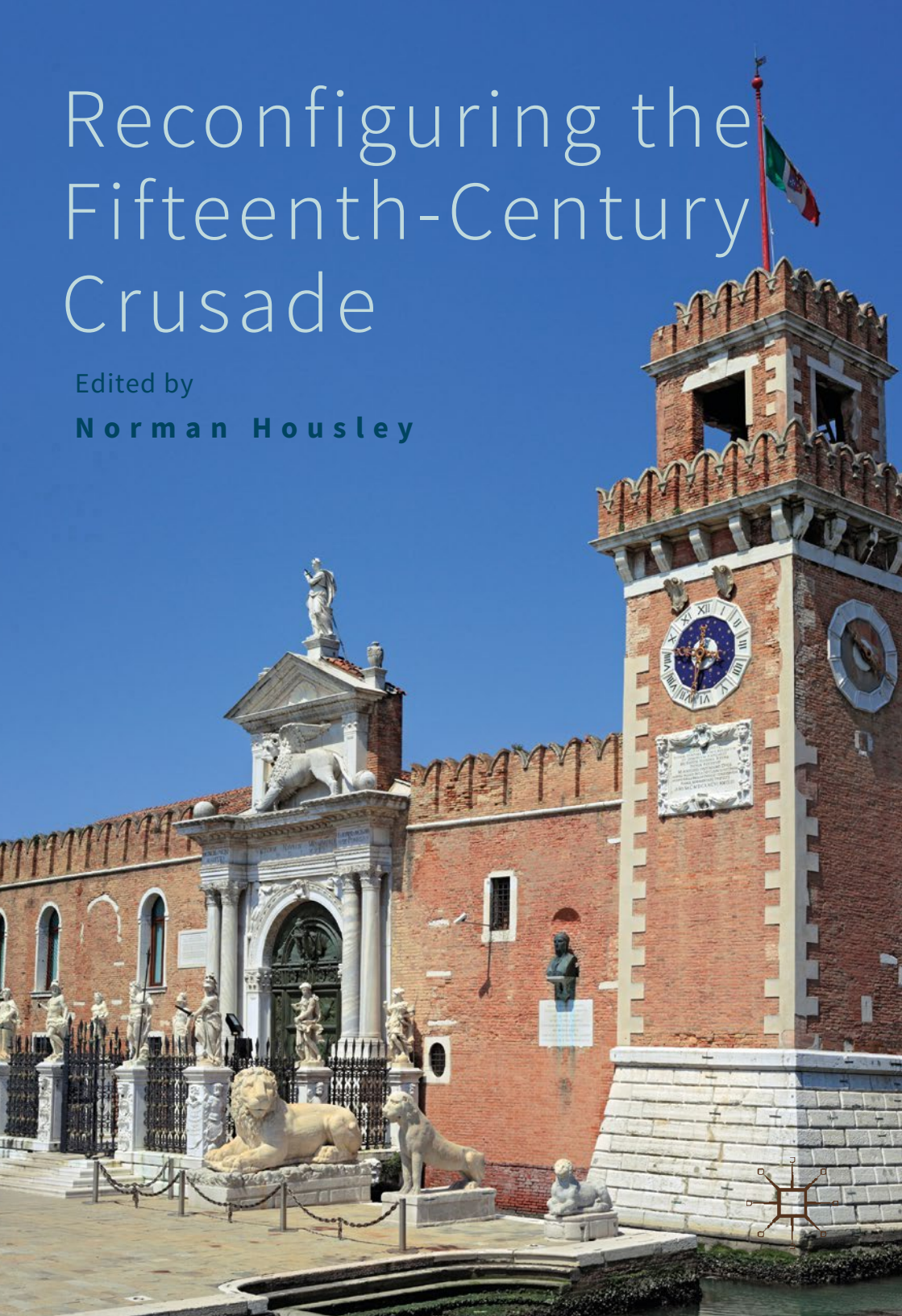
Reconfiguring the Fifteenth-Century Crusade

Edited by

Norman Housley



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Norman Housley
August 2016

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Nancy Bisaha is Professor of History and Director of Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Vassar College. She is the author of *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) and coauthor, with Robert Brown, of *Europe, c. 1400–1458*, an annotated translation of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini's *Europe* (Catholic University of America Press, 2013). She has also published several articles.

Norman Housley received his PhD from the University of Cambridge in 1979. He held research fellowships at Cambridge and Liverpool, and since 1983 has taught at the University of Leicester, where he has been Professor of History since 1992. He has also held visiting fellowships in Oxford, Princeton and Washington DC. He has written and edited many books about the history of the crusades, especially the crusades after 1200. His

recent publications include *Religious Warfare in Europe, 1400–1536* (Oxford University Press, 2002); *Contesting the Crusades* (Blackwell, 2006); *Fighting for the Faith: Crusading to the Holy Land* (Yale University Press, 2008) and *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505* (Oxford University Press, 2012). He is currently completing work on a project entitled "Crusading and Conciliarism, 1400–1500."

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Stefan Stantchev is Associate Professor at the School of Humanities, Arts, and Cultural Studies, New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, Arizona State University. His research interests focus on the religious and economic factors that shaped power relations within Europe and throughout the Mediterranean between c. 1000 and c. 1600. His work often

engages topics that are typically treated separately, such as economic and Church history or foreign policy and religious identity.

