embassy was to dissuade the Greeks from making a treaty of friendship with Bāyezīd, stating that Tīmūr was planning to march against the Ottomans during the autumn’.³³

The background for new and intense diplomatic activities was in place, and in this context we should include not just the political aspirations of the European powers, but also the commercial advantages or disadvantages which might arise through links with this, still mysterious, lord of central Asia. Some merchants, such as Beltramo Mignanelli, were horrified by the Timurid invasion of Syria, as is clear from Mignanelli’s long report entitled *De Ruina Damasci*.³⁴ But others were tantalized by this new market. It was for this reason that Boucicaut, immediately after his appointment as governor of Genoa, began paying a lot of attention to the Genoese agencies. If Pera acted to a large extent in an independent manner, in the cases of Chios and Phocaea, Famagusta, Tana and Caffa there was much more proactive involvement by the French governor. In Chios Boucicaut played an active role in forwarding the reconstruction of the town walls to prevent an Ottoman attack, thereby showing a clear understanding of the island’s importance.³⁵ In relation to Tana and Caffa, it is noteworthy that after the dramatic devastation of this area by Tīmūr, the economy seems to have completely revived, probably through a *modus vivendi* reached with the former invader.³⁶ In the case of Famagusta there is no direct evidence for diplomatic intervention, but an embassy dated 17 October 1402 presented the ‘Signoria di Creta’ with a request for peace thanks to an officer (*luogotenente*) of Tīmūr, called Epso, a request which was received by the Venetians.³⁷ Ongoing competition between Venice and Genoa gave further stimulus to this diplomatic activity.

1402: the battle of Ankara

There is no direct evidence of any European contingents taking part in the battle of Ankara, with the exception of Johannes Schiltberger, and as far as we know the captured Bavarian exercised no influence on any political decision of Tīmūr.³⁸ Similarly, we lack any detailed information about the Castilian embassy of Payo Gómez de Sotomayor and Hernán Sánchez de Palazuelos, which reached Tīmūr after the battle of Ankara and returned to Spain with an envoy of Tīmūr, Ḥājī Muḥammad (Mohamad Alcaji), in 1402.³⁹ But substantial information did reach the West in the immediate aftermath of the battle. For an idea of the extensive reportage about the battle in the West, we can draw on various reports which were later transcribed by Marino Sanudo in his *Vitae Ducum Venetorum*.⁴⁰ Also well-known is the reaction of the Genoese of Pera, who apparently raised the standard of Tīmūr over their town.⁴¹

The presence of a Byzantine ambassador in Kutāhya during the autumn of 1402 is attested by the Timurid sources, and it demonstrates the immediate reaction of the Emperor and the Latin community of Constantinople to news of the battle. The *Ẓafarnāma*, or *Liber Victoriae*, by Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī, completed two years after the battle, reports the more authentic Persian version of this embassy: the 'king of Istanbul' (*malik-i Istanbūl*), informed of Tīmūr's success, sent messengers to him, asking him to accept the submission of the Byzantine Emperor and payment of a tribute.⁴² The later version of Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī (1427–28) enlarges the account with some interesting additions: he notes that the *ḥakīm* (governor) of Quṣṭantiniyya (Istanbul), known as *takvūr*,⁴³ gave various *flūrī* (florin), and was honoured by Tīmūr with a number of embroidered cloths.⁴⁴ Clavijo, who also mentions this embassy, notes that some Genoese irritated Tīmūr by helping the Ottomans to escape across the Dardanelles.⁴⁵ The Venetians for their part set in train an ambivalent policy, showing particular concern for Gallipoli and recognizing the position of Süleymān Çelebī in Europe.⁴⁶

1403: Chios and Phocaea

It is likely that Tīmūr was disappointed only with the Genoese of Pera and the Byzantine Emperor, in fact during his subsequent advance in Anatolia Tīmūr paid particular attention to the other Genoese settlements in Chios and Phocaea. This was probably a consequence of Boucicaut's policy, for he was more attentive to the Maona (company) of Chios, which was the object of an obscure correspondence in November 1402.⁴⁷ If the Timurid chronicles place particular emphasis on the capture of the fortress of Smyrna (Izmir), portraying it as a further *ghazā* against the infidel Franks (i.e. the Knights Hospitaller),⁴⁸ they employ a completely different tone towards the island of Sāqqiz (Chios) and the town of Fūcha (New Phocaea) on the mainland. During the early months of 1403, Tīmūr sent the prince Muḥammad Sulṭān, son of his deceased second-born son Jahāngīr and heir to the Timurid throne, to negotiate the ransom for Phocaea. Later the lord of Chios sent other envoys to the court of Tīmūr to negotiate about his own *maona*. These

two episodes are widely reported by the Persian, Greek and Latin chronicles,⁴⁹ and a careful reading of events reveals the revival of a previous agreement between Tīmūr and certain Genoese agents. The Timurid sources describe Muḥammad Sulṭān's encampment in front of Phocaea, together with the submission of the lord of the town who agreed to the payment of the *jizīya* (capitation tax). The lord of Phocaea is here generically described as a *navvāb-i nāmdār* ('renowned lord'). When Muḥammad Sulṭān was on his way back to Manisa, where Tīmūr was encamped, a French king (*yak az Mulūk-i Iفرانج*) whose name was S.T.H. (or Sata), from the island of Sāqgez (Chios) reached the encampment with a request for clemency for his island, and a declaration of submission to Tīmūr, accompanied by the payment of the *jizīya* and *kharaj* (tribute). The three Arabic letters used for the name of the lord of Chios presented a puzzling problem to the copyists and editors of the Persian sources, who transcribed them in various ways.⁵⁰ In fact they seem to correspond to a truncated transcription of the word (Batti)sta, which is the name of the governor of the *maona* until 1404: Battista Adorno.⁵¹ Yazdī notes in his description the fact that Chios was famous for the production of mastic, but this addition is clearly a later one, inserted by the author to flaunt his own encyclopaedic culture.⁵² Though some modern historians describe the submission of Chios as a capitulation provoked by the terror that Tīmūr produced,⁵³ contemporary Greek sources, in particular Dukas, describe the meeting between Muḥammad Sulṭān and the Genoese of Phocaea as particularly friendly.⁵⁴

1404: Clavijo and the end of European relations with Tīmūr

The departure of Tīmūr from Anatolia is attested by several European sources, which introduced a long series of more or less realistic episodes relating above all to the imprisonment of Bayezid in a cage, and his death on 8 March 1403.⁵⁵ Soon after the battle of Ankara the Genoese and Venetians regained their previous status as allies of the Ottomans,⁵⁶ and the disenchantment of the western powers in general was immediate; the author of the *Livre des fais* of Boucicaut would underline this, adopting a fatalistic approach to the figure of Tīmūr.⁵⁷

One significant exception was the embassy of Clavijo, which reached Samarqand in September 1404. The political outcomes of the embassy were minimal, but it occasioned one of the deeper and more substantial western accounts of Tīmūr's life and deeds. Clavijo was witness to the last great *quriltay* (general assembly) which Tīmūr held in Samarqand, on 8 September 1404, before his departure for China.⁵⁸ In the course of this assembly Tīmūr received the ambassadors representing the *bilād-i ifranj* (the Frankish countries), which he considered solid allies.⁵⁹ The Persian account of this meeting by Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī is confirmed by Clavijo himself who describes the diplomatic ritual, including the delivery of presents, and followed by the same practices on the part of the ambassador from Mamluk Egypt. Here the westerners encountered the ambassador whom Tīmūr had earlier despatched to Spain; he was clothed in the Castilian manner, which amused the participants. Clavijo describes the enthusiastic reception of the western embassy, underlining the fact that they were explicitly

invited to take seats in a higher position than the Chinese ambassador, because the king of Castile was considered by Tīmūr as a son, whereas the Chinese Emperor was called *tangūs* (*tongūz*), 'pig' on the grounds that he refused to pay tribute to Tīmūr.⁶⁰ After the exchange of presents and a brief speech by Tīmūr, more detailed discussion was deferred to another time. Nevertheless, over the course of several weeks Tīmūr invited the Castilian envoys to participate in an impressive sequence of banquets and parties, and Clavijo describes the bouts of heavy drinking engaged in by the 'Chagataids' including Tīmūr himself. Finally, without any further private audience or official letters to the king of Castile, the ambassadors were forced to leave Samarqand for their home on 21 November 1404.

Clavijo's embassy may be taken as typical of the evanescent character of Tīmūr's interest in the Latin West. The sole exception might be the attention he directed towards the Byzantines, Genoese and Venetians, all of whom Tīmūr explicitly warned not to form a treaty of friendship with Bayezid. It is hard to detect in Tīmūr's strategies any clear continuity with the intensive Mongol (particularly Ilkhanid) interest in fostering relations with the West. That said, some echoes of these events, including a deliberate confusion between the two periods, can be seen in the late Timurid falsification of the so called *Letters* of Rashīd al-Dīn, as Andrew H. Morton has convincingly argued.⁶¹ In later eastern sources Tīmūr's western agreements were reduced to a generic mention of 'Frankish' involvement, above all during the Anatolian campaign.

More interesting is the narrative of the deeds of Tīmūr which appeared in European sources of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They represent a *mare magnum* of details, in which the progressive myth-creation of humanist culture put to imaginative use various stories of Tīmūrid encounters with the West.⁶² On the one hand, in the early-fifteenth century Poggio Bracciolini's extrapolation of Tīmūr from the account by Mignanelli gave rise to a substantial popularization of Tīmūr, who around 1430 was also portrayed in the lost Palazzo Orsini in Rome.⁶³ It was most likely this portrait of Tīmūr that later inspired Machiavelli in his work, *The Prince*.⁶⁴ On the other hand, the figure of a Genoese who was the personal counsellor of Tīmūr appeared early in the sixteenth century in Spain, Italy and France. In some French books of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries this individual acquires the fantastic name of Axalla.⁶⁵ Far removed from any historical reality, these figures were the last evidence of an earlier attempt to establish a contrast to the Ottoman Empire. The synthesis of the titanic figure of the 'hyperborean' Central Asian king with an exaggerated European presence at his court, thus gave rise to a considerable theatrical and artistic tradition.

Notes

- 1 The nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century perspective on relations between Tīmūr and the West may be summarized by two studies: Joseph Delaville Le Roulx, *La France en Orient: expéditions du Maréchal Boucicaut*, 2 vols (Paris, 1886); Marie Mathilde Alexandrescu-Dersca, *La campagne de Timur en Anatolie* (Bucharest 1942, with some additions in the London reprint of 1977). This research has been substantially developed in recent times. See in particular Adam Knobler, 'The Rise of Timur and Western

- Diplomatic Response, 1390–1405’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 5 (1995), 341–9; Michele Bernardini, ‘Tamerlano, i Genovesi e il favoloso Axalla’, in *Europa e Islam tra i secoli XIV e XVI*, eds Michele Bernardini, Clara Borelli, Anna Cerbo and Encarnación Sanchez García, 2 vols (Naples, 2002), 1:391–426; Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West 1221–1410* (Harlow, 2005), esp. ch. 9, 235–55; Michele Bernardini, ‘Chio, Focea e Tamerlano’, in *Sûzişât-i mü’ellefe. Contaminazioni e spigolature turcologiche. Scritti in onore di Giampiero Bellingeri* (Treviso, 2010), 57–64.
- 2 For the use of *fīrang*/Franks during the Mongol period see Karl Jahn, *Die Frankengeschichte des Rašīd ad-Dīn* (Vienna, 1977).
 - 3 For hostility towards the Christians of Anatolia see Michele Bernardini, ‘Motahharten entre Timur et Bayezid: une position inconfortable dans les remous de l’histoire anatolienne’, in *Sincréismes et hérésies dans l’Orient seldjoukide et ottoman (XIV^e–XVIII^e siècle)*, ed. Gilles Veinstein, Collection Turcica 9 (Paris, 2005), 199–211, at 205–7; J.-M. Fiey, ‘Sources syriaques sur Tamerlan’, *Le Muséon* 101 (1988), 13–20.
 - 4 Rūs are mentioned in Timurid sources. A reference to Lithuanians (*Libqa*) is made by Mu‘īn al-Dīn Naṭanzī, *Muntakhab al-tavārīkh-i Mu‘īnī*, ed. Jean Aubin (Tehran 1336/1957), 97. The reference was to the extension of the Golden Horde’s empire during the reign of Toqṭamish, from the *sarḥaad-i libqa* (in the extreme North) to the extreme South, which is represented by Kafa (Caffa). It would appear that the Russians, Poles and Lithuanians were considered as *Fīrangs*, as for example in a letter of c. 1395 published by Zeki Velidi Togan, ‘Timurs Osteuropapolitik’, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 108 (1958), 279–98. Note that in this instance the European communities in Caffa were also described as ‘infidels’, presumably Latin Christians (Genoese and Venetians).
 - 5 Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāma*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abbāsī, 2 vols (Tehran, 1336/1958), 1:291–4; Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī, *Ẓafarnāma par Niẓāmuddīn Shāmī, avec les additions empruntées au Zubdatu-t-tawārīḫ-i Baysungūrī de Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū*, in *Texte persan du Ẓafarnāma* (Prague, 1937), 99–101.
 - 6 Félix Nève, ‘Étude sur Thomas de Medzoph et sur son Histoire de l’Arménie au XV^e siècle, d’après deux manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Impériale’, *Journal Asiatique* 6 (1855), 221–81, esp. 267–8.
 - 7 ‘Azīz ibn Ardashīr Astarabādī, *Bazm-u-Razm*, ed. Kilisli Rifat and Mehmed Fu‘ād Köprülü (Istanbul, 1928), 17. For this episode see Jean Aubin, ‘Comment Tamerlan prenait les villes’, *Studia Islamica* 19 (1963), 83–122, esp. 19.
 - 8 The presence of some religious at the Timurid court, in particular Franciscans, is mentioned by Andrea Redusio de Quero, see below. Their status is not clear and Golubovich omits any reference to them, but he mentions various Franciscans in the lands of the Golden Horde, as in Hajji Tarkhan (Astrakhan) until its conquest in 1395, Girolamo Golubovich, ed., *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell’Oriente francescano*, 5 vols (Quaracchi, Florence, 1906–1927), 5: 313.
 - 9 Andrea Redusio de Quero, ‘Chronicum Tarvisinum ab anno MCCCLXVIII usque ad Annum MCCCCXVII Auctore Andrea de Redusiis de Quero nunc primum in lucem erumpit ex Msto Codice Collaltino’, *RIS*, XIX, 757–866, here 801–4. See also Bernardini, ‘Tamerlano, i Genovesi e il favoloso Axalla’, 391–426.
 - 10 Wilhelm Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant au Moyen-Âge*, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1959), 2:374–6; Jackson, *The Mongols and the West*, 240.
 - 11 This description was not taken into consideration by Donald Wilber, ‘The Timurid Court: Life in Gardens and Tents’, *Iran* 17 (1979), 127–33.
 - 12 A similar tree was observed by Clavijo in Samarqand, Ruy González de Clavijo, *Historia del Gran Tamorlan*, ed. Gonzalo Argote de Molina (Madrid, 1984), 208. The golden tree reminds us of the ‘fountain-tree’ made by the Parisian goldsmith Guillaume Boucher, and described by William of Rubruck at Qaraqorum: Guglielmo di Rubruck, *Viaggio in Mongolia*, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Borghero Torinese, Turin, 2011), 210–13.

- 13 Could these be the Franciscans of Astrakhan or Tana mentioned by Golubovich? See below, and Thomas Tanase, 'Jusqu'aux limites du monde'. *La papauté et la mission franciscaine, de l'Asie de Marco Polo à l'Amérique de Christophe Colomb* (Rome, 2013), 661.
- 14 The allusion could be to Sulṭān Aḥmad Jalāyir, the lord of Tabriz and Baghdad, or to one of the Muẓaffarid lords of Fārs, all of whom were defeated by Tīmūr on various occasions during the years 1381–93.
- 15 Andrea Redusio, 'Chronicum Tarvisinum', cols 802–4. For the conquest of Tana by Timur see Elena Skrzinskaja, 'Storia della Tana', *Studi Veneziani* 10 (1968), 3–45.
- 16 Jean Froissart, *Chroniques. Livres III et IV*, ed. Peter Ainsworth and Alberto Varvaro (Paris, 2004), 616. For this man see Michele Bernardini, 'Jacques du Fay, un Français à la cour de Tamerlan', in *De Samarcande à Istanbul: étapes orientales. Hommages à Pierre Chuvin, II*, ed. Véronique Schiltz (Paris, 2015), 205–10.
- 17 The activity of other French in the East in this period, in particular at the Ottoman court, is well described by Philippe Gardette in his 'Jacques de Helly, figure de l'entre-deux culturel au lendemain de la défaite de Nicopolis', *Erytheia Revista de Estudios Bizantinos y Neogriegos* 24 (2003), 111–24.
- 18 Freddy Thiriet, ed., *Registres des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie*, 3 vols (The Hague, 1958–61), nos 860, 898, 927, 981.
- 19 For the battle and its aftermath see Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades. From Lyons to Alcazar 1274–1580* (Oxford, 1992), 75–83 and Jacques Paviot, *Les ducs de Bourgogne, la croisade et l'Orient (fin XIVe siècle–XVe siècle)* (Paris 2003), 33–52.
- 20 Togan, 'Timurs Osteuropolitik', 279–98.
- 21 Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāma*, 2:186–91.
- 22 Michele Bernardini, *Mémoire et propagande à l'époque timouride* (Paris, 2008), 79–91.
- 23 Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan*, 2 vols (Princeton, 1989), 1:21–2, 254–63.
- 24 Clavijo, *Historia del Gran Tamorlan*, 220, describes 150,000 Christian deportees in Samarqand in 1403.
- 25 Silvestre de Sacy, 'Mémoire sur une correspondance inédite de Tamerlan avec Charles VI', *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 6 (1822), 470–520, esp. 515–16.
- 26 See the very useful references in Thomas Tanase, *Jusqu'aux limites du monde*, 665. See also Knobler, 'The Rise of Timur', 342. The observations concerning the letter written by Tīmūr to Charles VI, by Abolala Soudavar, 'The Concept of "al-aqamo aṣaḥḥ" and "yaqīn-e sābeq", and the Problem of Semi-fakes', *Studia Iranica* 28 (1999), 255–73, are unhelpful for the understanding of the range of activity of these two French friars. Soudavar's observations are confined to the character of the letter and the protocol used, and we have no other examples of letters sent to Christian courts. Alexandrescu-Dersca, *La campagne de Timur*, 39, mentions the use of Fr. François in 1394 by Manuel II as envoy to the court of Tīmūr, but there is no evidence on this point.
- 27 Henri Moranvillé, 'Mémoire sur Tamerlan et sa cour par un dominicain, en 1403', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 55 (1894), 441–53.
- 28 As in the case of the sultanate of Burhān al-Dīn of Sivas, and the lords of the Beyliks who escaped from Bayezid's imprisonment: Astarabādī, *Bazm-u-Razm*, 449; Aṣīk Paşazade, *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi*, ed. Kemal Yavuz, M.A. Yekta Saraç (Istanbul, 2003), 139.
- 29 Denis Lalonde, *Jean II Le Meingre dit Boucicaut (1366–1421). Étude d'une biographie héroïque* (Geneva, 1988), 71.
- 30 Ibid., *Jean II Le Meingre*, 96–105.
- 31 Nicolae Iorga, 'Notices et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des Croisades au XV^e siècle', *Revue de l'Orient Latin* 4 (1896), 238; Alexandrescu-Dersca, *La campagne de Timur*,

- 52; Roberto S. Lopez, *Storia delle colonie genovesi nel Mediterraneo*, 2nd edn (Genoa, 1996), 305.
- 32 Michel Balard, *La Romanie génoise (XIIe-début du XVe siècle)*, 2 vols (Rome, 1978), 1:101 n. 351.
- 33 Knobler, 'The Rise of Timur', 343; the document, reproduced by Knobler, is in George T. Dennis, 'Three Reports from Crete on the Situation in Romania, 1401–1402', *Studi Veneziani* 12 (1970), 243–65, at 245. See also Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, 1:101 n. 351.
- 34 The new edition of this text, with a long introduction and other works by Beltramo Mignanelli, constitutes a key source for the understanding of the economic context: see Nelly Mahmoud Helmy, *Tra Siena, l'Oriente e la Curia. Beltramo di Leonardo Mignanelli e le sue opere* (Rome, 2013). See also Walter J. Fischel, 'A New Latin Source on Tamerlane's Conquest of Damascus (1400/1401): B. de Mignanelli's *Vita Tamerlani* (1416), Translated into English with an Introduction and a Commentary', *Oriens* 9 (1956), 201–32; Angelo Michele Piemontese, 'Beltramo Mignanelli senese biografo di Tamerlano', *Oriente Moderno* 15 (1996), 213–26. The arrival at Valencia in 1401 of news of the Syrian invasion was perhaps derived from the reports of Mignanelli: Knobler, 'The Rise of Timur', 345.
- 35 Bernardini, 'Chio, Focea, Tamerlano', 58–9.
- 36 Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, 2:687.
- 37 Mario Abrate, 'Creta, colonia veneziana nei secoli XIII–XV', *Economia e storia* 4 (1957), 251–77.
- 38 Johannes Schiltberger, *The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schiltberger*, ed. J. Buchan Telfer (London, 1879), 20–21. Timurid sources depicted the clash with Serbs serving in the army of Bayezid as an act of *ghazā* between the 'lord of Iran and Turan' and the *Qayṣar-i Rūm* (Bayezid) and his *Ifranĵ* corps (the Serbs): Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāma*, 2: 307–14. Jackson mentions another knight who was involved in the battle, the Hungarian Nicolaus Gerecz: *The Mongols and the West*, 245.
- 39 Clavijo, *Historia del Gran Tamorlan*, 17–18.
- 40 Marino Sanudo, in *RIS*, XXIII (1733), 794–8.
- 41 Giorgio Stella, *Annales Genuenses*, in *RIS*, 17/2 (reprint 1975), 260; Knobler, 'The Rise of Timur', 343; Jackson, *The Mongols and the West*, 239.
- 42 Shāmī, *Ẓafarnāma*, 1:264–5.
- 43 This term is certainly an Armenian loanword absorbed by the Ottoman literature: see Michele Bernardini, 'Un'ambasceria del *Takvur* di Costantinopoli alla corte di Tamerlano. Riflessioni sul "Cesare di Rūm" nelle fonti timuridi', in *Bisanzio e l'Occidente: arte, archeologia, storia. Studi in onore di Fernanda de' Maffei* (Rome, 1996), 297–304; Alexios G.C. Savvides, 'Tamerlane, Byzantium and Spain (with notes on Clavijo's visit to Trebizond in A.D. 1404)', *Ἀρχαίον Πόντου* (1992–93), 46–58.
- 44 Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāma*, 2:330–31.
- 45 Ruy González de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlan*, ed. Francisco López Estrada (Madrid, 1943), 111–12.
- 46 George T. Dennis, 'The Byzantine-Turkish Treaty of 1403', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 33 (1967), 72–88, esp. 72–3.
- 47 Philip P. Argenti, *The Occupation of Chios by the Genoese and their Administration of the Island 1346–1556*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1958), 1:154–5. The content of this letter of Boucicaud has not survived, but it is possible to suppose that Boucicaud tried to play down the conflicts between Chios and New Phocaea in view of an agreement with Tīmūr.
- 48 Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāma*, 2:336–42.
- 49 See Bernardini, 'Chio, Focea e Tamerlano', 59. For the Persian sources, see Shāmī, *Ẓafarnāma*, 2:268–9; Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāma*, 2:343–4; 'Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī, *Maṭla' al-sa'dayn va majma' al-bahrayn*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Navā'ī (Tehran, 2004), 1/2, 947–50. Among the Greek sources, see Ducas, *Historia-Turcobyzantina*

- (1341–1462), ed. V. Grecu (Bucharest, 1958), 105–09; in Italian, Agostino Giustiniani, *Annali della Repubblica di Genova*, (Bologna, 1981), p. clxviii. See also Knobler, 'The Rise of Timur', 341–9.
- 50 Yazdī, II, 344; S.Ī.H. س ی ه or S.B.H. ه ب س, Hāfīz-i Abrū, *Zafarnāma par Niẓāmuddīn Šāmī, avec les additions empruntées au Zubdatu-t-tawārīh-i Baysungʻūrī de Hāfīz-i Abrū II, Introduction, commentaire, index*, ed. Felix Tauer (Prague, 1956), 180, and *index*, S.T.H. / S.Ī.H. ه ت س, ه ي س, or ه ی س, Samarqandī, *Maṭlaʻ al-saʻdayn*, 948, S.T.H. ه ت س.
- 51 Probably (جي ت اب) ه ت س, who was a descendant of Antonio Adorno, *maonese* in Chios between the 1370s and 1390s: see Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, 2:380; Bernardini, 'Chios, Focea e Tamerlano', 61–2. For a different hypothesis see Knobler, 'The Rise of Timur', 348 n. 47.
- 52 This commerce was well known at the end of the fourteenth century: Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, 2:742–9; Kate Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State* (Cambridge, 1999), 26.
- 53 See e.g. Lopez, *Storia delle colonie genovesi*, 306–07.
- 54 Ducas, *Historia-Turcobyzantina*, 107, 109.
- 55 See Michele Bernardini, "'Tamerlano e Bāyazīd in gabbia". Fortuna di un tema storico orientale nell'arte e nel teatro del Settecento', in *La conoscenza dell'Asia e dell'Africa in Italia nei secoli XVIII e XIX*, ed. Aldo Gallotta and Ugo Marazzi, 3 vols (Naples, 1989), 3/2:729–60.
- 56 Dennis, 'The Byzantine-Turkish Treaty of 1403'.
- 57 *Le livre des fais du Bon Messire Jehan Le Maingre dit Boucicaut*, ed. Denis Lalande (Geneva, 1985), 157–59.
- 58 For Clavijo see the comprehensive article of Beatrice Forbes Manz and Margaret L. Dunaway 'Clavijo, Ruy González De', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, V/7:692–3.
- 59 Yazdī, *Zafarnāma*, 2: 443.
- 60 Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlan*, 172–5. See Ralph Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden* (Wiesbaden, 2005), 72–6.
- 61 Andrew H. Morton, 'The Letters of Rashīd al-Dīn: Īlkhānīd Fact or Timurid Fiction?', in *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy*, ed. Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan (Leiden, 1999), 154–99, esp. 193.
- 62 See Michele Bernardini, 'Tamerlano protagonista orientale', in *Mappe della letteratura europea e mediterranea. II. Dal Barocco all'Ottocento*, ed. Gian Mario Anselmi (Milan, 2000), 227–48.
- 63 Helmy, *Tra Siena, l'Oriente e la Curia*, 296–303; for the paintings in Palazzo Orsini, see Annelis Amberger, *Giordano Orsinis Uomini famosi in Rom: Helden der Weltgeschichte im Frühhumanismus* (Munich and Berlin, 2003); Angelo Michele Piemontese, *Persia istoriata in Roma* (Rome: Vatican City, 2014), 142. For another portrait of Tīmūr in western painting of this period see Cristelle Baskins, 'The Bride of Trebizond. Turks and Turkmens on a Wedding Chest, ca. 1460', *Muqarnas* 29 (2012), 83–100.
- 64 Eric Voegelin, 'Machiavelli's Prince: Background and Formation', *Review of Politics* 13 (1951), 142–68.
- 65 Bernardini, 'Tamerlano, i Genovesi e Axalla', 407–20.

9 Venetian attempts at forging an alliance with Persia and the crusade in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries

Giorgio Rota

When the Mongols conquered western Persia, eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia (including Baghdad) between 1231 and 1258, among the western powers best placed to gather information about the newcomers were the Venetians, thanks to their extensive commercial interests and presence in the area, and in time they began to do business with the Mongols in both the economic and political sense of the word. At the time, the remnants of the crusader states of the Holy Land that had survived the onslaught of Saladin (1169–93) were fighting for their life against his Ayyubid successors and, above all, against the new power of the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria (1250–1517). The Venetians do not seem to have been part of the attempts to set up a Christian–Mongol alliance to relieve the crusaders from Mamluk pressure, although one may recall here the historian Marino Sanudo Torsello, or the Elder (c.1270–after 1343), and his project to destroy first the economy of Egypt and then the military might of the Mamluks with the help of the Mongol Ilkhanid dynasty ruling over Persia.¹ When compared to other European powers, official contacts between the republic of Venice and the Ilkhanid state started perhaps somewhat later, but they developed into a routine that, given the standards of the time, can be considered quite regular. The Venetians sent envoys to the Ilkhanid court at least in 1286, 1320 and 1326 or 1327, and they received a Mongol emissary perhaps in 1307;² in 1320 a commercial treaty was negotiated;³ and in 1324 we find a Venetian consul in Tabriz.⁴ Shortly thereafter, the sudden death of the last Ilkhanid ruler, Abū Saʿīd (1316–35), brought about the likewise sudden collapse of the dynasty and a period of turmoil which, of course, had a negative impact on Venetian relations with Persia. However, these were not interrupted altogether: for instance, we have evidence of two letters that the Jalayirid ruler Sheykh Oveys Khān (1356–74) wrote to the Venetian representative (*bailo*) at Trebizond in 1370 and 1372 or 1373.⁵

In the same years the star of Tīmūr (the Tamerlane of the western sources, 1370–1405) began to rise in Central Asia. To the best of our knowledge, the republic started to have relations with the great conqueror only at a later stage of the latter's career, after he had reached western Persia, eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea basin. From a political point of view, Tīmūr's presence was a mixed blessing for Venice: he destroyed the Venetian colony of Tana in 1395 but he also established a *Pax timuridica* that was beneficial for trade. Perhaps more relevant to

the present article, at the battle of Ankara (1402) he checked the expansionism of the Ottoman sultan Bayezid I (1389–1402), who was not yet an immediate danger for the Venetian territories but threatened the existence of what remained of the Byzantine Empire. After Ankara, Tīmūr withdrew eastwards, which meant that the republic did not have to develop what I have elsewhere called a *Timuridenpolitik*.⁶ This period is however particularly relevant from our point of view because it is when the first of two episodes occurred in which Persia played a role in Venice's anti-Ottoman plans. On the eve of the crusade of Nicopolis (1396), and at a time when Bayezid was blockading Constantinople,⁷ the Venetian Senate urged the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II (1391–1425), in a letter dated 24 July 1394, to resist, because at the time the sultan had to deal with a certain *Zamberlanus*⁸ (that is, Tamerlane).⁹ The second episode occurred in 1430, the final year of the war against Murad II (1421–44, 1446–51) for Thessalonica, which had started in 1423: in this year, the Senate wrote to the commander of the Venetian forces in the East that 'a son of Tīmūr' had attacked, or was about to attack, the Ottomans from the rear.¹⁰ As explained in more detail elsewhere,¹¹ this unexpected 'ally' was not the actual son and successor of Tīmūr, Shāhrokh (1405–47) attacking the Ottomans but rather the distorted echo of a campaign against the pro-Ottoman Qarā Qoyūnlūs led by either Shāhrokh or the loyal ally of the Timurids, Qarā 'Osmān Āq Qoyūnlū (often known as Qarā Yolūq 1403–35), which was mistaken in Venice for an offensive against Murad II.¹² Furthermore, in the same years the king of Hungary, Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387–1437), was indeed in contact with Qarā 'Osmān and, through him, perhaps with Shāhrokh himself:¹³ thus it is possible that rumours about their dealings reached Venice. In both cases, the republic counted on an offensive from Persia which would divert the Ottoman threat: in other words, the Venetians were perfectly aware of the potential impact that an attack from Persia could have on the Muslim masters of Anatolia (as the Mongols had shown in 1243 and Tīmūr himself in 1402), although such an attack was neither coordinated with nor requested by the Venetians themselves. We also see three features that were to characterize attempts at joint Christian–Persian military efforts (whether or not they were labelled as crusades) until the end of the seventeenth century, when they were finally abandoned: 1) the approximate nature of the information available to both sides, warped by geographical distance and oral transmission; 2) the divisions existing on the Christian side, in this case between the republic and Sigismund, and 3) the fact that allying with Persia was not an integral part of a coherent Venetian anti-Ottoman strategy but rather an extreme measure to which Venice resorted in times of emergency.