Benjamin Weber is affiliated researcher at the University of Toulouse. He spent many years working in Roman archives for his PhD on papal crusading policy in the fifteenth century, which was published as *Lutter contre les Turcs: Les formes nouvelles de la croisade pontificale au XVe siècle* (École française de Rome, 2013). He is now researching relations between Ethiopia and the West in the Middle Ages and the early modern period.

List of Abbreviations

AStV	Archivio di Stato, Venezia
ASV	Archivio segreto Vaticano
CFC	*The Crusade in the Fifteenth Century: Converging and Competing Cultures*, ed. Norman Housley (London: Routledge, 2017)
DRA	*Deutsche Reichstagsakten*
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae historica*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 161 vols (Paris, 1857–1866)
PL	*Patrologia Latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–1866)
RIS	*Rerum italicarum scriptores*
RIS NS	*RIS New series*
Setton, *Crusades*	*A History of the Crusades*, ed. Kenneth M. Setton, 6 vols (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969–1989)
Setton, *Papacy*	Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204–1571*, 4 vols (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976–1984)

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Norman Housley

In 2012 the Leverhulme Trust awarded a grant which made possible the collaborative activities of the international network of scholars who wrote the eight chapters that follow. There is no better way to introduce the collection than by describing the project which, as prospective Principal Investigator, I outlined to the Trust four years ago. The project title was "Reconfiguring the Crusade in the Fifteenth Century: Goals, Agencies and Resonances." Its background was the resurgence of interest since the 1970s in the crusade planning and activity that followed the Mamluk conquest in 1291 of the last remaining Christian outposts in the Holy Land. Particularly telling evidence for this resurgence was afforded by Daniel Baloup's program for the Centre national de la recherche scientifique on crusading in the late Middle Ages, which came to an end just before the Leverhulme network began work. The volumes of essays that resulted from Baloup's series of conferences have been appearing at intervals during the work of the network and they have informed reflections and discussions at network meetings held in Leicester (2013) and Rome (2015).[1] Also significant was the international conference which met under the Trust's auspices in London in 2014, whose proceedings have also been published.[2] Finally, network members benefited from a workshop on

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"Italy and Crusading in the Fifteenth Century" which took place at the Accademia di Romania in Rome in October 2015.

In one way or another, all of these meetings and publications have played their part in shaping the chapters that follow. More important, however, was the threefold research program which I set out in 2012, because this was fundamental in shaping both the character of the network and the essay topics which its members proposed as their contributions. It derived from my conviction that in the 1400s, unlike the 1300s, crusading was a synergy of the old and the new. Ways of thinking and behaving that had originated in the time of Innocent III (1198–1216) and even that of Urban II (1088–1099) were given fresh impetus and vitality by new ideas, values and techniques. Telling examples of the latter, all of which had received substantial attention by 2012, were the Italian humanists, the Franciscan Observants and the impact of printing. Much of the fascination of studying the crusade in this period lies in observing how those groups most closely associated with it—popes, preachers and military Orders among others—adapted traditional responsibilities, outlooks and ways of operating, often applying considerable ingenuity and resourcefulness in their search for the effective.

It was logical in the first instance to consider the question of goals. As is well known, the two major targets of crusading in the 1400s were the Ottoman Turks and the Hussites. Of course, there were others, peripherally and occasionally the Muscovites and the Moors of Granada, but there is no doubt that the bulk of the discourse, whether it took place at the papal *curia*, the Imperial diets or the courts of intending commanders, related to the Turks and the Hussites, and in considering the latter, we should not ignore crusading against George Poděbrad in the 1460s. But how were such goals arrived at and what were the implications of targeting these groups? A number of the contributors to this collection address these questions. It makes sense to start with Benjamin Weber's chapter. In his recent study of papal crusading programs in the fifteenth century, *Lutter contre les Turcs*, he displayed nuance and sensitivity in his judgment of why and how the popes from Eugenius IV through to Sixtus IV decided to deploy the crusade against the Turks.[3] Military threat interwove with vulnerability to pressures coming from within the Catholic community to persuade the heads of a reunified Church to revive the crusade. Weber possesses a rare ability to describe how specific circumstances and traditional patterns of thought converged, and it is on display in his chapter here. In it he traces the process by which the popes from Eugenius IV

through to Alexander VI pursued the idea of bringing non-Catholic powers into an alliance against the Turks.

Weber sees this process as occurring in three phases. Initially, between c. 1400 and 1439, papal missions were the natural accompaniment to the painfully slow movement toward Church Union that eventually succeeded at the Council of Florence. After the achievement of that Union, at first in competition with the Council of Basel and then in reaction to the fall of Constantinople, Eugenius and his successors—especially Calixtus III—became more proactive and there was substantial outreach activity. It reached its peak with the ambitious alliance schemes of the 1460s and 1470s, when there was much optimism about persuading non-Catholic rulers in the East to open a "second front" against the Ottomans. Weber detects a substantial shift with the onset of the age of discoveries. At first glance, the latter seem to have been tailor-made for the realization of the dreams of Eugenius IV and Calixtus III, but Innocent VIII and Alexander VI no longer had the authority to do more than sanction and ratify the discoveries and conquests which were brought to their attention. Weber goes further, however. He argues that even before the 1480s, the emphasis placed by Eugenius and Calixtus on the recovery of the Holy Land was a sign that, for all the heady excitement induced by Church Union, it was only by laying emphasis on the holy places of Palestine that the popes could make full reference to their traditional crusading authority, as opposed to their more recent role as the primary source of "crusade validation" for the grinding war against the Turks. In other words, even at their most ambitious and enterprising, the fifteenth-century popes possessed limited room for maneuver, at least compared with their predecessors.

My own chapter is complementary to Weber's, because I examine the internal counterpart to external mission and alliance. This was religious reform. Whereas Weber examines the series of popes who presided over the reunified Church, my focus is the Church councils, especially Constance and Basel. I pose the question whether crusade and reform remained, as they had been so often in the past, complementary goals. Undoubtedly there were idealists at Constance who hoped that the ending of the schism would usher in a period of far-reaching reform, and that this would be accompanied by a crusade against the Turks and to recover the Holy Land. Martin V made the same connection about the work of the council of Pavia/Siena and the fathers at Basel pursued a reforming agenda alongside a program of Church Union that included crusade plans. But as early as the anti-Hussite crusades of the 1420s, the tensions between crusade

and reform were making themselves felt. The series of legates dispatched by Martin V and Eugenius IV to preach the crusade against the Hussites were simultaneously tasked with reforming the German Church, but that feature of their mission largely fell by the wayside. There are grounds for arguing that when Eugenius won the contest against Basel for the negotiation of Church Union, it was predicated on the unspoken assumption that reform could be shelved: union and crusade were prestigious enough to replace reform as priorities. For later popes, the demand for reform became a stick with which hostile rulers might threaten the *curia*, usually in association with a demand for another Church council.

Promoting a crusade in the fifteenth century invariably revolved around the systematic preaching of indulgences. While reformers like Giuliano Cesarini argued passionately that this could be done without opening the door to abuses, the range of issues thrown up by indulgences remained probably the most contentious feature of crusading. To the extent that the goal of crusade was the saving of souls as well as the achievement of military objectives, this was bound to exercise the minds of theologians who considered the matter, and Pavel Soukup takes this as his subject in a chapter based on a number of hitherto unexamined manuscripts. Soukup detects a clear trend among his authors. Those who wrote in response to the preaching of the crusade against King Ladislas of Naples by Pope John XXIII viewed the preaching as an abuse which, no less than the Schism itself, called for thoroughgoing eradication. The men who followed them were reformers eager to make indulgences compatible with respectable penitential practice, partly because they were responding to Hussite manifestos which took vigorous and loud offense at the use of crusade against the utraquists. A later group of commentators concerned themselves mainly with technicalities. Wherever they fitted on this spectrum, Soukup's theologians often harked back to earlier treatments of the indulgence, sometimes revisiting questions which had been settled in the thirteenth century. His chapter reminds us that theologians in the fifteenth century did not necessarily consider a judgment by Aquinas as definitive—assuming that they even knew of it.

The network's second theme was agencies and in this respect we were fortunate to have the participation of Jürgen Sarnowsky. No consideration of agency can exclude the military Orders and Sarnowsky has the expertise to discuss with authority both of the international Orders which remained active in the fifteenth century, the Knights of St John and the Teutonic Knights. He chose as his topic the central question of how the two

Orders adapted to the changing religious and military challenges of the period. In this way, the question of goals converged pleasingly with that of instrumentality. Sarnowsky emphasizes that the strategic scenario facing the Knights Hospitaller at Rhodes was more favorable than that confronting their sister Order in Prussia and Livonia. The Knights of Rhodes were well placed to engage in hostilities against both the Ottomans and the Mamluks: their dilemma was one of alternative fronts, and Sarnowsky shows that the Knights regarded the Mamluk Sultanate as a powerful and dangerous foe right up to the Sultanate's extinction by its Ottoman rival. In the north, the Teutonic Order faced a more forbidding conundrum: the absence of a clear mission following the conversion of the Lithuanians and the Samaitans. Sarnowsky describes the engagement of the Teutonic Knights with campaigning against the Mongols of the Golden Horde, the Turks and the schismatic Muscovites, as well as referring to more ambitious plans to resettle members of the Order on the Danube.

There is considerable evidence that shows both military Orders promulgating what amounted to propaganda in connection with their campaigning, and some of it was ambitious in both its range and intention. It is regrettable that neither Order bequeathed sources that disclose internal debates about policy formation, because these might show how sensitive their oligarchies were to external pressures. To some extent, the reports of the Teutonic Order's procurators at the papal *curia* fill this gap, but they tended to focus on relaying information and danger signals, and these were not necessarily acted on or even given credence by the Order's decision-makers. This forms an interesting contrast with the Venetian Republic. Its Senate decrees and the voting patterns which lay behind them have long been identified as a highly revealing source. It is important to stress that the republic enjoyed a very significant crusading history, for there is still a tendency to view the Venetians as reluctant or even duplicitous crusaders. It was not an image which the Venetians had of their past and present roles. When the republic decided on war against the Ottoman Turks, it fought with determination and perseverance. But as Stefan Stantchev shows in his study of Venice and the Ottomans, it took the republic longer than is often supposed to view the Ottoman sultans as the principal enemies of its commercial lifelines east of the Adriatic.