Things however began to change a few decades later. In July 1463 the republic declared war on the Ottoman Empire, starting one of the longest and hardest-fought conflicts in the history of the two states:¹⁴ despite the final defeat of the Venetians, the war saw what we could call the apogee of Venetian 'crusading' projects that included Persia, that is, the sustained, coordinated and almost successful attempt at organizing a joint military offensive together with Ūzūn Ḥasan Āq Qoyūnlū. The latter had begun his career as a ruler in 1453, when he reached supreme power within the Āq Qoyūnlū ruling clan. This career received an

exceptional boost first in 1467, when Ūzūn Ḥasan defeated and killed a traditional enemy of the Āq Qoyūnlūs, Jahānshāh Qarā Qoyūnlū (1438–67), and above all in 1469, when he defeated, captured and executed Solṭān Abū Saʿīd (1451–69), the last great Timurid ruler of Central Asia. If the former victory removed a traditional thorn in the flesh and paved the way for the conquest of Persia, the latter had a powerful symbolic meaning because Abū Saʿīd was a direct descendant of the great Tīmūr and the overlord of the traditionally pro-Timurid Āq Qoyūnlūs. *Mutatis mutandis*, taken together for Ūzūn Ḥasan and the Āq Qoyūnlūs these two victories were what the conquest of Constantinople had been for Mehmed II (1444–46, 1451–81) and the Ottomans in 1453: they marked a coming of age for a polity that, as John Woods has effectively summed up, ‘was thus transformed almost overnight from a small group of nomadic clans [...] into an Islamic world power concerned with questions of universal sovereignty’.¹⁵ Furthermore, if Ūzūn Ḥasan’s relations with Mehmed II had started to sour after 1458,¹⁶ his triumph over Abū Saʿīd meant that the final clash between the Āq Qoyūnlūs and their second overlord, the Mamluks, was just a question of time.¹⁷

The attempt to create a Venetian–Āq Qoyūnlū anti-Ottoman axis actually involved or affected four states rather than three:¹⁸ they were all empires, albeit different from each other in terms of structure, historical development and war aims. The Mamluks had ceased to expand territorially (or, better said, they had never expanded much beyond the borders of Egypt and Syria but had rather strengthened their control over these two regions), but they could count on several factors that increased their prestige and political legitimacy. Since 1250 they had ruled over core Islamic lands such as Egypt and Syria, they controlled the Holy Places of Mecca and Medina, and Cairo was the seat of an Abbasid Caliph who, despite being devoid of real power, enhanced the prestige and legitimacy of the Mamluk Sultan. Furthermore, in the 1470s the Mamluks still enjoyed the prestige and fame as holy warriors that their predecessors had gained in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries during the wars against the crusaders and the Ilkhanid Mongols: while their armed forces had not been put to test against major enemies since Tīmūr had attacked Syria in 1400–01, with this mostly peaceful period not failing to affect their capabilities negatively, they were still able to invade Cyprus successfully as late as 1460,¹⁹ and (as later developments would show) remained effective as a fighting force. Victory in war, the ultimate evidence of God’s favour towards a ruler in traditional Muslim societies, was particularly important from the point of view of political legitimacy for men who were not born Muslims, had started their military careers as slaves, generally refused the principle of dynastic succession to the throne and, nonetheless, ruled an important part of the central Islamic lands. Still, their right to rule was not unassailable or unchallenged: in the autumn of 1472, on the eve of his invasion of northern Syria, Ūzūn Ḥasan did accuse them of being ‘slaves’ and therefore unfit to rule.²⁰ Formally neutral in the war between Venice and Mehmed II, they were a factor of stability in the region: they favoured the status quo,²¹ and aimed at preserving the territorial integrity of their domains from the threat of ambitious upstarts like the Ottomans and, above all, the Āq Qoyūnlūs.

When compared to the Mamluks, the Ottomans were a relatively young power. They had quickly recovered from their disastrous defeat at Ankara in 1402 and conquered Constantinople in 1453, a victory that had not only shocked Christendom,²² but also provided motivation and legitimacy for further conquests. Like the Mamluks, they had strong credentials as *ghāzīs* or ‘holy warriors’ but, unlike them, they were a major factor of instability, threatening Christian and Muslim neighbours alike.²³ In 1460, Mehmed II completed the conquest of the Peloponnese (with the exception of a few Venetian fortresses) and definitively eliminated the presence of the despots of Morea, the brothers Thomas and Demetrios Palaiologos. In 1461, he took Trebizond and put an end to the rule of the local Komnenos dynasty: the niece of the last emperor had married Ūzūn Ḥasan in 1458,²⁴ and the fall of the city further strained relations between the two rulers.²⁵ In 1463, Mehmed II conquered Bosnia, which was wedged between Venetian Dalmatia and Hungary. The Ottomans did not yet directly menace Mamluk or Āq Qoyūnlū territory, but in 1465 Mehmed II installed his own protégé on the throne of the buffer state of Karaman in southeastern Anatolia, thus acquiring temporary control of the territory and irking both the Mamluk Sultan, Khūshqadam (1461–67), and Ūzūn Ḥasan, who had sent troops in support of another pretender.²⁶ Finally, the Ottomans lent at least some support to the north-Syrian rebel, Shāhsavār Zūʿl-qadar (d. 1472), during the years 1468–72.²⁷

By the mid-fifteenth century the republic of Venice was, like the Mamluks, one of the traditional great powers of the Mediterranean basin and a factor of stability there. Still expanding on the Italian mainland, after 1453 it had been confronted in its overseas territories by the increasing expansionism of the Ottomans, which had brought the borders of the two states into direct contact on a number of fronts. It is not necessary here to linger on Venetian self-representation or on the sources (in the opinion of the Venetians themselves) of Venetian sovereignty, but obviously the republic could not consider Ottoman claims on Venetian territories legitimate. By declaring war on Mehmed II, the republic was trying to preserve its own conquests rather than making new ones.²⁸

The Āq Qoyūnlūs can be considered the newest among these four polities: while their presence in eastern Anatolia and northern Syria is attested as early as the mid-fourteenth century (that is, not long after the Ottomans started their conquests in western Anatolia),²⁹ nonetheless as stated above their sudden transition from ‘confederation’ to ‘empire’³⁰ did not take place until the years between 1467 and 1469. This budding empire was still full of unsolved contradictions. It was ruled by a military class of Turkmen origin (which included the ruling dynasty) and administered by high-ranking bureaucrats mostly of Persian origin. It included a large Christian population (Nestorians, Armenians and Greeks) that was usually well treated by the rulers.³¹ As a Sunni monarch with very few non-Muslim neighbours, Ūzūn Ḥasan tried to earn credentials as *ghāzī* with occasional campaigns against Georgia, with whose kings he had otherwise peaceful relations.³² As mentioned above, his relations with the Empire of Trebizond were definitely good.³³ Supported by the religious scholars of his court, he tried to depict himself as the *mojadded* (‘renewer’) of Islam for the ninth century of the

Hijra (1398–1495), but his education in matters of religion was probably less than perfect: a Mamluk envoy (and as such perhaps not the most unbiased source) who visited his court in 1471 claimed that Ūzūn Ḥasan did not know who the *ansār* of the Prophet were.³⁴

The need for political legitimacy, common to every leader or polity, was particularly acute in the case of a newcomer like Ūzūn Ḥasan, who, moreover, operated in a geographical context where much if not all of the available physical space was occupied by more prestigious and well-established Sunni neighbours. The emphasis he placed on his descent from the mythical ancestor of the Turkmens,³⁵ the claim to *ghāzī*-status and his support for dervishes were bound to set him on a collision course with the Ottomans. Pretension to *mojadded*-status, his support for official Islam and the attempt to have his own name read during the Friday prayer in Mecca and Medina in 1473³⁶ were even more open challenges to the Mamluks. His victories against powerful enemies were clear signs of divine favour, at least in the eyes of his own followers: the inescapable inference was that the Sultans in Constantinople and Cairo could not partake of the same favour. These were non-military, symbolic challenges that foretold and later accompanied and strengthened Ūzūn Ḥasan's offensives against his Muslim neighbours:³⁷ it is not a coincidence that the announcement of the victory over Solṭān Abū Sa'īd that Ūzūn Ḥasan, following the Muslim diplomatic conventions of the time, sent in 1469 to his overlord, the Mamluk Sultan Qā'itbāy (1468–96), was written in apparently respectful and friendly terms but was in fact, in the words of a modern scholar, 'the first evidence of Uzun Hasan's designs against the sultanate, a throwing down of the gauntlet, as it were'.³⁸

The timing of this open provocation to the ruler of Cairo is also particularly indicative of how divergent the political agendas of the two 'natural allies', Venice and Ūzūn Ḥasan, actually were: whereas the former was fighting a mainly defensive war, the latter was bent on building a large empire that was inevitably to include much or most of the territory currently belonging to the Ottomans and the Mamluks. However, Ūzūn Ḥasan did not limit himself to symbolic steps: like Mehmed II, he was wiping out older dynasties. We mentioned above the demise of the Qarā Qoyūnlūs and the defeat of Solṭān Abū Sa'īd, which meant the end of Timurid rule over most of the Iranian plateau. Less spectacular from the point of view of the territorial conquests involved, but perhaps equally loaded with symbolic value, was Ūzūn Ḥasan's conquest of Ḥiṣn Kayfā and the slaying of al-'Ādil Khalaf, the last semi-independent (he was a vassal of Ūzūn Ḥasan) Ayyubid lord in 1462. Needless to say, the Ayyubids were the descendants of the great Saladin and had ruled Egypt before the Mamluks: their fall did not fail to impress contemporaneous observers, and the Egyptian chronicler Ibn Taghrībirdī dated 'Uzun Hasan's emergence as a real power in Diyar Bakr from this event'.³⁹ To sum up, the Āq Qoyūnlūs were a regional destabilizing factor like the Ottomans but younger, as a consequence not as prestigious and, as later developments would show, not quite as strong.

As early as 2 December 1463 (less than five months after the formal outbreak of the war), the Venetian Senate ordered an envoy to be sent to Ūzūn Ḥasan, to the

ruler of Karaman and to a certain *Turcumanum*,⁴⁰ who may have been Jahānshāh Qarā Qoyūnlū and who does not seem to appear again in later alliance projects. At the same time, Venice adhered to the crusade proclaimed by Pius II (1458–64) in 1463: the crusade itself, however, came to nothing with the death of the Pope on 18 August 1464,⁴¹ and the republic did nothing to revive it. The exchanges of envoys which followed between Venice and Ūzūn Ḥasan cannot be dealt with in detail here,⁴² but in the autumn of 1464 Venice reached an agreement with an ambassador of the Āq Qoyūnlū ruler *Mametanazab* on the partition of the territories that were to be taken from the Ottomans during future military campaigns, whereby the Venetians would retain the coastland and Ūzūn Ḥasan the interior. Although Venetian sources of this period do not seem to use the word crusade, some in Venice were aware that the approval of the Pope was necessary before entering a formal alliance with a non-Christian ruler, a point which was raised by none other than the *Capitano generale da Mar*, or commander of the naval forces, Pietro Mocenigo, a supporter of the alliance, in 1471.⁴³ However, it was not until September 1471 that the Senate sent Caterino Zeno as an ambassador to his ally, with a letter promising that other Italian states, Hungary, Poland and even the highly unlikely ally Emperor Frederick III (1452–93) would join the fray. The diplomatic effort finally led to military action in 1473, when the republic sent a fleet to ravage the coasts of Asia Minor and a few ships with a small expeditionary force, led by ambassador Giosafat Barbaro, to the coast of Cilicia, where they should have met Ūzūn Ḥasan; Barbaro was accompanied by the ambassadors to Ūzūn Ḥasan of the Pope and the king of Naples.⁴⁴ Ūzūn Ḥasan, however, instead of focusing on the joint campaign against the Ottoman ‘common enemy’, had divided his forces: Āq Qoyūnlū invasions of Ottoman Anatolia and Mamluk Syria were beaten back in August 1472 and April 1473, and finally Ūzūn Ḥasan was decisively defeated by Mehmed II at the battle of Başkent (also known as the battle of Tercan or Otlukbeli) on 11 August 1473.⁴⁵

There is no doubt that the imminent showdown with the mortal foe Mehmed II caused considerable commotion in both Venice and Persia. We are not particularly well informed about the Persian side, but, as John Woods has written, ‘after the defeat of Sultan-Abu Sa‘īd, ... Uzun Hasan also came to regard himself as the rightful successor not only of Shahrukh, but of Timur as well’.⁴⁶ In 1402 Tīmūr had posed as the restorer of the small Anatolian dynasties dispossessed by the Ottomans and, before attacking Ottoman-held Karaman in June 1472 with the aim of restoring the local dynasty to power, Ūzūn Ḥasan sent a letter to a local enemy governor containing a detailed comparison between himself and Tīmūr that demonstrated his superiority over the latter: the not so subtle conclusion to be drawn was that the Ottomans would face catastrophic punishment in case of resistance.⁴⁷ It is however interesting to remark that the above-mentioned *Mametanazab*, during his permanence in Venice, claimed that Tīmūr was one of Ūzūn Ḥasan’s ancestors.⁴⁸ We do not know if this invention was due to the imagination of the ambassador, the propaganda work of his lord or, perhaps, a simple mistake in translation. What is certain is that Ūzūn Ḥasan seriously overestimated his strength when he took on the Mamluks and the Ottomans at practically the

same time.⁴⁹ Had he really come to believe what he and his courtiers had been saying for years, that he was a new Tīmūr and that, as such, enjoyed special divine protection? We do not know for sure, but it is possible, especially if we take into consideration Ūzūn Ḥasan's offensive stance at Baškent, against Ottoman troops protected by wagons chained together and strengthened by fire weapons, as compared to his much more cautious siege of the camp of Solṭān Abu Sa'īd (whose troops had no fire weapons) a few years earlier.

We can follow thoughts in Venice a bit better. Although Venetian relations with Sigismund of Luxemburg were far from idyllic, the Venetians may have been to some extent aware of his relations with Qarā 'Osmān 'Qarā Yolūq', Ūzūn Ḥasan's grandfather.⁵⁰ Interestingly, however, in Christian and Muslim sources alike the former appears often as the father, not the grandfather, of the latter.⁵¹ Furthermore, both Qarā 'Osmān and Ūzūn Ḥasan (as well as other Āq Qoyūnlū rulers before them)⁵² had married Christian princesses from Trebizond,⁵³ and were known (or, at least, supposed) to favour Christians. Interestingly, a letter written by Ragusan traders to Sigismund on 22 March 1432 calls Qarā 'Osmān *Denurovich*, that is, in a Slavized form, 'the son of Tīmūr'.⁵⁴ Some at least must have seen a pattern in this series of pro-Christian 'reincarnations' of Tīmūr. During an age rife with prophecies concerning the final outcome of contemporaneous events in general and of the titanic clash between Christendom and Islam in particular,⁵⁵ there must have been some, in Venice and elsewhere in Europe, who thought that the son had come to complete what the 'father' had left unachieved, whereas others may have reached the conclusion that God had finally decided to fight his enemies with other enemies.⁵⁶ In Rome, where the Pope was again allied with the republic, the clash and final victory of Good over Evil was even represented on stage on 2 March 1473 in a performance organized by Cardinal Riario, the Pope's nephew: loaded with classical references as well as current political meaning, the work presented the king of Macedonia (that is, Ūzūn Ḥasan, as the new Alexander the Great) defeating and capturing the Ottoman Sultan.⁵⁷

However, events on the battlefield did not match these expectations. Ūzūn Ḥasan was not only defeated in 1473 but died soon afterwards, in 1478. In 1499, Shāh Esmā'īl I (1501–24), founder of the Safavid dynasty and at the time still little more than a boy (he was born in 1487), started his bid for power in north-western Persia.⁵⁸ The political authorities in Venice were informed of his military activities at the latest in December 1501,⁵⁹ in the middle of another war against the Ottomans (the conflict lasted from 1499 to 1503).⁶⁰ As early as 1502, a 'poor gentleman from Constantinople' and former trader, Costantino Lascaris, visited the camp of Shāh Esmā'īl I, where he could not see the Shah but spoke with one of the many Karamanid pretenders who were still trying to continue the fight against the Ottomans even though their land had been definitively annexed in 1474; Lascaris gave him assurance of Venetian support. Once back in Venice, he certainly reported on the hardiness, loyalty and enthusiasm of the Shah's warriors, but most probably also on the conditions of western Persia (which was exhausted by the recurrent outbreaks of civil war that had followed Ūzūn Ḥasan's death)⁶¹ and the extent of the Shah's conquests, which at that time included Tabriz and

little more.⁶² Yet the awareness that this boy-king (with all the images and associations that such a description could evoke) was not only allegedly partial to Christians but was certainly hostile to the Ottomans and, furthermore, was the grandson of Ūzūn Ḥasan cannot have failed to raise great hopes, on which we are unfortunately very poorly informed.⁶³

In the following years, emissaries of the Shah met Venetian officials in Constantinople, in the Venetian colonies and in Venice itself, and we know of at least one Venetian agent sent to Persia to gather information.⁶⁴ In 1509, two Persian envoys visited Venice within about two months of each other (the second in the company of a Karamanid envoy): Venetian sources do not tell much about the aim of their missions, but it seems fair to assume that the Shah was still interested in a military alliance. The second ambassador in particular could not have arrived at a more unfavourable time: he was received by the Doge on 16 May, two days after the battle of Agnadello, where the Venetians had been defeated by the king of France, one of the members of the league of Cambrai.⁶⁵ Paradoxically, the league had ostensibly been created as a crusade against the Turks, but it was now dealing with Venice in order to get rid of a power that, according to the allies' propaganda, was not sufficiently committed to the defence of Christendom. Even more paradoxically, the Venetians were running the risk of proving the propaganda of the league to be true: a proposal to ask the Sultan for military help was submitted and discussed in the Senate during the same days the Safavid envoy was in the city.⁶⁶ The times were extremely tense for the republic and so the proposals of the Shah, whatever they were exactly, came to nothing. The exchange of letters however did not stop: in 1510, a number of Venetian subjects returning from Persia in the company of two Safavid envoys were arrested by the Mamluk authorities while trying to cross the Euphrates with letters from the Shah to the Doge. The discovery of the letters, and the role played by the Venetian consul in Damascus in keeping up these exchanges, triggered a major crisis between the republic and Egypt that lasted until 1512,⁶⁷ showing that Veneto–Persian relations were as likely to antagonize the Mamluks as they had in the days of Ūzūn Ḥasan.

The Mamluks of Egypt and Syria disappeared however as an independent political power in 1517, defeated by Selim I (1512–20): this further expansion of Ottoman power, coupled with the fact that the Ottomans were now in control of the ports and markets of the Levant, meant that any attempt at challenging them militarily had to be even more carefully considered than before. In the preceding decades, the deaths of Charles the Bold of Burgundy (1477), Isabel of Castile (1504) and Ferdinand II of Aragon (1516), and of their only male heir John (1497) meant that large parts of western and central Europe fell under Habsburg control. Surrounded as it now was by much larger and more powerful neighbours, the republic had to strive more than ever to preserve its independence and gradually became militarily less active on the international stage. This certainly influenced its attitude towards Persia as well: diplomatic overtures to the Shah in case of crisis with the Ottoman Sultan could very easily irritate the latter without bringing any military help from the former. At the same time, projects of anti-Ottoman alliances with Christian powers (besides

being obviously irritating to the Ottomans) could open the door to unwelcome political interference, again without necessarily bringing the promised help. As a consequence, during the other two sixteenth-century wars against the Porte in 1537–40 and 1570–73 (which the republic fought as a member of a league with the Pope and the Emperor in the first case, as a member of a Holy League with Spain and the Papacy in the second),⁶⁸ Venice did send envoys to Persia, but the reason both of them went down in history was of a literary rather than politico-military nature.⁶⁹

It is something of a paradox that the first Veneto–Persian attempt at a joint military effort was also the only one that ever came close to success. The reasons are quite simple. Both sides were determined to fight (the Venetians more than Ūzūn Ḥasan, to tell the truth) because both were at a turning point in their history, and the outcome of the struggle with the Ottomans would decide whether they could still aspire to a role as great powers or not. The Venetian presence on Cyprus, and in general its naval superiority, combined with Ūzūn Ḥasan’s theoretical ability to establish a bridgehead on the Anatolian coast would have enabled the two allies to meet ‘physically’. While Venice did not receive much support from its Christian allies it was not particularly threatened by them either, whereas Ūzūn Ḥasan’s grip on his own state was, until Baškent, firm. Finally, both powers could count on expert and committed diplomats.⁷⁰ These conditions were never to recur during the following decades.

Notes

- 1 Felicitas Schmieder, *Europa und die Fremden. Die Mongolen im Urteil des Abendlandes vom 13. bis in das 15. Jahrhundert* (Sigmaringen, 1994), 117–20. See also Marinus Sanutus, *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis super Terrae Sanctae recuperatione et conservatione* (Hanover, 1611; repr. Toronto, 1972).
- 2 Giorgio Rota, *Under Two Lions. On the Knowledge of Persia in the Republic of Venice (c 1450–1797)* (Vienna, 2009), 9.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 5 For more on this phase of Venetian–Persian contacts see *ibid.*, 8–11, 14.
- 6 For more on Venice and Tīmūr see *ibid.*, 10–11, 26–27. Generally on Tīmūr’s relations with Christian powers see the essay by Michele Bernardini in this collection.
- 7 Setton, *Papacy*, 1:341; Halil Inalcik, ‘The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades, 1329–1451’, in Setton, *Crusades*, 6:249–50; Caroline Finkel, *Osman’s Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923* (London, 2006), 24. On the crusade of Nicopolis, see Setton, *Papacy*, 1:341–57. Venice contributed to the crusade with a few galleys.
- 8 Rota, *Under Two Lions*, 26; see also Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West, 1221–1410* (Harlow, 2005), 240.
- 9 Tīmūr conquered Baghdad on 29 August 1393 but, instead of marching against Bayezid, in 1395 he attacked and defeated the Golden Horde: see H. R. Roemer, ‘Tīmūr in Iran’, in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (Cambridge, 1986): 64, 72–3.
- 10 Rota, *Under Two Lions*, 27.
- 11 Giorgio Rota, ‘Bohemia, Hungary and the Question of the Diplomatic Relations between Persia and Europe (15th–17th Centuries)’ (*Studia Historica Brunensia*, Brno, forthcoming).

- 12 H. R. Roemer, 'The Successors of Tīmūr', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 6:102–3; John E. Woods, *The Aqqyunlu. Clan, Confederation, Empire. Revised and Expanded Edition* (Salt Lake City, 1999), 48, 57.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 57; Rota, 'Bohemia, Hungary'. Sigismund became Holy Roman Emperor in 1433.
- 14 On this, see Setton, *Papacy*, 2:242–328.
- 15 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 100.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 89.
- 17 Matthew Melvin-Koushki, 'The Delicate Art of Aggression: Uzun Hasan's *Fathnama* to Qaytbay of 1469', *Iranian Studies* 44 (2011), 193–214, at 197; Giorgio Rota, 'The 1473 Āq Qoyunlu-Venetian Joint Military Campaign in Anatolia and its Background', in *Zwischen Feinden und Freunden: Kommunikation im spätmittelalterlichen Krieg*, ed. Petr Elbel, Alexandra Kaar and Robert Novotný (Vienna, forthcoming).
- 18 Without counting smaller states like the kingdom of Cyprus, buffer states like the Karamanids or occasional partners like the kingdom of Naples.
- 19 Sir George Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, 4 vols (Cambridge, 1948–52; repr. 1972), 3:560–78.
- 20 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 114–17; Mehmet Şefik Keçik, *Briefe und Urkunden aus der Kanzlei Uzun Hasans* (Freiburg, 1976) 132–3; Shai Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East* (Leiden, 1995), 96–7. Similar arguments were used later on at least two different occasions by the Ottomans, in 1485 and 1517: see Robert Irwin, 'The Political Thinking of the "Virtuous Ruler," Qānshūh al-Ghawrī', *Mamlūk Studies Review* 12 (2008), 37–49, at 46; Hakan T. Karateke, 'Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate: a Framework for Historical Analysis', in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. Hakan T. Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden, 2005), 13–52, at 25.
- 21 Carl Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians?* (Albany, 1994), 29–35, 52–3; Har-El, *Struggle for Domination*, 6, 27; Albrecht Fuess, 'Dreikampf um die Macht zwischen Osmanen, Mamlūken und Safawiden (1500–1517). Warum blieben die Mamlūken auf der Strecke?', in *Die Mamlūken. Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur. Zum Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999)*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Anja Pistor-Hatam (Schenefeld, 2003), 240, 245–6.
- 22 This shock also caused unexpected and peaceful reactions, like for instance the famous episode of the letter written (but perhaps not sent) by Pius II to Mehmed II: see Luca D'Ascia, *Il Corano e la tiara* (Bologna, 2001) (Latin text of the letter at 233–86).
- 23 'The Ottoman Empire was a dynastic state organized for war': see Colin Imber, 'Frozen Legitimacy', in *Legitimizing the Order*, 99. The political importance of the role of the Ottoman Sultan as a military leader has been investigated in *ibid.*, 99–107, while the main elements of Ottoman legitimacy have been summarised in Karateke, 'Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate', 13–52.
- 24 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 88.
- 25 The struggle for Trebizond appears potentially even more significant and fraught with consequences when seen in the light of Teodoro Spandugnano's statement, according to which Mehmed II claimed to be of Komnenos ancestry: see Karateke, 'Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate', 24.
- 26 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 93–5; F. Sümer, 'Karāmān-oghulları', in *EI*, 4:624; Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 64. On Mehmed II and the Mamluks during this period, see Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians?*, 51–5.
- 27 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 97; Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians?*, 42–4; Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, 'Les dernières batailles du grand émir Yaşbak min Mahdī', in *War and Society in the Eastern Mediterranean, 7th–15th Centuries*, ed. Yaacov Lev (Leiden, 1997), 302, 305–6; Margaret L. Venzke, 'The Case of a Dulğadir-Mamluk *Iqtā'*: A Re-Assessment of the Dulğadir Principality and Its Position Within the Ottoman-Mamluk Rivalry', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 43 (2000), 399–474, at 423–7.

- 28 Setton, *Papacy*, 2:240–43; Inalcık, ‘The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades’, 325.
- 29 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 28–35.
- 30 I have borrowed both terms from Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, which remains the most detailed and authoritative study of the Āq Qoyūnlūs.
- 31 Ibid., 57; Andrew Palmer, ‘John Bar Šayallāh and the Syrian Orthodox community under Aqqyunlu rule in the late fifteenth century’, in *Christians and Muslims in Dialogue in the Islamic Orient of the Middle Ages*, ed. Martin Tamcke (Beirut, 2007), 187–205.
- 32 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 88–90, 122–3. On the other hand, Georgia was theoretically a natural ally in the fight against the Ottomans. In 1460–61 the famous Ludovico da Bologna crossed Europe with a group of ‘Oriental’ ambassadors which supposedly included envoys of Ūzūn Ḥasan as well as the Georgian princes: see Giorgio Rota, ‘Taking Stock of Ludovico da Bologna’, in *The Eurasian History. Contributions to the History, Culture and Civilization*, ed. Stoica Lascu (Constanta, forthcoming).
- 33 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 88.
- 34 Stephan Conermann, ‘Ibn Aġās (st. 881/1476) “Ta’rīḥ al-Amīr Yašbak az-Zāhirī” – Biographie, Autobiographie, Tagebuch oder Chronik?’, in *Die Mamlūken*, 150–51. On Ūzūn Ḥasan and the support lent to him by both religious scholars and dervishes, see Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 82–4, 102–7, 122. The *anšār* of the Prophet were the men of Medina who supported him during the years of his exile in that city: see W. Montgomery Watt, ‘Anšār’, in *EI*, 1:514.
- 35 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 9, 25–8, 35, 56, 115, 179–82.
- 36 On this particular episode, see *ibid.*, 107–8.
- 37 Har-El, *Struggle for Domination*, 6–7.
- 38 Melvin-Koushki, ‘The Delicate Art of Aggression’, 193–214, at 197; see also Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 100–8. Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians?*, 44–9 contains several factual inaccuracies.
- 39 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 92; see also Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians?*, 45.
- 40 Guglielmo Berchet, *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia* (Turin, 1865), 103.
- 41 Setton, *Papacy*, 2:235–7, 243–50, 261, 266–70.
- 42 A detailed narration of these events can be found in Rota, ‘The 1473 Āq Qoyunlu-Venetian joint military campaign’.
- 43 Barbara von Palombini, *Bündniswerben abendländischer Mächte um Persien 1453–1600* (Wiesbaden, 1968), 17–19; Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 2008), 226 (which wrongly has Mocenigo as Doge). Mocenigo called Ūzūn Ḥasan not ‘infidel’ but ‘rex a christiana professione alienus’: see von Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, 18. Interestingly, the contacts with Ūzūn Ḥasan (and of course Mocenigo’s speech) almost coincided with the ‘paradigm shift’ in the attitude towards Persia which took place in Italy in the decade or so following 1453, whereby Persia started to be seen as ‘a country of noble princes’: see Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, 218–23, at 218. See however below, n. 56.
- 44 When later Barbaro decided to go to Persia, his fellow ambassadors did not follow him: see Rota, ‘The 1473 Āq Qoyunlu-Venetian joint military campaign’. On the contacts between the Holy See and Ūzūn Ḥasan, see Angelo Michele Piemontese, ‘The Nuncios of Pope Sixtus IV (1471–84) in Iran’, in *Iran and Iranian Studies. Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar*, ed. Kambiz Eslami (Princeton, 1998), 90–108; *idem*, *La Persia istoriata in Roma* (Vatican City, 2014), 289–92; Rota, ‘Taking Stock’.
- 45 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 118–20.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 112.
- 47 ‘Annali Veneti dall’anno 1457 al 1500 del senatore Domenico Malipiero ordinati e abbreviati dal senatore Francesco Longo ...’, *Archivio Storico Italiano* 1/7 (1843), 79; Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 115.
- 48 ‘Annali Veneti’, 33–4.