Stantchev is well aware of the sophisticated ways in which religious goals interwove with commercial activity. His recent study of trade embargos against enemies of the Church was a forceful reassertion of the primacy of pastoral intentions—in essence, saving the souls of Christian

traders—as the dynamo behind the Papacy's highly ambitious program of curtailing trade with infidel powers.[4] But this does not blind him to the central significance for Venice of its commercial prosperity, without which the republic was doomed to decline. In making its decisions about peace and war, the Venetian patriciate could not afford to ignore practical realities. Stantchev carefully charts the evolution of Venice's response to growing Turkish power, and he concludes that right up to the fall of Negroponte in 1470, the Republic persisted in seeing the Genoese and Catalans as its most important foes in the Mediterranean's northern waters. Furthermore, both its trade with the Mamluk territories and its expansion on the Italian *terraferma* took precedence over the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea in the thinking of the ducal council and Senate. A striking feature of Stantchev's chapter is his argument that historians have been too prone to see "grand designs" behind Venetian policy, which was usually heavily circumstantial. Perhaps they have been misled by Venetian public relations, which portrayed the Republic as steadfast in the pursuit of its commercial objectives and unwavering in defending its citizens and their possessions abroad. There is a pattern here: the papal *curia*, the military Orders and Venice were not as clear-cut and consistent in their assessment of what the advance of the Ottomans entailed for the Christian faith as their own sources—especially those written with hindsight—would have us believe.

A strength of the network working on this program was the inclusion of two Romanian historians, Dan Ioan Mureşan and Emanuel Antoche. They were able to bring to bear an authoritative Balkan perspective, one moreover which came from different but complementary vantage points. In his chapter, Mureşan uses an episode in the long life of Cardinal Basilios Bessarion—the printing of his *Orations against the Turks*—to examine how an appeal for crusade that was rooted in an intimate knowledge of the history and plight of the eastern, Orthodox world was communicated to western, Catholic powers in 1470–1471. The context for this latest appeal for a united response to the Ottoman threat was the fall of Venetian Negroponte to Mehmed II in July 1470, which opened the central Mediterranean to Ottoman sea power and, in conjunction with the first Turkish raids into Habsburg lands, revealed the scope of Ottoman ambitions and—implicitly—the number and diversity of the threatened Christian powers. Mureşan investigates the links between Bessarion's extensive friendship network, the dissemination and impact of the cardinal's eloquent *Orations* in France and the Holy Roman Empire, and the

debates at the *Große Christentag* of Regensburg. His contribution adds to a growing corpus of research which emphasizes the geographic range of the lobbying process, and the energy and sophistication of its protagonists, in the decades that followed the fall of Constantinople.

Antoche, by contrast, focuses on a single military encounter for which he claims the status of a Balkan Hattin. Like Saladin's great triumph over the army of the king of Jerusalem in 1187, the second battle of Kosovo in October 1448 paved the way for the Turks to reach the Danube. It also made the Ottoman sultan secure in the central Balkans, enabling him to pose a threat to the Adriatic coast and beyond it to Italy. In terms of the development of crusading ideas in the Renaissance, Kosovo therefore demands comparison with the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and Negroponte in 1470. But even without this resonance, for Antoche, the sheer scale of the encounter makes it a decisive battle, more so than the better-known defeat suffered by the Christians four years previously at Varna. Antoche painstakingly assembles the patchy and sometimes contradictory sources about Kosovo to reconstruct an encounter which lasted several days and cost each side massive casualties. From his chapter, we gain insights into the logistics, reconnaissance, battlefield command and tactics of the Christians and Turks, and the warp and weft of major campaigns in the middle decades of the fifteenth century. Thanks to the work of Antoche and other military historians, we are beginning to develop a more firmly grounded sense of how warfare in the Danube basin and the lands between it and the Aegean Sea differed from war in Central and Western Europe. The result should be a fuller grasp of the difficulties facing the popes and their advisors as they struggled to comprehend how best to mobilize and direct crusading resources, both on land and at sea.

The network's third theme, resonances, is represented in the main by Nancy Bisaha's contribution. Bisaha is well known for her work on the way in which Italian humanists engaged with crusading past and present. In her contribution to this collection, she considers whether the response to the Ottoman subjugation of the Orthodox and Catholic populations of south-eastern Europe marked a step forward in perceptions of the inherent right of civilians to be treated decently by their conquerors. Bisaha is well aware of the breadth of her research question and of the eclecticism of the sources testifying to changing sensibilities about how civilians and their property should be treated in wartime. She takes into account earlier stances based on custom and law, and makes comparisons with the situation in contemporary Italy, where the non-military population suffered

grievously on occasions like the sack of Piacenza in 1447. Bisaha advances several intriguing suggestions about why the fall of Constantinople in particular exerted such a big impact on Western Europe. Hitherto the question of how crusading influenced the juridical approach toward human conflict has been looked at principally from the viewpoint of the legal authority to start a war (*ius ad bellum*); the legal issues thrown up by military operations (*ius in bello*) have been almost wholly neglected and Bisaha's chapter will help correct this imbalance.

The theme of resonances of course comprises not just contributions to future developments such as human rights, but also echoes in spheres of contemporary life which at first glance seem devoid of crusade connotations. From this perspective, a number of contributions have new things to say. Mureşan revisits the debate about how far and in what ways the new art of printing could be harnessed to spread crusading propaganda. Weber's analysis of the aims and methods of the papal *curia* in relation to the extension of crusading goals beyond Europe has an important bearing on many other policy objectives of the Renaissance Papacy well into the sixteenth century—and, no less importantly, where to locate personnel skilled and resourceful enough to carry them through. My own attempt to establish the links and tensions between reform and crusade has a bearing on the failure of the Church to make substantial progress on implementing reform in the decades before the Reformation. Exploring and adding to such resonances unquestionably forms part of the agenda of the thriving community of researchers currently engaged in the study of crusading in the fifteenth century.