- 49 At the same time, more Āq Qoyūnlū troops were engaged in trying to subdue several Kurdish chiefs: see Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 110–12.
- 50 Rota, ‘Bohemia, Hungary’.
- 51 Enea Silvio Piccolomini (Papa Pio II), *I commentarii*, ed. and Italian trans. Luigi Totaro, 2 vols (Milan, 1984; repr. 2004), 1:900; Keçik, *Briefe und Urkunden*, 132; Benjamin Arbel, ‘Levantine Power Struggles in an Unpublished Mamluk Letter of 877 AH/1473 CE’, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 7 (1992), 92–100, at 98–9.
- 52 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 34.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 58, 88, 205, 244 n. 124.
- 54 Wolfgang Freiherr Strome von Reichenbach, ‘König Siegmunds Gesandte in den Orient’, in *Festschrift für Hermann Heimpel zum 70. Geburtstag am 19. September 1971*, 2 vols (Göttingen, 1972), 2:609; see also Rota, ‘Bohemia, Hungary’.
- 55 See for instance Paolo Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi* (Florence, 1975), 67–91; Kenneth M. Setton, *Western Hostility to Islam and Prophecies of Turkish Doom* (Philadelphia, 1992); Ottavia Niccoli, ‘High and Low Prophetic Culture in Rome at the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century’, in *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period*, ed. Marjorie Reeves (Oxford, 1992), 203–22; eadem, ‘L’arme des prophéties et des pronostics dans les guerres italiennes, du XVe au XVIe siècle’, in *La prophétie comme arme de guerre des pouvoirs, XVe–XVIIe siècles*, ed. Augustin Redondo (Paris, 2000), 203–19; Gérard Poumarède, *Pour en finir avec la croisade* (Paris, 2004), 81–148.
- 56 As Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo openly stated in 1507: see Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, 235–6. On earlier Italian views of Tīmūr as a tool of divine Providence, see *ibid.*, 203–4, 215–17. See also above, n. 43.
- 57 Angelo Michele Piemontese, ‘La rappresentation de Uzun Hasan sur scène à Rome (2 mars 1473)’, *Turcica* 21–23 (1991), 191–203; *idem*, *La Persia istoriata*, 291; Meserve, *Empires of Islam* 223–4; Rota, ‘Taking Stock’.
- 58 Jean Aubin, ‘L’avènement des Safavides reconsidéré’, *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien* 5 (1988), 6–13.
- 59 *Šāh Ismā‘īl I nei “Diarīi” di Marin Sanudo*, ed. Biancamaria Scarcia Amoretti (Rome, 1979), 3–4.
- 60 On this war, see Setton, *Papacy*, 2:514–34 (524–53 on Pope Alexander VI’s crusade); Inalcık, ‘The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades’, 347–52; Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580* (Oxford, 1992), 115–17.
- 61 Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 121–61; Aubin, ‘L’avènement des Safavides reconsidéré’, 69–84.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 13–21. For Lascaris’ reports, see “*Diarīi*” di Marin Sanudo, 32–9.
- 63 Von Palombini, *Bündniswerben abendländischer Mächte*, 39–64; Palmira Brummett, ‘The Myth of Shah Ismail Safavi: Political Rhetoric and “Divine” Kingship’, in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, ed. John Victor Tolan (New York, 1996), 331–59; Meserve, *Empires of Islam* 231–7; Rota, *Under Two Lions*, 28–38. Some observers, however, remained sceptical of the new Shah and possible ally: see Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, 234–6. Hannes Möhring, ‘Der andere Islam. Zum Bild vom toleranten Sultan Saladin und neuen Propheten Schah Ismail’, in *Die Begegnung des Westens mit dem Osten*, ed. Odilo Engels and Peter Schreiner (Sigmaringen, 1993), 150–55, unfortunately does not take into consideration the role played by Ūzūn Ḥasan in the formation of this ‘myth of Shāh Esmā‘īl’.
- 64 Von Palombini, *Bündniswerben abendländischer Mächte*, 41–8; Giorgio Rota, ‘Diplomatic Relations Between Safavid Persia and the Republic of Venice: an Overview’, in *The Turks*, vol. 2, ed. Hasan Celāl Güzel, C. Cem Oğuz and Osman Karatay (Ankara, 2002), 580–7, at 581.
- 65 Giorgio Rota, ‘Safavid Envoys in Venice’ in *Diplomatisches Zeremoniell in Europa und im mittleren Osten in der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Ralph Kauz, Giorgio Rota and Jan Paul Niederkorn (Vienna, 2009), 213–45, at 217–18.
- 66 *Ibid.*, 218 n. 15. On the question of the *impium foedus* with the Ottomans, see for

- instance Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, 35–61; Giovanni Ricci, *Appello al turco* (Rome, 2011); Christine Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel* (London, 2011), 23–48.
- 67 Francesca Lucchetta, ‘L’“affare Zen” in Levante nel primo Cinquecento’, *Studi Veneziani* 10 (1968), 109–219; Setton, *Papacy*, 3:25–33; Jean Aubin, ‘La crise égyptienne de 1510–1512. Venise, Louis XII et le Sultan’, *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien* 6 (1989), 123–50; Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, ‘Gli ultimi accordi tra i sultani mamelucchi d’Egitto e la Repubblica di Venezia’, *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 12 (1994), 60–4; Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, *Les Ottomans, les Safavides et leurs voisins* (Istanbul, 1987), 138–40. This incident is also mentioned in Fuess, ‘Dreikampf um die Macht’, 241–2, unfortunately on the basis of Egyptian sources and secondary literature alone. On the Mamluk habit of virtually using the foreign Christians living in their domains as hostages during diplomatic crises with the Christian powers, see Johannes Pahlitzsch, ‘Mediators between East and West: Christians under Mamluk Rule’, *Mamlūk Studies Review* 9 (2005), 31–47.
- 68 Setton, *Papacy*, 3:427–9 and 4:1012–16. On the two wars, see *ibid.*, 3:422–51 and 4:944–1094.
- 69 Both envoys, Michele Membrè and Vincenzo degli Alessandri, left travel reports that are now of remarkable importance for the history of Safavid Persia: see Michele Membrè, *Relazione di Persia (1542)*, ed. Giorgio R. Cardona (Naples, 1969); *idem*, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia (1539–1542)*, English trans. A. H. Morton (London, 1993); Berchet, *La Repubblica di Venezia*, 30–7.
- 70 On the Venetian and Āq Qoyūnlū diplomats engaged in the negotiations that led to this military campaign, see Rota, ‘The 1473 Āq Qoyunlu-Venetian joint military campaign’. After 1573 and the loss of Cyprus, Venice did not really look any longer at Persia as a potential military ally: see *idem*, ‘Diplomatic Relations’, 583–4; *idem*, ‘Safavid Envoys in Venice’, 213–15.

10 Quattrocento Genoa and the legacies of crusading

Steven A. Epstein

The standard story of crusading in late medieval Genoa is that the city, facing increasing economic and political disarray, lost all interest in crusading, compared to almost every other European power of whatever rank, but especially Venice.¹ What little money Genoa had for overseas ventures of any kind paid for wars of survival and desperate efforts to keep the Ottoman Empire from conquering the eastern colonies, Caffa, Pera and Chios. Distant memories of the crusade Pope Clement VI summoned for the defence of Caffa in 1345, or the French governor of Genoa (1401–09) Boucicaut's raids along the eastern Mediterranean coast marked the end of Genoa's major offensive wars against the Muslims, whether or not they were called crusades.² Jean Le Meingre, called Boucicaut (1366–1421) had campaigned with the Teutonic Knights against the Lithuanians and in Spain, and was captured twice at important battles: one the crusader disaster at Nicopolis in 1396, and in 1415 at Agincourt.³ This intrepid career, intersecting Genoese history, represents a different strand in the legacy of crusading, not influential in Genoa. This conclusion to the history of Genoa and the crusades stands in stark contrast to the well-known and important contributions Genoa made to crusading from about 1100 to 1300. The first task of this paper is to briefly re-examine the evidence for the conventional wisdom, and the second, based on the findings of the first, looks at what happened to the basic impulse behind Genoese crusading – a real taste for overseas holy war. This endeavour engages us in the activities of the best known Genoese of the century, Christopher Columbus.

The memorable year 1453 and the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople have always stood in the historiography of the period as a sharp turning point.⁴ Although our main interest is in the period from 1453 to 1509 and the league of Cambrai (or 1506 and the death of Columbus), a few events in the first half of the century merit notice because they influenced both the standard historical accounts, and, as we will see, the ways Columbus saw his world. What some have called the fifth Genoese–Venetian war in 1431 ratified the belief that Genoa was no longer a Mediterranean naval power of even the second rank. The Venetians seized Genoese galleys off the coast of Crimea, causing panic in Caffa.⁵ Even when the Tatars were besieging Venetian Tana on the Sea of Azov, nearby Genoese Caffa offered no help.⁶ The collapse of the Genoese war fleets, beyond the scope of this paper, meant that the city would play only a minor role, if that, in

anything that passed for crusading in this period. In 1440 Genoa received a Papal indulgence for unclear reasons, probably related to the general chapter meeting of the Franciscans in Genoa, and not aimed against the Aragonese in southern Italy, a long struggle from which Genoa was lucky to emerge undefeated if not victorious.⁷ In 1444 the funded public debt of Genoa, held by what had become a quasi-financial institution, the Bank of San Giorgio, collapsed as the city drowned in colossal debts. Genoa was able to reorganize its finances and consolidate the public debt.⁸ These problems were probably the main reason why the city was in no position to contribute ships or money to the Burgundian ‘crusade’ in the Black Sea in 1445.⁹ Since Genoa still had Caffa and commercial interests in the region, the lack of interest in and or ability to campaign in the Varna crusade in 1444 is testimony to the accuracy of the standard accounts. The Genoese out in Pera again provided invaluable assistance to the Ottoman Turks, helping to transport Sultan Murad II and his Anatolian army across the Dardanelles.¹⁰ In 1447 the city ceded Famagusta on Cyprus to San Giorgio, another sign of retreat.

In 1452 the Genoese, at least still well informed about likely events in the East, provided reinforcements to their commercial colony at Pera, across the Golden Horn from Constantinople, a place the Genoese had interests in for nearly two centuries. Genoa sent more aid to Byzantine Constantinople in 1453 than any other European power except Venice, but the Ottoman victory doomed Pera to a slow death and made Genoese access to the Black Sea increasingly problematic. For these reasons, and the usual financial exigencies, Genoa transferred Corsica (its most important overseas possession) and the Black Sea colonies to the Bank of San Giorgio, on the theory that much of the income from these places already flowed to the bank for debt services. Hence the Bank, Genoa’s viable economic institution (certainly not the city government) had the motive and resources in theory to defend these places. (The island of Chios had been leased to a private company, the Maona, since the previous century.) The defeats of 1453 frightened the Italian powers into a general peace of Lodi in 1454, one that excluded Genoa from being one of the five great powers (the Papacy, Naples, Florence, Venice and Milan) because of its relative political insignificance and its habit of turning the city over to a foreign power like the king of France or a local one like the duke of Milan. In 1455 the Ottoman Turks took Old Phocaea from the Gattilusio lord of Mytilene, and New Phocaea from the Maona of Chios.¹¹

Rare accounts from 1456 about the selling of indulgences in Liguria for the crusade, with the money deposited in San Giorgio, reveal according to Jacques Heers that enthusiasm for the crusade may have been stronger in the small towns of Liguria than in Genoa proper. La Spezia contributed L278 s.4 d.7, about 180 ducats, at a time when the average merchant Giovanni Piccamiglio paid about seven ducats for his personal indulgence and Pope Pius II had to pay more than 300 ducats a month to rent a ship and crew from Genoa.¹² (A tithe on the income of the Ligurian clergy amounted to a suspiciously modest and rounded 600 ducats, the price of hiring a ship for two months.) This Pope excluded Genoa from his general crusade tax in 1460, possibly because the city was in no position to pay anything, or perhaps recognizing that the Genoese were doing all they could

to plan for the defence of Caffa. Members of the Centurione family from Genoa in 1462 were involved in exploiting the profitable alum deposits at Tolfa in the Papal State. Phocaea, now Ottoman and for centuries the main supplier of alum, a dye fixative, to the Mediterranean world and beyond, now faded as the Pope and the Genoese profited from this stroke of good luck. In 1449 the alum from Phocaea had amounted to 40–50,000 ducats.¹³ (By the end of the century, members of this great Genoese family were active in the sugar business on Madeira, where Columbus found his wife.¹⁴) The overall impression is that Genoa's minor role in the post-1453 crusading movement was limited to modest contributions of money and ships for hire to the Papacy in protecting the coast of Latium and the Tyrrhenian Sea, and in the Aegean.

Records of a commercial dispute originating in Cyprus but adjudicated in Genoa, reveal that in 1441 the important Grimaldi family was actively engaged in the sugar business in Nicosia.¹⁵ The operation involved transporting cane, presumably by mule trains from plantations, to warehouses and a refinery with tin cauldrons in Nicosia. From there the refined sugar would have had to travel from inland Nicosia to a port, but the records are silent on this step in the trade. What seems clear is that the Genoese were intermediaries in the sugar business and not owners of plantations. It would be worth knowing who was cutting cane on Cyprus in the 1430s. (In 1464 the Cypriots ended Genoese authority over Famagusta, but not private ventures on the island.) On Chios Greek labourers gathered the valuable gum from mastic bushes; no need for agricultural slaves there.

Despite an indulgence for Caffa in 1456 and San Giorgio's efforts to effectively administer Caffa and its dependencies in Crimea, the city nevertheless fell to an Ottoman fleet in 1475. This defeat ended any Genoese hopes of using the Black Sea to revive trade across Asia to China. Many of the surviving Genoese and Armenian children were enslaved; hundreds of leading Genoese, including the consul, were beheaded.¹⁶ The Genoese responded by rushing help to Chios, a place Columbus visited around this time.¹⁷

The last quarter of the fifteenth century, when Columbus was old enough to weigh the significance of events, was a period of light and shadows. On the positive side, Genoa's feisty archbishop Cardinal Paolo Fregoso (later also its doge) in 1481 commanded the crusading armada assembled to retake the Turkish base at Otranto in southern Italy.¹⁸ At the same time Genoese ambassadors were in Kiev, a sign that the city's astute overseas traders recognized that any ties to traditional trade routes to the East would now have to take a circuitous route through the northern Balkans around the Ottoman Empire. Venice saw the same possibilities and was even exploring common interests with Persia against the Turks.¹⁹ Genoese hopes for keeping open one branch of the Silk Road to the East proved impractical, and their sea power had so dwindled that in 1495 Venice was defending Chios. Genoa, torn between domestic parties supporting France, Milan, and soon Spain, was more and more a pawn in the contest over Italy beginning in 1494 and the French invasion. The Genoese served as very junior partners in a French fleet attacking Mytilene in 1501.²⁰ By 1508 it faced problems closer to home when Turkish corsairs appeared off the Riviera. In 1509, a good date to end this

story (before the Spanish turn and the rise of Andrea Doria) Genoa, along with everyone else (including the Turks) joined in a minor role the league of Cambrai against Venice.

Complicating this portrait of Genoese politics were those periods in which Genoa submitted itself (usually voluntarily) to the rule of a foreign power: France from 1458 to 1461 and from 1499 to 1506, and Milan from 1464 to 1477 and from 1487 to 1499. For much of the second half of the Quattrocento Genoa increasingly had to conform its overseas policies to the larger strategies of its masters, the king of France or the duke of Milan. These connections probably sapped whatever lingering crusading designs the Genoese still had. What sea power remained at the city's disposal had to serve in the first instance the policies of Milan and France and the larger international struggles of the period. During the short interludes of independence we can see what interested the Genoese when they were their own masters – so for example, the capture of Otranto in 1481. On a more modest level, given the limitations on Genoese importance, we can note these actions, all too frequently merely words. In 1456 the Genoese republic formally asked the king of England for help against the Turks menacing Chios.²¹ Turning to France's defeated enemy, soon faced with civil war, was an unpromising endeavour. In the same year, outside the framework of the Peace of Lodi, Alfonso of Aragon and Naples declared war on Genoa. Hostilities resulted mainly from perennial disputes over Corsica and the Aragonese claim that the Genoese were providing arms and goods to the king's Muslim enemies. (As we will see, Genoa's complicated ties to North African Muslim powers are key to understanding the legacies of crusading.) As recently as 1434 Pope Eugenius IV had condemned the Genoese for supplying slaves from Caffa to Mamluk Egypt, but this did not stop them from engaging in this traditional and lucrative trade.²² One of the undoubted benefits of Milanese rule was that under the protection of the Sforza dukes the republic became part of the general peace, but on its own dangers loomed. Not all pleas for distant help were in vain; in 1458 Duke Philip of Burgundy provided funds for one big galley to defend Caffa and Pera.²³

In 1464 a letter written before Milanese rule suggests that the Genoese were being encouraged to contribute to the forces gathering at Ancona which according to this account planned a brief voyage across the Adriatic to fight the Turks in Albania.²⁴ There are no signs that Genoa even attended the congress of Mantua in 1459 to plan this crusade or aided it in any way. While under Milan, the Genoese concluded a 30-year peace with the ruler of Tunis.²⁵ In this case we can presume that the Genoese, and not Milan or Tunis, initiated this pact, subject to the usual Muslim stipulation of a long truce rather than permanent peace between a Muslim and a Christian power. During the brief period of independence from 1478 to 1487, the republic of Genoa made an alliance between the Ligurian Pope Sixtus IV and the king of Sicily, and a similar deal with the Pope and Venice. As a very junior partner to the Papacy and the great navy of Venice, Genoa tried to chart its own course, but not for long.

The traditional hallmarks of crusading, a Papal summons and an indulgence, hardly appeared in this rapid summary of Genoese affairs. Genoa's private wealth

and public poverty or squalor could not be squared with expensive overseas ventures. It was not the only part of Europe that seemed to be losing interest in the struggles in the eastern Mediterranean, the defence of Constantinople, and the impossible dream of a recovery of the Holy Land by traditional means. We know as well as contemporary Genoese that crusading was still vibrant, in its historical sense, in the Baltic and Iberia. I am going to argue that what happened to the Genoese zest for crusading can best be seen in the career of Columbus. I am by no means the first to tie Columbus to the history of crusading. But I think a closer look at his Genoese context and his own writings reveal what happened in general to Genoese aspirations about overseas fortune and glory.

* * *

Before turning to Columbus's own thoughts about his enterprise, let us look briefly at two contemporary Genoese historians who help to place his activities in an Italian perspective. Then we will be able to see how things may have appeared differently in Iberia. Bartolomeo Senarega wrote a standard humanist history of Genoa covering the years 1488–1514.²⁶ His main task was to describe Genoa caught in the struggles between Spain and France, and looking to side with the winner. As an official history, the slow rise of Andrea Doria and his eventual alliance with Spain is the backdrop for a history primarily concerned with the Italian peninsula. Still, Senarega recognized the significance of Columbus the explorer and was happy to claim him as a Genoese.²⁷ The 1490s were a grim period in Genoa's history and any good news was welcome. Under Milanese rule, Genoa was mainly on the French side, but it was relatively powerless and Senarega noted that Venetian ships (and not Genoese fears) had prevented an Ottoman attack on Chios. In 1501 a French–Genoese fleet of eight galleys and six ships, at first intended to fight in Naples, instead sailed east to battle the Turks off Chios. While in the Aegean this flotilla joined up with the Venetians in a fruitless assault on well-fortified Mytilene.²⁸ Senarega reports that this combined fleet contained 42 galleys and other ships, a good gauge of the relative naval power of Venice which predominated over the French and Genoese by four to one. This minor episode points to the murky circumstances of crusading in this period.

Regular campaigning against the Ottomans, whether or not buttressed by a Papal indulgence, now took place among state-sponsored military units, not spontaneously gathered essentially private armies or navies of enthusiasts. The naval side to crusading had always required a level of government initiative in building and maintaining fleets – witness the Arsenal in Venice or private contracting in Genoa. Money for these efforts might still be raised by Papal taxes that carried spiritual benefits for the donor/taxpayers, far removed from the nitty gritty of attacking fortresses in the Aegean. Closer to home, Senarega reports that in 1508 Turkish galleys raided off the Riviera at Diano, causing some sleepless nights in Liguria, and took prisoners, soon to be slaves in Turkish galleys or possibly ransomed.²⁹ For centuries to come Ottoman or Barbary corsairs off

the coast of Liguria were an endemic problem which Genoa's navy was increasingly unable to solve. It must have seemed that one of the legacies of crusading was this curious reversal; after centuries of campaigning in the East, the war was back where it had been in the tenth century, on Genoa's doorstep. As an epilogue to the role of captives and slaves in the legacy of crusading in Genoa, the brief tract Giorgio Interiano of Genoa wrote on the Zichi, or Circassians, published in 1502, reveals the recent memories of Genoese trading in the Black Sea and Caucasus. Interiano notes that most of the male slaves exported from this region had ended up in Egypt where some rose in the Mamluk ranks to become sultans and admirals.³⁰ Selling slaves in Cairo was no longer a trade in Genoese hands, and soon enough the Ottomans would incorporate the Mamluk Empire into their state (1517). Genoese silence about Egypt, which after all controlled Jerusalem, may have resulted from this reprehensible trafficking in human beings who constituted the core of Mamluk military power. As we will see, this silence may have been another reason why Columbus looked for options elsewhere.

Antonio Gallo wrote a commentary on Genoese history from 1476 to 1478 that was exclusively focused on Italy and did not mention the loss of Caffa in 1475, so no notice of any consequences either.³¹ Venetian dominance on Cyprus began in 1474 and was complete by 1489, another Genoese failure Gallo omitted. Misplaced priorities in the eastern Mediterranean cost Genoa dearly. Eliyahu Ashtor theorized that Genoa, with no big domestic market for spices, had to let the Egyptian trade dwindle away in order to focus on Pera, Caffa and Chios.³² By the end of the Quattrocento Genoa's trade in Alexandria was perhaps a third of Venice's, in a place where they had predominated at the beginning of the century.³³

In 1506 Gallo produced a brief account of Columbus, and the way he framed his work set the tone for a great deal of the subsequent vast historiography on him. Gallo began with a long prologue on Portugal and its explorations along the coast of Africa, in which the Genoese had participated since the fourteenth century. Gallo then picked up the story from a Castilian perspective focused on Cadiz and the Atlantic.³⁴ Without the Genoese merchant colonies in Lisbon and Cadiz, Columbus would have lacked vital intermediaries to the monarchs and local important people. These Genoese were not in Iberia as pilgrims, explorers or tourists. They were there to make money, in commerce and in sugar, and that meant slaves. This western emphasis in some Genoese merchants takes the Mediterranean out of the picture (but not its legacies of sugar and slaves) and for some Spanish historians helped the long process of transforming Columbus into a Castilian. If we take a closer look at how Columbus perceived and sold his own project, we may find a new way of explaining why the Genoese at home were also looking elsewhere for outlets for their crusading impulses.

There is no need to rehearse here the standard story of the war of Granada, the crusade Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile waged against the last independent Muslim power in Iberia.³⁵ The successful conclusion of the long war in 1492 enabled the rulers to turn their attention to expelling the Jews from

their kingdoms and their resources partly to subsidizing the plans and dreams Columbus had so persistently urged upon them.³⁶ Felipe Fernández-Armesto has noticed how early Jerusalem appeared in Columbus's thinking.³⁷ The textbook story has Columbus adroitly appealing to Ferdinand's greed by promising the vast profits of a direct trade with China, and to Isabella's spirituality by casting his endeavour as a kind of crusading reconnaissance preparing to recover Jerusalem and attack the Ottomans by the back door across the Indian Ocean. Our interest is to take all the Genoese context presented here and see Columbus as a product of this environment. What influences led Columbus to believe he was in some respects a crusader, indeed if we wish to romanticize the situation, possibly one of the last crusaders?

The text to consider is known today in the best modern edition and translation as *The Book of Prophecies Edited by Christopher Columbus*.³⁸ Roberto Rusconi has carefully analyzed the surviving mutilated and much altered manuscript and isolated the parts in Columbus's own hand, or in the hand of an Italian notary he employed to take down his own musings. A large part of the manuscript contains extracts made from other sources by a Spanish monk (Father Gorrício), perhaps at Columbus's request, but here we ignore all these entries, as well as the ones made by Ferdinando Columbus and others, and consider only those prophecies or historical remarks we can definitively attribute to Columbus. This record, compiled before, during, and after Columbus's voyages, was a private record he intended for himself and reveals what motivated him and what was on his mind. For example, remarkable comments in his own hand note that he saw on 14 September 1494 an eclipse near Hispaniola which he was able to measure as five and a half hours from Portugal.³⁹ Another eclipse in 1504 enabled similar calculations, when Columbus imagined the sun setting seven and a half hours earlier than in Jamaica at the island of Calis, near Rhodes (the island is said to be in Spain, but by modern measurement two and a half time zones to the east places it at the island Calis in the Aegean).⁴⁰ It is striking that even when off the coast of Jamaica the Ottomans in the eastern Mediterranean were not far from Columbus's thoughts. Eclipses were important to Columbus as a mariner, but they were also aptly mentioned in his book of prophecies, to which we now turn.

Not surprisingly, when Columbus thought of prophecies he remembered the Old Testament and its past prophets, who had something useful to say about the past on the one hand, and the present and future on the other. Prophecies concerning the past were still relevant to the present, but they seem to have mostly referred to the interval between the prophets' future and Columbus's past. He divided up his references by entries that varied considerably in length, so rather than weigh their significance by entry or even biblical verses in modern editions, it seems best to count the number of lines by prophet. These entries are in the hand of the Italian scribe (so named by the editor) and they reflect exactly what Columbus wanted copied out, especially because he skips some verses and summarizes others. There is no doubt that Columbus knew his Latin Bible – no sign of vernacular translations in Castilian or Italian here.

Past Prophecies by Number of Lines

Isaiah 337

Jeremiah 88

Baruch 32

Ezekiel 62

Daniel 7

Hosea 11

Joel 83

Amos 14

Obadiah 16

Micah 45

Zephaniah 52

Zechariah 222

Present and Future Prophecies by Number of Lines

Isaiah 58

I Chronicles 37

II Chronicles 34

At first glance we can see that the prophets Isaiah, Zechariah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were especially important to Columbus. The number of lines from Joel is misleading because they were contained in just two long excerpts very meaningful to Columbus. We now need to ask: what did Columbus find in these prophets, what themes run through the passages? What might they reveal about crusading?

Columbus believed that ‘Most of the prophecies of Holy Scripture have already been fulfilled ...’ and that one in particular resonated: ‘I have already said that for the voyage to the Indies neither intelligence nor mathematics nor world maps were of any use to me; it was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy.’⁴¹ This is a remarkably disingenuous remark from a skilled mapmaker and computer who certainly knew better, so what can he mean? Further,

This is what I want to record here in order to remind your Highnesses [Ferdinand and Isabella] and so that you can take pleasure from the things I am going to tell you about Jerusalem on the basis of the same authority. If you have faith in this enterprise, you will certainly have the victory. (All in Castilian.)

Plainly Isaiah was important to Columbus because he wrote so much about Jerusalem, a city crucial to Columbus and his patrons because they thought this enterprise was a means to recover it. Norman Housley did not find much interest in defending Europe by recovering Jerusalem, but it is revealing that the big exception was Pope Calixtus III (1455–58), a Borja from Valencia.⁴² One need not enter the protracted debates between the lumpers and the splitters about the scope of ‘true’ crusades to recognize in Columbus the deeply rooted significance of recovering Jerusalem for Christian rulers. In modern parlance, Columbus was future oriented and he had little or no interest in history except insofar as it (as prophecy) was a

guide to the future he wanted. For example, he noted that ‘The Calabrian abbot Joachim said that whoever was to rebuild the Temple on Mount Zion [Jerusalem] would come from Spain’, heady news for his audience.⁴³ This same opinion was in an extract from a letter of the Genoese envoys to the rulers of Spain in 1492, and it becomes difficult to catch who is influencing whom.⁴⁴ The old thirteenth-century prophecies of Joachim of Fiore about time and the end of the world also engaged Columbus because there was a strong apocalyptic strand in this thinking. I do not think we have here a case of any ‘terrors of the year 1500’. Instead, again in a familiar vein, Jerusalem and the End Times were the same subject, and by taking the city Columbus may have seen himself as hastening the other. But even without that grandiose view, Columbus might simply have shared the opinion of many of his respectable contemporaries that the End was nigh. Housley also found that ‘Apocalyptic thinking was one of the period’s most characteristic features and the Turkish advance was thoroughly assimilated into it’.⁴⁵ The different perspective from the western Mediterranean will be considered below.

So, what did Columbus notice in the prophetic books of the Bible?⁴⁶ A cluster of interesting associations in his favourite prophet, Isaiah, concerned the significance of secrecy (24:16, KJV leanness, NAB wasted), every notice of islands (e.g. 41:1, 49:1) and Jerusalem and Zion (e.g. 51:3, 60:2) and the righteous servant from the East, who would bring justice to all peoples (41:2). Columbus did not view himself as a Christ-like figure, but rather as someone bringing light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6), no doubt the Indians he found in the Caribbean, but they were what had been foretold, what he had expected to find. David Abulafia, however, has plausibly suggested that especially after his troubled second voyage, Columbus identified with the biblical suffering servant.⁴⁷ Columbus also appreciated Isaiah’s sense of a big world extending beyond the confines of Israel to Ethiopia, or Sheba (60:7) and indeed the ends of the earth (43:6) and the islands there (49:2). I think Isaiah also prepared Columbus to ignore his critics, who would wither like grass (51:12). Kedar, a place evoking dark peoples, was also important to Columbus (e.g. 42:11, 60:7 and a focus that will carry over to Jeremiah). The last extract from Isaiah (beginning 66:18) encapsulates an explorer’s Bible and is worth citing at length:

I come to bring together their works and their thoughts with all peoples and tongues, and they will come and see my glory. 3. I will place a sign among them, and I will send some who have been saved to the peoples of the sea, to Africa and Lydia, to the ones who draw the bow; to the distant islands, to those who have not heard me and have not seen my glory.

What a reaffirming message for God’s instrument Columbus, who also appreciated islands.

In contrast, his rough contemporary Anselme Adorno, from the Flemish branch of the Genoese family, has left an account of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1470–71. The most non-Genoese aspect of Adorno was that he did not like islands, not recognizing them as the traditional stepping stones of Genoese

commerce, or that in many ways Liguria was an island in Italy, or that islands could loom large in a seafarer's apocalyptic reveries. Adorno thought, for example, that the Corsicans were scoundrels and the Sardinians were even worse. He wrote that Sardinia had poor wine, unhealthy air conducive to fevers, bad water, and foreigners should not eat the food.⁴⁸ Later he observed that almost all people living on islands were bad but that the Sicilians were the worst.⁴⁹ These views were so contrary to Genoese traditions (let alone the spirit of Fernand Braudel) that perhaps we can conclude that they are in some way part of the legacy of crusading in the more health-conscious period of continuing outbreaks of bubonic plague. Yet another reason for ordinary people to stay home and avoid intrepid and risky enterprises like holy wars, piracy or exploration. Columbus thrived in this context, and his Bible provided a framework of prophecy and an Apocalypse that explained his sense of purpose.

Jeremiah's prophecies on Jerusalem, distant lands and the rest continue to surface in these extracts. A new place appears – Tarshish, providing silver ingots (10:9 – Columbus somehow missed the reference in Isaiah 60:9) and usually associated with Spain, possibly even the lands around Cadiz, the Phoenician West. Tarshish, Brother Gorricio assured Columbus, was found very often in Scripture⁵⁰ as in the many passages he copied out for Columbus on islands and Ophir. Kittim (another mysterious biblical island, usually thought to be Cyprus) was at the end of Jeremiah's world, just the kind of place Ezekiel also described in these terms – 'nor are you sent to many peoples of an obscure language and an unknown tongue, whose words you cannot understand. However, if you were sent to such a people, they would listen to you'. (Ez. 3:5) This is a side issue, but Columbus faced severe language problems in the New World and none of his own languages or translators did him any good. Still, these new people would listen, even if they were uncircumcised, as Ezekiel among others had warned him (e.g. Ez. 32:28). Joel, an apocalyptic prophet intriguing to Columbus, had a lot to say about Jerusalem and the wider world, in his case including the Greeks (Joel 4:6). Amid the apocalyptic reveries of the later prophets, Columbus found a telling passage in Micah (6:8): 'I will show you, O man, what is good and what the Lord asks of you'. This is how he conceived his mission and role in events. Zephaniah and Zachariah also gave him plenty of additional references to Jerusalem and the End of Days.

The smaller set of references to the present and future show Isaiah still in the lead, but here passages from I and II Chronicles also appear. Columbus understood that these would be about the biblical future but possibly his own times. Verses from Isaiah (6:11–12) about a desolated and depopulated Jerusalem certainly resonated in the late fifteenth century when memories of the great plagues of the last century were still vivid. Chronicles provided Columbus with another prophet, Nathan, and plenty of references to the gold of Ophir and the riches of Solomon. At the end of these passages is a revealing entry in Columbus' own hand, a very unexpected extract from the play *Medea* by Seneca. What he found there were two mentions of Thule,⁵¹ another piece of evidence that his much debated possible voyage to Iceland and beyond in 1477 had actually occurred.

In a letter Columbus wrote to his patrons (and copied into his book of prophecies), probably right after the capture of Granada in 1492, he built his case around restoring the Temple in Jerusalem (also a marginal note referring to Seneca!).⁵² Columbus made the remarkable claim, no doubt annoying to Ferdinand and Isabella, that ‘the Holy Spirit operates in Christians, Jews, Moors, and in all others of any sect, not only in the wise, but in the ignorant as well’.⁵³ What Columbus meant was that prophetic knowledge could be obtained anywhere, a kind of common grace (!) that helped him calculate that if the expected life of the world was the traditional 7,000 years, only 155 remained. Time to get busy.

Columbus had looked East, and like many of his Genoese contemporaries, he concluded that there was nothing there – no gold, no salvation, and no way to recover Jerusalem. Losses in Pera, Caffa, Famagusta and in the formerly lucrative Egyptian trade, let alone the Ottomans, made the East appear hopeless. So he turned West, and after he was returned to Spain in chains in 1500, he still was urging upon the Spanish monarchs a westerly campaign to liberate Jerusalem, which he believed was a necessary harbinger of the End of the World.⁵⁴ Nancy Bisaha concludes that ‘Columbus believed that he had every right to rename and take possession of the lands he encountered in the West; his confidence stems from natural law but also from a sense of cultural superiority in keeping with humanist traditions’.⁵⁵ True enough, but the Bible and apocalyptic thinking may have been more powerful stimulants to Columbus’s sense of mission. The Genoese back home contributed some money and second-hand crossbows to Papally approved indulgence campaigns, but they would do no more. Intrepid Genoese had been looking to the West for some time since the Vivaldi brothers’ fabled expedition in the 1290s to sail around Africa to the East. Columbus followed their path to Tarshish. Out there, despite his claims that mathematics and maps meant little, Columbus went out into the Ocean Sea expecting to find what the Bible prophesied: gold, islands, souls to save, a back door to recovering Jerusalem, and maybe even a way to hasten the Second Coming and the End.⁵⁶

Columbus brought to bear on ‘the Indies’ his deep experience of the Old World. It was, after all, on his second voyage (1493–96) that Columbus brought the first sugar cane cuttings to the Caribbean and on his third voyage (1498–1500) he was giving sugar among other things to the Indians.⁵⁷ According to Bartolomé de las Casas the first refined sugar was made on Hispaniola in 1505–06.⁵⁸ Las Casas placed this matter in the previous context of so many Indians dying from overwork, cruelty, and above all diseases, and an effort to introduce new plants at the same time that a plague of ants was devastating vegetation on the island. He situated refining of sugar in the history of cane coming from Valencia to the Canaries to Hispaniola, immediately followed by plans to rely on Castile to supply black slaves (*negros esclavos*), and more importantly the Genoese would procure thousands of slaves in Guinea.

Part of Columbus’s endless arguments on the economic benefits to flow to Ferdinand and Isabella from his discoveries was that Castile, Portugal, Aragon, Italy, Sicily and the islands of Portugal [Madeira] and the Canaries needed many slaves [why?].⁵⁹ In his opinion Guinea and the Cape Verde islands would not

be able to supply as many slaves as needed, and the Indies could fill the gap. Columbus was also interested in the recent crusading past. He was able to reassure and advise his patrons that just as the Jews had paid for the war of Granada (a remarkably astute insight), what was gained in ‘the Indies’ could pay for the recovery of Jerusalem.⁶⁰ Four centuries of Genoese experience of crusading, and a lifetime observing the trade in gold, slaves, sugar and even brazil wood, formed his heady plans and ambitions.

I have drawn attention before to a letter Columbus wrote in 1498, in which he estimated, after circumnavigating the island, that Hispaniola would be able to export 4,000 slaves a year.⁶¹ Iberia needed no lessons from a Genoese mariner about slavery, as William D. Phillips has recently proved.⁶² The Iberian kingdoms of Portugal, Castile and Aragon, the Genoese, Venetians, and others all became active in slavery and the slave trade precisely during the centuries of crusading and *Reconquista* in the Mediterranean. All of these peoples, excepting the remote Venetians, would take an active part in the globalization of Mediterranean slavery in the Quattrocento and Cinquecento. Is this what became of the Genoese zeal for crusading (and of course that of the others)? Is this the crusading and Columbian legacy? What did Columbus imagine these slaves would do back in Spain? If I may quote at length from Robin Blackburn (my interpolations),

Some specialist slaves may have been used in the development of sugar plantations in the Levant in the wake of the Crusades, but most of the ‘honey cane’ was probably grown by serfs [?⁶³] The Crusaders, and the merchants who accompanied them [guess who] learned the new Arab – originally Indian – methods of extracting sugar from cane by means of a simple mill and the boiling of cane juice. The prosperity of feudal Europe stimulated demand for this much prized luxury [or Say’s law that supply creates its own demand]. The Crusader kingdom of Outremer had helped to introduce sugar to Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. [Genoese agency?] The Crusaders were always on the lookout for sources of wealth ... [t]hey would have had no scruples about either purchasing or using slaves on their estates.⁶⁴

Far from it. As Benjamin Z. Kedar proved, Papal permission for Christians to own slaves who had converted to their faith had originated in the Holy Land in the thirteenth century, where older customs had given such slaves their freedom.⁶⁵ This is another legacy of crusading with a long sequel. The ephemeral presence of the Hospitallers in the seventeenth century on the island of St Croix in the Caribbean, complete with black slaves and a sugar refinery, points to a more complex story.⁶⁶

The sixteenth-century Genoese historian Agostino Giustiniani (1470–1536) saw Columbus as a patriotic Genoese who, rising from rags to riches, had made Spain rich.⁶⁷ All true. Giustiniani (a humanist bishop) was the first historian to note (but not the last to lament) that in his last will Columbus had left a tenth of the income forever (from his rights in the Indies) to what he called the Ufficio of San Giorgio. For reasons Giustiniani did not know, San Giorgio received nothing

from this legacy. It went without saying that San Giorgio was the appropriate heir, because, as Niccolò Machiavelli later noted and all astute observers knew, it was the real authority in Genoa.⁶⁸ As Columbus understood from his time in the eastern Mediterranean, a bank (or a sovereign debt fund!) was the last Genoese entity confronting the Ottoman Turks. Money was the sinews of war, and no doubt some of the accumulated riches of the Aztecs and Incans paid the bills for Lepanto. So did sugar and the enslaved bodies of those needed to cut cane and stoke refineries. For those historians who emphasize ‘war capitalism’ as fundamental to Europe’s global dominance beginning in the eighteenth century, sugar cultivation was the model for cotton, whose enslaved workers changed the world.⁶⁹ Maybe the end of crusading in western Eurasia and the rise of yet another slavery in the Americas were not a coincidence.

Notes

- 1 This is certainly so after 1453; Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505* (Oxford, 2012) takes almost no notice of Genoa, it was not a front line state like Venice or Hungary against the Turks, nor was Genoa likely to attack Mamluk Egypt, which ruled the Holy Land in this period.
- 2 This venture included the sack of Beirut on 10 August 1403, mostly damaging to Venetian merchants there.
- 3 For details see Denis Lalonde, *Jean II Le Meingre, dit Boucicaut (1366–1421)* (Geneva, 1988), 97–163.
- 4 A fine work that sensibly blurs this distinction is Peter Lock, *The Franks in the Aegean, 1204–1500* (London, 1995), at 160, which notes a *longue durée* by following, for example, the Venetians in the Aegean down to 1718.
- 5 S. Karpov, ‘New Documents on the Relations between the Latins and the Local Populations in the Black Sea Area (1392–1462)’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995), 33–41, at 37.
- 6 For more on this episode see François Dupuigrenet Desroussilles, ‘Vénitiens et Génois à Constantinople et en Mer Noire en 1431 d’après une lettre de Martino da Mosto’, *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 20 (1979), 111–22.
- 7 Agostino Giustiniani, *Annali della repubblica di Genova* (Genoa, 1537), 200v.
- 8 Steven A. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese 958–1528* (Chapel Hill, 1996), 277.
- 9 In fact the piratical activities of the Burgundians enraged Genoa, see Colin Imber, ed. and trans., *The Crusade of Varna, 1443–45* (Aldershot, 2006), 31.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 30, another episode in the long tradition of a Genoa–Ottoman informal alliance dating back to the war with Venice in the 1350s.
- 11 Christopher Wright, *The Gattilusio Lordships and the Aegean World 1355–1462* (Leiden, 2014), 68–9. Francesco Gattilusio, a Genoese pirate, received the island of Lesbos from the Byzantine Emperor John V in 1355, and married the Emperor’s sister.
- 12 For these details and what follows see Jacques Heers, ‘La Vente des indulgences pour la croisade à Gênes et en Lunigiana en 1456’, *Miscellanea storica ligure* 3 (Milan, 1963), 71–101, at 74–80. Piccamiglio was prudent enough to pay for his indulgence in L15 in *paghe*, money of account on the books of San Giorgio, worth L12 in cash when one florin or one ducat was worth L2 s.11.
- 13 Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1983), 331. Housley also notes the temporary bonanza of Tolfa, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 133–4.
- 14 Emilio Pandiani, *La vita della repubblica di Genova nell’età di Cristoforo Colombo* (Genoa, 1952), 254. Columbus visited the island around 1478; Genoese merchants

- from Cadiz introduced sugar to the island and were involved in the African slave trade, *ibid.*, 259.
- 15 Svetlana Bliznyuk, *Die Genuesen auf Zypern: Ende 14. und im 15. Jahrhundert. Publikation von Dokumenten aus dem Archivio Segreto in Genua* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005), 251–6, indicating that the business began in 1436.
- 16 For details see Geo Pistarino, ‘La caduta di Caffa: diaspora in Oriente’, in *idem*, *Genovesi d’Oriente* (Genoa, 1990), 479–512, here 491, 494. For centuries stories circulated about Genoese refugees in places like Poland or the Caucasus, see Geo Pistarino, *I Gin d’Oltremare* (Genoa, 1988), 475–82.
- 17 Geo Pistarino places the visit between 1471 and 1476; see his *Chio dei genovesi nel tempo di Cristoforo Colombo* (Rome, 1995), 446–7. This is a presumptive visit, based on Columbus’s claim to have recognized mastic bushes on Cuba and Hispaniola, and reflecting in a letter about the value of trade in mastic for Chios, seemingly based on his memory of what he saw there, *ibid.*, 489–90.
- 18 Setton, *Papacy*, 2:364–80, esp. 371.
- 19 See the paper by Giorgio Rota in this volume.
- 20 Setton, *Papacy*, 2:538, note 134.
- 21 *Trattati e negoziazioni politiche della repubblica di Genova 958–1797*, ed. Pasquale Lisciandrelli, *Atti della società ligure di storia patria*, n.s. 1 (1960), 158, no 883.
- 22 Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 333.
- 23 For background on Philip and crusading see Jacques Paviot, *Les ducs de Bourgogne, la croisade et L’Orient (fin XIVe siècle – XVe siècle)* (Paris, 2003), 117–76.
- 24 *Ungedruckte Akten zur Geschichte der Päpste*, ed. Ludwig Pastor (Freiburg, 1904), 306–09.
- 25 *Trattati*, ed. Lisciandrelli, 160, no 893.
- 26 Bartolomeo Senarega, *De Rebus Genuensibus*, ed. Emilio Pandiani, *RIS NS* 24 parte 8 (Bologna 1932), hereafter cited as Senarega.
- 27 Senarega, 28.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 81–4.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 121.
- 30 For convenience see the Italian translation in Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Navigazioni e Viaggi*, ed. Marica Milanese, vol. 4 (Milan, 1983), 27–36 at 31, or his *Delle Navigazioni...* (Venice, 1583), 196r–198r.
- 31 Antonio Gallo, *Commentarii: De Rebus Genuensium et de navigatione Columbi*, ed. Emilio Pandiani, *RIS NS*, vol. 23 parte 1 (Città di Castello, 1910), hereafter cited as Gallo. He was the main source for Senarega.
- 32 Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 292.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 485.
- 34 Gallo, 81–7.
- 35 Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *The Last Crusade in the West: Castile and the Conquest of Granada* (Philadelphia, 2014).
- 36 The literature on Columbus is immense, but less so on his Genoese background, which was appreciated long ago by Jacques Heers, *Christophe Colomb*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1991) emphasizing the navigational side of the project.
- 37 Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Columbus* (Oxford, 1992), 50.
- 38 *The Book of Prophecies Edited by Christopher Columbus*, ed. Roberto Rusconi, trans. Blair Sullivan (Los Angeles, 1997), hereafter cited as Rusconi. It is revealing that a fine collection of letters written to Columbus, and remarks by contemporaries, have almost nothing in common with what preoccupied him, see Juan Gil and Consuelo Varela, *Cartas de particulares a Colón y Relaciones coetáneas* (Madrid, 1984).
- 39 Rusconi, 291.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 291.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 75.

- 42 Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 27–8. Oddly, his nephew Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503) also had a particular interest in Jerusalem, *ibid.*, 29. It remains to be discovered whether Columbus derived his focus on Jerusalem from his native Liguria, his wide reading, his extensive travels, or his time in Spain.
- 43 Rusconi, 38.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 317.
- 45 Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 18.
- 46 I have checked biblical passages in *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. B. Fischer *et al.* (Stuttgart, 1975), and for translation used the New American Bible (NAB) rather than the King James Version (KJV).
- 47 David Abulafia, *The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus* (New Haven, 2008), 228, in the context of the *Book of Prophecies* and noting the importance of Jerusalem to Columbus.
- 48 Jacques Heers and Georgette de Groer, *Itinéraire d'Anselme Adorno en Terre Sainte (1470–71)* (Paris, 1978), 56–60.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 148.
- 50 Rusconi, 321.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 291.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 67–73.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 70. I am not arguing that Columbus was part of the subject Stuart B. Schwartz explored in his *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven, 2008) which does not consider this source or any connection between crusading and the history of toleration.
- 54 Fernández-Armesto, *Columbus*, 154–5, and at 153 he notes Columbus's 'old campaign for a crusade to Jerusalem'.
- 55 Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia, 2004), 183.
- 56 The contemporary Spanish historian Peter Martyr noticed the gold on Hispaniola, and made the connection to Solomon, king of Jerusalem, and his similar search for riches in the Persian gulf and points south – see the relevant excerpts in Gil and Varela, *Cartas de particulares*, 84.
- 57 *Las Casas on Columbus: The Third Voyage*, ed. Geoffrey Simcox (Turnhout, 2001), 34 and in general for the context of the voyage and analysis of slavery.
- 58 *Historia de las Indias: por Fray Bartolome de las Casas*, ed. Agustín Millares Carlo (Mexico City, 1965), 273–5 for this and what follows.
- 59 Cristóbal Colón, *Textos y documentos completos*, ed. Consuelo Varela and Juan Gil, 2nd ed. (Madrid, 1995), 408.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 408. The editors earlier expressed the opinion that 'La conquista de Jerusalén es una idea fija colombiana', note 181 with references.
- 61 Epstein, *Genoa*, 310–11, citing Cristóbal Colón, *Textos y documentos completos*, 407–8.
- 62 William D. Phillips, Jr, *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Philadelphia, 2014) with no notice of Genoa, Columbus or Hispaniola – a book that concentrates on Iberia.
- 63 Anthony Luttrell among others has noted the sugar plantations on Cyprus in the Trecento, but the labour supply remains mysterious: see his perceptively titled 'Sugar and Schism: The Hospitallers in Cyprus from 1378 to 1386', reprinted in *idem*, *The Hospitaller state on Rhodes and its Western Provinces, 1306–1462* (Aldershot, 1999), paper IV, 157–66.
- 64 Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern 1492–1800* (London, 1997), 76–7.
- 65 Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims* (Princeton, 1984), 147.

- 66 See William Zammit, 'The Order of St John and its Caribbean Islands, 1653–1665: A Cartographic Record', in *Islands and Military Orders, c. 1291–c. 1798*, ed. Emanuel Buttigieg and Simon Phillips (Aldershot, 2013), 257–70, at 267.
- 67 For this and what follows, see Giustiniani, *Annali*, 248v–249r.
- 68 Niccolò Machiavelli, *Istorie fiorentine* in *Opere*, ed. Corrado Vivanti, vol. 3 (Turin, 2005), 719–20.
- 69 Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York, 2014), 88–9 and elsewhere for the intertwined histories of sugar and cotton; pp. xiv–xvi and 31–9 for the beginnings of war capitalism and a notice of Columbus. No one has as yet proposed the crusades as the first chapter in the history of war capitalism.

Part IV

Frontier zones

The Balkans and the Adriatic

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11 The key to the gate of Christendom?

The strategic importance of Bosnia in the struggle against the Ottomans

Emir O. Filipović

In July 1464, just over six months after his arduous winter campaign in Bosnia ended in victory, the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus complained to Pope Pius II of renewed Turkish attacks against him and the possessions he had recently acquired through great labour, claiming that the enemy ‘... again invaded Bosnia, which is certainly, so to speak, the key and gate of the whole of Christendom, from where paths in all directions towards the west and north can easily be accessed’.¹ When he described his successful Bosnian war to the same Pope a few months earlier, he wrote jubilantly that his victory would allow the wound, which had been inflicted on the Christian body through the ruin of Bosnia, to heal more easily and completely than before, and that this was important ‘... since the said wound affected not only the corners and sides of Europe, but its very heart, from where it could easily have spread and infected all of its parts’.²

The king, evidently an eloquent master in the language of his day,³ could not have made clearer the perceived importance of Bosnia in the general struggle of Christendom against the Ottomans. Even though these two instances represent obvious use of embellished *antemurale* rhetoric and crusading terminology, they were still grounded in decades of experience in dealing with Ottoman assaults on the front line of conflict. The principal aim of this study will therefore be to investigate those instances when *antemurale* language was applied to Bosnia, with special attention given to sources emanating from Hungary and Venice, the two archetypal bulwark states. Tracing the origins and historical development of this crusading discourse, I shall present documented occasions when Turkish raiding troops surged through Bosnia during the first half of the fifteenth century in order to invade Hungary, Croatia, Dalmatia and Slavonia, as well as such distant lands as Carniola, Carinthia, Styria and Friuli. In that sense, I shall attempt to show how these attacks helped shape the typical *antemurale* concept of Bosnia as the ‘gate of Christendom’, and the ways in which this ideological device was then used as a propaganda tool to mobilize a unified Christian resistance to the imminent danger posed by the rising Ottoman power.

Bosnia in the midst of other *antemurale* states

Although he made good use of it, the rhetorical strategy employed by King Matthias in his letters to the Pope was certainly not an innovation devised by

his royal chancery. In fact, its origins in the central parts of Europe can be traced back at least to the thirteenth century when Hungary, as the furthermost bastion of Christianity, was attacked by a vast Mongol army. This event precipitated the formulation of a frontier ideology which drew upon the distinctly medieval idea of a 'unified Christian commonwealth' with determined borders and a defined territory. Due to the apparently unique position of Hungary at the time, King Bela IV was then able to promote his kingdom as a 'gateway to Christendom' which was entrusted with a mission to protect Christianity from external enemies.⁴ Other frontier states soon began adopting and developing this notion that the faith had to be defended as a whole. Consequently, they presented any potential attack on their borders as a supposed threat to other Christians as well. Such an arrangement implied that those polities which bordered with infidels would be the ones who endured the greatest strain of the conflict, defending their neighbours and the rest of Christendom, while others provided only military and financial assistance.⁵ In order to accentuate their delicate position on the first line of defence of the Christian world, to gain recognition for their valiant struggle, and to invite a united response, rulers of the endangered states resorted to using powerful and vivid metaphors in their diplomatic correspondence, referring to themselves as the gate (*porta, ostium, fores*), bulwark (*antemurale, propugnaculum*), key (*clavis*), shield (*scutum, clipeus*) or wall (*murus*) of Christendom.

This ideology evolved further in the late-fourteenth and fifteenth century with the emergence of the ever-growing Ottoman Empire whose very existence posed a threat to the medieval world order. Moreover, the *antemurale* topos subsequently even came to be predicated on constant and seemingly limitless Ottoman expansion. Thus in the course of the protracted Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, almost every state inevitably, at one point in time, had to become a shield or wall which was supposed to momentarily stifle the rising influence of the Turks, protecting its hinterland in the process. The first of such blocks was Constantinople itself, and even Rhodes and Cyprus figured to some extent as bulwarks of the faith.⁶ Once Bulgaria succumbed to Ottoman pressure in the last few decades of the fourteenth century, it was Serbia's turn to act as a buffer. In 1441, just a couple of years after the Serbian capital Smederevo fell to the Ottomans for the first time, the Ragusans urged Bosnian nobles to help the expelled Serb despot George reclaim his country, since he was 'a good shield for Hungary and Bosnia'.⁷ The pattern is obvious: after Serbia, Bosnia was next in line to serve as the barrier of Ottoman advance to the West, and after Bosnia came Croatia, then Venice, and so forth.

However, the most prominent of these early *antemurale* states was Hungary, which, as the biggest and the most powerful kingdom in the region, with traditional ties to Rome, represented the safest option for leadership of a general crusade with the aim of containing the Ottomans south of the Danube and Sava for as long as possible.⁸ Soon the same mantle was taken up by Poland,⁹ and somewhat later by Croatia.¹⁰ These three were also the best-researched cases since the *antemurale* myth became incorporated into their respective national identities during the course of centuries. In recent times, valuable studies have also appeared which analyse the positions of Moldavia and Ragusa in this sense.¹¹

Among the *antemurale* states, Bosnia represents a curious example. It has actually never been previously considered as such in historiography despite its important geopolitical position and despite ample evidence which testifies that contemporaries understood its strategic significance, calling it the ‘key’, ‘shield’ or ‘gate of Christendom’. Since most of the attention was focused on neighbouring Hungary and Croatia, states which willingly adopted and embraced the rhetoric, it was assumed that Bosnia remained on the other side of Christendom’s bulwark. And indeed, the Bosnian kingdom was not an *antemurale* in the classical sense of the word, but rather an *ante-antemurale*, which possessed the potential to prevent unhindered passage of the Turks deeper into the territories controlled by Venice and the kings of Hungary.¹² However, due to specific historical circumstances, Bosnia was forced to serve more as a ‘gateway’ than as a ‘shield’.

‘The principal gate of the Christians’

While he was gathering an army to march against Bosnian duke Hrvoje Vukčić and his Turkish allies in June of 1398, Hungarian King Sigismund described Bosnia as ‘the shield and defence of our kingdoms of Dalmatia and Croatia’.¹³ Almost 60 years later, in June 1457, Bosnian King Stjepan Tomaš, who was being prepared for leadership of an upcoming crusade, told Cardinal Juan Carvajal that the Sultan considered his kingdom to be ‘la principal porta de christiani’.¹⁴ This rhetorical evolution, from ‘shield and defence’ to ‘gate’, reflected the way that Bosnia’s position in regard to the Ottoman Empire changed during those six decades, but the deceptively insignificant modification also tells us a lot about the way that King Tomaš wanted to describe his situation to those from whom he expected concrete military aid.

The first Ottoman incursions into Bosnia began as early as 1386 and increased in number and intensity after the battle of Kosovo three years later. In those early instances the Bosnian nobility handled the confrontations well and withstood a number of fierce Ottoman assaults.¹⁵ But after a period of severe pressure, during which the Bosnians and Turks sometimes fought as allies against their common adversary King Sigismund of Hungary, the Bosnian rulers and nobles finally yielded in 1415 and reached for a lifeline offered by the position of a tributary state of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁶ Using the complex internal political conditions to their advantage, and exploiting discord in the country, in the following decades the Turks practically turned Bosnia into a corridor for attacks on the neighbouring regions of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia, venturing even further into Hungary and the lands controlled by the counts of Cilli, the dukes of Austria and the patriarchs of Aquileia. It is important to note, though, that those raids were intermittently scattered throughout the first half of the fifteenth century, usually alternating with incursions into Bosnia, and that their frequency waned in those periods when Bosnian rulers managed to organize some kind of resistance or paid regular tribute. But it became clear very early on that Bosnia could not hold out against this menace for long and that it needed outside help, so the impression that its demise would have disastrous consequences for the rest of Christendom formed

the basis of Bosnian international diplomacy with the sole aim of organizing a crusade to relieve the pressure and push the Ottomans far away from its borders.

This policy of insisting on the importance of Bosnia for the whole of Christendom would eventually become not only the preserve of Bosnian rulers but of all those who were advocating crusade in the fifteenth century. For this they relied on *antemurale* frontier ideology which had its roots in the understanding that the growth of Ottoman power was almost unstoppable. In a kind of a domino effect, the fall of each Christian kingdom consequently meant that all other neighbouring states became directly threatened as potential targets for the next invasion of the all-conquering Ottoman army, and that it was just a matter of time before it reached the distant lands of Germany or Italy. Ottoman expansion came to be perceived and presented by Christians as a universal tragedy. This anxiety was voiced as early as March 1307 when Pope Clement V warned that the fall of Constantinople into the hands of 'Turks, Saracens and other infidels' would place the Roman church and the whole of Christendom in grave danger.¹⁷ His contemporary, the Venetian Marino Sanudo, feared that the Turks, if not prevented soon, would enter Europe and that no one would be able to stop them,¹⁸ while Pope Clement VI wrote to the French king in May 1345 that the Turks were ravaging Greek lands, capturing people and selling them like cattle, forcing them to renounce their Catholic faith, and if the crusaders who then captured Smyrna had not stopped them, who knows how far the Turks could have reached, to Naples, and maybe even further.¹⁹

The contemporary view about the character of Turkish intentions towards Christian states is summed up well in a letter written in May 1429 by the Ragusan government to the bickering Bosnian dukes Sandalj Hranić and Radoslav Pavlović, urging them to reflect on Ishak-bey, the 'evil and cunning' marcher lord of Skopje, who thinks of nothing else but to breed conflict among the Bosnian nobles so that he could 'devour' them and destroy them one by one:

And this is the custom of the Turks who had no possessions in *Romania* a hundred years ago, and working for a hundred years with their malice, sowing discord among the Greek lords, whom they destroyed one by one, they arrived at great dominion and power. They did the same thing with the Bulgarian Emperors, and similarly in the kingdom of Serbia, and they have attempted and are still attempting to do the same in Bosnia.²⁰

Indeed, ever since they appeared on European soil for the first time, the Ottomans were determined to conquer important river crossings, pathways and passes, as well as forts and towns crucial for further advance towards the West.²¹ This allowed them to use those locations as stepping-stones in order to harass and pillage neighbouring countries. The diplomatic correspondence of the time is full of allusions to certain places, forts or states, whose strategic importance was presented as such that their loss would have had a devastating impact on Christianity in general, allowing the Turks virtually unopposed access to other Christian lands. During the course of the fifteenth century this idea developed even further,

becoming an essential propaganda tool of diplomacy for those states situated on the violent Ottoman frontier. Thus in 1465 Matthias Corvinus informed his messengers in Rome that the Sultan had attacked him for a third year in a row with the intention of capturing Belgrade, occupying Serbia and recovering Jajce and Bosnia. According to the Hungarian king, these were the ultimate goals of Mehmed II since Belgrade represented the door to Hungary, Poland and Bohemia, whereas Jajce was the gate to Dalmatia, Istria, Italy and Germany.²² After the fall of Negroponte in 1470, the Venetians wrote that the Turks – ‘the eternal and implacable enemies’ – did not take just any Christian town or island, but that they ‘had overcome the shield and bulwark of all Christians, opening the path and removing all obstacles to invade, assault and spoil Italy itself’.²³ The same sentiments were expressed once again five years later by Prince Stefan of Moldavia. After his glorious victory in the battle of Vaslui, he notified the western powers that the Sultan – ‘the infidel Emperor of the Turks, who is the destroyer of all Christendom’ – will be planning revenge ‘and will want to obtain this gate of Christendom, which is in our realm’, warning them that ‘if this gate should be lost, then all Christendom will be in danger’.²⁴ In 1476, a year after the fall of Caffa in the Crimea to the Turks, Pope Sixtus IV encouraged Charles of Burgundy to help the common Christian cause, because ‘if Hungary is conquered Germany will be next, and if Dalmatia and Illyria are overrun Italy will be invaded’.²⁵

All of these instances were in fact cries for help intended to portray the certainty and imminence of Ottoman danger to the Christian West. They were supposed to stir the emotions of fellow co-religionists and hopefully result in a common military action in the form of a general crusade. In essence, their message was that distant countries should not allow themselves the luxury of having to defend their home at the doorstep, but that they should rather protect their possessions in advance by helping those on the forefront of the conflict.