Notes

1. *La noblesse et la croisade à la fin du Moyen Âge (France, Bourgogne, Bohême)*, ed. Martin Nejedlý and Jaroslav Svátek (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2009); *Les projets de croisade: géostrategie et diplomatie européenne du XIVe au XVIIe siècle*, ed. Jacques Paviot (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2014); *Partir en croisade à la fin du Moyen Âge: financement et logistique*, ed. Daniel Baloup and Manuel Sánchez Martínez (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2015); *Histoires et mémoires des croisades à la fin du Moyen Âge*, ed. Martin Nejedlý and Jaroslav Svátek (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2015).

2. *CFC*.
3. Benjamin Weber, *Lutter contre les Turcs: Les formes nouvelles de la croisade pontificale au XVe siècle* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2013).
4. Stefan Stantchev, *Spiritual Rationality: Papal Embargo as Cultural Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

CHAPTER 2

Toward a Global Crusade? The Papacy and the Non-Latin World in the Fifteenth Century

Benjamin Weber

> At that time, some envoys of the king of Babylon were in our camp. When they saw the wonders that God had accomplished through His servants, they glorified Jesus, son of Holy Mary, who could overcome the most powerful tyrants with his poor [servants]. These envoys assured us of the grace and good will of their king and showed us his kindness toward Egyptian Christians and toward our pilgrims. They were thus sent back with our envoys, and asked to discuss a treaty and friendship with the king.[1]

Among the various sources recording contacts between the Fatimid sultan and the army of the First Crusade in 1098—including Muslim chronicles and a contemporary letter from Stephen of Blois—Raymond of Aguilers is the only one to specify that the Egyptian embassy was sent back together with Christian envoys. It is possible that this Egyptian initiative was triggered by an overture from the Christian army itself while crossing Anatolia or even before its departure.[2] The encounter outside the walls of Antioch, limited to a quick note in most of the sources, would then

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become a real diplomatic encounter, with a mutual exchange of letters and ambassadors, planned treaties and hopes for a joint offensive. This project of Frankish–Muslim alliance during the First Crusade was short-lived because it was based on an almost complete miscomprehension: the desire of each party to gain control over Jerusalem. It proves, however, that from the very beginning, the crusade should not be considered as a basic contest between two monolithic groups: Christianity and Islam. A complete list of the diplomatic overtures that followed would take us at least as far as the alliance between Suleiman the Magnificent and Francis I in 1536,[3] but such an enumeration would be as tedious as it would be futile—it would only show that the practice of war always comprises accommodations and concessions, provided that they help to bring about an easier victory, if not a more complete one. Theory is very different. As a specific form of holy war, the very principle of the crusade hinged on a struggle between Christianity and Islam, even, from some eschatological perspectives, a confrontation between Christian believers and their foes to hasten the coming of the last days. As division among Christians grew, this conception evolved into a war to ensure the victory of Latin Christianity, loyal to the Papacy, against *all* its enemies. This enlargement permitted the extension of the crusade to expeditions against heretics, schismatics and political enemies of the Holy See. From a papal point of view, the theory was thus clear: crusading was a terrestrial avatar of the fight between good and evil, and as such could support no nuance or concession. It was of course inconceivable to make an alliance with Muslims to facilitate victory, but it was also out of the question to cooperate with Pagans or false Christians. This was the struggle of the warriors of Christ, united behind His vicar on earth against all who would oppose His final victory.

However, the Papacy quickly understood that such a conception of the crusade had to be shadowed with a praxis that lay closer to strategic realities. The failure of every expedition in the twelfth century demonstrated that God's support alone was insufficient for Western warriors and that additional allies had to be found. Attempts at securing union with the Greek Church and connections with Eastern Christians must be understood in this context, even if they were not guided solely by strategic considerations. At the same time, the Latins in the Levant discovered the existence of hitherto unknown lands and peoples which considerably enlarged papal horizons. We know that an "Indian bishop" visited Calixtus II in 1122.[4] Even if the identity, status and geographic origin of this visitor remain unclear, he helped inform the *curia* of the extent of the world

and the existence of Christians beyond Muslim domination. This knowledge gave birth to new hopes of alliances with far-away Christians, which can be seen in the popularity of the legend of Prester John, the powerful Christian king, eager to help the West to defeat the Muslims and conquer Jerusalem. As Charles Beckingham has rightly noted, the first mention of Prester John, in the chronicle of Otto of Freising in 1145, was not particularly hopeful: it detailed how the king, initially victorious against the king of Media and Persia, was unable to cross the Tigris and lost a large part of his army waiting for the river to freeze.[5] The legend nevertheless gave birth to one of the most enduring strategies conceived by the Christians in order to defeat the Muslims: a combined attack, by sea from the West and by land from the East. The formation of the Mongol Empire in the first decades of the thirteenth century gave concrete form to these dreams, even if none of them were ever fully realized. In the course of 150 years between the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries, the papal strategic program was completely transformed. Its geographic horizons were broadened and its very foundations were altered: to achieve Christian victory, it was possible, or even necessary, to form an alliance with Christians who until then had been considered as heretics, and even with non-Christian powers.