As mentioned earlier, the same rhetoric was applied to Bosnia. On 15 November 1455 Juan Carvajal, the Cardinal of St Angelo and papal legate to the German lands, wrote to the duke of Bavaria warning him that the Sultan could easily transfer his troops to Germany through the Bosnian kingdom which was subject to him through tribute.²⁶ Antonio Guidoboni, the Milanese envoy to Venice, expressed concern in June 1462 that the Bosnian king and Duke Stjepan Vukčić might be defeated by the Sultan, or forced to make peace with him. In that case, he warned, the Turks might end up in Friuli with great ease, and there would be no way to resist their power on land.²⁷ King Stjepan Tomašević had pretty much the same message for Pope Pius II, warning him in the same year that the defence of Christendom depended on defending Bosnia first, because, as he claimed, Turkish insatiability had no bounds:

After me he will attack the Hungarians and the Dalmatians who are subjected to Venice, and then through Carniola and Istria he will seek Italy which he aspires to rule. He often speaks of Rome, and his heart pulls him there. If the Christians permit him to obtain my kingdom, he will have the most suitable province and appropriate places to achieve his desire. I expect the first

storm, and after me the Hungarians and the Venetians will taste their fate, and not even Italy will be able to rest; this is the enemy's design. I am submitting this information to you so that you cannot say that it was not foretold, and accuse me of negligence. My father predicted the calamity which befell Constantinople to your predecessor Nicholas and to the Venetians – but he was not believed.²⁸

In February 1463 the Bosnian king again alerted his neighbours to the impending danger. He sent envoys to Venice and his representatives conveyed the message that the king had a trusted source which informed him of the Turkish intention to occupy and ruin his kingdom. He hoped the Venetians would realize that this would cause great damage to their state, and that they would send messengers to the Pope in an attempt to petition for a crusade, suggesting straightforward military action, without delay, because it was clear that the Turk was growing each day because of the Christian silence – ‘e questo se vede chiaramente, el Turcho se fa ala zornada piu grande per taxer i Christiani’.²⁹

Despite all of the warnings, the king's pleas proved ineffective. He received no military aid, no weapons and no soldiers. After a quick offensive led by the Sultan himself in May and June 1463, Bosnia finally fell to the Ottomans and the king was beheaded. When the Venetians heard about the outcome of the Sultan's actions they became aware of the immediate danger posed by further Ottoman expansion and had reason to worry greatly since the conquest of the Bosnian kingdom exposed not only the Dalmatian towns, then ruled by Venice, but also the Adriatic ports of Italy.³⁰ The collapse of Bosnia led to extreme terror being spread everywhere, and Venice now found itself directly in the path of the Ottoman military threat.³¹ The Venetians instantly set about on a diplomatic and military mission to inform their allies and friends about the Bosnian demise, to alarm them of the Ottoman peril, and to try and organize some sort of military campaign.³²

Therefore, in just a couple of months the tables turned and Venetians, who responded to Bosnian pleas only with hollow phrases of encouragement, found themselves in the same position as Bosnia before the conquest, having to resort to *antemurale* rhetoric in order to arouse the attention of neighbouring states and implore their assistance. They told the *Provveditore* of Zadar on 12 June 1463 that the Turks – ‘enemies of the whole of Christendom’ – had captured Bosnia, ‘the gate of Italy’.³³ In a letter sent on 14 June directly to the Pope in Rome they said that the Turkish forces had advanced all the way to Senj on the coast, to the doors of Italy – *ad hostium et fores Italie*.³⁴ On the same day, the Venetians warned the Florentines that the Sultan was not satisfied with the capture of Bosnia, but that he was ‘striving for further conquests and more spacious lands, promising his army even more’, not fearing ‘to arrogantly bring his arms to the seashore at Senj, to the very gate and entrance of Italy’.³⁵

The same feeling was shared by Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, who wrote to his father Count Lodovico Gonzaga of Mantua from Tivoli informing him of the Bosnian plight and expressing concern that unless the Turk was strongly opposed immediately, he could take a great part of Italy in less than a year and a half.³⁶ On

3 July 1463 Pope Pius II wrote to Bologna stating his disappointment and remorse that the Sultan had occupied Bosnia all the way to the shores of Dalmatia, and was now arrogantly standing with his weapons at the gate of Italy.³⁷

Realizing that something tangible had to be done, the Pope sent Cardinal Bessarion to Venice in July 1463, hoping finally to unite forces and organize a crusade.³⁸ The Venetians were completely prepared to commence a full-scale military conflict against the Turks, stating that they were aware that if they did not resume the war, which they considered to have been in progress since the fall of Constantinople, they would undoubtedly lose not only their Dalmatian provinces, but also the city of Ragusa, the Croatian Banate, the counties of Krbava, Cetina and Senj, and that the Turks would enter even deeper into the core of Christian lands, thus arriving in the vicinity of the gates and crossings into Italy.³⁹ They gave Bessarion a written reply which the cardinal conveyed to the Pope in his report. In their response the Venetians claimed that they understood, from the fact that the Turks had occupied so many kingdoms in such a short period of time, that Venetian dominions would be their next target. In order to avert this, they had persistently incurred many expenses, and had they not done so, the Turk would already have been in Italy. The senators confirmed that their republic was always ready, and especially now, for a general expedition against the Turks, also declaring that they had already made preliminary contacts with the king of Hungary.⁴⁰

This Veneto-Hungarian alliance, although late in coming,⁴¹ still proved to be very successful in its initial stages. King Matthias waited for the majority of Turkish troops to retreat before he made a decisive strike, capturing almost the whole of the Bosnian kingdom, and managing to seize the important fortress of Jajce on Christmas Day 1463.⁴² The king's triumph, which was presented as the rescue of Christendom's 'key' and 'gate',⁴³ lifted the spirit of resistance in those states which were affected by the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia. As soon as the news of his achievement reached Venice, the Venetians decided to send him even more money to aid him in his future endeavours, expressing happiness about his victories, praising him and lauding the fact that he managed to conquer Bosnia which was undoubtedly the shield of their state and possessions in Dalmatia (*scutum status et locorum nostrorum Dalmatie*).⁴⁴ However, their joy was premature and the successes of the Hungarian king eventually proved to be short-lived, because the Ottomans resumed hostilities as early as the spring of the following year.

Was Bosnia an 'open gate' of Christendom?

The reason why Venice and Hungary reacted to the fall of Bosnia in the way that they did was that the disappearance of the Bosnian kingdom from the political map of the fifteenth century brought the previously protected borders of both states into direct contact with the expanding and aggressive Ottoman Empire. Even though they had bordered and clashed with the Turks in the past, the new situation required an immediate response. Seeking to assemble as many allies as possible for the forthcoming war, they sent out many letters to foreign rulers

and governments, and while some of their claims were certainly exaggerated for propaganda purposes and in accordance with the literary style of the time, they still had a logical rationale behind them.

This was because the methods and tactics of the Ottoman army in the early stages of their expansion were founded on the agility and speed of their *akinci* raiders, who were able to cover great distances and overrun faraway lands, spreading fear wherever they went.⁴⁵ These raids were mostly conducted from the territory of their vassal or tributary states, and thus Turkish incursions from Bosnia into Hungarian and Venetian regions became a relatively common occurrence even before the final Ottoman conquest of the kingdom in 1463. So, far from being merely a metaphor, to contemporaries Bosnia represented a genuine 'gate of Christendom' through which, as it seemed at the time, Turks entered as they pleased.

The first Ottoman intrusions into territories beyond Bosnia – Croatia, Slavonia and Hungary – occurred against the background of the struggle for the Hungarian crown between Sigismund of Luxemburg and Ladislaus of Naples in the last years of the fourteenth century, and increased in number during the first decade of the fifteenth century. The majority of Bosnian nobles, led by Duke Hrvoje Vukčić, chose to support Ladislaus in his attempt to overthrow Sigismund and put the Angevin dynasty back on the Hungarian throne.⁴⁶ Wishing to hasten the political and military demise of his opponent, and in line with the axiom that the enemy of an enemy is a friend, Ladislaus allied himself with Sigismund's principal adversaries, the Turks, who were then conducting their first raids into Hungary from Serbia.⁴⁷ This in turn meant that Bosnians also became Turkish allies, commencing combined assaults on territories controlled by King Sigismund, primarily concentrating them on Slavonia and Croatia, since Duke Hrvoje and his allies already controlled possessions in Dalmatia.

These attacks diminished after the crisis caused by Ottoman defeat in the battle of Ankara in 1402. Thus having strengthened his position in Hungary, beginning in 1406 King Sigismund was able to undertake a number of offensive expeditions against Hrvoje and his associates – 'the perfidious Turks'.⁴⁸ After a couple of years of heavy fighting, Sigismund's army finally managed to defeat the rebellious Bosnian nobles in September 1408, inflicting a shattering blow on the plans of Ladislaus who would completely abandon his Balkan ambitions the following year. Despite the successful outcome of Sigismund's Bosnian campaigns, which had also included the submission of one of his most stubborn opponents, Duke Hrvoje, it seems that the disturbed and unsettled political situation in Bosnia caused by the conflicts only hastened the arrival of fresh Turkish troops. Just a few months after Sigismund's victory, in November of 1408, the Venetians heard rumours that Nikola Frankopan, the count of Senj, intended to give provisions to the Ottoman army and allow it safe passage through his lands.⁴⁹ In May of the following year, the Venetians denied Count Nikola's request for a loan of 10,000 ducats. He claimed that he needed the money due to the numerous Ottoman incursions and other wars he had to fight.⁵⁰ If taken at face value, these would constitute the first of many Turkish invasions into Dalmatia from Bosnian territory.

The following few years were relatively calm on the Turkish front, mainly due to the consolidation of Bosnia after years of battle with the Hungarians, but also due to internal developments in the Ottoman Empire where the sons of Sultan Bayezid were fighting each other for the throne. The apparent unity between the Bosnian nobles and King Sigismund did not last long. In 1413 Sigismund denounced Duke Hrvoje, condemning him as a rebel and a traitor, accusing him of renewed collaboration with the Turks and confiscating his lands in Croatia and Dalmatia.⁵¹ Regardless of whether the accusations were true or not, and Hrvoje did attempt to convince Sigismund of his innocence,⁵² this clash triggered an immense political shift in the Balkans. Already in the following year, wishing to reclaim his territories and to gain revenge, Hrvoje again introduced Turks into Bosnia, allied himself with the Venetians, and began a mass-scale attack on the lands of King Sigismund.⁵³

The first information about the movement of the Ottoman army dates from June 1414, and they caused terror and panic almost everywhere. It was obvious from the beginning that the main focus of the campaign would be directed against Dalmatian coastal towns and islands which were once in the possession of Duke Hrvoje. Thus on 2 July 1414 the Ragusans warned their people on Brač, Hvar and Korčula, three islands in the Adriatic, to prepare for the worst, to repair their ships and ensure guards, so that they would not suffer damage from the Turks.⁵⁴ In the letter which the Ragusan government sent to Sigismund on 10 July we discover that the Turks had marched towards Bosnia and that Duke Sandalj tried to stop them with the Bosnian army, but when he saw that he was not able to defend and keep the passes, he allowed them to enter. Thus as early as 5 July they came to Uskoplje in central Bosnia, where they split into three groups. One went along the flow of the Bosnia river towards Dubočac and Slavonia, another went towards Zagreb, while the third one remained in Uskoplje.⁵⁵ The raiding and pillaging continued throughout the summer of that year. Unfortunately, not many sources survive about these invasions, but their extent can be grasped from a letter of Berengar de Muntmany written in Barcelona. He told King Ferdinand of Aragon in August of 1414 that a duke called 'Carvoya' attacked Senj and Istria with 20,000 Turkish horsemen, ravaging Dalmatia and Slavonia in the process.⁵⁶ These raids also seemed to have reached as far north as the dioceses of Zagreb in Croatia and Kalocsa in Hungary.⁵⁷

The winter brought only a short respite. Already on 10 January 1415 the citizens of the coastal commune of Trogir agreed to send ten archers, for a period of one month, to aid Ivaniš Nelipčić, count of Cetina, because of the 'Turkish fear', and in February they decided that, in the case of necessity, they would also send armed men to Omiš.⁵⁸ Their caution proved to be justified as sources from the following month speak of the Turks passing through Bosnia, devastating the lands around Omiš, Šibenik and Zadar, and even reaching the seacoast.⁵⁹ They then pillaged and burnt, among many, the fort Zvoničac between Šibenik and Drniš.⁶⁰ At the beginning of March, a certain G. de Fenolet wrote from Barcelona to King Ferdinand of Aragon about the news he had received from Venice, that a multitude of Turks had ravaged the lands of the Hungarian king.⁶¹ Contemporary

Venetian chronicles report that the Turks then laid waste the lands of Count Nikola Frankopan, as far as Senj, taking back with them 12,000 slaves.⁶² The description given by Dietrich of Niecheim is somewhat more detailed. He writes that in March 1415, invited by the prefect of Bosnia – probably Duke Hrvoje – the Turks attacked Dalmatia as far as the seacoast, launching an invasion into Slavonia as well, riding night and day until they reached the diocese of Veszprem, in the vicinity of Lake Balaton in Hungary, where they captured many people of both sexes. He also claims that they arrived at the borders of Germany, burning and destroying churches, villages and fields, killing many Christians and capturing more than 8,000 slaves.⁶³

These persistent attacks continued for the following few months. In May 1415, the Turks reached Ljubljana in Carniola, and preparations were undertaken in Udine, Friuli, for defence.⁶⁴ Wanting to prevent their unrestricted invasions into his lands, King Sigismund, who was then busy in Constance, sent an army to Bosnia in July in order to deal with the Turks. However, instead of restraining them, the Hungarians suffered defeat in a decisive battle fought in the county of Lašva in central Bosnia.⁶⁵ Apart from definitively asserting their influence in Bosnia, this also allowed the Turks to continue raiding during the rest of the summer. Dietrich of Niecheim writes that this victory opened the paths to the lands of the counts of Cilli as well as to Germany and the borders of the diocese of Salzburg and the lands of the patriarch of Aquileia.⁶⁶ In August of 1415 Turks arrived in Friuli. Seeking aid in soldiers and *ballistae*, Patriarch Louis of Teck wrote to Udine that the Turks had arrived through the lands of the counts of Cilli and those of Ortenburg, causing ‘maxima damna’. On 2 September the patriarch again contacted Udine saying that the Turks had now retreated, but that they were preparing a new assault, and that the duke of Austria, the Hungarians, the counts of Cilli, Croatia and Ortenburg, as well as the lord of Wallsee on the Danube in Lower Austria, were preparing weapons for a war against them.⁶⁷ Contemporaries reported that even though they did not cross the Sava this time, the Turks still apparently managed to capture and enslave 70,000 people.⁶⁸ According to one Venetian chronicle, Celje and Senj saved themselves from greater misfortune because they gave provisions to the aggressors and paid a sum of 6,000 ducats.⁶⁹

Paying the Turks appeared to be the only way to avoid the pillaging, looting and killing. Thus Bosnians resorted to this solution very early on. In June of 1415 the Ragusans wrote to Sigismund that new Turkish pillaging was expected beyond the borders of the Bosnian kingdom, in which they would not rob anyone since all of those areas were obedient and were paying tribute to the Sultan in order to save themselves.⁷⁰

These incursions in 1414 and 1415 were just a taste of what would happen on a regular basis if Bosnia remained a tributary state of the Ottomans or if it was conquered and incorporated into their growing Empire. However, in the following period the Ottomans devoted themselves to resolving internal disputes, battling in Wallachia and Albania, and besieging Constantinople.⁷¹ With the exception of smaller raids, the lands neighbouring Bosnia were mainly left in peace and the next major raid occurred only a decade later. In August 1426 the Ragusans wrote

to King Sigismund that 4,000 Turks had devastated Bosnia and the surrounding areas in the preceding few months, that they had taken key passes and ravines, and that King Tvrtko and the other Bosnian nobles did not dare to oppose them. They further wrote that the Turks had invaded Croatia from Bosnian territory at least twice, and they had captured many people there.⁷² However, King Sigismund was already aware of this because the Bosnian king had informed him of the attack a couple of months earlier. Thus in June 1426, King Sigismund wrote to the bishop of Winchester, Henry Beaufort, the newly elected cardinal and papal legate for Germany, Hungary and Bohemia, that the Bosnian king had told him about the everyday 'infestations' of the Turks which caused immeasurable and irreparable damage, invading Croatia and Slavonia twice, from where they captured many thousands of both sexes. The Bosnian king also told Sigismund that the Ottoman Emperor, with all his military might, wanted personally to lead a campaign to subjugate Hungary, and that he could not prevent the passage of this army through his land, as could be seen from the recent everyday intrusions into Bosnia.⁷³

The Bosnian king saved his kingdom in the usual way, by paying tribute, and was subsequently not bothered by Turkish invasions. A few years later, after the unsuccessful siege of Golubac, in February 1429 King Sigismund made a three-year peace with the Turks.⁷⁴ But as soon as the peace expired, in February and March 1432, the Turks renewed their attacks on Dalmatia through Bosnia. The Ragusans wrote to Sigismund informing him that 3,000 Turks, led by the marcher lord of Skopje, Ishak-bey, passed through Bosnia towards Luka and Zadar, where they seized a lot of cattle. However, they could not capture many people who, seeing the movement of the army, managed in good time to hide in unreachable places.⁷⁵

After this the incursions of the Ottomans into Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia declined, stopping almost completely for a long period of time. It is most likely that this was caused by their preoccupations in Serbia and Bosnia, where they undertook many campaigns with the aim of undermining local rule and nobility, weakening those states and preparing them for final conquest. The next far-reaching Turkish invasion into Dalmatia came in the spring of 1449, a year after they established their first permanent strongholds in Bosnia. This raid was somewhat larger than the previous ones, with contemporaries estimating that around 10,000 Turks devastated and plundered the lands of Ban Petar in Cetina.⁷⁶

The need to devise some kind of common strategy against the Ottomans was especially pressing after the collapse of John Hunyadi's effort at Kosovo and the recent attacks on Bosnia and Dalmatia. The Bosnian king Stjepan Tomaš met with the ban of Macso John of Korogy on 11 November 1449 to discuss mutual responsibilities regarding the Ottoman threat. An agreement was reached, but only the obligations from the Bosnian side are outlined in the surviving charter.⁷⁷ The king promised the Hungarians that he would not invite the Turks against them or give them aid, and that he would prevent those Turks who were residing in his kingdom from crossing the rivers into Hungary. However, if such a force was to invade the Bosnian kingdom and if the king was not able to resist their impact and defend those river crossings and boats, then he would inform the governor and

Hungarian nobles immediately and he would act according to their orders.⁷⁸ The text of this agreement leaves the distinct impression that the Hungarians considered Bosnia to be practically under complete Ottoman control, and that they could do nothing to stop the inevitable demise of this state.

On the other hand, the Turks themselves were also aware of Bosnia's strategic location in their struggle against the Hungarians. In preparation for the upcoming siege of Belgrade in 1456, the Sultan asked his vassals, King Tomaš, Duke Stjepan and Duke Petar, to join him with their armies. All declined, stating that they would only pay their dues, as they had done until then.⁷⁹ However, the king was faced with one additional, but crucial demand. The Sultan requested that he surrender four fortifications, of which Bistrički, located in the westernmost part of the country, was important for further advance towards Dalmatia and Istria. King Tomaš complained to Venice, warning the republic that after Bosnia, its own possessions would be next in line.⁸⁰ A few years later, the king was in such a serious position that he was required to comply with everything that the Turks ordered him to do. In the beginning of May 1460 Simon, the ban of Macso and captain of Belgrade, wrote that a certain Hasan-pasha came to Bosnia and forced Tomaš to cede him passes over the river Sava for further advances towards Srem and Vukovska county.⁸¹ In such conditions, it was not difficult to predict that it would only be a matter of time until the Ottomans eliminated the hindrance that was the Bosnian king, and entirely included Bosnia into their Empire.

Conclusion: the outcome of the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia

The Ottoman conquest of Bosnia and the events which followed soon after destabilized the whole region for the following half a century. The territory of the former Bosnian kingdom became a zone of permanent war between the Hungarians and Turks. Even though King Matthias had reclaimed a lot of the lost territory by Christmas of 1463, and organized a new defence system around those forts he captured, creating the southernmost defensive formations of his kingdom,⁸² the Turkish raids only increased, being repeated almost on an annual basis. In the first decade after the Bosnian conquest, the Turks attacked Zadar, Šibenik and Modruš in Dalmatia and Croatia, undertaking pillaging in Slovene lands.⁸³ One of the key events was the Ottoman conquest of Počitelj in 1471, and Ljubuški not long after; these completely opened all the routes towards Dalmatia, allowing it to be attacked with increasing frequency.⁸⁴ Seven years later a diet was held in Zdeni in Slavonia which passed laws concerning obligations for the defence of Croatia against Turkish incursions. One of the articles stipulated that the army was to do battle only south of the River Sava, and not further, as was the usual custom during the Turkish wars.⁸⁵ This meant that the war now became a purely defensive one and that Croatian and Hungarian nobles did not even contemplate reclaiming Bosnia for the Christians. It is safe to say that the conquest of Bosnia tipped the scales of power in the Balkans in the Ottomans' favour.

Gaining a firmer foothold in Bosnia allowed the Turks to venture deeper than ever before. During the 1480s Turkish raiding parties regularly wreaked havoc

in Carniola and Styria,⁸⁶ and by the end of the fifteenth century more and more attacks were recorded in Friuli.⁸⁷ While returning from one of such raids in 1493, the Turks encountered resistance from Croatian nobility but managed to inflict a savage defeat on them at the battle of Krbava, killing and enslaving many of the most prominent nobles.⁸⁸ Just 15 days after the battle, on 27 September 1493, Juraj Divnić, the bishop of Nin in Croatia, sent a detailed report to Pope Alexander VI, expressing his thoughts on the recent events:

The first and most important reason why the Turk invaded these provinces, I think, is this: the insatiable spirit which craves the slaughter of the faithful and greedily wants to appropriate the whole world. And then, the copious amount of men and things which fertile Bosnia nourishes and nurtures, Bosnia, I say, the best of all provinces which can compete with any from ancient times, rich and abounding in all things necessary for human life. To this can be added the freedom to go where he wants, for wherever he extends his flag from Bosnia into these parts, he finds very safe openings. Bosnia, alas, is too close to the wretched Croats. The Turk inhabits it whole, and comes out from it safely whenever he wants, running around and pillaging the neighbouring provinces at his will; he penetrates Illyria and traverses Liburnia⁸⁹ and the Teutonic borders all the way to the spring of the river Sava, setting down his standards as he pleases. Nobody comes to meet him, and no one opposes him, Holy Father, and there is nobody whose strength could equal and be compared with his. He resides safe in Bosnia, and is protected wherever he goes.⁹⁰

The whole letter is tragic and distressing, but it paints a clear picture of what Bosnia meant to the Ottomans. They turned it into a ‘stronghold’ of their military might in the Balkans, from where they could undertake further attacks and conquests towards the West and North. So instead of being Christendom’s ‘shield’ and protecting other Christian lands from Ottoman incursions, Bosnia came to serve first as a ‘gateway’ through which the neighbouring regions were desolated, and then finally as an Ottoman ‘bastion’ which guaranteed their supremacy in the region. It seems that by obtaining Bosnia, the Ottomans truly gained the ‘key’ to unlock Christendom’s ‘gate’, and despite the fact that the Empire’s power diminished with time, Bosnia still remained its westernmost province until the end of the nineteenth century.

Notes

- 1 ‘Boznam quippe totius Christianitatis, ut ita dicam, clavem et portum [sic], et unde quaquaversum in occidentem et septemtrionem aditus patet, gravio meo labore nuper recuperatum, quasi pensitans, quid amiserit, rursus invasit et omnia illic castra apud manus nostras habita semel obsediti ...’: *Mathiae Corvini Hungariae Regis epistolae ad Romanos Pontifices datae et ab eis acceptae 1458–1490*, ed. Vilmos Fraknói (Budapest, 1891), 30–31, hereafter cited as *MCH*; *Mátyás Király levelei. Külügyi osztály*, ed. Vilmos Fraknói, 2 vols (Budapest, 1893–95), 1:54, hereafter cited as *MKL*.

- 2 ‘Ad utramque autem augendam talis ordo, taliaque principia parata sunt, ut ex eis vulneri huic, quod Christiano corpori ex ruina Bozne inflictum erat, facilius, quam ante, salubriusque remedium parari poterit; quandoquidem sane vulnus non iam angulos Europe, non latera sola, sed precordia ipsa attigerit, potuissetque ad omnes eius partes infesta correptione dilatari’: *Mathiae Corvini Hungariae Regis epistolae ad Romanos Pontifices*, 28; *MKL*, 1:48.
- 3 Attila Barany, ‘The Crusading Letters of King Matthias’, in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Vol. 5 (1350–1500)*, ed. David Thomas and Alexander Mallett (Leiden, 2013), 574–88. On the authorship of the king’s letters: Gyula Mayer, ‘Philologisches zu den Briefen von König Matthias Corvinus’, in *Pietas non sola Romana. Studia memoriae Stephani Borzsák dedicata*, ed. Anita Czeglédy et al. (Budapest, 2010), 602–08. The standard work on King Matthias is still Jörg K. Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus – Diplomat, Feldherr und Mäzen* (Graz, Vienna and Cologne, 1998), but see also Gyula Rázsó, ‘Die Türkenpolitik Matthias Corvinus’, *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 32 (1986), 3–50; Norman Housley, ‘Matthias Corvinus and Crusading’, in *Church Union and Crusading in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Christian Gastgeber et al. (Cluj Napoca, 2009), 239–51.
- 4 Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom. Jews, Muslims and ‘Pagans’ in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c. 1300* (Cambridge, 2001); eadem, ‘Hungary, “the gate of Christendom”’, in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend (Aldershot, 2002), 195–215; eadem, ‘Défense de la Chrétienté et naissance d’une identité. Hongrie, Pologne et péninsule Ibérique au Moyen Âge’, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 58 (2003), 1009–27.
- 5 Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505* (Oxford, 2012), 40–50. See also J. Janos Varga, ‘Europa und “Die Vormauer des Christentums”. Die Entwicklungsgeschichte eines geflügelten Wortes’, in *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, ed. Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm Kühlmann (Tübingen, 2000), 55–63; Urszula Borkowska, ‘The Ideology of “Antemurale” in the Sphere of Slavic Culture (13th –17th Centuries)’, in *The Common Christian Roots of the European Nations: An International Colloquium in the Vatican*, vol. 2 (Florence, 1982), 1206–21; Paul Srodecki, ‘Antemurale Christianitatis’, in *Religiöse Erinnerungsorte in Ostmitteleuropa: Konstitution und Konkurrenz im nationen- und epochenübergreifenden Zugriff*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke et al. (Berlin, 2013), 804–22.
- 6 Norman Housley, ‘Frontier Societies and Crusading in the late Middle Ages’, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 10/1–2 (1995), 104–19, at 108.
- 7 ‘... considerando che lo signore Despotto stagando nella signoria de Schiauonia della qualle chazato essere bono schudo alla Ungaria et anche alla Bosina ...’ (7 March 1441), Dubrovnik State Archives, hereafter DSA, *Lettere di Levante*, 13, fol. 14.
- 8 One of the earliest examples of Hungary being considered as a bulwark of the faith is to be found in a letter of Pope John XXIII to King Sigismund of Luxemburg in 1410, in which he describes Hungary as ‘scutum atque murus inexpugnabilis nostreque et christianae fidei fortitudinis brachium’: *Vetera Monumenta Historica Hungariam Sacram Illustrantia*, ed. Augustin Theiner, 2 vols (Rome, 1859–60), 2:289, hereafter cited as *VMH*. Another notable instance, among many, is when Pope Pius II in 1463 referred to the famous kingdom of Hungary as the ‘invulnerable shield of Christendom’: *ibid.*, 2:378. Most of these documents were gathered and published in the collection: *Hungary as ‘Propugnaculum’ of Western Christianity: Documents from the Vatican Secret Archives (ca. 1214–1606)*, ed. Edgár Artner et al. (Budapest and Rome, 2004). See also Janos M. Bak, ‘Crusading in Hungary in the Fifteenth Century’ in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley (Basingstoke, 2004), 116–27; Norman Housley, *Religious Warfare in Europe, 1400–1536* (Oxford, 2002), 29 and *passim*; idem, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 40–46.
- 9 Paul W. Knoll, ‘Poland as *Antemurale Christianitatis* in the Late Middle Ages’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 60/3 (1974), 381–401; Wiktor Weintraub, ‘Renaissance

- Poland and *Antemurale Christianitatis*’, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* III-IV/2 (1979–80), 920–30; Jadwiga Krzyżaniakowa, ‘Poland as Antemurale Christianitatis: The Political and Ideological Foundations of the Idea’, *Polish Western Affairs* 33 (1992), 9–15; Małgorzata Morawiec, “‘Antemurale christianitatis’”. Polen als Vormauer des christlichen Europa’, *Jahrbuch für europäische Geschichte* 2 (2001), 249–60.
- 10 Ivo Žanić, ‘The Symbolic Identity of Croatia in the Triangle Crossroads-Bulwark-Bridge’, in *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe*, ed. Pål Kolstø (London, 2005), 35–76; Norman Housley, ‘Christendom’s Bulwark: Croatian Identity and the Response to the Ottoman Advance, Fifteenth to Sixteenth Centuries’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 24 (2014), 149–64.
 - 11 Alexandru Simon, ‘The Use of the “Gate of Christendom”’. Hungary’s Mathias Corvinus and Moldavia’s Stephen the Great, Politics in the Late 1400s’, *Quaderni della Casa Romana di Venezia* 3 (2004), 205–24; Liviu Pilat, ‘Between Ottoman Empire and Latin Christendom: Moldavia as Frontier Society in the Late Middle Ages’, in *Europe and the Ottoman World. Exchanges and Conflicts (Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries)*, ed. Gábor Kárman and Radu G. Păun (Istanbul, 2013), 171–93; Lovro Kunčević, ‘The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)’, *Dubrovnik Annals* 17 (2013), 37–68.
 - 12 Much like the principality of Moldavia whose rulers claimed that they shielded Transylvania and Hungary from Ottoman attacks, Housley, ‘Christendom’s Bulwark’, 152. See also Simon, ‘The Use of the “Gate of Christendom”’, 205–24; Pilat, ‘Between Ottoman Empire and Latin Christendom’, 171–93.
 - 13 ‘... ad ipsum regnum Bosne, scutum et deffendiculum predictorum meorum Dalmatie et Croatie regnorum ...’: *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, ed. Tadija Smičiklas, 18 vols (Zagreb, 1904–90), 18:345.
 - 14 Vilmos Fraknoi, ‘Kardinal Carvajal u Bosni 1457’, *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini* 1 (1890), 9–12, at 11. Carvajal was ordered to go to Bosnia in April and to talk to the king about the action against the Turks, as well as to undertake all that was necessary for the campaign to succeed, *VMH*, 2:292.
 - 15 Đuro Tošić, ‘Bosna i Turci od Kosovske do Angorske bitke’, *Zbornik za istoriju Bosne i Hercegovine* 1 (1995), 85–97.
 - 16 Momčilo Spremić, ‘Turski tributari u XIV i XV veku’, *Istorijski glasnik* 1–2 (1970), 9–58. See also *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Gábor Kárman and Lovro Kunčević (Leiden and Boston, 2013).
 - 17 Setton, *Papacy*, 1:166.
 - 18 Angeliki Laiou, ‘Marino Sanudo Torsello, Byzantium and the Turks: The Background to the Anti-Turkish League of 1332–1334’, *Speculum* 45/3 (1970), 374–92, at 385.
 - 19 Setton, *Papacy*, 1:194.
 - 20 DSA, *Lettere di Levante*, 10, fol. 57v–58, 59–59v.
 - 21 See: Franz Babinger, *Beiträge zur Frühgeschichte der Türkenherrschaft in Rumelien (14.–15. Jahrhundert)* (Munich, 1944).
 - 22 *MKL*, 1:82–4. Indicating the importance of Jajce, in a letter sent to Emperor Frederick III in 1464, after the Sultan had laid siege to the erstwhile Bosnian capital for the second time, King Matthias wrote: ‘Nos qui fere soli scimus, quanti momenti locus ille sit toto nomini christiano...’: *MKL*, 1:48.
 - 23 *Magyar Diplomacizai emlékek. Mátyás Király korából 1458–1490*, ed. Iván Nagy and Albert Nyáry, 4 vols (Budapest, 1875–78), 2.185, hereafter cited as *MDE*; Housley, ‘Christendom’s Bulwark’, 152.
 - 24 *MDE*, 2:301–2. Cf. Pilat, ‘Between Ottoman Empire and Latin Christendom’, 182; Simon, ‘The Use of the “Gate of Christendom”’, 218.
 - 25 *Hungary as ‘Propugnaculum’ of Western Christianity*, 112. Housley, ‘Christendom’s Bulwark’, 152.

- 26 'Cum iste Christi persecutor, christianorum occisor, per regnum Bozne, federe et tributo ei obnoxium, facile in Germaniam potest copias suas adducere': Nicolae Iorga, ed., *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XV^e siècle*, 6 vols (Paris and Bucharest, 1899–1916), 4:125.
- 27 *Monumenta historica Slavorum Meridionalum vicinorumque populorum*, ed. Vicentio Macusev, 2 vols (Warsaw and Belgrade, 1874–82), 2:158, hereafter cited as *MSM*.
- 28 *Pii Secundi Pontificis Maximi Commentarii*, ed. Ibolya Bellus and Iván Boronkai, 2 vols (Budapest, 1993), 1:534–5.
- 29 *Listine o odnošajih između južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke republike*, ed. Šime Ljubić, 10 vols (Zagreb, 1868–91), 10:237–8. Cf. Marko Šunjić, 'Venezia e gli ultimi re della Bosnia', *Radovi Hrvatskog društva za znanost i umjetnost* 3 (1995), 45–54, at 53.
- 30 Hans J. Kissling, 'Venedig und der Islamische Orient bis 1500', in *Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV*, ed. Agostino Pertusi, 2 vols (Florence, 1973–74), 1:361–88, at 375; Setton, *Papacy*, 2:240.
- 31 Roberto Lopez, 'Il principio della guerra Veneto-Turca nel 1463', *Archivio Veneto* 29–30 (1934), 45–131, at 55.
- 32 Emir O. Filipović, 'Ardet ante oculos opulentissimum regnum... Venetian Reports about the Ottoman Conquest of the Bosnian Kingdom, A.D. 1463', in *Italy and Europe's Eastern Border (1204–1669)*, ed. Iulian Mihai Damian *et al.* (Frankfurt am Main, 2012), 135–55.
- 33 'Bosna porta Italiae de Thurcibus, hostibus inimicissimis totius Christianitatis ... occupata est': Rázsó, 'Die Türkenpolitik Matthias Corvinus', 13, n. 34.
- 34 *Listine*, 10:250–1; *MDE*, 2:217.
- 35 *MSM*, 1:532–4; *Documenti sulle relazioni delle città Toscane coll' Oriente Cristiano e coi Turchi fino all'anno mdxxxi*, ed. Giuseppe Müller (Florence, 1879), 199.
- 36 *Ungedruckte Akten zur Geschichte der Päpste vornehmlich im XV., XVI. und XVII. Jahrhundert*, vol. I, ed. Ludwig Pastor (Freiburg, 1904), 185.
- 37 *MSM*, 1:309.
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- 66 De Niem, 'De Vita ac factis Constantiensibus Johannis Papae XXIII. usque ad fugam & carcerem ejus', 417–18.
- 67 Levec, 'Die ersten Türkeneinfälle', 198–200.
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- 69 Iorga, ed., *Notes et extraits*, 1:235 n. 3.
- 70 'Habemus etiam per mercatores nostros de Sclavonia, qualiter unus caporalis nominatus Isach Theucer congregat ad Scopiam gentes Theucas, qui his diebus expectatur in Bosna pro eundo ad raubarías versus ponentem extra regnum Bosne, in quo regno nil depredantur. Que omne contrate sunt ad ipsorum obedienciam, dando tributum domino imperatore Theucrorum pro se conservando': *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, 250.

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- 76 Marko Šunjić, *Bosna i Venecija (odnosni u XIV. i XV. st.)* (Sarajevo, 1996), 245; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 316.
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12 Between two worlds or a world of its own?

The eastern Adriatic in the fifteenth century¹

Oliver Jens Schmitt

The Balkans were an important theatre of the later crusades, when crusading aimed at pushing back, then at stopping the Ottoman advance in what Dimitri Obolensky has called the Byzantine Commonwealth.² The battles at Nicopolis in 1396 and Varna in 1444 are firm pillars of every account of the later crusades.³ However, the Balkan peninsula is seldom studied in this context for its own sake, i.e. as regional political entities, interested mostly only as far as they served as allies of crusader campaigns, or figured in the crusading plans that were developed at European courts. Language barriers have unfortunately prevented western historiography from making use of the impressive bulk of regional scholarship, both medievalist and Ottomanist. Even in Balkan studies, the eastern part of the late-medieval Balkan peninsula, i.e. present day Bulgaria and northeastern Greece, whose history in the fifteenth century has to be reconstructed mostly on the basis of Ottoman evidence, almost completely ‘falls out’ of dominant narratives in the historiography.⁴ On the other hand much scholarly interest has been devoted in the last 180 years to the western part of the peninsula, mainly to the former Byzantine and Greek-speaking areas whose maritime parts were, from the early-thirteenth century onwards, under direct or indirect Venetian and Genoese rule. While Karl Hopf, in his *Geschichte Griechenlands im Mittelalter*, had included contemporary Albania in his analysis,⁵ and while his predecessor Jacob Philipp Fallmerayer in his – unduly forgotten – last monograph had provided a passionate narrative of Scanderbeg’s resistance against the Ottomans,⁶ the region which western diplomats in the 1990s baptized ‘the western Balkans’ remained in the shadow of western medievalists’ interests in general and crusader studies in particular. Bosnia, Serbia and Albania possess the advantage of being in the realm of Italian archival documentation, while Dalmatia, as a part of the Adriatic world, possesses archival records that surpass in many respects even north Italian collections, but have remained, with the notable exception of Dubrovnik, almost unexplored.⁷ With the exception of Scanderbeg, the eastern Adriatic plays a very minor role in crusader studies. The region is virtually bypassed and has remained a kind of a black hole, despite numerous mostly short articles in western languages by Serbian historians, who participated in international conferences but whose major contributions were, like those of colleagues in neighbouring countries, published in their respective national languages. Approaching the eastern

Adriatic and adjacent parts of the so-called ‘western Balkans’ therefore constitutes, if not a complete novelty, then certainly a mosaic stone that enriches the highly complex picture of late-medieval crusader studies.

This paper considers the question whether the ‘western Balkans’ can be studied as a research topic of its own in the framework of crusader studies. We have first to clarify what were the two worlds that influenced our area of interest. It is evident from the political history of the fifteenth century that pressure was exerted on the region from two directions: from the Ottomans pushing forward their expansion from the southeast, and from Catholic powers intervening from the west and from the north. The latter have been far better studied than the internal mechanisms of the Ottoman advance. This is especially true for the Veneto-Ottoman confrontation,⁸ to a lesser degree for Hungary’s attempts to crush or at least to limit the Ottoman advance in what had traditionally been perceived as a Hungarian area of suzerainty, i.e. the vast area stretching from Moldavia, Wallachia and north-eastern Bulgaria to northern Bosnia.⁹ Venetian politics have been studied on a macro-level, focusing on central authorities and the strategies pursued by them; Venetian agencies and actors on a regional level, from Dalmatia to Albania, have to date attracted much less scholarly interest.¹⁰ Similar observations apply to Hungary’s intervention in Balkan politics – the focus has been on major military actions and much less on the almost uninterrupted small-scale warfare in Bosnia and the highly complicated relations with Wallachia and Moldavia, whose formation as principalities had been an act of political emancipation from Hungary.¹¹ A third major Christian player was the kingdom of Naples, whose expansive strategy under Alfonso V, and whose constant rivalry with Venice in the southern Adriatic following Alfonso’s death, complicated considerably crusading and the building of Christian alliances in the central and southern Adriatic.¹²

The Ottoman political world in the Balkans constitutes a still bigger challenge for crusader studies, which have concentrated on military campaigns under the direct command of the Sultans.¹³ However, the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans was a process driven mainly by the regional marcher lords (*uc beys*) of Thrace, Central Macedonia (Skopje), Thessaly and, from the middle of the fifteenth century also from Bosnia and Serbia.¹⁴ There was even a crucial period when the Ottomans were locked out from the Balkans by Amadeo’s VI takeover of Gallipoli (1366) and Turkish marcher lords pushed forward the conquest without any interference by the Sultans; even Edirne was captured by them in 1369, and not by the Ottomans.¹⁵ Most of the men in the Ottoman rank and file were not ‘foreign Asian invaders’, but belonged to regional society; and only a proportion of them, mainly the elite, had actually converted to Islam.¹⁶ Much of the bitterness of warfare, e.g. in Scanderbeg’s Albania, can be explained by the personal intimacy of military leaders on both sides. Crusader studies have to take into account this regional dimension. The Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, and the later crusades as a reaction to it, overlap with a highly unstable political setting in the western Balkans – and local players were not simply the objects of the grand politics pursued by the two worlds. They pursued their own agendas, very often quite ably, by adapting to rapidly changing international circumstances, as well as by making

use of new opportunities opened up by political change.¹⁷ This paper will argue that local and regional agencies in the western Balkans have to be reinterpreted if we are to understand the impact of the later crusades in the area.

To sum up: the two worlds were in fact much more complicated, multi-layered if not internally fragmented than a simple division into a 'western' and an 'Ottoman' block would suggest. This is certainly nothing new for European diplomatic history in the fifteenth century. But what is lacking is a differentiation between local and regional actors on the one hand, and central authorities (courts and chanceries) on the other side. The understanding of the Ottoman part has, however, to be reassessed in the light of recent scholarship by Bulgarian, Serbian and American Ottomanists. Therefore, the term 'world' which I have used for the title of this paper does not do full justice to the highly complex and fragmented socio-political realities in the fifteenth-century western Balkans.

If the 'two worlds' surrounding our area of interest deserve a sophisticated model of interpretation, this is all the more true for the area on which we are concentrating. In the fifteenth century the western part of the Balkan peninsula reached the zenith of its political fragmentation while preserving – notwithstanding thoroughgoing demographic changes triggered by Ottoman violence – its extraordinary socio-cultural variety. In the first place, the area had traditionally been a zone of cultural and political transition between the Byzantine sphere of influence and the Italian powers. Politically, Byzantium had disappeared in the late-twelfth century, but the Byzantine Commonwealth exerted a lasting cultural impact on the zone. Second, three major ecclesiastical organizations coexisted in the area, the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church on the coastal strip, and the so-called Bosnian Church whose dogmatic essence continues to form the object of much scholarly dispute.¹⁸ What matters for our context is the permeability of religious allegiances and the dynamics of religious change provoked by both Hungarian and Ottoman pressure. Albanian noblemen in particular had traditionally been accustomed to change their confessional loyalties according to their political orientation.¹⁹ Constant Hungarian crusading against Bosnia had a strong impact on the religious configuration in this remote and wood-covered area of the Balkans.²⁰ Only extreme Ottoman pressure triggered what one can call the Catholicization of some parts of the western Balkan political elite, including the Bosnian royal dynasty and Scanderbeg: the last Bosnian king, Stjepan Tomaš was crowned with a Papal crown in 1461, and in 1463–64 Pope Pius II seems to have offered to Scanderbeg a crown as the reward for his participation in the crusade against Mehmed II.²¹ But this was not a general phenomenon: while noblemen on the western fringe of the Balkans, with close contacts to Italy and realistic perspectives of finding shelter in the Catholic world, made this step, others continued to vacillate, like Stipan Vukčić (1435–66), the ruler of Hum/Hercegovina and a steadfast supporter of the Bosnian Church.²² The western Balkans, more exactly the rocky area of Krajina close to the lake of Scutari (Shkodra/Skadar), was the only spot in the continental Balkans where the Church Union of Florence was actually implemented: it found fertile ground there in the tradition of confessional code switching.²³ But it cannot be stressed enough that the Orthodox noble

network of the western and central Balkans had never been as tightly knit as in the fifteenth century: Greek, Serbian, Romanian, Bulgarian and Albanian noblemen constituted a kinship network that encompassed the entire Balkans. Being Orthodox was a key element of belonging.²⁴

This diversity can be explained at least in part by geography: differences between the narrow coastal strip and the hinterland are indeed considerable. Despite intensive trade in cattle, salt and silver between the coast and the hinterland, urban communities in the lowlands from Dalmatia to Durazzo belonged structurally to the Adriatic world, and they resisted repeated attempts by neighbouring noblemen to integrate them into aristocratic *seigneuries*. There was also a political border between Dalmatia and Bosnia, while in the south political frontiers between coast and hinterland were far less clear. Until 1420, however, Venetian conquest stabilized spatial division between maritime and continental parts of the area. Bearing in mind these deep social, cultural and political differences, one might ask if our area of interest is homogeneous enough to be analyzed as an object of research. I would argue that it constituted in the fifteenth century a *Geschehenseinheit*, that is, an area affected by similar political processes and intensive intra-regional political interaction.

It is now time to take a closer look at the region's political dynamics. By 1370 it was clear that the Serbian crown – royal and imperial alike – had not succeeded in establishing a permanent new political order.²⁵ The emerging kingdom of Bosnia, whose most important ruler, Tvrtko I (d. 1391), combined the Bosnian and Serbian crowns in 1377 and took possession of much of coastal Dalmatia, proved to be an even more ephemeral political construction.²⁶ The advancing Ottoman marcher lords were confronted with a political world in a process that can be characterized as the last phase of the disintegration of the former Byzantine–Serbian political system – or as the emergence of new regional political patterns. In fact, historians have tended to interpret political change in the western Balkans only in terms of decline, one which inevitably led to Ottoman conquest: Ottomanists have even presented conquest as means of stabilization and glorified the *pax ottomanica* by downplaying the mass destruction caused by Ottoman warfare. Placed in another context – that of general trends in east-central and central Europe – the area's political landscape begins to appear much less exotic and extraordinary. New political entities were emerging through a process of territorialization and *Herrschaftsverdichtung*²⁷ – the most lasting result of this process being the Romanian principalities in the northeast,²⁸ while the formation of territorial *seigneuries* was interrupted in Bosnia, Hercegovina and Albania by the Ottoman advance and to some extent by constant Venetian, Neapolitan and Hungarian intervention. Indeed, much of the history of the first half of the fifteenth century is characterized by overlapping processes of Venetian, Hungarian, Neapolitan and Ottoman advance – the powers competing for influence often applied the same political tools, by creating systems of alliances and belts of vassals, only at a later stage proceeding to full-scale military intervention and conquest.²⁹

Regional political actors striving for the construction of their own new political entities took into account this pressure from west, north and east. Competition

between the great powers was reflected on the ground in pronounced versatility on the part of regional political agencies – it would appear that the constant switching of political allegiances formed a substantial feature of strategies of political survival. Since Halil İnalçık's seminal article, the 'two circle model' of Ottoman conquest – indirect rule via vassals followed by full-scale incorporation into the system of central administration and *timar* – has been confirmed in research debate.³⁰ The southern periphery of our area of interest, southern Albania, had been one of the early target zones of the *timar* system, but Albania proved also to be one of the areas where resistance against the redistribution of agrarian resources was extraordinarily stiff and long-lasting.³¹ The Ottoman vassal system had a long life in the north, where various Serbian noblemen paid homage to the Sultan between 1371 and 1392. Bosnia was hit by Ottoman raids from the last 15 years or so of the fourteenth century. It took the Ottomans and their marcher lords several decades to transform the belt of vassal principalities into a normal provincial system – the victims of conquest were not only Christian princes who had either to go over to the Ottomans, to capitulate, to die or to flee, but in the long run also marcher lord dynasties like the Mihaloğlu in Thrace, Turahanoğlu in Thessaly and Pasa Yiğit's family in Skopje. That the marcher lord of Skopje was rewarded *timars* and offices in Bosnia was not only a sign of gratitude on the part of the Sultan, but also a way of removing him from central Macedonia, where the imprint of the family had become all too visible in the skyline of Skopje.³² Recent research has emphasized the ties between the marcher lord milieu and such centrifugal social forces as dervishes and elements of the *akıncıs*, particularly in Thrace.³³ Ottoman conquest thus entailed not only the destruction of Christian *seigneuries*, but also an eventual crack-down on those who had made the decisive contribution to Ottoman success.

On the Christian side, Venice and Naples competed fiercely to establish a belt of vassal principalities on the southeastern shore of the Adriatic. The age-old competition between Hungary and Venice for supremacy in the Adriatic had become even more complicated since the internal Hungarian struggle over the crown had led to a division of royal rights on Dalmatia. While King Ladislas of Naples had sold his rights to Dalmatia in 1409 to the republic of Venice, neither King Sigismund nor the Hunyadys definitely resigned theirs. By 1420, Venice had taken control of almost the whole eastern Adriatic coast (with the exception of the Hungarian *littorale* around Rijeka, and Dubrovnik under Hungarian suzerainty), a process pushed forward both by negotiation, pressure and open violence. Further south, Venice had acquired its Albanian possessions in a long period stretching from 1396 to 1420. 1420 also marked decisive Venetian victory over King Sigismund in Dalmatia and Friuli. When Alfonso V of Aragón entered Naples in 1441, the situation once again became very tense: Alfonso pursued a very ambitious eastern policy and built up his own structure of vassals stretching from the Morea to Hercegovina. Venice and Naples justified their expansion in the southern Adriatic with reference to the defence of the area against Ottoman advance – and there was of course much more than a kernel of truth in this argument. But both powers were far too heavily committed to internal Italian competition to

avoid using their Balkan strongholds and allies for a proxy war in the Balkans. It has long been overlooked that this proxy war did enormous damage to all those forces in the Balkans which were trying to stem the Ottoman tide.³⁴

Thus the political landscape of the western part of the Balkan peninsula went through a process of radical political change. In this period of transformation, new territorial entities emerged out of the heritage of the Byzantine–Serbian political world. The process was heavily influenced, hampered, and eventually reversed by the multiple interventions of great powers operating at the fringe of this area. Vassalage acted as the main tool of their politics of interest in what evolved into a buffer zone between the expanding Ottoman marcher lords and the Catholic powers, and the outcome was not unilateral dependency, but a scenario in which local actors utilized the situation to bring equilibrium to the regional balance of power. The second part of this paper is dedicated to case studies. We will analyze the political elbow-room of the regional actors, focusing on Scanderbeg and Stipan Vukčić Kosača.

* * *

The three most prominent Christian political leaders in the western Balkans in the fifteenth century were without doubt the Serbian despot George Branković (1427–56), Stipan Vukčić Kosača of Hercegovina (1435–66), and the north Albanian nobleman George Kastrioti Scanderbeg (1443–68) – the most famous being Scanderbeg, for the other two are known only to a handful of specialists.³⁵ We will begin with Scanderbeg’s case and then compare it to his northern neighbours. Scanderbeg is the most prominent example of religious code-switching: from Orthodoxy to Islam, back to Orthodoxy and eventually a kind of slipping over to Catholicism. Far less known are the political and socio-cultural mechanisms lying behind these changes of religious and for the most part political allegiance. Scanderbeg was socialized in the tradition of Serbian Orthodoxy: his father had built the so-called Albanian tower in the Chilandar monastery on Mount Athos, and one of his brothers died as an Orthodox monk in Chilandar.³⁶ Scanderbeg’s conversion to Islam was apparently influenced by dervish circles, so it might be questioned if he adhered to the Ottoman ulemas’ Islam or to some sort of more or less ‘heterodox’ religious practices.³⁷ In any case, the milieu to which he was related was composed of many converts from his native area of Dibra (today the border area between Macedonia and Albania) – but these converts had a modest social background. Social differences and questions about the status of recent converts in the Ottoman army led to tensions within this group, and to bloody feuds which in Scanderbeg’s case lasted for more than three decades. Warfare during his uprising might be read also as a prolongation of inner-regional conflicts: Scanderbeg’s main enemies on the ground were the family of Hızır bey, his former comrade in Kruja, and the clan of Balaban, a former peasant of Scanderbeg’s father Ivan. Three generations of Hızır’s family fought against Scanderbeg, and it was highly symbolic that in 1466–67 they subdued villages in the core land of George Kastrioti. Balaban was even appointed commander-in-chief of the

Ottoman forces in 1465, and his intimate knowledge of society and terrain at least partially explains eventual Ottoman success, although Balaban himself was killed during a dramatic siege of Kruja.³⁸ Since Scanderbeg had participated in Ottoman operations against the Serbian despotate and against Transylvania, he was familiar with the milieu of Ottoman marcher lords. The dynasty of marcher lords of Skopje even pursued their personal feuds with the Kastriota for two generations, because Scanderbeg's father Ivan had formerly been the target of their attacks in central Albania.

The second network which had a considerable impact for Scanderbeg was a regional one: on his mother's side, Scanderbeg was related to the Serbian princely dynasty of Branković; and Ivan Kastriota's marriage policy had created kinship ties to the leading Albanian and Slav noble families. Scanderbeg himself continued this tradition by marrying his relatives into the Branković and the Byzantine Rallis family – it has to be emphasized that Scanderbeg's marriage strategy should be viewed in the context of the Orthodox noble kinship network in the late-medieval Balkans.³⁹ Most regional dynasties involved in this network had longstanding experience with vassal ties, especially the late-medieval Serbo-Byzantine rulers in what had once been Romania (i.e. the Greek-speaking Byzantine world) and Serbian regional dynasties in Macedonia and Serbia proper. It is particularly noteworthy that Scanderbeg was probably the only Orthodox nobleman who did not accept the Sultan's offer of a vassal principality – indeed, after Scanderbeg's initial successes, Mehmed II used the stratagem to detach Scanderbeg from Italian political influence.⁴⁰ While the Ottomans had succeeded in destroying the Catholic-Orthodox alliance of 1443 by reinstating George Branković as despot of Serbia, Scanderbeg, Branković's relative, was not trapped: Branković's principality was swallowed 16 years later, the Serbian idea of maintaining political autonomy between the Hungarian hammer and the Ottoman anvil proving to be unrealistic.

Scanderbeg understood much better than Branković that the Ottoman advance did not leave the option of manoeuvring between the great powers. That was why he sided with the Catholic powers and definitively quitted the political world of the Orthodox Commonwealth. While he declined Ottoman suzerainty, he was grateful to become a vassal of the crown of Naples (1451).⁴¹ First, there was a longstanding tradition of Neapolitan suzerainty in coastal Albania; second, Naples under Alfonso V was able and willing to send substantial military aid. Scanderbeg was certainly the most loyal and stable vassal in Alfonso's power system in the southwestern Balkans. The reasons are evident: while other regional rulers strove to optimize short-term benefits and were prepared at any moment to change allegiance according to the political situation, Scanderbeg shared with his suzerain the goal of pushing the Ottomans back from the Balkans. Scanderbeg felt a deep personal gratitude which explains his intervention in the Neapolitan war of succession (1458–64). He renewed his oath to King Ferrante who, unlike his father, refrained from attempting a military offensive, learning from the Berat campaign in 1455, when Catalan and Albanian forces had been crushed by the Ottoman marcher lords.⁴² Vassalage had obvious advantages for Scanderbeg: he

got rid of Kruja, which he could barely defend against Ottoman armies, and which until 1466 was controlled by a Neapolitan garrison; this left Scanderbeg free to concentrate on guerilla warfare in the mountains. Vassalage also guaranteed shelter in Italy: the possibility of a complete military defeat was always present and concrete, and like many other Balkan noblemen Scanderbeg was wise enough to take measures of precaution.

But the Neapolitan vassal system also had somewhat problematic effects on the regional architecture of power. As mentioned above, Venice opposed Neapolitan expansion in the highly sensitive southern Adriatic; it did not have to wait until Alfonso V's flag waved over the castles of the Zenebish family, right opposite Corfu, to understand that the Neapolitan vassal system was directed against vital interests of the Republic of Saint Mark. For a long time researchers have overlooked the bitter enmity between Scanderbeg and Venice; after Scanderbeg's death it fell into oblivion, because neither Venice nor Scanderbeg's followers, who had found shelter in the lagoon, had any interest in remembering the story.⁴³ The enmity had structural reasons: Balkan noblemen in the Adriatic hinterland traditionally had the tendency to expand to the coast and to control port towns. Scanderbeg simply followed this political and economic logic, and tried to conquer Venetian Albania in 1447–48. He was defeated by the townspeople – one of the best examples of why there were no 'national uprisings' in the late-medieval Balkans. Scanderbeg continued his expansionist strategy in coastal Albania as a Neapolitan vassal, and this contributed eventually to his political isolation in the Adriatic world. First, with the exception of a short period in 1463–64 when Venice launched its own war against the Ottomans, relations remained extremely tense; second, in 1466, Venetian troops massacred the Neapolitan garrison of Kruja and occupied it until its eventual conquest by the Ottomans in 1478.⁴⁴ 1466, it should be remembered, was the year of Mehmed II's first massive and devastating campaign in Albania.⁴⁵ The Kastrioti benefited from their vassal ties only once they were in exile after Scanderbeg's death.

The Neapolitan quest for vassals did not only involve Scanderbeg in a proxy war, it also triggered a Venetian reaction and fierce competition for Balkan vassals between the two Italian powers. This conflict prevented any stable Christian coalition in the Balkans. It is quite fascinating to observe how Venice and Naples tried to encircle each other in the Balkans and how they drew most of the petty noblemen into their respective nets. The so called league of Alessio (1444), a loose coalition of regional noblemen, glorified by Albanian nationalist historiography as an 'Albanian state', was in fact nothing more than a very short-lived alliance of interests, and it was virtually torpedoed by this Italian strife.⁴⁶ Even the members of this coalition swore their oath to Naples independently of Scanderbeg, and because of Scanderbeg's pressure to centralize command structures, some of them, including Scanderbeg's own father-in-law Araniti Komino, defected to Venice. While the inner circle of rebels at least remained steadfast and did not go over to the Ottomans, members of the Dukagjin family in north-central Albania did not refrain from changing sides several times. The more powerful of the family's two branches acknowledged Neapolitan and

Ottoman dependency, and in 1463 negotiated with Venice. The weaker branch sided with Venice and was annihilated by the politically more versatile and militarily more powerful branch. In fact, the Dukagjin were the only Albanian noble family which managed to survive the Ottoman onslaught in 1466–67.⁴⁷ This was due to their readiness to accept Ottoman suzerainty, at least temporarily, which most of the rebels did not; and because they repelled any attempt by Scanderbeg to conquer their mountain *seigneurie*.

Scanderbeg's war against the Sultans, Venice and his regional neighbours brought havoc to his followers: when Mehmed II had finished his second campaign against central Albania in 1467, up to 75 per cent of the population of Mati and Dibra, Scanderbeg's core lands, had been killed, deported, had fled or, as Kritobulos noticed, even committed suicide.⁴⁸ Anti-Ottoman resistance always had a modest demographic base in the Albanian mountains – and by 1467, even this base no longer existed.

Thus, if we assemble the pieces of the puzzle, we may conclude that an analysis of the regional framework for Scanderbeg's rebellion provides us with many explanations for his failure – local competition between petty noblemen, both Christians and converts, aggravated by the Veneto–Neapolitan struggle over hegemony in the southern Adriatic; Scanderbeg consumed most of his time in fighting against people from his own society. With very modest resources, he had to rely on external support and became involved in a proxy war which eventually ruined him politically. In the context of the later crusades, Scanderbeg proved to be the most reliable regional leader because his rebellion did aim at destroying Ottoman rule in the Balkans. That is why he definitively sided with Catholic powers and adopted – as the only Orthodox ruler in the area – the Catholic faith.

Stipan Vukčić Kosača of Hercegovina belonged to Scanderbeg's generation and shared the same geopolitical constraints. His political decisions, however, differed considerably from Kastrioti's anti-Ottoman stance. Vukčić was a major player in Bosnian domestic politics, and these were probably even more complex than the continuous feuds and shifting coalitions in the small world of Albanian noblemen. From the late-fourteenth century Bosnia was under permanent pressure from Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, and it was turned into a virtual battleground between these two major powers.⁴⁹ Venice was an important neighbour, but it never expanded into the mountainous hinterland of Dalmatia.⁵⁰ Like their Albanian counterparts, western Bosnian noblemen pursued expansionist plans toward the coastal region: King Tvrtko I had temporarily subdued Dalmatian urban communes, Hrvoje Vukčić Kosača had proclaimed himself duke of Split, and Stipan Vukčić continued this policy. It is impossible to retrace here all the alliances Stipan concluded; in our context, it makes more sense to analyze the general patterns of his political behaviour vis à vis the Bosnian king, Bosnian regional dynasties, Ottoman marcher lords, the Serbian principality (which was an Ottoman vassal), Hungary, Hungarian vassals in the Dalmatian hinterland, Venice and Venetian Dalmatia, the republic of Dubrovnik (under Hungarian suzerainty), and the kingdom of Naples. The list alone gives a fair idea of the complexity of Bosnian politics, a complexity which

was deepened by confessional conflicts between the Catholic Church and the Bosnian Church to which Stipan belonged.