The importance of this period for the global conception of the *curia*, and for its crusading strategies, has frequently been pointed out.[6] But it is often conceived as a dead-end, a historical parenthesis that quickly closed. It is assumed that rivalries between the growing European states, the Great Schism, the conciliar crisis and the difficulties the popes increasingly faced in enforcing their power within Christianity would have led the Papacy to focus its attention on the West, neglecting other horizons. During the same period, the shift of the principal crusading fronts toward Anatolia and Europe following the growth of Ottoman power there would surely have led to a purely defensive strategy, one aimed solely at containing these new conquerors. Yet the end of the Middle Ages saw no slowing down of Western exploration of the world, culminating with the voyages of Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus. These explorations are usually perceived as secular undertakings, sponsored by the Iberian powers. The Papacy, it is assumed, played a very secondary role, one limited to the provision of financial and spiritual support by granting authority over the newly conquered lands.[7]

I do not intend to deny the importance of the thirteenth century in widening papal horizons, or the narrower ambitions of fifteenth-century

papal policy. However, the prevailing view of a Papacy that was interested only in Western affairs or the Ottoman front in the Balkans should be corrected. An analysis of relations between the Papacy and non-Latin powers will demonstrate not only the range and diversity of papal crusading hopes, but also their realism and their capacity to adapt themselves to changing political circumstances. In common with all their predecessors, the popes of the fifteenth century did not consider the crusade as a binary opposition between Christendom and Islam. They benefited from the improvement of geographic knowledge, and included in their strategies rulers who did not recognize—or at least did not *fully* recognize—their authority. Although there were few concrete results, these projects reveal how crusading in the fifteenth century cannot be considered as a simple defensive war along the Danube or in the Aegean. Crusading was "global" in a twofold sense. From a geographic point of view, the war conceived by the Papacy extended to the entire world, including lands about which very little was known. From a strategic point of view, the evolution of papal embassies reveals substantial movement, from a vast number of fronts against *all* the enemies of Christendom to one large, global alliance against a single enemy: the Ottoman Turks.

The Sources, the Methods and Their Limits

From the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Papacy was among the first Western institutions to experiment with the systematic conservation of its administrative documents. It gave birth to one of the world's most important archival collections, one that is particularly rich the closer one gets to the end of the fifteenth century. The huge quantity of this documentation is not, however, without accompanying technical and theoretical problems. The general logic underpinning the papal archives was very different from modern conceptions, and it remains to be studied in detail for the fifteenth century.[8] Diplomacy was not perceived as an independent activity: legates and envoys were only acting instead of the pope in a different place, their activities were not regarded as specific, and its records were therefore archived alongside every other act of daily administration.[9]

This study is mainly based on two archival funds: the registration volumes of papal letters (the so-called *Registri Vaticani*) which comprise more than 1,000 volumes for the fifteenth century; and the volumes of accounts (the *Introitus et Exitus*) which represent more or less one volume for each year. Because of this huge quantity of documentation, only

the first decades of the century, up to the 1480s, have been studied in detail. Even for the first part of the century, it must be kept in mind that some documents have been lost[10] and that many were never recorded. The impression of completeness given by the accounts is misleading because the *Introitus et Exitus* only recorded the payments made in Rome by the Apostolic Chamber—the major papal financial institution—and therefore excluded all expenses incurred and payments made outside the pope's city, which included most of the diplomatic outlay. On the other hand, only bulls that the papal administration considered it useful to record were copied into the *Registri Vaticani*, and the logic behind this decision is still to be explored. A lot of daily acts were simply not registered, not to mention less important affairs, treated by the shorter kind of letters—briefs—which were not systematically archived until the pontificate of Paul II (1464–1471). The global view of papal administration given in this study is thus a minimalist image, hopefully valid from a qualitative point of view, but no doubt deficient in its quantitative aspects. A lot of minor papal envoys did not leave any trace in the papal archives and it is impossible to examine their operations.

It is also important to keep in mind the overall vagueness of papal documentation. In the first place, this was because papal administration had no need for precision: it was very often sufficient to note that four golden ducats were given to an envoy without mentioning his destination, or to copy a safe-guard to "certain places in the world" ("ad nonnullas mundi partes") according to the established expression. But the general vagueness could also have some highly political motives. As papal field representatives, envoys and legates were the most visible manifestation of the institution's universal reach. They were deliberately given very large jurisdictions to highlight their prestige and make clear papal universality. In June 1464, for example, Pius II sent Cristoforo da Viterbo, a brother in the *societas peregrinantium*, to liaise with Christians under Turkish dominion, "in particular in the cities of Caffa and Pera, and the lands of the Saracens, pagans, Greeks, Bulgarians, Cumans, Ethiopians, Iberians, Alans, *Basarorum* [?], *Bottorum* [?], Ziks, Ruthenians, Scyths, Jacobites, Nubians, Nestorians, Georgians, Armenians, Indians, *Moleschitarum* [inhabitants of Mosul?], Tatars, Kurds, Hungarians from Greater Hungary and others who do not as yet receive the sacrament of our faith."[11] Similar lists can be found in numerous nomination bulls.[12] They give precious information on papal world conceptions,[13] but provide us with few useful details to study concrete diplomacy.