When Stipan inherited his regional *seigneurie* in southwestern Bosnia in 1435, the Bosnian king Tvrtko II, the regional dynasty of Pavlovići and the Hungarian king Sigismund of Luxemburg attacked his lands. Stipan reacted by calling on Ottoman support; in the ensuing bickering and battling, the Pavlovići also paid Ottoman troops, and in 1439 the inner-Bosnian conflict was temporarily settled by a marriage contract. When King Albrecht of Hungary suddenly died, Stipan expanded to coastal Dalmatia (Omiš, Poljica in the hinterland of Split), pushing aside the *banus* Matko Talovac, defeating once again the Pavlovići (in the hinterland of Dubrovnik: Trebinje, Vrm, Klobuk) and benefiting from the Ottoman conquest of Serbia by taking possession of the coastal towns of Zeta (especially Antivari/Bar).⁵¹ Dubrovnik was too weak to react, but Venice waged war on Stipan until 1445, when the republic took possession of the coastal strip around Bar. It was this Venetian pressure which convinced Stipan to accept Alfonso V's suzerainty.⁵² The crusade of 1443–44 had no direct impact on Stipan – in 1444, when Despot George Branković was reinstalled in Serbia, Stipan settled his border dispute with his Serbian neighbour, whose lands he had attacked five years earlier when the Ottomans had crushed the Serbian despotate. Stipan resisted military pressure from the new Bosnian king, Tomaš, and established a trade network under his control. His attempt to conquer Dubrovnik in 1451 failed, in particular because the peace between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire (24 November 1451) deterred him from prolonging a war which in any case was proving unsuccessful. Dubrovnik took revenge by supporting the rebellion of Stipan's son Vladislav, to whom King Tomaš offered military help. In this dilemma, Stipan offered his *seigneurie* to the republic of Venice, but Ottoman aid proved to be far more effective. In 1454 Stipan renewed his alliance of vassalage with Alfonso V, and stabilized his internal position by marrying his son Vladislav to Anna Kantakuzina, a relative of despot George Branković, and his second son Vlatko to a relative of Ulrich von Cilli. By these means he secured his position in both the pro-Ottoman and the pro-Hungarian camp of regional noblemen.⁵³

Stipan's position as a pro-Ottoman political player was strengthened by the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Nonetheless, he refused, together with the Bosnian king and the Bosnian nobleman Petar Pavlović, to join Mehmed II in his campaign against Belgrade in 1456, instead intensifying his relations with the Papacy, Alfonso V and Dubrovnik. At the same time he did act in the interests of the Sultan against Stefan Crnojević, Venetian captain of Montenegro from 1455. After 1456, Stipan again joined the Ottoman side when King Tomaš planned a counterattack against the Ottomans and attacked Stipan's lands. Tomaš however concluded a treaty with Mehmed II in 1459, after the Serbian despotate, ruled during the last days of its existence by the Bosnian crown prince, had been conquered.⁵⁴ Tomaš proceeded to ask the Sultan to punish Stipan, and the resulting Ottoman attack on Stipan's principality put an end to his pro-Ottoman position. He went over to the Venetian camp and supported the new (and last) Bosnian king, Stjepan Tomašević, another champion of the anti-Ottoman cause who had

accepted a crown sent by Pope Pius II.⁵⁵ But the Bosnian king was also pursuing a feud against the Croatian *banus* Pavao Sperančić. Stipan's last years were overshadowed by the constant rebellion of his son Vladislav, who played the Ottoman card to enforce the division of his father's lands. In 1463 Stipan and King Stjepan Tomašević had to confront a major Ottoman onslaught, and in their despair, they asked Scanderbeg for help.⁵⁶ While the Bosnian kingdom succumbed, Stipan managed to recover most of his lands and was reconciled by Hungary with his son Vladislav. Father and son alike supported King Matthias Corvinus's major inroad to Bosnia in 1464, but the family quarrel resurfaced, and in 1465 the Ottoman marcher lord Isa bey conquered Stipan's lands. The sole remaining heritage was Stipan's title *herceg*, which ever since has designated the region of Hercegovina.⁵⁷

As in the case of Scanderbeg, these political and military events were the expression of structural change: regional political division was not solely a sign of internecine strife between noble families, it was aggravated by Ottoman and Hungarian pressure. It cannot be emphasized enough that the kingdom of Bosnia was exposed to devastating Ottoman raids for almost a whole century and that the demographic consequences were indeed dramatic: immediately after the Ottoman conquest, in southeastern Hercegovina, 25 per cent of all settlements were completely destroyed, while in most other settlements, the population shrank considerably. Waves of refugees sought shelter on the territory of Dubrovnik, whose population rose between c.1350 and 1500 from c. 30,000 to 90,000, the most impressive growth (c. 1400 to c. 1500: 50/60,000 to 90,000) being to a considerable degree the direct consequence of Ottoman raids.⁵⁸ At the same time, Orthodox Vlachs moved from the inner Balkans into Bosnia and changed its ethnic and religious composition.⁵⁹

Herceg Stipan certainly did not pursue an ideological agenda comparable to that of Scanderbeg, who aimed at destroying Ottoman power in Europe; but it should not be forgotten that Scanderbeg established a *seigneurie* as a consequence of his rebellion, while Stipan had inherited a vast territorial lordship in the kingdom of Bosnia. While Scanderbeg grasped that the rules of the political game in the Balkans had radically changed, Stipan continued the policy of his predecessors and manoeuvred between Ottomans, Hungarians, Venetians and his Bosnian peers. One of the reasons behind these tactics was the simple fact that Sultanic power was for many decades not very conspicuous in the western Balkans – regional Christian rulers dealt with Ottoman marcher lords whose power base was considerable, but did not exceed the resources of the larger Christian lordships. Decades of conflict and acquaintance lured the Christian lords into an illusory misinterpretation of the nature of Ottoman conquest. Since the end of the Serbian imperial idea (1371), Orthodox and Bosnian lords had grown used to double allegiance (the Ottoman Empire and Hungary); they often obtained the citizenship of Dubrovnik and Venice and even access to their patriciates. They faced diversified political, military and financial risks, but many of them could not imagine that the Ottomans would put an end to their status of political ambiguity.

The western Balkan lords were not only masters at playing different political cards at almost the same time, they also took control over the economic resources

of their territories (mainly customs duties paid by Dubrovnik merchants), blackmailed the republic of Dubrovnik and invested the proceeds in Dubrovnik banking houses. They purchased houses and palaces in Dubrovnik, the Dalmatian islands under Venetian control, and in Venice itself, as havens in the event of Ottoman attacks.⁶⁰ Scanderbeg did not differ from the political habitus of his Bosnian and Serbian neighbours; he obtained a fief in Apulia (1464), held a bank account in Dubrovnik, was for a time on Venice's payroll, received subsidies from the Pope and troops from Naples, had his son elected as a Venetian patrician and administrated highly complex external relations with a small and motley crew of advisers, Albanians, Slavs and Greeks, most of them clerics.⁶¹ However, while most Bosnian lords simply strove to maintain their status and power, Scanderbeg had grasped that the classical Balkan political 'inbetweenness', that is between the major great powers, would eventually crush these lordships. That was why he opted for an unequivocal alliance with crusading powers such as the Papacy and the kingdom of Naples under Alfonso V.

Hercegovina, whose history has been presented here in a simplified narrative, therefore mirrors the extreme volatility of the political world between the major powers, the Ottoman Empire, Hungary, Venice and Naples. One thing we can deduce from these events is that the maritime powers did not really matter. Naples was unable to offer support as it did in Albania, and Venice confined its efforts to defending its commercial and strategic interests on the coast. The Balkans were in fact divided between an Ottoman and a Hungarian sphere of interest. Warfare was constant, but remained mainly on a low scale. Regional and major conflicts often overlapped, i.e. inner-Bosnian feuds for control over territory were inextricably intermingled with the larger Ottoman–Hungarian confrontation. The Italian-, Venetian- and Neapolitan- cards were played in order to counterbalance overwhelming pressure by the great powers operating on the fringe of the Bosnian world. As in the Albanian case, noblemen attempted to preserve as much local political autonomy as they could by pursuing a seesaw policy and by trying to control trade and access to the coast to finance their following (*Gefolgschaft*). For many years Stipan Vukčić clearly had no intention of joining crusader campaigns led by Hungary – he was probably aware of the time-honoured tradition of Hungarian crusading propaganda acting as a camouflage for Hungarian expansion into Bosnia.

Conclusion

Did the western Balkans constitute 'a world of its own', albeit under pressure from the 'two worlds' evoked in the title of this paper – and if so, what was the impact of this regional world on the later crusades? The western Balkans formed a world of its own mostly in terms of politics: the fifteenth century was the zenith of a long process of political fragmentation in the Balkans, a process which nonetheless had the potential to create a new political landscape, one of regional territorial *seigneuries* akin to those in Italy or the Holy Roman Empire. What

prevented this political reconfiguration was Ottoman conquest. It was this conquest, and Hungarian and Venetian attempts to contain it, that characterized the political world of the western Balkans in the fifteenth century. Nobles belonging to the Orthodox and the Bosnian Church wavered between these two worlds in search of both political and cultural/confessional survival. The potential for crusading was rather low, the notable exception being Scanderbeg, one of the few regional leaders who went over to Catholicism rather early and was considered a crusading leader by Popes Calixtus III and Pius II. There was a leaning towards Catholicism and the Catholic Church in Bosnia too, but with regional differences: eventually, in 1461, the king sided with the crusading cause almost desperately, while the *herceg* of Hercegovina did so only when all other political options had vanished.

In any case, one should not overestimate the possible impact of the western Balkan rulers on overall crusading plans in the fifteenth century. The western Balkans had been under constant attack by Ottoman marcher lords since the 1380s, and this sparsely populated and barely urbanized region suffered in some areas an almost complete demographic breakdown. Waves of refugees from Bosnia, Dalmatia and Albania crossed the Adriatic and settled in the kingdom of Naples, the Papal State and Venice. Even noblemen who were fully devoted to the crusading idea, like Scanderbeg in 1463–64, could offer no more than tactical diversions against Ottoman marcher lords. Participating in crusades was, until the final Ottoman onslaught in 1463, a dangerous and not very attractive prospect; one that was in addition, for most non-Catholic noblemen, synonymous with Hungarian supremacy. Those who dared to side with the Pope, like the Bosnian king in 1461 and Scanderbeg in 1463, paid an enormous price: Bosnia was conquered, at least partially, by Mehmed II in 1463, and Scanderbeg's lands were almost completely destroyed by the Sultan in person in 1466–67. Mehmed II was not prepared to tolerate the creation of Catholic 'crusader kingdoms' in Bosnia and Albania and annihilated Pius II's grand design before it could take shape.

As a political world, the late medieval western Balkans was marked both by external political pressure and demographic instability, and both factors explain why this world disappeared at the end of the fifteenth century: Ottoman conquest did not only change the political map by removing a political and cultural buffer zone between the Catholic powers and the Ottoman Empire, it also engendered radical social change. Although the area stretching from Albania to Bosnia was unable to participate actively in the crusading enterprise, it had nevertheless staunchly opposed the Ottoman advance for almost a full century. The price it paid was enormous. It is true that Bosnia and Albania later became cornerstones of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, not least because of an intensive process of islamization – but it should not be forgotten that before the arrival of the so-called *pax ottomanica*, the Ottoman advance brought utter devastation and massive destruction, and that many people who belonged to the political world which we have described did not survive the Ottoman onslaught.

Notes

- 1 This article is very much indebted to the discussions at the conference ‘The Ottoman conquest of the Balkans – interpretations and research debates’, held in November 2013 in Vienna; the conference volume will be published in 2016. It is also informed by research conducted for a project sponsored by the Austrian Science Foundation (FWF) SFB F 42 Visions of Community.
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13 The Romanian concept of crusade in the fifteenth century

Sergiu Iosipescu

In memory of Professor Mihai Berza

For many people, including many students, the history of the Romanian principalities remains obscure, despite the fact that one of the greatest historians of the late-nineteenth century was Romanian – this being Nicolae Iorga, a specialist on the later crusades and the last general historian of the Ottoman Empire. This shadow covering Romania's past is the consequence of the atypical character of its historical development. It was only at the end of the fourteenth century, after a long and difficult evolution and a protracted period of insecurity generated by incessant invasions, that the Romanian principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia, attained their final shape, stretching from the Carpathian Mountains to the Black Sea and the eastern Balkans. The text *Terre hodie Graecorum et dominia secularia et spiritualia ipsorum*, in a Munich library manuscript dating from 1435, describes 'two Wallachias, with their own language, two states, with two natural sovereigns, situated at the frontiers of Hungary and Russia, and obedient to the Greek Church'.¹ The Orthodox faith practised by the Romanians was both ancient and distinctive. They lived alongside Catholic communities, they showed tolerance in the fifteenth century towards the Hussites, and they placed a high premium on their origins – antique, imperial and Roman. In the northern Balkans, Romanians were not scattered in different communities but instead formed two states, the Romanian principalities; they also had a comfortable majority in the county of Maramurş, the banat of Temesvár, the duchy of Transylvania and in other counties of the kingdom of Hungary, everywhere being organized into 'districts' or lands (*terrae* in the Latin documents).

Wallachia had a surface area of more than 100,000 km² (38,610 square miles), Moldavia c. 93,000 km² (35,907 square miles):² each of them was larger than the kingdom of Scotland (78,746 km²),³ while the principalities combined covered nearly 200,000 km² (77,220 square miles),⁴ an area exceeding by around 25 per cent the medieval kingdom of England (151,053 km²).⁵ With their rear protected by the Carpathian Mountains, and using the opportunities presented by the crusade against the Mongols, between 1369 and 1392 the Romanian princes succeeded in gaining substantial coastal access to the Black Sea, reaching from the estuary of the Nistru (Dniester) to Varna, a distance of more than 500 km (around 310 miles). The principality of Wallachia dominated the Danube valley from its Clissura or Iron Gates – the river's canyon – all the way to its mouth, more than 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) of waters, islands and morasses. The population

of the principalities was described by Giovanni da Marignola as ‘innumerable’ before the Black Death, and in the 1435 Munich manuscript it still features as ‘populus in maxima quantitate’;⁶ but during the second half of the fifteenth century the number shrank to around two million people in both principalities. An embassy of King Matthias Corvinus to the duke of Milan in 1476 gives 40,000 *casate* (households) for Wallachia, compared with 60,000 ‘families’ in 1447–48.⁷

The international standing of the Romanian principalities rose in accordance with the growing importance of the Black Sea – ‘a turntable of international trade’ in the late Middle Ages, to use the railway metaphor deployed by George I. Brătianu. The *pax mongolica* (‘Mongol peace’) opened up their territories, which became a link in the European-Asian chain stretching from the Pacific and China Seas to the Black Sea. At the same time, the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia were a beneficiary of the major commercial routes from the Black Sea to western, central and northern Europe, via the Danube, through the Saxon towns of Transylvania including Nosen-Bistrița, Kronstadt-Brașov, Hermannstadt-Sibiu, and Gross Wardein-Oradea Mare, and following the Prut and Siret valleys to Lemberg (Lwów, Lioy), Kraków (Cracovia) and Danzig (Gdańsk). The principalities obtained control over these routes by taking part in the crusade against Mongol power, a veritable *Reconquista* which was marked out by the introduction of the crossed eagle on the Wallachian coat of arms (Figure 13.1). Wallachia controlled the great maritime harbours of Chilia-Licostomo and Brăila, while Moldavia held Cetatea Albă/Moncastro in the estuary of the Nistru.

To employ the definition of Nicolae Iorga, the expansion of Ottoman power in the Balkans was, in its early stages, a *dromocratia*, that is power based on controlling communications, making use of the region’s traditional and politically important roads. The idea of a thrusting expansion into central Europe via Belgrade and Vienna, which Suleiman, son of Orkhan, had in mind when he landed at Tzypmé and Gallipoli, stalled, and gave way to the realities of this Ottoman method of conquest.⁸ The *sol-kol* (left way), *orta-kol* (middle-way) and *sag-kol* (right way) represented, for Ottoman soldiers disembarking on the western shore of the sea of Marmara, the standard means of expansion and conquest. They used ancient imperial highways: to the left to the Peloponnese via Athens and Corinth; to the centre, using the via Aegnatia to Thessaloniki and Durazzo, and from there to Italy; and to the right, the Lower Danube and Black Sea coast. In different periods of Ottoman expansion each of these roads enjoyed a pre-eminence. All the conquests in the Balkans were balanced and calibrated by subsequent expansion in Anatolia, against Turcoman emirates and Christian territorial lords.⁹ The relations of the Ottomans with the neighbourhood states evolved from alliances – many Christian princes from the Balkans turned to Turkish auxiliaries for help in their intestine wars – to tribute taxation and, finally, to the conquest of the regions. This last stage was represented by the suppression of local dynasties and the introduction of the timariot system of land exploitation, based on inventories of demographic and economic resources (*vilâyet tahrîrî*) in the conquered states.¹⁰ The Ottoman court used the imperial Byzantine pattern for the reconstruction, step by step, of the former Roman Empire in the Balkans and around the Black Sea, in the East and in Africa.



Figure 13.1 Mircea, prince of Wallachia confirms the alliance treaty with Wladislaw Jagello, king of Poland, on 20 January 1391 in Lemberg (Lwów). Photograph reproduced by kind permission of Sergiu Iosipescu.

From the beginning of the Turcoman pirate raids from western Anatolia into the Aegean Sea, the reaction of Christianity was the crusade, proclaimed by the Holy See in 1333. Another crusade against the Turks was organized in 1363–64, after the victories of Peter of Lusignan, king of Cyprus, in the eastern Mediterranean. A princes' conference in Kraków, presided over by Emperor Charles IV of Luxemburg, resolved for the first time on military action in the Balkans, to be led principally by Louis I of Anjou, king of Hungary (1342–82), to halt the advance of the Turks.¹¹ Contemporary Philippe de Mézières in his *Le Songe du vieil pèlerin* (*Dream of the Old Pilgrim*), manuscripts of which were popular in the fifteenth century,¹² included in the theatre of operations against the Turks 'la Terre d'Alexandre de Balgerat, en Ablaqueie' ('the realm of Alexander of Basarab, Wallachia').¹³ Unfortunately the Angevin king of Hungary, imbued with the dream of his ancestors of Naples for an empire that would extend from the Adriatic to Constantinople, began his crusade with the conquest of the Bulgarian

tsardom of Vidin (1365), a schismatic but Christian state, conceived as the first step to Constantinople. Meanwhile Dobrotitza, despot of a maritime principality that extended from Caliacra to Constantza, and allied to the princes of Wallachia, reached an agreement with the Green Count, Amadeus VI of Savoy, during his crusade of 1366–67. From that time, the Romanian princes developed their own crusade against the rump of Mongol power around the mouth of the Danube, extending the borders of Wallachia to the Black Sea's northwestern shores. Mircea the Old, prince of Wallachia (1386–95, 1396–1418) inherited the lands of despot Dobrotitza and developed the territory of the Romanian principality further to the south, reaching the eastern Balkans.

The battle of Pločnik (1387) and more importantly the battle of Kossovopolje (1389) persuaded the Ottomans to deflect their forces, via the 'right way', towards the Lower Danube and the northwestern shores of the Black Sea. The result was that for more than a century this became a major battlefield of the crusade. These considerations are fundamental for the geopolitical situation facing the Romanian principalities, whose rulers were confronted – after the collapse of the Bulgarian tsardom of Târnovo in 1388–93 – with the full force of Ottoman expansion on the 'right way' (*sag-kol*). To realize their advance from the southern Balkans to the Lower Danube valley, the Ottomans under Murad I and Bayezid I established the centre of an aggressive frontier, a base for the famous *akindjis*, at Karinovasi (Karnobat). Just as in 1388, it was the Trans-Danubian possessions of the Romanian princes which formed the first Turkish target. In 1393 Mircea the Old, who had restored Wallachia's relations with Hungary, tried to destroy the *akindji* nucleus by an expedition to Karinovasi, using the Balkan passes.¹⁴ Prince Mircea the Old and his advisers – among them the great boyar Baldwin who owned properties near Caliacra on the Black Sea – grasped the full dimensions of this confrontation with the Ottoman Empire and faced it by embracing the crusade as the only available way to save the southeast Danubian and maritime parts of Wallachia, as well as Constantinople.

From 1395 to 1444–45, the crusade plan of campaign remained consistent: an advance by land forces on the banks of the Lower Danube and then, leaving the river around Dristra (Dorostolon, Silistra), reaching the shores of the Black Sea with a second thrust towards Constantinople and the Straits. Of course if it was to be effective this plan had to include a naval component. But what was the thinking behind the plan? The origin and elaboration of the pattern for the Nicopolis and Varna crusade projects can be located in a Latin document that was issued by Mircea the Old on 7 March 1395, in Braşov (Kronstadt).¹⁵ It took the form of a sworn treaty of alliance between the prince of Wallachia and Sigismund of Luxemburg, king of Hungary. The preamble of this act is a declaration of Romanian allegiance to the crusade and identifies the common enemy as 'the inhuman and treacherous sons of iniquity, enemies of the name of Christ, and our special foe, the Turks'.

Independent of all pressure, and of his own free will, the prince of Wallachia was to participate personally with his army in the war against the Turks and their satellites, provided that Sigismund himself took the field against their common

enemy. So the presence of the king entailed that of the Romanian prince on campaign. The prince undertook to arrange free passage for the king and his forces 'against [the Turks] in the country of [Dobro] titza and throughout all other lands, fortresses, territories, passes, harbours, and all other places in our dominion and subject to our rule'. The Romanian prince committed himself to fight with all his forces and to remain with the king and his army throughout the campaign in these regions, to coordinate the defence of all the territories, fortresses, passes and harbours that they conquered, and to provision the king's forces, when stationary, in accordance with fair prices. Particular attention is accorded in the document to the various routes that might be followed along the Lower Danube:

In addition, on each and every occasion that the above-named lord, the king, undertakes to lead his army in person or to send it into these parts by another route, one lying outside our territory or not subject to our rule, in such instances we will be committed and obliged to send and provide the desired supplies – subject to appropriate payment – to the king and his army and to his people on the other side of, or near, the Danube, throughout our dominion and in the vicinity of the Danube; and the said provisions will be transported via the Danube and by other means, whenever they chance to be near the Danube.

By the same act the Romanian prince engaged himself to provide shelter to the king's wounded soldiers, free passage for them and for their possessions in the southern Trans-Danubian territories of his principality.

It is easy to understand why the crusading plan of campaign from 1396 and 1444–45 proved to be so consistent. The principality of Wallachia could offer indispensable logistical support for the Christian army; by means of the Danube and Black Sea, the Romanian Trans-Danubian territories would facilitate a great advance of the crusade from the Carpathians into the southern Balkans. The plan negotiated and elaborated by Prince Mircea the Old and King Sigismund of Luxemburg, together with their principal advisers, was both judicious and realistic. Its various provisions are essential for a full understanding of the whole sequence of crusading activity aimed at the control of the Lower Danube, from Nicopolis (1396) through to 1462; that struggle, first developed by Mircea the Old and subsequently by Mihail I, Dan II, Vlad the Devil, Basarab II and Vlad the Impaler, was backed up and supported by King Sigismund of Luxemburg, Wladislaw II Jagello and the great Iancul of Hunedoara (János Hunyadi).

Defeat at Nicopolis (1396) necessitated some rethinking. As Iorga remarked, Philippe de Mézières, in *De la chevalerie de la passion de Jésus Christ*, and with his eyes set on the Holy Land, suggested a more viable itinerary for the crusaders, proceeding by sea to Syria or Egypt, rather than by the roads of Serbia or 'la double Allaqwie' ('the two Wallachias').¹⁶ In cooperation with Transylvanian forces under the Polish voivode Stibor de Stiboricz (1395–1400), Prince Mircea the Old re-established his control over all the territory of Wallachia (1397). In 1400 he defeated the Ottomans, probably south of Dobroudja.¹⁷ But his greatest political

achievement began after the collapse of the first Ottoman Empire, following the battle of Angora (now Ankara) in 1402. During the years 1403–13 the Balkan influence of Prince Mircea as ‘sultan-maker’ – in the case of Prince Musa – was apparent; his enhanced prestige was reflected in a shift of his principality’s axis, as the court’s residence became Giurgiu on the Lower Danube. Wallachian silver coins from this period presented Mircea as a great sovereign in an imperial suit, holding sword and crossed globe in his hands; and the inscription accords him the title of tsar (Caesar) (Figure 13.2).¹⁸

Restored under Mehmed I, the Ottoman Empire unleashed the war on the Lower Danube in 1419–20, when even Cetatea Albă, on the Nistru in Moldavia, was attacked while Wallachia lost Dristra/Silistra. But the new Sultan disappeared ‘by accident while hunting in Wallachia’ according to the *Memoirs of the Sultans* of reis-effendi Feridun.¹⁹ King Sigismund of Luxemburg was able to resume the offensive. Together with Romanian forces under Prince Dan II, he drew on the services of Transylvanian and Hungarian troops, led by Filippo Scolari, count of Temesvár (Timișoara), Cuvin and GrossWardein (Oradea Mare), and crusading volunteers from afar, above all Infante Dom Pedro duke of Coimbra, whom Sigismund received into his Order of the Dragon. He also called on the Teutonic Knights under Claus von Redwitz to install their soldiers at the Danube gates in the fortresses of the river’s Clissura (Strait). As in the time of Mircea, in 1426 Prince Dan II of Wallachia concluded a *tractatus defensionalis* (‘defence treaty’) with King Sigismund.²⁰ In a letter sent from Tata, in May of that year, Sigismund evoked the Danubian front and the war ‘for the defence of the faith in our country and in our Transylvanian dominions, but also for the entire Christian community’ against ‘the ferocious Turks, persecutors of the cross of Christ, hateful to God and men, who have injuriously invaded the country’s frontier and our Transylvanian regions and Wallachia, like a multitude of malign spirits spewing forth from the depths of hell’.²¹



Figure 13.2 Silver ducat of Mircea, prince of Wallachia, with imperial symbols (front and reverse). Photograph reproduced by kind permission of Sergiu Iosipescu.

In 1427, to support ‘the magnificent’ or ‘famous’ prince Dan, a great expedition was prepared by Sigismund in Bârsa County using the Transylvanian and Lower Hungarian forces under Filippo Scolari and the voivode Nicholas Csáki, and the Portuguese crusaders of Dom Pedro, duke of Coimbra. The plan was to deliver Wallachia from the Turks’ ally, voivode Radu, taking the action south of the frozen Danube as far as the seashores.²² The king gave the command of the auxiliary forces to Dom Pedro, recently made Knight of the Imperial Order of the Dragon; after a successful expedition Prince Dan recovered Wallachia before July 1427.²³

Unfortunately the death of Stephen Lazarević, the Serbian despot, compelled Sigismund to divert his attention to Belgrade. The consequence of Sigismund’s defeat at Golubać Castle in June 1428, and the subsequent retreat of his forces north of the Danube – shielded by a Romanian expeditionary corps commanded by Prince Dan – was a peace treaty with Sultan Murad II. Serbia and the principality of Wallachia preserved their independence and rulers, together with their existing relationship with the Holy Roman Empire and Hungary, but were obliged to pay tribute to the Ottoman Porte.²⁴

* * *

In the last decades of his life and reign, Sigismund’s perception of Orthodoxy and schismatics evolved considerably, probably due to his extended contact with the Romanians. In October 1429, in a Romanian-Cyrillic act issued in Pressburg (Bratislava), the king confirmed the possessions of the Romanian monastery of Tismana (Gorj county, Little Wallachia), at the demand of the high priest (*popa*) Agathon.²⁵ The following year Sigismund succeeded in attracting into his orbit, alongside Vytautas the great duke of Lithuania, Alexandru the Good prince of Moldavia. Alexandru was noted for the protection he offered to Hussite refugees in his country. Sigismund was of course a champion of the Union of the Churches and an initiator of the unionist council of Ferrara-Florence. Even so, his tolerance towards Orthodoxy was extraordinary: ‘it is not necessary to reduce the Greeks’ – the famous *reductio Grecorum* – he wrote,

because they confess the same faith as us, and they differ from us only by the beards and wives of their priests; nor should we criticize them, because the Greek priests are content with one wife, while the Latin priests keep ten or more.²⁶

The Emperor’s last actions concerning the Romanian principalities were significant: he installed a detachment of Teutonic Knights at the Iron Gates of the Danube, he appointed as prince of Wallachia a knight of the Order of the Dragon, Vlad the Devil, and took as his escort to Italy, Iancul, the son of a Romanian – Voicu of Hunedoara. Installed initially in the district of Făgăraș, in southern Transylvania, Prince Vlad established there a coinage for the financial support of the crusade,²⁷ a symptom of the new conditions of holy war.

Soon after the death of Sigismund of Luxemburg in December 1437, the new Emperor, Albert of Habsburg explained to the Saxons of Transylvania the role

of Wallachia and of its prince Vlad ‘the Devil’, son of Mircea the Old: ‘it must preserve you without any damage against the insults provoked by the pressures of other invaders and especially the wild Turks.’²⁸ As a knight of the Order of the Dragon, initiated in Nürnberg by Emperor Sigismund, Prince Vlad the Devil’s duty was the crusade. Immediately after his accession to the Wallachian throne, he appointed as ‘governor’-tutor of his heir a former participant in the Nicopolis crusade, a valiant Romanian companion of Enguerrand VII de Coucy, the first earl of Bedford. Like his French-English master this man fell prisoner to the Turks, but was ransomed by the Genoese and returned to his homeland. Almost half a century after the crusade of Nicopolis, the ‘governor’ was able to explain to Wallerand de Wavrin, without hesitation, the various phases of the battle.²⁹ The events of the reign of Vlad the Devil and the history of the Romanian principalities during the first half of the fifteenth century were well known at the English court due to the diffusion of the *Anchiennes Chroniques d’Engleterre* of Jehan de Wavrin. The annals contain the memoirs of Wallerand de Wavrin which described the Danube campaign of the joint forces of the Wallachian prince and the crusading fleet.³⁰

Following two great Turkish invasions (1432, 1438) of the principality and south Transylvania, led in person by Sultan Murad II, and the Wallachian prince’s captivity in the Ottoman prison at Gallipoli in 1442–43, Vlad the Devil was very dubious about the prospects of the Varna campaign. He observed that the crusaders’ army was less numerous than the Sultan’s hunting escort. The most he would commit was to delegate his son to take part in the crusade with a Romanian contingent. As compensation, however, he engaged himself with all his forces during the crusaders’ expedition in the Black Sea and on the Danube, to recover the fortresses which controlled the river valley, in particular the castle of Giurgiu. The prince explained to the crusade’s western commanders that this

is the most powerful fortress on the Danube, and if it remains in the hands of the Turks it could cause the greatest harm to all Christians ... whereas if I can recover without loss this fortress, which my father had built, then even the women of my country, using the forks from their weaving looms, would be able to recover Greece [my italics].³¹

Once one takes into account the political tradition fashioned during the long reign of Vlad the Devil’s father Mircea the Old, it becomes easier to understand the Romanian view of the Varna crusade, due to the importance of controlling the Lower Danube for the reconquest of the Balkan peninsula and the expulsion of the Ottomans. More difficult to interpret is the attitude of Iancu of Hunedoara (János Hunyadi). Courageous, militarily skilled and an exceptional manager of his fortunes, this obscure Romanian nobleman, a native of Hațeg County, managed to rise to the dignities of count of Temesvár (Timișoara), voivode of Transylvania and, finally regent of the kingdom of Hungary. One of his advantages was the availability of a private army recruited among the Romanians of his native county, Hațeg, and from other parts of Transylvania and the Banat of Temesvár

(Timișoara) where he possessed estates. Iancu of Hunedoara had a broad conception of the crusade against the Ottoman Turks, based on a comprehensive view of the Balkans from the Adriatic to the Black Sea. After the Ottoman invasions of southern Transylvania in 1419–20, 1432 and 1438, the next Turkish attempt in 1441 to reach the centre of the country, Alba Iulia, was defeated by the voivode's forces under Iancu himself. He succeeded in moving the theatre of the war, first to Wallachia in 1442 and afterwards south of the Danube in 1443. From 1443 to 1448, including the intermezzo of the Varna Crusade, the Ottoman Empire was attacked and all local Christian insurrections were harnessed for the benefit of the Turkish war, and to relax the pressure on Constantinople. The peace of Adrianople of 1451,³² which was to last for three years, established a balance of power on the Danube, with the principality of Wallachia conserving its independence, its prince and the right to elect his successor, though with accompanying obligations, chiefly financial, to both of its principal neighbours, Hungary and the Ottomans.

At first glance, Iancu of Hunedoara's politics in respect of the Romanian principalities look like a clear continuation of the tradition established in the fourteenth century by King Louis I of Anjou. The conquest of Vidin and its surrounding region in 1442 afford an example.³³ But the events that followed in the years 1447–48 suggest a different interpretation. After the tragic end of the reign and life of Vlad the Devil (November–December 1447), Iancu briefly accepted the princely throne of Wallachia. Immediately afterwards, he demanded the cession of Chilia-Lycostomo from his new tributary prince of Moldavia, Peter II, on the grounds that this territory had formed part of Wallachia. He followed this by installing a new prince in Wallachia, but in 1452 Iancu retained the counties of Amlaș and Făgăraș, the parts of the Romanian principality lying on the Transylvanian side of the mountains. During his negotiations with the Emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos to secure the Byzantine throne, Iancu tried to obtain the fortress of Mesembria, as a relay station for his forces between the mouth of the Danube and Constantinople. But it is important to bear in mind that Mesembria was also the southernmost city held by the despot Dobrotitza, and it had previously been claimed by Mircea the Old. Hence even in the crusading ideas of Iancu of Hunedoara there are elements of the Romanian state tradition.