The last and most certainly the principal difficulty in studying papal activity outside Christendom lies in the conception of diplomacy itself. With a few notable exceptions—in particular, the duchy of Milan—nothing existed in the fifteenth century that bears comparison with modern diplomatic practice.[14] Diplomacy was not considered as a separate branch of politics generally. It is also a modern point of view to isolate envoys who went beyond Latin Christendom from those who stayed within it. From the point of view of the popes, their universal power gave them the right to intervene in Christian affairs all over the world and to intervene in every kingdom as far as the fate of Christianity was more or less concerned. But dealing with lands that were very distant brought about specific problems. It was these that in practice made papal diplomacy in the non-Latin world quite different from its counterpart within Christendom. At the papal court, nobody was an ambassador and almost everyone could become one, to the extent that he was in the right place at the right moment—and was trustworthy enough, of course. The more distant the projected embassy was, the more difficult it became to find a suitable envoy. Unlike the rulers of France, Germany or England, the Papacy could seldom afford to send specific envoys to Ethiopia, Georgia or even Constantinople. It had to rely on people who were traveling there for another reason: a foreign ambassador returning home, a missionary, a pilgrim or a simple merchant. The technical skills of some of these agents enabled them eventually to become real specialists, to whom the Pope could systematically refer to deal with certain lands or matters. Cristoforo Garatone, for example, carried out at least six trips to Constantinople and almost as many in Hungary before his death at the battle of Kosovo in 1448.[15] Moïse Giblet probably arrived in Italy during the Council of Florence and was in charge of four successive missions in Egypt, Palestine and Syria for Calixtus III and Pius II.[16] Undoubtedly such men can be described as papal ambassadors. On the contrary, the Spanish pilgrim Pero Tafur asserts that while traveling in Rome, he was charged by Eugenius IV with collecting as much information as he could during his trip to Jerusalem.[17] The Franciscan vicars of Mount Sion in Jerusalem were sometimes asked to deliver letters to oriental addressees. Is this enough to regard them as papal ambassadors? It seems more appropriate to reserve the designation "ambassador" for men who were *directly* sent by the Papacy, leaving aside occasional travelers in charge of a specific mission.

Eugenius' request to Pero Tafur, and the work of the Franciscans in Jerusalem nonetheless remain relevant for our topic, since they disclose

the popes' desire to gather information on, and increase their contacts with, Eastern princes in order to prepare a future crusade. This leads to the last, and maybe the main, problem of this study on papal crusading ambassadors: defining a crusading mission and thus defining the crusade itself. This is not the place for any exposition of this difficult question. It will be enough to recall that the various forms of papal intervention outside Latin Christendom were closely linked with each other and very often operated together. Unlike what happened in the West, few envoys were exclusively asked to organize or prepare a military expedition. Relations with these distant lands were infrequent, so envoys were expected to function *inter alia* as reformers, preachers, missionaries, letters- or gift-bearers and political ambassadors. Although most of the papal bulls do not mention the crusade, it hovers in the background of almost all the missions. Discussions over Church union with the Byzantines or other Christian communities were perceived as the necessary precondition for a general offensive against the Turks.[18] Missionary activity, whether aimed at converting infidels or supporting Eastern Christians, was conceived by the Papacy as a mean of enforcing papal authority and uniting Christians against a common foe.[19] *A fortiori*, ordinary missions, such as bringing back relics from the West or organizing marriages, must be read as an aspiration to bring foreign rulers into the war against the enemies of the faith by asserting papal universalism and creating the necessary conditions for the definitive victory of Christianity. Of course, there was a big difference between such missions as delivering guns to Uzun Hassan or inviting the Eastern patriarchs to submit to papal authority, but ultimately the whole of papal policy in the East was aimed at uniting all peoples under papal authority in order to assure the victory of the Christian faith over its enemies. Since St John's Gospel, uniting one flock under one single shepherd had always been regarded as the best way to protect it against the wolves.[20]

This study thus takes into account *all* papal envoys outside Latin Christendom, the sole exceptions being friars sent to the Balkans or to Genoese colonies to reform convents or pursue heretics, Franciscans dispatched to the Holy Land for the specific purpose of managing the convents at Jerusalem and Beirut, and certain envoys whose brief was so sparsely documented that it remains impossible to be sure about their destination and role. The resulting collection represents more than 50 missions. Due to the limitations outlined above, it cannot be considered as a complete conspectus of papal diplomacy, but rather as a broad image of each pope's conception of his role outside Latin Christendom. The

difficulty—even the impossibility—of realizing papal projects in the far distance has often been emphasized,[21] but the popes still possessed large ambitions, wide horizons and global strategic conceptions. A chronological examination of these plans will allow us to locate them in a precise context and to elucidate how papal strategies evolved over the course of the fifteenth century.

The First Decades: A Byzantine Horizon, 1400–1430

For the first quarter of the fifteenth century, we possess few sources and even fewer studies. Any judgment on this period must thus be advanced tentatively, but it seems that papal horizons remained rather restricted. The low level of papal diplomatic activity during these years was mainly due to practical reasons. The Great Schism had disorganized papal administration, taken it away from its main archives—almost all of them left in Avignon—and excised the diplomatic structures that had been set up in the course of previous centuries. The popes of the century's first decades simply did not have at their disposal a sufficient network of qualified persons to acquire a precise knowledge of distant lands or sovereigns, all the more so to actually travel there. Crusading diplomacy was thus necessarily limited. It is striking that the Papacy was completely excluded from the numerous relations between various Western powers and the Turco-Mongolian conqueror Tamerlane (Tīmūr) at the very beginning of the fifteenth century. Though some Christians might have been in contact with Tamerlane as early as 1395 (most of all Genoese, maybe French), contacts really began after the battle of Nicopolis in 1396 and more importantly after his conquest of Damascus in 1401 and his victory over the Ottomans in 1402. Official embassies and letters were exchanged with the French, English and Castilian courts and the Genoese colonies of Pera and Chios.[22] Even if these contacts were often driven by commercial perspectives—the reopening of the Black Sea road toward Central Asia and China—they were also motivated by crusading ambitions, the revival of the old dream of the Latin–Mongol alliance against Mediterranean Muslim enemies, be they Mamluks or Ottomans. The popes, whether at Rome or Avignon, were regularly in contact with these sovereigns, but they never considered the possibility of such an alliance. The deeds of Tamerlane were known at Avignon through a very negative letter written to Benedict XIII in 1403 by the King of Aragon, Martin I, in which he portrayed the conqueror

as a barbarous and bloodthirsty savage. Significantly, no early fifteenth-century copies of the more accurate views of Tamerlane conveyed by John of Sultanieh's *Libellus de Notitia Orbis*, by Beltramo de' Mignanelli's *De Ruina Damasci* or by the narration of Ruy González de Clavijo's embassies of 1404 seem to have circulated either in Rome or at Avignon. In 1405, Tamerlane was still viewed as an enemy by the Roman Pope Innocent VII, who tried to enlist the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II in a joint crusade with the Italian cities and Hungary against him.[23] The Papacy simply lacked a sufficiently informative network on the situation in the East to elaborate larger and more up-to-date crusading plans.

The popes of the first quarter of the fifteenth century therefore confined their crusading project to a very ancient horizon: that of union with the Greek Church. Since the eleventh century, the imperial ambitions of the Papacy and the Byzantine emperors had been in conflict with each other, but the papal attitude toward Byzantium was always highly ambiguous. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were a time of hesitation between a sincere desire for union to promote a joint crusade against the Muslims and an imperative wish to protect the Latin territories conquered after 1204 by proclaiming crusades against the Greeks.[24] The imminence of Ottoman conquest and the progress of discussions over Church Union favored a more systematic policy of reconciliation.[25] Once again, however, the first years of the fifteenth century were characterized by very subdued diplomatic activity. The years 1400–1403 were marked by Emperor Manuel II's trip to the West to gather help and support against the Ottomans.[26] Various letters were exchanged between the emperor and Boniface IX in Rome and Benedict XIII in Avignon, discussing a common crusade. Both popes issued indulgences to encourage financial help to the Byzantine Empire.[27] But although the emperor sent his son-in-law Hilario Doria as his representative to Rome, and Constantinos Vranas to meet Benedict in Avignon, no papal embassy is recorded toward the emperor (or indeed to Constantinople) during this time. It is quite unclear whether a meeting took place between the emperor and the pope: if it did happen, it was only on his return trip, in 1403, that Manuel II met Boniface IX in Florence.[28] These limited contacts show how much papal prestige had sunk at the very beginning of the century. But it is also the consequence of the lack of an available emissary at this point, when the Avignonese and Roman courts could muster at best a limited number of reliable personnel.

Contacts between the Papacy and the Byzantine Empire did not disappear, however, and direct diplomacy started again as soon as unified

papal authority was restored with the election in 1420 of Martin V. Just a few weeks after ascending the papal throne, the pope entrusted Cardinal Giovanni Dominici with the restoration of Church Union with the Hussites in Bohemia and the Greeks in Constantinople.[29] Even though the legate died in Buda and never reached the Byzantine capital, the embassy shows Martin's will to extend to the Eastern Church the unification process begun at the Council of Constance. Two years later, a very similar mission was given to Pedro de Fonseca. He was to travel to Aragon in order to resolve the schism of the antipope Pedro de Luna—formerly Benedict XIII—who was entrenched in the fortress of Peñiscola, then pursue the route to Constantinople to discuss a general council.[30] The Ottoman siege of Constantinople once again prevented a papal emissary from reaching his final destination, but the close link between papal authority in the West and in the East recurs clearly in Fonseca's embassy.

During the first half of the century, no fewer than ten different papal ambassadors were sent to Constantinople. Church Union was the main motor of this diplomacy, to organize the council up to 1439, and to enforce its decrees afterward, but war against the Turks was constantly in the background to the discussions. The Greeks conceived it as a necessary prerequisite for Union, whereas the popes imposed the recognition of their authority as an imperative precondition for any armed expedition.[31] Papal diplomacy was often accompanied by tangible—though quite insufficient—military help: in 1439, Cristofore Garatone was leading two war galleys and 300 crossbowmen recruited in Crete and, in 1452, Isidore of Kiev arrived with 200 men-at-arms from Chios. The Greek Empire was also the only place outside Latin Christendom during the entire fifteenth century to which cardinal-legates were sent.[32] This is a strong indication both of the importance of Byzantine diplomacy for the Papacy and of the ambiguous status of the Greek lands, since cardinal-legates where usually sent only to Latin lands. Breaking with the papal hesitations of previous centuries, fifteenth-century popes fully incorporated the Byzantine Empire into their crusading strategies, treating it on a par with Latin Christendom. Mehmed II's conquest of Constantinople in 1453 put an end to this diplomacy: the papal *curia* maintained some epistolary contacts with the despots of Morea and—maybe—the emperor of Trebizond, but it never sent an ambassador there. These lands possessed neither the strategic interest nor the symbolic importance of Constantinople.