The fall of Constantinople on 29 May 1453 was rapidly followed by a fresh attempt at Ottoman expansion pursuing the 'right way', to the Danube and along the shores of the Black Sea.³⁴ The siege of Belgrade and the fighting around the city and on the Danube in the summer of 1456 ended with the complete defeat of Sultan Mehmed II by the crusaders of Iancu of Hunedoara, inspired by Giovanni da Capistrano. Mehmed returned to the Danube only after conquering Trebizond in 1461. His target now was the principality of Wallachia, under Vlad the Impaler, who would later achieve worldwide fame as Dracula. Important for our subject is the letter that Prince Vlad wrote to King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary in February 1462, at the beginning of the Turkish war. The context was Pope Pius II's preparations for a crusade, resolved on in 1459. Confronted by exceptional military pressure from the Ottoman *uğ* – aggressive military marches – along

Wallachia's Danubian frontier, the Romanian prince responded with a general attack on the river line from northern Dobroudja to Vidin (winter 1461–62). Immediately afterwards, he wrote to Matthias:

Your Majesty must know that I broke peace with [the Ottomans] not for my own benefit, but out of loyalty to your Majesty and to your Majesty's sacred crown and to strengthen the Catholic faith, *for the sake of the whole of Christianity* [my italics].

The Romanian prince expatiated further on the Sultan's plan of campaign against his country and at the close he warned the king:

If it is your Majesty's will to fight against [the Turks], then mobilize your country and all the people who are fit for war, both cavalry and infantry, at all the passes; come with them over the mountains into our country and fight here. And if your Majesty does not wish to come in person, then graciously dispatch your entire army to the region of Transylvania which belongs to your Majesty, before Saint Gregory's day [12 March]. And if your Majesty does not wish to send all of your army, then send only as much as you wish, at least the Transylvanians and the Székelys. And if it is your Majesty's will to assist us, then be gracious, and inform us quickly of your thoughts ... Because if almighty God hears the prayers and wishes of the Christians, and ... grants us victory over the heathen, enemies of Christ's cross, this will be the greatest consolation, benefit and balm for your Majesty's own soul, for your sacred crown and for the whole of Christianity; because we have no desire to flee before their savagery, rather we wish to fight them in every way. And if, despite God's warning, we come to a bad end, and our little country perishes, your Majesty will not profit, neither will any good come your way, rather damage will ensue for all of Christianity.³⁵

As Pope Pius II observed at the same time, when preparing his crusade: 'making war among ourselves, we fight without fear of death and expecting glorious rewards; against the Turk the disputes become bloody wars, and there are no rewards apart from the eternity of the soul.'³⁶

Byzantine histories and western sources offer a circumstantial exposé of Romanian crusading warfare in 1462. The strongly autocratic regime of Prince Vlad the Impaler decreed a mobilization of the country's entire male population older than 12, with the goal of raising an army of c. 30,000 men. A general retreat into the mountains and forest areas of the principality's non-combatant population proved effective, and all the resources likely to be used by the invaders were destroyed. As is well known, the Ottoman campaign was led by Mehmed II in person. After two night-combats, and unable to provide food for his army, the Sultan was obliged to retreat, indeed he was facing the beginning of a mutiny among his troops.³⁷ In these conditions Mehmed II's reflections on the campaign were recorded in the contemporary memoirs of a janissary, the Serbian Konstantin Mihailović of Ostroviča:

“As long as the Wallachians hold and command Kilia and Belgorod [Cetatea Albă], and the Hungarians Serbian Belgrade, we will not be able to defeat them”. And so ended these discussions,³⁸ the janissary ironically added.

* * *

For the Romanians the last chapter of the crusade in southeastern Europe corresponds to the reign of Stephen the Great, prince of Moldavia between 1457 and 1504. Under the pressure of the Ottomans, including the raids carried out by their fleet after the fall of Constantinople, and with the consent of the Polish suzerain, from 1456 Moldavia agreed to pay tribute, in exchange obtaining a valuable Ottoman privilege to trade within the Empire, using the Straits. In 1465, supported by the Polish crown, Prince Stephen conquered Chilia-Lycostomo, the great Wallachian-Ottoman emporium on the Danube. King Matthias's attempt to restore Hungarian control over Moldavia and Chilia failed in 1467; gradually the Romanian principality became engaged in conflict with the Ottoman Empire on the Lower Danube and in the Black Sea. In 1473 Prince Stephen married Maria Assanina Palaiologina, princess of Mangup, a mountain-state in the Crimea. This formed part of his maritime, Pontic and imperial policies, and consequently he refused to pay the tribute to the Sultan. Confronted immediately with an aggressive Ottoman frontier along the Danube, the Romanian prince expressed his opinion about the imminent Turkish war – *contra Othman et eius orribilem potentiam* – in a letter to Pope Sixtus IV sent from Vaslui on 29 November 1474:

In these circumstances, we affectionately inform your Sanctity that, using all the power that God conferred on us, we are always prepared to fight for Christianity with our entire strength ... And we exhort your Sanctity to cooperate with other powerful kings and princes, in such a manner that Christianity will be preserved, not trampled on by the perfidious pagans, to make sure that we do not fight alone, but rather with the help of the Christian princes.³⁹

A month later, Moldavia was invaded by Ottoman forces recruited from the European part of the Empire and their auxiliaries, totaling c. 50,000 soldiers. This army, under Suleiman the Eunuch, beglerbeg of Rumeli, was destroyed by the forces of Prince Stephen in a battle south of Vaslui and by a follow-up pursuit between 10 and 12 January 1475. After the victory, the Romanian prince sent a veritable war report to the Hungarian king and all the Christian courts:

Around the feast of Epiphany [6 January], the above-named Turk sent one of his great armies against us ... And we conquered and subdued them and put them to the sword: glory to God for this victory! Subsequently, on hearing the news, the infidel Turk desired to avenge the defeat in person, and decided to attack us in the month of May. *It is his aim to conquer this gate of Christianity, which is our realm*, and from this fate may God preserve us. Because if this gate is lost, great peril will follow for all Christianity. And to

prevent this, we beseech your Friendship and all the kings to take the field immediately against the enemy of Christianity, for the cause is urgent ... And for our part we promise on our Christian faith and on our own lives to do so, provided that you for your part proceed by land and by sea, *because with God's help we have cut off his right hand* [my italics].⁴⁰

It is important to emphasize here the prince's conception of the Romanian realm as a doorway into Christianity and the need to organize a Christian defence of the 'Romanian gate' and with it, of all Europe. Also noteworthy is the convergence between his geopolitical explanation of his victory and the fact that the Ottomans were defeated in the 'right way', i.e. the Lower Danube and Black Sea direction of Turkish expansion.

Under the threat of an Ottoman counter-attack, Stephen the Great and his counsellors succeeded in changing the Turkish orientation of the principality of Mangup by an expedition to the Crimea, and they obtained a treaty of alliance from King Matthias Corvinus. Unfortunately the Genoese port of Caffa and the Greek-Gothic Crimean principality were lost, conquered in the second half of the year 1475 by a combined attack of the Ottoman fleet and army. It is from this time that a Florentine note offers an intriguing insight into the forces engaged in the crusade against the Turks, from the Adriatic to the Black Sea: 14,000 men from the kingdom of Hungary; 44,000 from Transylvania, including 2,000 Romanians fighting on behalf of the Corvinus family; 12,000 cavalry and 20,000 infantry from the prince of Moldavia; and 8,000 cavalry and 30,000 infantry from the prince of Wallachia. Out of a total of 128,000 men, the Romanian contribution was 72,000 or 56 per cent.⁴¹ At the beginning of 1476, a letter of Nicholas, bishop of Braunsberg in Ermland (eastern Prussia) to the grand master of the Teutonic Order similarly assessed the crusade forces that were under the nominal command of King Matthias of Hungary:

Also from Transylvania there are 2,000 Wallachians who are appreciated above all in the fight with the Turks, and they are from the heritage of the king's father, men who always fought with the father of the king and with his majesty's forces. Also for this army the prince of Moldavia has 12,000 knights and 20,000 infantrymen and some cannons in good shape. Also the prince of Little Wallachia has 8,000 knights and 30,000 infantrymen.⁴²

But all such calculations remained paper ones. From 1475 to 1479, help for the Romanian resistance proved to be highly inconsistent. After the disastrous year 1476, when Moldavia was invaded by the Ottoman army under Mehmed II, and by the Tatars and other auxiliaries, Stephen the Great summarized the situation in a famous oration, delivered to the Venetian Senate by his ambassador Ioannis Tzamblicos on 8 May 1477:

Had it been a single attack, it would not have been so terrible. But I was assailed on one side from Wallachia, from another by the Tatars, and from a third by

[the Sultan] in person, with all his forces; they surrounded me from three sides and they found me alone, for my forces were fragmented as my men tried to protect their own families. And your Excellency can imagine how outnumbered I was, being pressed by so many forces ... I accept that it was God's will, to punish me for my sins, and blessed be his name! After the enemy left our country I remained abandoned, with no support from the other Christian princes ... in fact they may even have relished the damage inflicted by the heathens on my realm. I do not need to emphasize how important my realm is for the cause of Christianity, so much is evident ..., it is the lock of Hungary and Poland, the guard for these two kingdoms ... But, as you are Christian princes and well-known Christians, I, as a Christian, address your illustrious lordship, beseeching your help for the preservation of a realm that is so crucial for Christianity. I promise that all the gifts and subsidies that are given to me will be rewarded with many lives ... Apart from which, your Excellency will be carrying out a very noble deed in support of a fellow-Christian prince. Help is urgent, because I am informed that the Turks will attack me this coming summer, with the goal of conquering two castles, Chilia and Moncastro, which constitute a great danger for them ... And your Excellency should consider that these two lands stand for all of Wallachia, and Wallachia together with these two lands, is a wall for Hungary and Poland. Besides this I can say that *if these two castles are conserved, the Turks could lose Caffa and Chersonesus*. And if God allows me not to be assisted, two things will happen: either this country will truly be lost, or I will be forced to submit to the pagans, a deed that I will never commit, preferring a hundred thousand deaths. This I confide in you.⁴³

At the same time, in the above-mentioned letter to the grand master of the Teutonic Order, and referring to the Romanian war against the Ottomans, Bishop Nicholas concluded:

They have always resisted and they continue to resist, at the frontier with the Turks, and for a hundred years the Turks have been fighting against their homeland, and virtually nothing has damaged them, and the Danube alone lies between them.

From the Pope, Stephen the Great received only empty praise and the title of *athleta Christi*. Support from the Catholic kings of Hungary and Poland too proved inconsistent. It is however possible that Moldavia was included in the Ottoman-Venetian peace of 1479, because Stephen the Great obtained in the same year a *sulh-nāme*, or letter of peace from Mehmed II.⁴⁴

At the time of the crusade of Otranto (1481) the war on the Danube also resumed, with the Ottoman-Tatar conquests of Chilia and Cetatea Albă in 1484. A sweeping Ottoman-Tatar scissor offensive cut off Romanian access to the Black Sea. It is revealing to observe identical strategic considerations of the two fortresses featuring in the Ottoman and Romanian viewpoints. Bayezid's victory proclamation announced:

First we came to Stephen's fortress named Chilia, which is the key and the gate for the whole land of Moldavia and for Hungary and the Danubian lands. There, to help us, the Khan also arrived with his troops and the people loyal to us. And so in eight days, with God's help, we took and fortified that city from the land and sea in the name of our Empire. And we left that place and arrived at another fortress belonging to the same prince, whose name is Cetatea Albă, and which is the key to all the Polish land, Wallachia and the whole of the Black Sea, which fortress we took in two days with God's help, and we fortified also.⁴⁵

An Ottoman-Tartar aggressive frontier was placed on the Danube and on the coast, and every Romanian attempt to challenge this development failed. After the substantial but unsuccessful effort to recover Cetatea Albă (winter 1484–85), and a last Ottoman raid against the Romanian capital, Stephen the Great and his counsellors, in particular the great logothethos Tăutul, decided to bring the war to an end, and peace was made in 1486.⁴⁶ Four years later the bleak predicament facing Moldavia was acknowledged at Innocent VIII's crusade congress at Rome.⁴⁷

It is important to point out here that from 1369 to 1486 the Romanian principalities endured seven Ottoman invasions led personally by the sultans – Bayezid I, Mehmed I, Murad II, Mehmed II and Bayezid II, in 1395, 1419–20, 1432, 1438, 1462, 1476, and 1484. Even after 1486, Romanians did not lose hope of organizing a crusade. On 8 February 1493, an embassy of Stephen the Great to the grand duke of Lithuania, Alexander, outlined in Vilnius the Romanian point of view:

Merciful prince, you may readily understand that from every side the forces of Tatar and Turkish heathendom are growing day by day against Christianity. And he [Stephen the Great] ordered us to beseech you ... to turn their faces towards heathendom ... so that in your lifetime, with God's help, Christianity does not grow weaker and perish.⁴⁸

Some years later, in 1498, an embassy of Stephen the Great summoned the grand prince of Muscovy:

And Stephen the voivode ordered us to tell you: "All of the Christian kings and princes, all the regions of the West and all the Italian countries, are preparing to make war against the pagans. It is timely also for you to make peace with the Christians, to rise up together with the Christian princes against heathendom."⁴⁹

* * *

Acting alone, the Romanian principality proved unable to sustain the struggle; a substantial percentage of the population had perished in the war. But just at the time peace was reached with Sultan Bayezid, Stephen the Great, his boyars and communities initiated an imposing series of building works – churches, courts,

manors and bridges - accompanied by significant rural colonization. In the first instance, a new princely residence was finished on 15 September 1486 at Hârlău,⁵⁰ mid-way between the castle of Suceava and the market of Iași. The date of the dedicatory inscription is important because it corresponded with the Feast of the Cross. A few years later, a church dedicated to Saint George, military saint and protector of the realm was finished for the same princely court. For the question under discussion here, the iconographic programme of church painting in Moldavia is significant. Just a year after the confirmation of the Ottoman peace, in 1487, Stephen the Great opened the church of Pătrăuți near Suceava, dedicated to the Holy Cross. The masterpiece of the painting is the procession of the saints to discover and raise the Holy Cross. From the research of André Grabar⁵¹ and Sorin Ulea⁵² to the recent studies of our late friend professor Dimitrie Nastase and other authors, the relationship between this painting and the crusade, specifically with Pope Innocent VIII's bull *Catholice fidei defensionem* (12 July 1486)⁵³ is clear (Figure 13.3). More detailed research has demonstrated that the church conserved a part of the Holy Cross – it is a shrine – and represented a visual preaching of the crusade. During the restoration of the Pătrăuți church, a considerable surface of exterior painting appeared on the church's western façade,⁵⁴ and this offers a new topic for research.

It is possible that the integral exterior painting of Pătrăuți church had a similar iconographic programme to that of the church of Arbore, founded by Luca, the commander of Suceava fortress in 1503, at the close of the reign of Stephen the Great. And from this moment to the reign of Stephen's son Petru Rareș (1527–38, 1542–46), at Probotă, Suceava (St George and St Demeter), Humor, Baia and Moldovița (Figure 13.4), there appeared, usually near the entrance, a unique representation in Orthodox iconography, that of the siege of Constantinople. The siege was not that of 1453, rather an imaginary siege by the Turks, in which the great capital of Christianity, with the imperial court and soldiers on the walls, are shown resisting the enemy under the protection of the Holy Virgin, represented by her icon. If after the fall of Constantinople the Turkish war cry was 'Cibin, Cibin' which designated 'Sibiu, Sibiu' (Hermannstadt) as the target of a new offensive in the Ottoman tradition of the 'red apple',⁵⁵ we may infer that the depiction of the 'Siege of Constantinople' in these Romanian church paintings carried a similar message in terms of a new crusade to rescue the holy city.

It is important to underscore the importance placed by Stephen the Great and the Romanian elites on their maritime lands, which afforded free access to the Black Sea. Constantinople was not just the capital of the last Roman Empire but also the key to the Black Sea, and the exterior painting of these Romanian churches acted as a sublime summons to take part in a crusade to deliver both. From the end of the reign of Stephen the Great to the middle of the sixteenth century the Romanians would nurture a vivid hope in the crusade, acting as a Christian and European riposte to the aggressive expansionism of the Ottoman Empire. Thereafter, the hundred years of Romanian crusade became history.⁵⁶



Figure 13.3 The Cavalcade of the Holy Cross in the church of Pătrăuți. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of Sergiu Iosipescu.

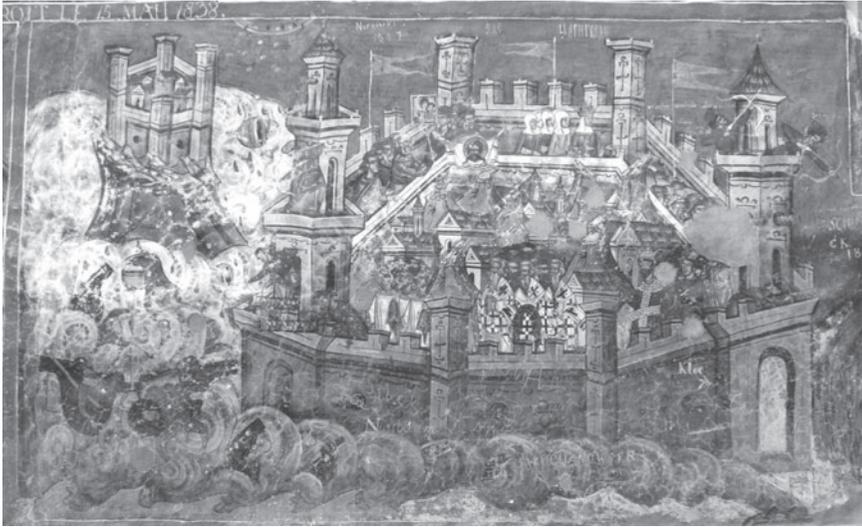


Figure 13.4 The Siege of Constantinople, exterior painting, church of Moldovați monastery. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of Sergiu Iosipescu.

Notes

- 1 *Actes et fragments relatifs à l'histoire des Roumains*, ed. Nicolae Iorga, 3 vols (Bucharest, 1895–97), 3¹:7–8.
- 2 *Enciclopedia României* [The encyclopaedia of Romania], ed. Dimitrie Gusti, 4 vols (Bucharest, 1938–43), 1:134.
- 3 *Almanach de Gotha*, ed. Justus Perthes (Gotha, 1915), 883; 77,168 km² according to *Großer Volks-Atlas*, ed. Konrad Frenzel (Bielefeld, 1936), 32.
- 4 According to the 1915 *Almanach de Gotha* the ancient kingdom of Romania covered 137,902 km² (p. 1069), Bessarabia 45,632 km² (p. 1095), and Bucovina 10,441 km² (p. 659). With the districts of Făgăraș and Amlaș in southern Transylvania (2,432 km²) these lands comprised the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 883.
- 6 *Actes et fragments*, ed. Iorga, 3:8.
- 7 Șerban Papacostea, 'Populație și fiscalitate în Țara Românească în secolul al XV-lea: un nou izvor' [Population and fiscality in Wallachia in the fifteenth century: a new source], *Revista de Istorie* 33 (1980), 1779–84; idem, 'Din nou cu privire la demografia Țării Românești în secolul XV' [Once more concerning the demography of Wallachia in the fifteenth century], *Revista de Istorie* 37 (1984), 578–81.
- 8 Paul Wittek, 'Deux chapitres de l'histoire des Turcs de Rum', *Byzantion* 11 (1936), 285–319; Halil İnalcık, 'Ottoman Methods of Conquest', *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954), 103–29; İnalcık, 'The Emergence of the Ottomans', in *The Cambridge History of Islam, I. The Central Islamic Lands*, ed. Peter M. Holt and Bernard Lewis (Cambridge, 1970), 276, 283–4.
- 9 See Claude Cahen's contribution to Édouard Perroy *et al.*, *Le Moyen Age: l'expansion de l'Orient et la naissance de la civilisation occidentale* (Paris, 1955), 538.
- 10 İnalcık, 'Ottoman Methods of Conquest', 109.
- 11 For Louis I as a crusader see Norman Housley, 'King Louis the Great of Hungary and the Crusades, 1342–1382', *Slavonic and East European Review* 62 (1984), 192–208.

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14 Conclusion

Transformations of crusading in the long fifteenth century

Alan V. Murray

The essays in this volume demonstrate how the fifteenth century, including – one might argue – several decades immediately before and after it, was a time in which both ideas and the practice of crusading flourished with a greater vigour than in either the preceding or following periods. The hundred years following the fall of Acre to the Mamluks in 1291 continued to produce plans and strategies for the recovery of the Holy Land and (as a means to this) the reform of the military Orders, but such schemes proved increasingly unrealistic in a radically changing geopolitical situation, and actual successes, such as the capture of Smyrna from the Turcoman emirate of Aydin in 1344, were rare. Few Christian leaders had the prescience of Pope Clement V, who as early as 1307 feared that the loss of the Holy Land would be followed by that of Constantinople, which would then place the whole of Christendom in grave danger.¹ By the final quarter of the fourteenth century it was clear that the Ottoman Turks had replaced the Mamluks as the principal threat to European Christendom, which now found itself increasingly on the defensive.

Fundamental changes in the dynamics of crusading occurred in the three decades between 1386 and 1417, a period which one might regard as forming the transitional beginning of – at least in crusading terms – a long fifteenth century, which lasted until the Reformation. The acceptance of Christianity by Lithuania and its dynastic union with Poland in 1386 removed the main *raison d'être* of the Teutonic Order's wars against the grand duchy. Throughout the fourteenth century, crusaders from Germany, France, the British Isles, the Low Countries and elsewhere had travelled to Prussia to take part in the campaigns (*Reisen*) against the pagans, and one can observe how many of them identified their Lithuanian opponents as Saracens even after they had formally entered the Christian fold.² However, the stream of crusaders to Prussia largely dried up after the Order's defeat by a Polish-Lithuanian coalition at Tannenberg in 1410. After this point the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order gained a greater freedom of action, and was more inclined to follow its own narrower interests, which identified Christian Russia as the main threat. As Anti Selart shows, the war between the Livonian brethren and Novgorod originally had little to do with the crusade, but flared up from a trivial incident, largely because of the Westphalian allegiance of leading members of the Order. The Livonians feared the expansion of Muscovy,

which came to incorporate the originally independent principalities of Pskov and Novgorod, while other Catholic powers hoped to bring Russia into Church union and enlist its support against the Ottomans. When one considers the Livonian branch's actions against other Catholic polities (such as the archbishopric of Riga or the kingdom of Sweden), one might conclude that its particularist interests were the main stumbling block to a general political settlement in northeastern Europe which might have brought about a greater unity and freed resources to combat the Turks.

The ending of the Great Schism of the West by the council of Constance restored much of the authority which the Papacy had lost since 1378. Thereafter the Popes, notably Calixtus III, Pius II and Paul II, offered real leadership in attempting to organize crusades, while also providing funds and even modest military and naval forces. One of the most visible aspects of this activity was a whirlwind use of legates to preach, organize, raise finance, and not least, to broker compromises and treaties as a means of establishing a general peace within Christendom which would enable a wider common effort against the Ottomans. However, with France and England involved in the Hundred Years War, whose effects spilled over into the Low Countries and Scotland, little practical assistance was forthcoming from many of the countries which had once been mainstays of crusading. The Anglo-French-Hungarian crusade which ended in humiliating defeat at Nicopolis (1396) was the last major effort that united crusaders from western and eastern Europe.

After Nicopolis the main military resistance to the Ottoman advance was carried by what might be thought of as the front-line states: the kingdoms and principalities of eastern Europe and the maritime powers of Italy. The efforts and abilities of these polities were markedly diverse. It is striking how Genoa had entered a period of decline and financial crisis, characterized by 'private wealth and public poverty' (Steven Epstein), which attenuated its abilities to support the crusade. The Ottoman advance throttled Genoa's commercial centre of Pera on the Bosphorus, while its colonies in the Aegean and the Black Sea became vulnerable to Ottoman and Timurid advances. This contrasted with Venice's resources and vigour in defending its more extensive colonial empire. The warlord Scanderbeg in Albania offered sustained resistance to the Ottomans and was also prepared to accept the overlordship of the crown of Naples as means to securing military support and, possibly, a refuge. By contrast, Bosnia offers a key example of how countries in the front line had little choice but to come to accommodations with the Ottomans (tribute, free passage of armies, surrender of key fortresses and passes, and subordination to foreign policy) in order to preserve something of the society and religion that they had hitherto enjoyed. The figure who stands out in the forefront of the crusading effort, however, was the remarkable Sigismund of Luxemburg. As king of Hungary for many decades before becoming Holy Roman Emperor, he had an excellent awareness of the threat posed by the Ottomans. After a long resistance against the Turkish advance, he had to contend against the Hussite heretics in his own hereditary lands of Bohemia and Moravia. He proved resourceful and flexible, for example in trying to enlist the Teutonic Order

in the defence of the Danube frontier, and using his new Order of the Dragon as a tool to reward allies as diverse as Vlad, voivode of Wallachia, and Pedro, duke of Coimbra. Above all, he realised the need to accommodate and conciliate the Orthodox Church, something that the Papacy failed to do adequately on the eve of the fall of Constantinople. Sigismund has sometimes been judged harshly for leaving the council of Constance, yet his journeys to France and Spain were undertaken with clear diplomatic aims: to make peace between England and France, and to persuade the Aragonese to drop their support of an antipope who constituted an obstacle to a unified crusading effort.³

One problem in connection with the history of eastern Europe is that it is often difficult to distinguish between crusading and what was actually a political and military struggle for survival by the Christian polities of the Balkans, which did not need to use the institution of the crusade to justify their intentions or mobilize their nations against the Turkish threat; indeed for non-Catholic societies such as Bosnia or the Romanian principalities there was scarcely any tradition of crusading such as that which had been elaborated by the Catholic Church since 1095. However, in varying degrees they grasped the utility of crusading ideology and rhetoric as a means of harnessing diplomatic and military support from the Papacy and the western powers. The concept of the bulwark of Christianity (*antemurale, propugnaculum*) had often already been applied to Poland and Hungary, but in this period it was also used in propaganda emanating from Bosnia and Moldavia (as well as Livonia). Further research might reveal how far this and other ideological dimensions of crusading were employed internally within the eastern principalities. It would also be illuminating to compare the eastern perceptions and images of the Turks and Mongols compared with those prevalent in the West.

The end of the fourteenth century also brought a major caesura in the apparently relentless advance of the Ottomans in Europe as a result of the sudden victories of the warlord Tīmūr, another leader of Turkic origin. His defeat of the Golden Horde in 1395 and of the Ottomans in 1402 raised the prospect of Western alliances with Tīmūr himself as well as with the Turcoman emirates which occupied the space between the larger Timurid and Ottoman states. Yet Tīmūr was a wild and unpredictable new factor on the Christian-Muslim frontier, as can be seen in his negotiations with the merchants of Tana on the Black Sea, which he proceeded to sack shortly afterwards, and little came of these diplomatic possibilities, even if much western effort was expended on them. In fact the defeat at Ankara produced only a temporary respite for Christendom, since by 1415 Turkish raiding parties were threatening the Venetian possessions in Dalmatia and had penetrated the southeastern frontier of the Holy Roman Empire. Christian powers might gain occasional victories over the Ottomans, but they found it hard to resist a foe which could regularly send against them armies which were superior in both strength and organization. Historians have long categorized the Ottoman Empire as a dynastic state organized for war, whose effectiveness over its Christian opponents derived from its large army with a substantial professional core and proper career structure, increasing use of firearms and efficient logistical capabilities; even the Ottomans' use of music by military bands, which had no equivalent in the West, terrified their

enemies. Yet while the material and organizational superiority of the Ottomans have long been appreciated, the legitimation and ideological basis of the Sultanate have been little considered by modern historians. A significant step in this direction has been provided by the study by Nikolay Antov, who highlights the problem of legitimation within the Islamic world after the extinction of the caliphate by the Mongols in 1258–59. Unlike the Mamluks who ruled Egypt and Syria, or the Timurids and Safavids who ruled Persia, the Ottomans had the great advantage of confronting the forces of Christendom directly, and their propaganda underscored this circumstance by portraying – contrary to reality – a unified and hostile Christianity led by the Pope. It was primarily the role of defenders and proponents of Islam that gave the Ottomans legitimacy, but it is interesting that much if not most of this propaganda was produced in Turkish, and thus presumably for internal consumption rather than as international propaganda, raising questions about what audience it was directed towards and how it was used.

The capture of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453 forms a central issue for most of the authors of this volume, which is a reflection of its resonance in western Christendom, as well as the influence of propagandist refugees such as Nicholas Agallon and the highly regarded Bessarion. Yet one would like to know more about its impact on contemporary imaginative literature and art. Shortly after this cataclysmic event, the French poet Antoine de la Salle completed the romance *Jehan de Saintré*. Although a kind of *Bildungsroman* offering a story of chivalric education, it includes a lengthy narrative in which numerous crusaders from France, England and the Holy Roman Empire travel to Prussia, where they are joined by the Emperors of Constantinople and Trebizond and the duke of Lithuania. This combined host then travels to the East where it fights a monumental battle against ‘the greatest army that the Saracens had ever assembled since the time of Muhammad’, uniting the forces of Asia, Syria and the Ottoman Empire, in which the eponymous hero, the knight Jehan, kills the Turkish Sultan. It is surely no coincidence that its sense of a worldwide struggle between Islam and Christianity was closely connected with the fate of Constantinople.⁴

An appreciation of the global perspective of crusading by the end of the fifteenth century can perhaps be seen most clearly on those peripheries which did not confront the Turks directly. It has long been recognised how the idea of crusade fed into the age of discovery as propounded by the Catholic monarchs in Spain and Henry the Navigator in Portugal, but it has only recently been established how the Danes and Portuguese were prepared to co-operate in crusading activities which would enable them to reach India via Greenland.⁵ Even in far-off Scotland, King James IV (1488–1513) put considerable efforts into a project to lead a crusade to the Holy Land.⁶ The aims and beliefs of the Genoese Christopher Columbus can also be seen in such contexts; as Steven Epstein states, ‘It is striking that even when off the coast of Jamaica the Ottomans in the eastern Mediterranean were not far from Columbus’s thoughts’. In particular, the biblical books of Isaiah, Zechariah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel had a great significance for the explorer and his patrons, having not only much to say about Jerusalem (and by implication, its recovery for Christendom), but more interestingly for Columbus,

about the geography of the wider world. We must accept that Columbus was a modern, forward-thinking visionary with a humanistic outlook, but in many ways also a very pious Christian with great faith in the biblical depiction of history past, present and future: appropriate attributes for a crusader at the end of the long fifteenth century.

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- 5 Janus Møller Jensen, *Denmark and the Crusades, 1400–1650* (Leiden, 2007), 181–205.
- 6 Alan Macquarrie, *Scotland and the Crusades, 1095–1560* (Edinburgh, 1997), 107–13.

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The following abbreviations are used:

a archbishop [of]; b bishop [of]; c count [of]; card cardinal; d duke [of]; e emir [of]; emp Emperor [of]; gm grand master [of]; gp grand prince [of]; k king [of]; kdm kingdom [of]; m master [of]; p Pope; q queen [of]; s Sultan [of]

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